

“A Question of Humanity in its Entirety”

Armin T. Wegner as Intermediary of Reconciliation between Germans and Armenians in Interwar German Civil Society

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Armin T. Wegner was a humanitarian writer and activist who witnessed the massacres and forced relocation of Armenian deportees while he was stationed in Ottoman Turkey during the First World War. This essay analyzes his efforts as an intermediary of reconciliation between Armenians and Germans within emerging conduits of civil society in Germany between 1919 and 1921. A look at the degree of apparent success, proximity to explicit political agendas, articulation and mobilization of narratives of suffering, and institutional sanction of his work is instructive for more general considerations about the role of intermediaries in acts of reconciliation in civil society.¹ The essay thus traces some of Wegner’s activities within civil

1 I prefer the term ‘intermediary’ to that of ‘mediator’, and venture to follow here Michel Callon’s definition of an intermediary as “anything passing between actors which defines the relationship between them”; hence, “actors define one another in interaction – in the intermediaries that they put into circulation”. Whereas the term ‘mediator’ conforms to Wegner’s self-presentation, the term ‘intermediary’ describes more aptly how his activities emerge out of processes of interaction between multiple agents and institutions, and with often unexpected results. Intermediaries include not only human agents but also published

society as well as the narrative and rhetorical contours of the interpretive framework within which these activities are set, and which they set-up, in the brief period of 1919-1921. Presenting himself as a mediator of reconciliation, Wegner explored ways of convincing his German and international audiences to look at images and listen to stories of the forced deportation of the Armenians. His work faced the difficult task, however, of how to navigate the heterogeneous terrain of personal witness testimony, contentious assertions of geopolitical identity by Germans and Armenians, and the normative claims of international humanitarian activism with which Wegner seems most strongly to identify. Despite Wegner's commitment to international humanitarianism and experiments with forms of narrative empathy, his attempts to mediate reconciliation were impeded by political circumstances and his own rhetorical associations of Armenian suffering with the legitimization for an independent Armenian nation-state.

EYEWITNESS OF THE DEPORTATION

Armin T. Wegner (1886-1978) was born in Wuppertal, Germany in 1886 to a socially well-connected family. He studied in Breslau, Zürich, and Berlin, before completing a doctoral degree in law. Yet he was more interested in the theatrical and literary arts, trying to make his way in the circles around Max Reinhardt's theater and as a writer of Expressionist poetry.² At the

texts and technical objects, such as Wegner's writings and photographs. Michel Callon, Techno-economic Networks and Irreversibility, in: *Sociology of Monsters: Essays on Power, Technology and Domination*, ed. John Law (London: Routledge, 1991), 132-164, here: 134-135.

- 2 For more details about Wegner's wider activities as a writer and not just as an activist for Armenian independence, I recommend Andreas Meier's informative podcast: <http://podcast.uni-wuppertal.de/2008/09/04/politisch-literarische-abenteuer-armin-t-wegner/>. See also: Martin Rooney, *Leben und Werk Armin T. Wegners (1886-1978) im Kontext der sozio-politischen und kulturellen Entwicklungen in Deutschland* (Frankfurt a.M.: Haag + Herchen, 1984). For a recent study on Wegner's wider literary writings on the Ottoman Empire, see Behrang Samsami, "Die Entzauberung des Ostens": *Der Orient bei Hesse, Wegner und Schwarzenbach* (Bielefeld: Aisthesis, 2011), 149-216.

outbreak of the First World War, he was initially stationed as a doctor's assistant on the Russian front. Thanks to his family's influence, he was then transferred in 1915 to the regiment of Field Marshall Colmar von der Goltz, where he served as the assistant to von der Goltz's personal doctor stationed in the region of the Ottoman Empire that is now Iraq. While stationed with von der Goltz, who was in charge of a Turkish regiment trying to fend off attacks by British soldiers, Wegner travelled from east to west within the Ottoman Empire. It was during this trip in the fall of 1915 and returning in 1916 that he crossed paths with the trekking Armenian refugees from the north heading southward into the Syrian Desert. In 1916, he spent time in the last refugee camp along the trek, where he talked to numerous refugees and documented in photographs and writing the suffering caused by the state-sponsored mass deportations and other brutal expatriation measures. After returning to Germany, he became a vocal activist on behalf of Armenian refugees. Due to censorship during the war, little information was disseminated within Germany about the Armenian genocide,³ but following the November Revolution, Wegner was able to publish writings depicting the atrocities, overtly blaming them on the Young Turkish regime, and demanding a change in German foreign policy.

3 For a detailed and well-documented discussion about what was known within the German administration and what was silenced by the wartime censor, see Margaret Lavinia Anderson, *Who Still Talked about the Extermination of the Armenians? German Talk and German Silences*, in: *A Question of Genocide: Armenians and Turks at the End of the Ottoman Empire*, ed. Ronald Grigor Suny et al. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), 199-220; Dominik Schaller, *Die Rezeption des Völkermordes an den Armeniern in Deutschland, 1915-1945*, in: *Der Völkermord an den Armeniern und die Shoah*, ed. Hans Lukas Kieser and Dominik Schaller (Zürich: Chronos, 2001), 517-556, here: 522-531.

THE OPEN LETTER TO WILSON AND THE POLITICS OF INTERNATIONAL HUMANITARIANISM

With the publication of his “Open Letter to the President of the United States of America, Woodrow Wilson, On the Expulsion of the Armenian People into the Desert” in the *Berliner Tageblatt* on 23 February 1919, Wegner achieved fame and notoriety both at home and abroad as an activist for Armenian relief and national independence.⁴ His appeal to Wilson makes clear that his ambition is “to right a wrong that no other people suffered like the Armenians [*ein Unrecht wieder gutzumachen, wie es keines dieser Völker erlitt*]” (5). Wilson had already announced his plan for the national independence of ethnic minorities within the crumbling Ottoman Empire. Hoping to garner support for the Armenians at the peace negotiations in Paris, Wegner announces in the letter his intention to speak on behalf of an Armenian nation – as “the mouth of a thousand dead ones” – justifying this speaker position on the basis of his eyewitness experience of the deportation, “as one of the few Europeans to have witnessed this nation’s horrible demise” (2). He describes the letter as a “testament”, at once an address “in accordance with the law of human community” and “a sacred promise” (5). Declaring that “no group of people has ever suffered an injustice to the extent the Armenians have”, he casts responsibility and atonement simultaneously as “a question of Christianity” and a “question of humanity in its entirety” (2).

Wegner’s appeal to Christian values here avers a common cause with the international evangelical lobby backing Wilson’s foreign policy regarding Armenian independence. Evangelical missionary groups were some of the most vocal supporters of Armenian relief in the United States, for in-

4 I cite from the text published separately in book form, *Offener Brief an den Präsidenten der Vereinigten Staaten von Nord-Amerika, Herrn Woodrow Wilson, über die Austreibung des armenischen Volkes in die Wüste* (Berlin-Schöneberg: Buchdruckerei Alb. Sayffaerth [Otto Fleck], 1919). All translations from Wegner’s texts in the following essay are my own. For more on Wegner’s popularity among evangelical supporters of Armenians, as well as his troubles with the Foreign Ministry, following the publication of the letter to Wilson, see Martin Tamcke, *Armin T. Wegner und die Armenier. Anspruch und Wirklichkeit eines Augenzeugen* (Hamburg: LIT, 1996), 185-186.

stance. At the forefront of these activities was the Near East Relief organization, which had a long history of Protestant missionary activity dating back to evangelizing missions in the Ottoman Empire and the Middle East in the nineteenth century.⁵ These U.S. missionaries were already present in the years before, during, and after the war, with some members supplying on-site relief work while others were concerned with bearing witness to the persecutions and launching a media campaign on behalf of the Armenians back in the United States – all in the name of a common Christian destiny. Granted a charter from Congress in 1919 and with James Barton appointed as its head, who would later participate in the treaty negotiations at the Lausanne Conference in 1922-23, Near East Relief became an important humanitarian relief organization and a vociferous lobby for Armenian independence.⁶ The fact that Near East Relief could so successfully combine evangelism, philanthropy, and international politics was due in no small part to the close personal ties of some of its members to Woodrow Wilson.⁷ Wilson's connection to the Protestant activists would not have been lost on Wegner, nor was Wegner unfamiliar with sibling networks of Protestant activism within Germany.

Yet Wegner's humanitarian agenda for reconciliation between Germans and Armenians is also staged here as a matter of concern for a presumed international community (hence the address to Wilson and the appeal to "humanity in its entirety"), and it consists of at least two parts. One concerns the commemoration of the dead: the creation of a cultural memory of the atrocities as a way to confer public recognition upon the dead as belonging to an imagined human community, in order to re-incorporate them into the world of the living.⁸ This act of incorporating dead bodies into the memory of the living community involves the creation of empathy with the absent

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- 5 Flora A. Keshgegian, "Starving Armenians": The Politics and Ideology of Humanitarian Aid in the First Decades of the Twentieth Century, in: *Humanitarianism and Suffering: The Mobilization of Empathy*, ed. Richard Ashby Wilson and Richard D. Brown (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 140-155, here: 141.
- 6 Ibid., 143.
- 7 Ibid., 144-145.
- 8 Thomas W. Laquer, Mourning, Pity, and the Work of Narrative in the Making of "Humanity", in: *Humanitarianism and Suffering*, 31-57, here: 38.

dead. Furthermore, this story of mourning overlaps with the second project to ameliorate the suffering of the living in the present. And Wegner has concrete demands for how this should happen: through the founding of an independent Armenian nation-state, compensation for lost property, and the mandatory care of Armenian orphans. These measures, Wegner argues in a move which expands the issue of reconciliation beyond the confines of a matter solely concerning Germans and Armenians, would represent the international community's "recognition of our common guilt for the atrocities" (7-8). Armenian relief is thus no longer articulated solely as the objective of Christian missionary work, nor are distinctions between perpetrators and victims to be understood strictly in terms of national interest. Wegner presents the matter as entailing shared histories⁹ by virtue of all participants being part of the common humanity underlying the international regime of nation-states.

Wegner's open letter to Wilson signals not only a shift in German humanitarian activism on behalf of Armenians, but also a recalibration of narratives about Armenia within discussions in German politics and civil society. Wegner's particular intervention in German debates about Armenians must be considered in light of changing attitudes in Germany toward Turks and Armenians since at least the time of the earlier massacres of 1894-96 during the rule of Abdul Hamid II in the Ottoman Empire. Whereas these deadly pogroms generated widespread international humanitarian outcry in Switzerland, France, Great Britain, and the U.S., a counter-discourse formed in Germany, which, as Margaret Lavinia Anderson has shown, "succeeded in diluting sympathy for the victims and shifting it to the perpetrators" of the massacres.¹⁰ A conglomeration of arguments from diverse political directions were thus woven into effective geopolitical narratives aligning support for Armenians with support of either an expansionist England or tsarist Russia. These political arguments against Armenia and for

9 Elazar Barkan contrasts the notion of "shared narratives" to "national myths" in the efforts of civil society to achieve historical reconciliation. Elazar Barkan, Introduction: Historians and Historical Reconciliation. AHR Forum Truth and Reconciliation in History, *American Historical Review* 114 (2009), 899-913.

10 Margaret Lavinia Anderson, "Down in Turkey, far away": Human Rights, the Armenian Massacres, and Orientalism in Wilhelmine Germany, *The Journal of Modern History*, 79, 1 (2007), 80-111, here: 83.

Turkey were buttressed by “Orientalist” narratives that cast Turkey as an agent of secular progress and tolerance, in contrast to “backwards” Armenians abroad and Christian zealots at home, and were circulated even by the liberal German press.¹¹

Wegner can thus be regarded as one of those alternative “spokesmen who could fit Armenians and Turks into a narrative in which listeners could imagine themselves”.¹² He did so by appealing to a broad sense of suffering and re-inscribing notions of victims and perpetrators within a framework that cast matters in terms of international regimes of humanity and inhumanity. These rhetorical and narrative strategies are the main features of his work as an intermediary of reconciliation between Germans and Armenians from the time of his letter to Wilson and subsequent public lectures until the trial of Talaat Pascha in 1921.

The publication of the letter to Wilson in 1919, as well as of a programmatic statement the previous year demanding official acknowledgment of the Armenian massacre and support for the founding of an Armenian nation-state in German foreign policy,¹³ cost Wegner his position as editor of *Der neue Orient. Monatsschrift für das politische, wirtschaftliche und geistige Leben im gesamten Orient*, a monthly publication of the Berlin Orient Institute supported by the German Ministry of Foreign Affairs. His public advocacy for the Armenians even cost him his contract with the Fleischel Verlag, his publishing company at the time.¹⁴ Between 1919 and 1921, Wegner continued his public advocacy by aligning his activities with those of the international *Bund der Kriegsdienstgegner* in 1919, as well as by teaming up with organizations within Germany, such as the evangelical so-

11 Ibid., 93-102.

12 Ibid., 84.

13 Die Neugestaltung unserer Orientpolitik, *Der neue Orient* N.F. 4, Berlin 1918, 101-104. For a discussion and lengthy excerpts from this text, see Rooney, *Leben und Werk Armin T. Wegners*, 253-256, as well as Martin Tamcke, Armin T. Wegner’s “Die Austreibung des armenischen Volkes in die Wüste”. Einführung zum unveröffentlichten Vortragstyposkript vom 19. März 1919 in der Urania zu Berlin, in: *Orientalische Christen zwischen Repression und Migration. Beiträge zur jüngeren Geschichte und Gegenwartslage*, ed. Martin Tamcke (Hamburg: LIT, 2001), 65-71, here: 66-67.

14 Rooney, *Leben und Werk Armin T. Wegners*, 288.

cieties and the *Deutsch-Armenische Gesellschaft*.¹⁵ Wegner's struggles for reconciliation between Germans and Armenians must be considered in the context of a pacifist proclamation of "a new law for the human" that entails the rejection of the centuries-old "law of violence" upheld by European political leaders, and the "complete and unconditional abolition of violence" as outlined in the manifesto of the *Bund der Kriegsdienstgegner*.¹⁶ Wegner's language of rights and crimes in this context mirrors the terms deployed in his advocacy of Armenian aid and right to self-determination; in both contexts, normative prescriptions are elicited by Wegner's phrase of "righting a past wrong" (*ein Unrecht gutmachen*).¹⁷ Wegner's interventions in civil society with the aim of reconciliation between Germans and Armenians are conducted under the banner of "righting a wrong".

"THE EXPULSION OF THE ARMENIANS": NARRATING SUFFERING, STAGING EMPATHY

One of his most impressive endeavors as an intermediary of reconciliation between Germans and Armenians was the presentation of his personal collection of pictures and reports, which he delivered between 1919 and 1921 as a public lecture accompanied by a slide presentation. The Institute for Popular Natural History at the *Urania* in Berlin had been founded in 1888 as an institution dedicated to the presentation of scientific knowledge to a

15 At the end of June 1919, Wegner founded the *Bund der Kriegsdienstgegner* with Robert Pohl, G.W. Meyer and Magnus Schwantje.

16 Armin T. Wegner, *Die Verbrechen der Stunde – Die Verbrechen der Ewigkeit. Aufruf zur Gründung eines Bundes der Kriegsdienstgegner*, in: *Das Ziel. Viertes der Jahrbücher für geistige Politik*, ed. Kurt Hiller (München: Kurt Wolff, 1920), 142-165, here: 143 and 152.

17 Wegner evokes this phrase in his discussion of the aims of the *Bund der Kriegsdienstgegner*, which he regards as a veritable alternative to the League of Nations, "a league of nations, whose provisions only entail a displacement, in the best case a reduction, of the instruments of power". He suggests that Germany could right one of the "the most disgraceful crimes of all time" by abolishing not only the institution of universal conscription but of military service in general. *Ibid.*, 160.

popular audience. Its building contained an observatory, an exhibition space, and a theater – and, according to an expanded definition of intermediaries, which would include non-human actors, should as well be considered a potential intermediary of reconciliation within civil society, for it provides the physical site where participants might assemble to look at Wegner’s images of suffering. The directors of the Urania Society agreed to schedule one or two personal lectures by Wegner on the topic of the Armenian massacres. Because, “the events that you depict have for some time now receded into the background”, the directors write to Wegner in a letter from 1918, they questioned whether his presentation would have a strong “attraction” (*Zugkraft*) for the public.¹⁸ Moreover, they expressed their disappointment at the poor quality of many of the diapositives for his slide show that he had sent along with his query letters, pointing out that many of them appear to be photographs of paper images and that their technological quality is substandard. Not until almost a year later, on March 19, 1919, did the plans for a public lecture at the *Urania* come to fruition.¹⁹

That the event was sponsored by the *Deutsch-Armenische Gesellschaft* reveals just how closely aligned Wegner had become to the efforts of the Protestant activists in Germany. The *Deutsch-Armenische Gesellschaft* had been founded in 1914 in Berlin by Pastor Johannes Lepsius (1858-1926), one of the most prominent German supporters of the Armenian cause, along with the journalist Paul Rohrbach and the Armenian writer Avetik Issahakyan. Lepsius’ organization was an outgrowth of a conglomeration of mostly confessional non-governmental organizations such as the *Evangelische Hilfswerke*, *Der Hilfsbund für christliches Liebeswerk im Orient*, *Das Notwendige Liebeswerk*, and Lepsius’ own *Deutsche Orientmission*. Lepsius’ *Deutsche Orientmission* was founded in 1895 in response to widespread violence in cities and throughout the countryside targeting Armenians in the Ottoman Empire. A reaction to increasing resistance and unrest by Armenian populations due to decades of expropriation and mistreatment at the hands of paramilitary groups in regions along the Russian border, as well as to mounting perceptions of an international threat to Ottoman sovereignty,

18 Direktion of the Urania to Wegner, 20 February 1918, Deutsches Literaturarchiv Marbach (hereafter: DLA), Nachlass Wegner, A: Wegner.

19 Wegner delivered the lecture several times afterwards in Breslau and Vienna until 1924.

this wave of massacres between 1894 and 1896 claimed the lives of more than 100,000 Armenians. While the massacres were primarily conducted by Kurdish paramilitary groups, state authorities did little to protect the Armenian population.²⁰ News about the massacres reached audiences in Europe, resulting however in little more than notes of protest from the major state powers, yet sparking support for the Armenians within private relief organizations, such as Near East Relief in the U.S., or *Pro Arménia* in France. We thus find in conjunction with the early massacres against the Armenians an international history of humanitarian organization and assistance formed in explicitly non-state sectors. In the case of pre-war Germany, the channels of activity are primarily forged or pursued by confessional leaders such as Pastor Lepsius and the Frankfurt Pastor Ernst Lohmann.²¹

Strategy played a role in Lepsius' support for Wegner's lecture, for the event was scheduled to take place shortly before the issue of Armenian independence was to be raised at the peace negotiations in Paris, and tickets were reserved for representatives from the Foreign Ministry. It was hoped that Wegner's lecture would bolster support for Armenian claims for independence.²² Not only did Wegner provide flesh and blood evidence as an eyewitness to the genocide, he also deployed his rhetorical prowess as a writer to help articulate the claims of Lepsius' humanitarian organization within a wider semantic framework than that of Christian charity. Around this time, Lepsius was also active as a compiler of documentary information concerning the state-sponsored Armenian massacres. Lepsius pub-

20 Annette Schaeffgen, *Schwieriges Erinnern: Der Völkermord an den Armeniern* (Berlin: Metropol Verlag, 2006), 18-19.

21 Uwe Feigel, *Das evangelische Deutschland und Armenien. Die Armenierhilfe deutscher evangelischer Christen seit dem Ende des 19. Jahrhunderts im Kontext der deutsch-türkischen Beziehungen* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1989). A work that critically situates Wegner's interventions within the wider context of the evangelical societies is Tamcke, *Armin T. Wegner*. For a discussion of efforts by the *Deutsch-Armenische Gesellschaft* to prevent the genocide during the war, see Anderson, *Who Still Talked*.

22 Martin Tamcke, *Die Kamera als Zeuge. Armin T. Wegners Fotografien vom Völkermord 1915/16 in Armenien*, in: *Das Jahrhundert der Bilder. Band I: 1900-1949*, ed. Gerhard Paul (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2009), 172-179, here: 178-79.

lished a revised version of his *Report on the Situation of the Armenians in Turkey*, originally published in 1916 but banned during the war, with the new title *The Passage to Death of the Armenians* in 1919.²³ He also edited a volume of diplomatic records commissioned by the German Ministry of Foreign Affairs, who hoped to thereby dispel notions of a German complicity and even removed passages that might have implicated German officials.²⁴ Although they are replete with numerous statistics, documentary sources, and factual reports, Lepsius' publications lack the narrative – sometimes lyrical²⁵ – eloquence of Wegner's writing.

Wegner's narrative eloquence faces the challenge, however, of how to move from the form of an open letter staging testimony in the first-person (i.e. the letter to Wilson) to the form of a public lecture in which those addressed view the images and hear the story of massacre as a communal event. The corollary question, moreover, is what type of communal event gets enacted in the process. Is it an act of looking at pictures or listening to stories together, in the hope of reconciliation between Germans and Armenians, or is it rather an act of myth-making and community-formation that solidifies geo-political identities and interests through a partisan foundational narrative? In the open letter to Wilson, Wegner still operates on the level of first-person address in the hybrid form of an open letter and an epistle.²⁶ He pens a self-aggrandizing eyewitness, who both “dares to grant

23 Johannes Lepsius, *Der Todesgang des Armenischen Volkes. Bericht über das Schicksal des Armenischen Volkes in der Türkei während des Weltkrieges*, zweite, vermehrte Auflage (Potsdam: Tempelverlag, 1919).

24 Johannes Lepsius, *Deutschland und Armenien 1914-1918. Sammlung diplomatischer Aktenstücke* (Potsdam: Tempelverlag, 1919); Schaeffgen, *Schwieriges Erinnern*, 38-39. See also the reproduction of these and other documents by Wolfgang and Sigrid Gust at www.armenocide.de.

25 Upon witnessing the deportation during his trip through the desert, Wegner composed a poem in 1916 about the horror of what he saw, with the title, *The Expulsion*, which he tellingly also titled, *The Expulsion of Humanity*. DLA, Nachlass Wegner, A: Wegner.

26 Because the address to Wilson as a prominent representative of the U.S.A. is also published in the *Berliner Tageblatt*, it simultaneously seeks to inform a wider public; furthermore, the personal tone of the address “amplifies the credibility

myself the right to conjure before you these images of misery and horror”²⁷ and authorizes himself to serve as “the mouth of a thousand dead that speak through me”.²⁸ This is no less than an inflated epistolary subject who assigns himself the moral authority to speak on behalf of Armenian victims in a German-language or international public sphere. A passage from the end of the slide presentation, on the other hand, describes the personal reaction of Wegner the public speaker to the images being presented, in a gesture that simultaneously affirms the amplified speaking self and hints at the dilemma of such a stance.

“Every time when I talk about the horrible pictures of misfortune of this group of people, from which your eyes have perhaps in horror often turned away from the screen, I imagine myself again among the starving and dying in the refugee camp, feel their supplicating hands in mine, summoning me to plead for them again once I return to Europe. And the bones of these abject ones, whose silent lament still cries over to us from these pictures, should become once again flesh in all of our hearts, in order to remind us of the hour of our deepest plunge. Yes, with the fervor of one who experienced the unthinkable ignominy of their suffering in his own tortured soul, I raise my voice for the surviving remnants of those abject ones for whom the benefit of life is no less precious than ours.”²⁹

While the passage affirms the aggrandized epistolary self by justifying his “fervent” speaker position with a description of his own reaction to the moving vividness of the images, the similarly presumptuous suggestion of an appropriate audience reception also raises the oratorical problem of how to create a shared reception of these images. The odd figure of the silent la-

and effect on the reader”. Johanna Wernicke-Rothmayer, *Armin T. Wegner. Gesellschaftserfahrung und literarisches Werk* (Frankfurt a.M.: Lang, 1982), 188.

27 Wegner, *Offener Brief*, 2.

28 *Ibid.*, 5.

29 DLA, Nachlass Wegner, A: Wegner. A comparison of the manuscript in Marbach with Tamcke’s reconstruction of the manuscript indicates that Wegner apparently altered the passage after the presentation in the *Urania*. The figure of bones becoming flesh again in Wegner’s heart and motivating him to testify on behalf of the dead is nonetheless already present in the older text. *Orientalische Christen*, 133-134.

ment of pictures of bones crying out at and becoming flesh in the hearts of the recipient is a riff on the rhetorical figure of *evidentia*, which denotes here the passage of images into voices that produce audience empathy for the victims.³⁰ While the text describes how the horrible images speak to Wegner, the question is what kind of images will be produced for the audience by Wegner's words as they present these images. Will the audience turn away in disgust, or hear the silent lament, and to what end?

Wegner opens by saying that the lecture tells "a story of death" of unprecedented scale either in the history of the Great War, or perhaps even in the history of humanity.³¹ Wegner evokes the hearing of stories as a communal and even international phenomenon in the figure of the reverberating

30 Classified as an ornamental figure of thought ascribed to the domain of *elocutio* in, for instance, the rhetorical systems of Quintilian and Cicero, *evidentia* denotes the orator's ability to represent a case (*narratio*) in vivid, convincing images for the audience, as if all were eyewitnesses to the events. Such a compelling representation of the events should immediately convince the recipient of the veracity of the reconstruction. The clarity or liveliness (*enargeia*) of the illustration (*evidentia*) depends on the recipient's being emotionally affected, i.e. moved, by the mental images produced before his or her eyes in the reconstruction (*representatio*). For the discussion of the section in Quintilian, *Inst. Oratio*, VIII 3, 61, see Heinrich Lausberg, *Handbuch der literarischen Rhetorik. Eine Grundlegung der Literaturwissenschaft*, 3rd ed. (Stuttgart: Steiner, 1990), 400. Further research on the figure of *evidentia* has of course been conducted in recent years. I follow a similar approach to the one elaborated, for example, by Peter Schneck, The Laws of Fiction: Legal Rhetoric and Literary Evidence, *European Journal of English Studies* 11, 1 (2007), 47-63.

31 I cite an unpublished manuscript of Wegner's lecture from his papers at the DLA, Nachlass Wegner, A: Wegner. This manuscript resembles a palimpsest, for it is a later version that has been written over several times and that does not have identifiable consecutive page numbers. For a published version of the lecture see: *Die Austreibung des armenischen Volkes in die Wüste: Ein Lichtbildvortrag*, ed. Andreas Meier (Göttingen: Wallstein, 2011). Tamcke has published an attempt to reconstruct the lecture from the *Urania* in *Orientalische Christen*, 72-135 (hereafter: Wegner, *Die Austreibung*). Whenever possible, I will provide citations for the quotations which correspond to the page numbers in Tamcke's reconstruction. Here: 72.

echo, saying that this particular story of death's "echo reverberated across the borders of all countries even during the war, failing only to penetrate into the heart of Germany". The goal of the lecture, then, is to educate the audience about the devastating nature of what Wegner refers to as a "crime" by presenting "an unadorned [*schlichte*] representation of the events as such, because they alone speak such a strong language that they cannot be trumped [*überboten*] by any political explication".³² Wegner's intended function is here neither that of plaintiff nor propagandist against Turkish people or culture, but instead that of a mediator of a moral admonition against the "terrible and disastrous demon" of violence. He strives to avoid a portrayal of the matter in terms of friend and foe distinctions between Armenians and Turks, or Christians and Muslims. In compliance with Wegner's desire to avoid partisanship, the narrative itself must not be adorned with either ornament or political explanation. An "unadorned" representation of the events, according to Wegner, will thus reveal the "truth" about the violence committed by a state against its own citizens in the interest of war. An underlying premise of his lecture is thus that "[t]he truth obligates him who knows it to speak".³³ Yet this is a form of speech that Wegner – and one could argue humanitarian narrative in general – has a difficult time negotiating. For the credibility of victimhood requires that narratives of suffering attest to the genuine innocence of a victim without too much interference by mediating instances. Wegner thus has to determine how to narrate this story of death in a way that enables the images to speak for themselves.

Wegner crafts a narrative out of his collected photographic materials and own eyewitness account from his tenure as personal assistant to Field

32 If Tamcke's reconstruction of the lecture at the *Urania* is accurate, then Wegner must have added this opening remark to a later version of the presentation. In any case, Wegner seems committed to the notion that truth can somehow speak for itself and that a politics of truth does not require further "political" explanation, as is apparent in his rather optimistic hope that "the politics of truth and humanity [*die Politik der Wahrheit und Menschlichkeit*]" could serve as a guide in these introductory remarks as well as in his denunciation of the propagation of lies and misinformation during the war. Wegner, *Die Austreibung*, 73.

33 "Die Wahrheit verpflichtet den, der sie kennt, zu reden". Wegner, *Die Austreibung*, 74.

Marshall von der Goltz in the region of the former Ottoman Empire that is now Iraq. Although Wegner photographed and talked to numerous refugees at that time, he does not elect to report his own experience in the form of an autobiographical narrative of his experience, but instead chooses first to introduce some historical background and then to *reconstruct* the expulsion of the Armenians with the aid of around 100 diapositives structuring the account. Because Wegner continued to collect materials from all sorts of sources, only around 24-26 of the pictures have been verified as actually taken by him.³⁴ The first thirteen slides show pictures of local color – geography, ruins, churches, Armenian women, etc. – while the following three show leaders of the Young Turkish revolution to supply political background to the account.

The account of the expulsions begins after such background information with a slide titled “Departure of the Refugees”. The next slides and their accompanying text present stages of the deportation and massacres in graphic, sometimes brutal detail. Wegner’s text surrounds the images with stories, including images and descriptions of groups of refugees, beaten individuals, corpses, and many Armenian women and children. Subsequent slides show packed wagons, families in tents, camps, and scenes from the Syrian Desert, including Kurdish horsemen, and the arrival of a transport in the desert. The remaining slides depict conditions in the desert camps, and, though interspersed with pictures of Armenian priests, they are overwhelmingly filled with additional images of women, children, and corpses.

The effectiveness of Wegner’s narrative of the deportation is indicated by the response of his audience at the *Urania* in Berlin on March 19, 1919, although it was not the response he had sought. The presentation was interrupted by the violent uproar among Turks and Armenians in the audience.³⁵ Wegner was nonetheless able to conclude his lecture following an intermis-

34 Andreas Meier: <http://podcast.uni-wuppertal.de/2008/09/04/politisch-literarische-abenteuer-armin-t-wegner/>.

35 According to a newspaper report, “voices of protest were repeatedly raised by Turks present in the audience, which were then whittled down by the Armenians who were present”. *Berliner Abendzeitung*, 20 March 1919, cited in Tamcke, *Die Kamera als Zeuge*, 178.

sion and the director's removal of the most disturbing slides.³⁶ The slides themselves thus played no small part as an intermediary of an unsuccessful attempt to bring people together to look at images of suffering. Despite his desire to articulate a narrative of human suffering at the hands of a particular logic of the nation-state at war – Wegner refers to a “megalomania of the concept of the nation-state and the bloodlust of armed force” – the violent response of the audience at the *Urania* suggests that his presentation of the events, through its focus on the production of a credible narrative of victimhood, mobilized feelings of partisanship rather than of empathy. This was the case for both Armenian and Turkish partisans in the audience, as well as for those eager to discuss the question of Germany's complicity with the persecution in the German press. The press reports focused predominantly on the conflict generated by the presentation and less on the actual topic of the lecture. Nationalist newspapers denounced Wegner as a charlatan, who either sought to discredit pre-republican Germany by suggesting its culpability or hoped to interfere in an internal affair that, as an article in *Die Verteidigung* from 22 March 1919 asserted, “could be settled between Armenians and Turks themselves”.³⁷ Defending its ambitions to be an institution of civil society with a neutral stance toward partisan politics, the *Urania* consequently distanced itself from Wegner's lecture. The directors complain to him in a letter five days later that, “The Urania cannot permit itself to become a stomping ground for political oppositions and opinions.

36 “After the customary intermission the second part of the lecture was listened to in greater quiet; however, the director of the ‘Urania’ had run by meanwhile and removed the worst pictures of horror from the sequence of slides accompanying the lecture.” *Berliner Abendzeitung*, 20 March 1919, *ibid.*

37 For an overview of press reports by both liberal and nationalist newspapers, see Tamcke, *Armin T. Wegner, 196-197*. Tamcke holds the “expressionist overload, the excess of affect”, of the language of Wegner's lecture responsible for preventing “a more objective reception of what the audience heard”. See Tamcke, Armin T. Wegner's “Die Austreibung”, 69. Tamcke seems to believe that emotions are the source of conflict here and that there exists an appropriate form of representation that could bracket emotional factors in the pursuit of what he calls “political enlightenment” about the massacres.

Your lecture was a lesson for us that we have to steer more carefully here”.³⁸

One explanation for the failure of Wegner’s lecture at the *Urania*, which had sought to provide an immediate forum for a shared experience of looking at the images and hearing this particular story of death, could possibly have been that the contested political situation at the time generated a pervasive environment of self-vindication and mutual recrimination. Wegner tries to carefully navigate the question of guilt. On the one hand, he avoids simple attributions of guilt by naming several international sites of war crimes,³⁹ and to no small extent, of German suffering. “Germany in Belgium, Russia in East Prussia, Rumania and France in the camps of German prisoners of war”: these nations too are all guilty of committing heinous crimes against enemy combatants or local populations during the war. Yet he even goes a step further and distinguishes between the benevolent intentions of a majority of Turks or the Muslim religion and the nationalist ambitions of brutal Turkish political leaders. He makes a similar distinction when it comes to Germans. He asserts that while “Germany bears no small amount of complicity, due to its close alliance with Turkey during the war”, the “mass of the German people that was shamelessly deceived knew nothing of this crime in which it was unwittingly implicated, because, as with everywhere else during the war, the public sphere, the voice of humanity, was suppressed”. A key demarcation between innocent populace and culpable leaders underlies his efforts at reconciliation between Germans and Armenians. The implication is that if the Armenians are depicted here as

38 Direktion of the Urania to Wegner, 24 March 1919, DLA, Nachlass Wegner, A: Wegner.

39 His discussion of war crimes intersects with the discourse of international law around the time. At the Paris Peace Conference, this language of war crimes was used by the victors against Germany. For a discussion of this context with respect to international relations toward the Ottoman Empire, see Daniel Marc Segesser, *Dissolve or punish? The international debate among jurists and publicists on the consequences of the Armenian genocide for the Ottoman Empire, 1915-23*, in: *Late Ottoman Genocides. The dissolution of the Ottoman Empire and Young Turkish population and extermination policies*, ed. Dominik J. Schaller and Jürgen Zimmerer (London and NY: Routledge, 2009), 86-101, here: 96.

innocent victims, so too have the populations of warring European nations suffered at the hands of bellicose political leaders.

Yet a closer analysis of the rhetoric of Wegner's presentation reveals that the text also fails to escape a certain political logic of national myth. The final slide of Wegner's lecture contains a picture of a sunrise over Lake Van. Signifying life in contrast to death and darkness, optimism, awakenings, and new beginnings, the rising sun is a metaphor of the birth of an Armenian nation with Europe's help. It thus also figures the promise of reconciliation between Armenians and Germans as part of the international community of European nations. Europe, Wegner insists, has a duty to participate in the relief work, which according to him should include no less than the allocation of land, the supply of resources, and the founding of an internationally recognized independent Armenian nation-state.

"When, we finally ask, will the conscience of humanity rise up with such power that a crime will ultimately disappear from the earth, a crime, which for the last twenty-five years has tarnished the earth for the eyes of Europe. It is Europe's duty to assist earnestly and lovingly in this relief work so that the fate of Armenia does not take second place to the self-centered goals of large states. All of Europe, and not in the least Germany, adopted in the Berlin Agreement of July 1878 the most sacred guarantee to protect the peace and security of Armenia. Seduced by self-centered politics, it has to this day not honored this vow."⁴⁰

Wegner's story thus does not end in the Syrian Desert, does not merely commemorate the deaths of many innocent Armenians, but signals the promise of a new beginning among the ruins of the Ottoman Empire. Humanitarian relief work is here coupled with the founding of an Armenian nation-state, which is no small demand and a very explicit political agenda that leads the search for a "transitional formula between suffering and relief"⁴¹ back into the political logic of nation-states.

40 DLA, Nachlass Wegner, A: Wegner. The first sentence of the passage is not included in Tamcke's reconstruction of the manuscript. *Orientalische Christen*, 132.

41 The phrase is borrowed from Slaughter's analysis of grammars of humanitarian narrative in Joseph R. Slaughter, *Humanitarian Reading*, in: *Humanitarianism and Suffering*, 88-107, here: 99.

A second metaphor for the politics of the nation-state overlaps with that of the sunrise: the transmission of knowledge and the moral repercussions of the atrocity figured as the crime's echo across national borders. In the introduction of his lecture, Wegner refers to the reverberation of the crime's echo across national borders and its halting at the sound barrier in the heart of Germany. The moral imperative animating Wegner's project of reconciliation between Germans and Armenians is inseparable from recognition of the political responsibility of both Talaat Pascha and his accomplices and of the world powers that failed to intervene or are in a position now to redress this injustice. The previous distinction between the moral authority of innocent populations and the violent abuse of political authority by their leaders transforms into a newly claimed political authority for the victims pit against the immorality of political leaders. Wegner makes such a connection in the text accompanying a slide showing Talaat and Enver in their salons. The text briefly summarizes their plans for a pan-Turkism, which Wegner claims they strove to accomplish through the "regretless eradication of all that is not Turkish [*rücksichtslose Ausrottung (sic.) alles dessen, was nicht türkisch ist*]"⁴² Two slides later, the lecture presents a relief map of Turkey. In the corresponding text, Wegner explains that the consolidation of a Turkish nation-state went hand in hand with the transformation of entire regions, including not only the Russian front but also the territories historically populated by Armenians, as well as the coastal areas along the Mediterranean, into the "concept of the border [*der Begriff der Grenze*]"⁴³. This "concept of the border" territorializes the notion of an ethnic nation-state by demarcating those areas, which might be susceptible to foreign invasion and providing a rationale for measures enacted to defend these borders in a time of war.⁴³ Wegner's sunrise metaphor reiterates, however, the logic of the border – though it temporalizes it by locating it on the horizon – and thereby legitimates semantics of the nation-state based on a story of common identity and geographical space ascribed to Armenia. What is more, his is a foundational myth tied to a vision of international reconcilia-

42 Wegner, *Die Austreibung*, 82.

43 *Ibid.*, 87. A process analyzed by Jay Winter, *Under Cover of War: The Armenian Genocide in the Context of Total War*, in: *The Spector of Genocide? Mass Murder in Historical Perspective*, ed. Robert Gellately and Ben Kiernan (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 189-214.

tion and cooperation that is legitimated by an appeal to a normative sense of “humanity”.

Wegner’s audience would thus have cause to be wary of the reconciliation staged by his slide presentation. Even if his narrative was able to escape the solipsistic mobilization of the figure of *evidentia* that is characteristic of the Letter to Wilson, in order to encourage a situation of reception in which the vividness of his narrative slide show motivated his audience to look together at the images of mass brutality, such an act of communal hearing and viewing remained nevertheless subordinate to those very stubborn investments in the integrity of the nation-state that so often hinder the successful construction of shared histories. Although Wegner’s slide show stages a scene of looking and hearing in the name of “humanity”, the legitimation of an independent nation-state put forth in the narrative was too contentious for audience members caught up in the environment of political groups seeking to advance their interests at home and abroad during the negotiation of peace treaties and the consolidation of new political regimes in Turkey and Germany.

THE TRIAL OF TALAAT PASCHA: A UNILATERAL GESTURE OF RECONCILIATION

Two years later, on June 2 and 3, 1921, a trial was conducted before a sworn jury of the Third District Court of Berlin to decide the question of Salomon Teilirian’s guilt for murdering Talaat Pascha, the former Minister of the Interior in Turkey between 1909 and 1917 and one of the principle instigators of the Armenian genocide. Talaat Pascha had been living incognito in Berlin since November 1918, after having fled there from Istanbul, along with other Young Turkish leaders, onboard a German torpedo boat with the help of the German General Hans von Seeckt.⁴⁴ Under pressure from the victorious allied powers, and in particular from Great Britain, the Ottoman regime conducted trials between 1919 and 1921 against politicians and officials responsible for the deportations of Armenians into the Syrian Desert. Talaat was sentenced in absentia to death on 5 July 1919.⁴⁵ He was

44 Schaeffgen, *Schwieriges Erinnern*, 42.

45 *Ibid.*, 31; Segesser, Dissolve or punish, 97.

thus either living secretly in Berlin as a refugee, or, depending upon one's perspective, as a fugitive. On March 15, 1921, the Armenian student and member of the Nemesis Group, whose avowed goal it was to assassinate such fugitive officials responsible for the Armenian genocide, shot Talaat Pascha in Berlin-Charlottenburg.⁴⁶ It was up to the jury to decide whether this was a case of premeditated murder.⁴⁷ After an hour of deliberation, the jury surprisingly acquitted Salomon Teilirian of the charge.

Remarkable for the topic of reconciliation and civil society is how this trial marks an instance of reconciliation between Germans and Armenians, and can be interpreted as contributing to the formation of an official cultural memory of the Armenian genocide. In this case, an authority sanctioned by the state, such as the district court of Berlin, became a conduit for the dissemination of witness testimonies, as well as for a gesture of reconciliation, by issuing a verdict of not guilty in favor of a victim of state-sponsored massacre and thereby distancing itself from the previous foreign policy of supporting Germany's war-time ally responsible for the forced deportations and massacres.

While the verdict was in strict legal terms to be decided by a twelve-member jury of laymen on the basis of expert testimony about the mental state of the defendant, whose entire family had been massacred during the deportation in June 1915, the shocking testimonies by eyewitnesses and German officials stationed in Ottoman Turkey during the war transformed the trial into a forum for the denunciation of the inhuman practices of a political regime toward the Armenians, in which victim transformed into perpetrator and vice versa. Armin T. Wegner had been commissioned as an expert witness for the trial by Counselor Johannes Werthauer due to his intimate knowledge of the massacres.⁴⁸ Though he never testified in court, he was involved in the proceedings and drafted an assessment of the trial, entitled "A Just Verdict" (*Ein gerechtes Urteil*), which was printed later in

46 Schaeffgen, *Schwieriges Erinnern*, 42.

47 According to the *Eröffnungsbeschuß. Der Prozeß Talaat Pascha. Stenographischer Prozeßbericht mit einem Vorwort von Armin T. Wegner und einem Anhang* (Berlin: Deutsche Verlagsgesellschaft für Politik und Geschichte, 1921), 13. The publication of the court transcript was financed by the *Deutsch-Armenische Gesellschaft*. Tamcke, *Armin T. Wegner*, 214-215.

48 Werthauer to Wegner, 30 March 1921, DLA, Nachlass Wegner, A: Wegner.

1921 as the Foreword to the publication of the stenographic report of the trial. Wegner declares that the trial reveals “once again to the eyes of the world, and for the first time also to those of the German public [...] the systematic massacre of an entire people by the Young Turkish regime”.⁴⁹ Wegner’s synecdoche of the “eyes of the world” suggests that the path towards reconciliation was made possible by the trial’s setting, which enabled both involved parties and an imagined international community to look together at the vivid and compelling images of the atrocity. This time the act of seeing together occurred within at least two frameworks that differ significantly from the previous ones in which Wegner was active.

The first setting was delineated by the institutional parameters of a local court of law. The district court in Berlin became, importantly and in contrast to Wegner’s public lecture at the *Urania*, an opportunity for Armenian victims living in Berlin to bear witness to their own experiences of suffering. The testimony of witness for the defense Christine Tersibaschian, in particular, delivered a first-hand account of the horrors of the deportation from her hometown of Erzerum in July 1915. With the assistance of a translator, Tersibaschian recalled in explicit detail the deportation of the town’s population in groups of four over the course of eight days.⁵⁰ Her twenty-one member family was part of the second group of five-hundred families to be deported; her testimony was especially moving for those present in the courtroom, because she testifies, “I have seen with my own eyes the loss of all but three of my family members”, as well as the brutal deaths of many others who were drowned in a river or beaten to death at the hands of Turkish police and soldiers.⁵¹ According to the court transcript, two statements from her testimony in particular caused “commotion” in the courtroom: The first was when she “swore” to have seen how the police and soldiers cut open the rib cages of pregnant women and threw away the fetuses. The second was when she explicitly attributed responsibility for the massacres to the Turkish leader Enver Pascha and described how Turkish soldiers forced the Armenian refugees to call out “Long live the Pascha!” for having spared their lives.⁵²

49 *Prozeß Talaat Pascha*, vii.

50 *Ibid.*, 53-55.

51 *Ibid.*, 54.

52 *Ibid.*, 55.

Additional eyewitness testimony combined with the accounts of expert witnesses, including extensive testimony by Lepsius, to make a damning case against Talaat Pascha and generate empathy for the defendant.⁵³ At the same time, the district court offered the German foreign ministry the opportunity to exonerate itself. For another expert witness called to testify at the trial was Limon von Sanders, the commander of the German military mission in the Ottoman Empire during the war, who explained for the record that neither the German government nor military officials had either participated in the deportations or been aware of the extent of the massacres.⁵⁴ Moreover, his account shifts the blame away from Talaat by emphasizing rather the role of unruly functionaries. For although he concedes that the Turkish regime ordered the mass deportations, he imputes the extent of their brutality to the undisciplined “bad elements” of the makeshift police placed in charge of conducting the deportations.⁵⁵ The presence of Limon von Sanders at the trial insured that reconciliation between Germans and Armenians was thus achieved at the expense of both vilified Turkish regime and functionaries. The trial thus conveniently allowed the German foreign ministry to participate in a gesture of reconciliation toward Armenian survivors while denying any responsibility as a former military ally of the Turkish regime and creating a measured degree of distance from those immediately responsible.⁵⁶ This in turn meant that the German public was also provided with an experience of hearing about the atrocities without being overly burdened by questions of complicity.

In addition to creating a setting invested with legal authority for the dissemination of survivor, eyewitness, and expert testimony about the massacre, the trial resulted predominantly in the scripting of an official public

53 Schaeffgen, *Schwieriges Erinnern*, 42-49.

54 Sanders claims under oath: “everything was kept secret from us, so that we could not gain insight into the internal political affairs.” *Prozeß Talaat Pascha*, 63.

55 *Ibid.*, 61-62.

56 Nevertheless, the trial and question of German complicity or guilt for war crimes persisted as highly contentious issues within Germany, as the widely varying responses in the press show. Schaller, *Die Rezeption des Völkermordes an den Armeniern*, 531-538. Further remarks on the trial’s reception are provided by Tamcke, *Armin T. Wegner*, 216-218.

record of the massacres within Germany, with no direct impact on Armenian political affairs. To be sure, Armenian survivors expressed their enthusiasm for the official recognition of the atrocities signified by the verdict, and their appreciation to Lepsius in particular for his efforts.⁵⁷ Yet the modest success of the trial as a unilateral gesture of reconciliation by Germans towards Armenians can be attributed to a large extent to its setting aside the question of material or political retribution through support of Armenian national independence. The Treaty of Sèvres from 10 August 1920 had recognized an Armenian Republic – the so-called “Wilsonian Armenia” – whose existence was under constant threat until finally being annexed by the Soviet Union in 1922, yet this political context was never thematized in deliberations at the trial. The trial might have served as a more congenial site for a gesture of reconciliation because its institutional conventions detached testimony from the explicit goal of Armenian independence that had been so important and contentious for Wegner’s project of reconciliation.

Wegner’s commentary to the trial attempts to re-frame the verdict within the international story of humanity that he had been advocating and narrating during the previous years. He insists on the political nature of the trial, asserting that it became a “tribunal of humanity” and that the verdict contains “world-historical significance”.⁵⁸ Moreover, while he still advocates “empathy [...] on the side of the Armenian nation”,⁵⁹ he casts the trial as a decision over “two other powers”, those of “violence and law, crime and humanity”. In other words, he casts the verdict as a “rejection of that politics which claims the right to treat entire peoples like animals for slaughter, or even worse, like unfeeling stones”.⁶⁰ Wegner’s text concedes here many of the concrete political goals that he had considered necessary

57 Schaeffgen refers to a large file in the *Johannes-Lepsius-Archiv* in Halle containing positive responses to the verdict by prominent members of the Armenian diaspora community, 48, and to the study: Hermann Goltz, *Dr. Johannes Lepsius (1858-1926). Zu Leben und Werk des Potsdamer Anwalts der Armenier*. This essay is available alongside others on Lepsius, the genocide, Wegner, and German-Armenian relations at the website of the *Lepsiushaus* Potsdam: <http://lepsiushaus.wordpress.com/aktivitaeten/publikationen/>

58 Wegner, Vorwort, in: *Prozess Talaat Pascha*, vii.

59 Ibid., xi.

60 Ibid., x.

for the process of reconciliation between Germans and Armenians. His role has changed along with the different context of reconciliation from that of the humanitarian activist trying to inform the German public about the atrocity, and thereby garner political and material support for the Armenian survivors, to that of the passionate interpreter of a moment of symbolic reconciliation offered by a German court of law toward Armenian survivors.⁶¹

Nevertheless, Wegner continued his activism, trying in vain, for instance, to found a humanitarian relief operation in Armenia in cooperation with Fritjof Nansen, who was in charge of refugee aid under the auspices of the League of Nations.⁶² In a gesture of appreciation for his work as an intermediary of reconciliation, an Armenian congregation granted him a generous stipend of 10,000 Reichsmark in 1922 to finance his attempt to write a great historical novel about the deportations called *The Expulsion*.⁶³

61 Robert M.W. Kempner, the assistant U.S. Chief Counsel during the Nürnberg trials, interprets the trial as “recognition for the first time in legal history of the tenet” that foreign states can try to combat genocide without being regarded as interfering in the internal affairs of a sovereign state, and Wegner’s role as consisting in “hammering the truth about this holocaust into the conscience of humanity”. Robert M.W. Kempner, *Vor sechzig Jahren vor einem deutschen Schwurgericht. Der Völkermord an den Armeniern, Recht und Politik* 3 (1980), 167-69, here: 167.

62 Nansen to Wegner, 23 February 1923, DLA, Nachlass Wegner, A: Wegner. Continued attacks on the Armenians by nationalist Turks led Wegner to write another epistle, this time to the “regimes of the victorious nations”, condemning the international failure to protect the newly-formed Armenian republic and the many displaced Armenians. Armin T. Wegner, *Die Schrei vom Ararat. An die Regierung der sieghaften Völker. Aufruf zum Schutze Armeniens, Die neue Generation* 18 (1922), 348-355, and again as: *Die Schrei vom Ararat, Die Weltbühne* 19 (1923), 122-126.

63 Meier, podcast. Despite fifty years of work, the novel was never completed. See also: Rooney, *Leben und Werk Armin T. Wegners*, 349. Exiled Armenians living in Germany expressed their appreciation for Wegner’s work around 1920 and especially after the trial, as evidenced by publication of his writings in Armenian newspapers, the fact that many exiled Armenians bought his books, and letters of thanks in his archived papers, such as the one from the *Verein der Armenischen Kolonie* in Berlin from 2 July 1921. Tamcke, *Armin T. Wegner*, 205.

Moreover, in 1968, he was invited to Armenia by the Catholics of All Armenians and awarded the Order of Saint Gregory the Illuminator in recognition of his work on behalf of Armenians. Wegner's efforts as an intermediary of reconciliation between Germans and Armenians, which he always regarded as a project to be undertaken not only as a German but also as an international matter, explored with varying degrees of success strategies for getting people to look together at or listen to the pain of others. His activities remind us that while such acts of looking and listening are embedded within contentious frames of reference by a host of intermediaries within civil society, these mediating instances of acts of reconciliation are themselves defined by those very political circumstances and dynamics that they set out to discern, contain, and change.