

PREFACE

Henry Morgenthau, a successful New York real estate developer, had served as the 'Democratic Party Finance Committee' chairman in Woodrow Wilson's 1912 presidential campaign. Upon Wilson's election he was rewarded with a political appointment as Ambassador to the Ottoman Empire, a position which he initially rejected on the grounds that it was the only diplomatic post open to American Jews. Only Wilson's personal intervention, and the insistence of Rabbi Stephen Wise of New York City, convinced Morgenthau to reconsider. Having done so, the fifty-eight year old Morgenthau arrived in the Ottoman capital of Istanbul (Constantinople), to take up his position on November 27, 1913. He served in Turkey for a period of twenty-six months and returned to the United States in February, 1916. His book, *Ambassador Morgenthau's Story*, written two years later, tells the 'story' of his foray into the world of international diplomacy.

When it comes to shaping the manner in which successive generations of Americans have viewed a given people and country, the impact of the book known as *Ambassador Morgenthau's Story* can have few equals.

Pivotal as a foundation for the vehement anti-Turkishness, which came to typify American public opinion in the 1920s, and remnants of which are still visible today, the Morgenthau book continues to be a primary source for the belief that the Young Turk Government of the Ottoman Empire perpetrated a premeditated massacre of its Armenian minority under cover of World War I.

This is not a study designed to answer the question of whether or not the fate of Ottoman Armenians during the First World War, should or should not be termed 'genocide.' It is, however, a work designed to question the credibility of the United States Ambassador Henry Morgenthau, as a source for the history of that era as portrayed in *Ambassador Morgenthau's Story*. This disclaimer is necessitated by the fact that partisans, be they Turks or Armenians, to the discussion of Turco-Armenian relations during World War I., tend to defend their positions from behind 'blindness' which allow them to see only what they want with no regard for the larger picture. Thus, to Armenians, an attack on the credibility of *Ambassador Morgenthau's Story* as a source for war-time Ottoman history, will in all likelihood be viewed as tantamount to "genocide denial," whereas, to the Turks, an attack on Morgenthau's veracity may well be interpreted as an attack on the Armenian charge of 'genocide.' Neither interpretation is, in the opinion of its author, warranted by the scope of this study.

I should like to express my appreciation to Justin McCarthy whose careful reading and helpful comments have added to whatever value this work possesses, although its shortcomings are mine alone. In addition, I am indebted to Aysegül Acar and Hakki Öcal for their patient editorial assistance.

Washington, D.C.
July 12, 1990

Heath W. Lowry