

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Dear Editor.

I was appalled to read Speros Vryonis' review of my book *Muslims and Minorities* in the Fall, 1985 issue of *Nationalities Papers*.

Professor Vryonis obviously has approached *Muslims and Minorities* intent on finding inaccuracies and faulty analyses. To one who has not read the book, it might appear that his search for errors has been successful. He has indeed brought forth a number of "errors" and has criticized them fully. However, the errors have come not from the book, but from Vryonis' imagination. He has cited statements I never made, noted omissions I never omitted, and questioned the validity of analyses that are not mine. Allowing himself such latitude has made his an easy job of criticism.

Because Vryonis' criticisms rest on my supposed errors, it is best to consider his points one by one:

1. "He ultimately fails to discuss the actual administrative mechanics of Ottoman population bureaus . . ." This should not surprise Professor Vryonis. Had his experience of demographic studies been greater he would have realized that there is a difference between a history of population and a history of the census bureau. It would have been especially senseless for me to have described in detail an administrative structure that had been explained elsewhere in two competent articles by Professors Shaw and Karpat, which I cited.

2. In an incredible criticism to come from a non-demographer, Vryonis doubts if my choice of the Coale and Demeny "East" Stable Population Model is applicable to Anatolian population and states that I have not demonstrated the relevance of that model. His comments are particularly odd because I demonstrate in the book (p. 229) that the East model is the accepted demographic standard for Anatolia. I cite the work of the demographers who have established that fact. Perhaps Vryonis overlooked the citations. His comments indicate that he has not the slightest idea what a stable population model is — this may lie at the heart of his objection.

3. He alleges that "In fact, Armenian massacres are never referred to as a demographic factor" and that I avoid mention of the 1895-96 Armenian troubles, etc. In fact, I not only mention Armenian deaths in those troubles, but take the most overblown and biased accounts of the 1895-96 Armenian deaths and demonstrate that my analyses of Armenian population figures would be correct even if those figures were accurate (pp. 53 and 84).

4. Vryonis questions that my assertion that Anatolian Greek population *may* have increased slightly more rapidly than Anatolian Muslim population. He contends that I have disproved the assertion myself in a table which shows that Greek population of Hudavendigar Province was

.00004 (1/2500) less of the total population in 1889 than in 1907. Even someone with no knowledge of statistical method should be able to realize that a .0004 decrease in the percentage of Greeks in one province does not preclude the Greek population increasing more quickly than the Muslim population in Anatolia as a whole. The Anatolian Greeks lived in provinces in which all populations — Greek, Muslim, and other — experienced high rates of growth, whereas Muslims were also spread out over provinces with lower rates of growth. It would have been odd indeed if the Greek population as a whole did not increase faster than the Muslim population as a whole, if only because Greeks lived almost exclusively in high growth areas. Perhaps I should have explained this in detail, but it seemed so obvious.

5. Vryonis accurately describes one part of my assertion that consistency in Ottoman population figures shows that the Ottomans were not deliberately undercounting minority populations. He disagrees: “that consistency proves that the Ottomans were not deliberately undercounting minorities is oxymoronic. If anything, consistency of undercounting would tend to support the opposite view.” Of course, deleting entire pages of my argument has made it considerably easier for Vryonis to be critical. He has, whether deliberately or not, I cannot say, omitted the fact that the consistency I mention includes a consistency between published Ottoman, statistics on minority populations and secret government documents on the same populations, not a simple consistency in what the Ottomans showed to the world at large. (See especially pp. 59-63.) Vryonis might choose to believe that the Ottomans intended to fool others, but does he really believe that they intended to fool themselves?

To bolster his case that the Ottomans were inaccurate, Vryonis writes, “And on page 56 he [McCarthy] records a remark from a census-taker which indicates that some of them were certainly infected by the problems of minority counts and of finding them to be greater than might be comfortable for the interest of the state.” It sounds as if an Ottoman census-taker had admitted errors, perhaps falsification in statistics on minorities. This might be damaging, were it true, but once again it is fabrication. What I in fact wrote was “it should be noted that whenever the Ottomans themselves strayed from their collected population date they were capable of making absurd statements on population,” after which I gave two examples of what happened when anyone, even Ottoman bureaucrats, guessed at population numbers rather than relied on the recorded data. Neither of the examples were of “a remark from a census-taker,” although Vryonis obviously wishes it were so. The reader can judge for himself if altering what is written in the book makes for a better review.

6. Vryonis complains that I have not used population documents written in Greek and Armenian, but he conveniently neglects to include a description of the alleged documents or their location. Until he, or someone, identifies such documents I will have a difficult time evaluating them. Somehow I do not find his assertion that such documents must exist sufficient reason to believe that they do exist. Demographers usually rely on enumerations of the population, as opposed to guesses or spurious estimations. To my knowledge, the only real enumerations of the Ottoman population were taken by the Ottomans. If other enumerations are found, I will naturally consider them in future works.

7. Vryonis rather confusedly condemns me for my analysis of Muslim dead in the World War I period: "In figure 7.3, listing the percentages of dead according to provinces, he lists the provinces of Bitlis and Van as having the highest Muslim mortality, i.e. 35 + %. What he does not say here, but indicates in his statistics elsewhere is that these were two provinces which he estimates elsewhere to have been over 75% Kurdish and less than 25% Turkish in terms of the Muslim population." Had I written such an analysis I would still find little wrong with it; the Ottomans only kept population data by religion, as I often stated in the book, so naturally I could only give mortality by religion, not language group. However, Vryonis once again has got it all wrong. He has compared the Muslim mortality in the Ottoman provinces of Van and Bitlis from 1914-1922 to a table (p. 107) of percentage Kurdish-speaking in Turkish Republican provinces as given in the Turkish Census of 1927 (not my "estimate"). If one assumes that the Muslims from Van and Bitlis who were killed in the wars were primarily Turks, then of course the percentage of Kurds in the provinces after the war (in 1927) would be great. I would not make such an assertion, since the Ottoman data does not allow differentiation between Kurds and Turks. Professor Vryonis should correspondingly not have misused my data to make false comparisons. He should perhaps also have noted that the Ottoman and Republican provinces he compared had very different borders; thus he cannot compare Bitlis in the one table with Bitlis in the other, as he has done. He is wrong geographically, as well as chronologically.

I will not bother to comment on the numerous small errors in Vryonis' review, such as his assertion that I have written an article on Greek population in the *International Journal of Middle Eastern Studies* which, to my present knowledge at least, I have not written. The foregoing examples of his accuracy should be sufficient. Vryonis does make one valid criticism — the word "six" (for the regions of Anatolia) was entered instead of "five" on one page, in a descriptive, not a statistical, passage. My proof-reading skills are obviously not up to his standard, but I doubt if this error seriously damages my reputation as a statistician.

Had Professor Vryonis written only a review of my book I would have been able to end my reply here. Unfortunately, in an unprecedented abuse of the reviewer's position, he has decided to attack my character, as well. He describes me as a "politicizing" academic, a term he never bothers to define, but something of which he obviously disapproves. He cites as an example of politicization my attendance at a conference sponsored by the University of Ankara. I did attend the conference, along with professors from other American universities, members of the Rand Corporation, and others. I am at a loss to find the evil in this. Following his principles, would Professor Vryonis find attendance at conferences sponsored by Greek universities equally suspect? Vryonis also adds that I have appeared on American television (to him a very bad sign), "denying that there ever was an Armenian massacre-genocide." This is as misleading as the other statements in his review. For the record, I have never denied that Armenians were massacred, although I believe the term genocide is inaccurate. I have stated that Turks were massacred by Armenians, as well as Armenians by Turks, and that in the interests of historical accuracy both should be considered. If this is politicization, then such politicization is exactly what an historian's job is about. We must profess what we believe to be historically true, no matter the prejudices and complaints of Professor Vryonis and others like him.

I have also, as Professor Vryonis points out, met with the U.S. Holocaust Memorial Commission and with the New York State Board of Regents Commission on Holocaust Curricula. In fact, the New York Board of Regents appointed me a member of their Holocaust Advisory Committee of Scholars, a committee of which I was proud to be a member. Does Professor Vryonis really believe that these are not proper activities for a scholar, or does he simply disagree with my position? I suspect the latter to be the case. His supposition of moral evil in those who disagree with him explains the tenor of Professor Vryonis' review. Obviously he has decided that disagreement with what, to him, is the truth must be prosecuted as immoral. It is surprising that falsification of the work of others for a reviewer's own political ends does not also rank as a moral crime.

Professor Vryonis' review of *Muslims and Minorities* must have been easy to compose, for he set himself the felicitous task of first creating a book, then criticizing it. I surely would never take seriously the book he describes. Thank God I never wrote it.

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