



REVIEW OF
ARMENIAN STUDIES

A Quarterly Journal of History, Politics and International Relations

ARTICLES

Facts and Comments

Ömer Engin LÜTEM

Decree Of April 24, 1915 and Armenian Committee Members
Arrested in İstanbul

Assoc. Prof. Dr. Yusuf SARINAY

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(July 1917 - November 1917)

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INTERVIEW

Interview with Prof. Dr. Nurşen Mazıcı on Historical Evolution of
Armenian Question and Its Contemporary Ramifications

Yıldız DEVECİ BOZKUŞ

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In this issue, different aspects of Armenian question has once more examined with reference to historical occurrences and their contemporary ramifications. Accordingly, in the first article, entitled 'Facts and Comments', developments on Armenian question and the Turkey-Armenia relations in the second half of 2007 are focused, and issues regarding bilateral relations between Turkey and Armenia, the discussions regarding the draft resolution recognizing Armenian genocide allegations adopted by the Foreign Affairs Committee of US House of Representatives, the declaration of the prominent American civil society organization, Anti-Defamation League, regarding the Armenian question and other recent relevant developments are covered.

In his article entitled "Decree of April 24, 1915 and Armenian Committee Members Arrested in Istanbul" Assoc. Prof. Dr. Yusuf Sarıay examines aims to reveal what had exactly happened in April 24, 1915, which has been accepted as the "Armenia genocide remembrance day" by those who supported Armenian genocide allegations. He concludes that, according to archival documents, at that day, what had happened was not a genocide or a massacre but the closure of Armenian revolutionary committees and arrest of 235 prominent Armenian committee members for their activities against the state. He shows how these arrests were made and what happened to those committee members afterwards.

Assist. Prof. Dr. Bülent Bakar examines the developments regarding the abandoned properties of the relocated Armenians, which was one of the major issues of Armenian relocation in his article "An Evaluation of Abandoned Properties after the Relocation". Bakar proves that, in accordance with archival evidence, despite grave difficulties for the retrocession of abandoned goods due to settlement of Turkish war refugees poured from Balkans and Caucasus to the Armenian houses, Ottoman administration more or less succeeded in resolving relevant disputes regarding that matter.

In his article entitled "Ottoman Armenians in the Period of Koca Ragib Pasha", Dr. Mesut Aydınır analyzes the life of Ottoman Armenians in Istanbul in the 18th century under the Grand-Vizierate of Koca Ragib Pasha, in whose tenure Armenians turned out to be one of the most favorable communities of the Ottoman capital, since they began to assume significant economic as well as political posts in the Ottoman administration. Hence, the article aims to fulfill a significant gap in the literature regarding the "golden age" of the Ottoman Armenians.

Dr. Can Erdem examines the policy of the Liberty and Entente Party (LEP) regarding the Armenian relocation in his article entitled “Liberty and Entente Party’s Approach to Armenian Question”. Through referring to newspapers and other first-hand sources of the era, Erdem tries to demonstrate how LEP attacked previous administrations, and to this end, how they even collaborated with the Allied Powers which had occupied the Ottoman capital

In his third article on the Eastern Legion, Mustafa Serdar Palabıyık analyzes the transportation of Armenian and Syrian volunteers to first France and then to the Legion’s camp in Cyprus as well as some reports prepared by French officers on the Legion emphasizing the cleavages between Armenian and Syrian subjects of the Legion. The article covers the period between July and November 1917.

In this issue, there is also an interview with Prof. Dr. Nurşen Mazıcı on recent developments regarding Armenian question. Prof. Mazıcı not only discusses historical evolution of the Armenian question, but also the efforts in Europe and the US for the recognition of genocide allegations.

There are also two reviews of the books edited by Ömer Engin Lütem entitled *Ermeni Sorunu: Temel Bilgi ve Belgeler* (Armenian Question: Basic Knowledge and Documentation), and written by Guenter Levy entitled *A Disputed Genocide: Armenian Massacres in Ottoman Turkey*. A list of recent publications as well as some important documents referred in the first article are put at the end of the issue.

With best wishes...

The Editor

FACTS AND COMMENTS

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Abstract:

This article analyzes, in the first place, bilateral relations between Turkey and Armenia in the second half of 2007. This was followed by the review of the development regarding the adoption by the US House of Representatives Foreign Affairs Committee of the Resolution No. 106 on the alleged Armenian genocide in what amounted to the most crucial development concerning the Armenian Question in the second part of the year 2007. However, thanks to the efforts made by the US Administration, the plan to put the resolution to a vote on the House floor was postponed. The third part of this article is on the American Jewish circles and Israel's stance vis-à-vis the Armenian genocide allegations. Finally, the article ends with the evaluation other significant developments regarding Armenian genocide allegations.

Key Words: *Armenian genocide allegations, Turkey, Armenia, US Administration, House of Representatives, Jewish organizations in the US, Israeli Government*

I. BILATERAL RELATIONS BETWEEN TURKEY AND ARMENIA

1. Meetings of the Ministers of Foreign Affairs

On October 3, 2007, the new Turkish Minister of Foreign Affairs Ali Babacan and his Armenian counterpart Vartan Oskanian met in New York, where they had arrived in order to participate the sessions of the United Nations General Assembly.

According to the Turkish press, the request to hold a meeting came from the Armenian side. These meetings, in which mainstream bilateral issues were addressed without going into details, saw Oskanian, as it might be anticipated, insisting on the opening of the Turkish-Armenian border. Babacan in turn replied that Turkey traded with Armenia via third countries, flights were allowed between two state

and that Armenian citizens worked in Turkey¹. Thus he tried to make the point that even though the border was closed, this prevented neither trade nor bilateral relations from happening.

Moreover, while referring to the resolution introduced in the American House of Representatives asking for the recognition of the genocide allegations, Babacan argued that history could not be made through parliamentary resolutions and reminded his counterpart of the Turkish proposal to Armenia on the establishment of a commission of historians².

Appearing to generally confirm these details³, the Armenian press also indicated that this meeting was the first meeting between the Foreign Ministers of Armenia and Turkey after the elections in that country, and that Oskanian had some expectations in this respect. However, there were no essential changes in Turkey's foreign policy at this point. It also added that while Turkey was still interested in processes, while Armenia was interested in results, and there were still no similarities here⁴. What was meant by the word "process" was Turkish expectation from both sides to engage in a process of negotiation. Armenia, on the other hand, wished to achieve certain outcomes soon, which in other words amounted to the opening of the bilateral border while Armenia did not undertake any change of attitude. As far as the Armenian hopes for a change in the Turkish attitude after the elections in that country are concerned, they were not based on reality since the government remained the same with the general outlines of its policies. Indeed, in a speech delivered in the Grand Turkish National Assembly during the sessions held on the budget of the Foreign Ministry, Babacan stated the following: "If Armenia wishes to eliminate its current hardships and be incorporated into the mechanisms of regional cooperation, it needs to give up its hostile approach towards Turkey on the matter of events of 1915 and that it should go ahead with constructive steps to solve the deadlock on the Nagorno-Karabagh problem without any delay⁵.

Although the positions of two sides did not enjoy any rapprochement, Oskanian stated that Armenia was willing to continue these meetings on the level of foreign ministers or deputy ministers⁶, while Babacan expressed the Turkish side was always open to dialogue⁷.

- 1 Cumhuriyet, October 3, 2007
- 2 Radikal and Türkiye, October 4, 2007
- 3 PanArmenian.Net and Armenews, October 4, 2007
- 4 Armradio, October 5, 2007
- 5 Cumhuriyet, October 3, 2007
- 6 Arminfo, October 5, 2005
- 7 Cumhuriyet, October 3, 2007

Babacan also pointed out that Turkey would insist to keep its proposal alive, which was welcomed by many countries, for establishing a commission consisting of historians from both countries and that if necessary, this proposal would be enriched by introducing new elements to it and by trying to make third countries support it⁸.

2. Statements by President Gül

Within the time span under inquiry, President Abdullah Gül too made certain statements on the Turkish policy towards Armenia.

President Gül addressed this subject in a detailed way while he delivered a speech at the Azerbaijani National Assembly on 7 November 2007. He stressed the points that Turkey was one of the first countries to recognize the State of Armenia, that it invited Armenia to join the Organization of the Black Sea Economic Cooperation even though this country did not share a border to the Black Sea, that Armenia did not abandon its hostile attitude towards Turkey, and that it invaded some parts of Azerbaijan's territory. It was because of all these problems that Turkey could not establish diplomatic relations with Armenia.

Furthermore, Gül underlined that the maintenance of the Turkish position concerning leaving historical judgment up to historians and that the offer to establish a Joint Commission of History was still valid. What is more, he made it clear that as long as Armenia retained its strategy to interpret the incidents of 1915 through parliamentarian decisions, there should not be any expectations for the normalization of bilateral relations.

Referring to multilateral cooperation schemes in energy, communication and transportation that Turkey has been carrying out with Azerbaijan and Georgia, Gül expressed his hopes for the Armenian society to recognize the gains that could be earned with a spirit of peace and cooperation. He also stated that he believed Armenian officials needed to discern that these projects were open to other countries which respected peace, cooperation, stability and good neighbourly relations⁹.

To sum up, the President highlighted following points:

8 Reply to the question placed by Süleyman Yağız, MP of DSP, Orta Doğu, December 5, 2007

9 Zaman, November 7, 2007

- Diplomatic relations could not be established because Armenia pursued hostile policies towards Turkey (not recognizing Turkish territorial integrity and promoting the so-called genocide allegations) and it insisted on invading Azerbaijani territories,
- Turkey kept its proposal to form a Joint Commission of Historians on the agenda
- Bilateral relations could not be normalized as long as Armenia sought to promote genocide allegations in the parliaments of third countries
- In order for Armenia to participate in the regional multilateral projects, it needed to respect peace, cooperation, stability and good neighbourly relations.

In other words, the President strongly re-emphasized the well-known main elements of the Turkish position.

These presidential statements did not receive any reaction by Armenian authorities. Within a few days, a Turkish newspaper¹⁰ claimed that the following statements made in his speech delivered at the Congress of the Republican Party where he came forward as a candidate for the Presidency, the Armenian Prime Minister Sarkisyan replied to Gül's ideas: "We will not let Azerbaijan and Turkey to impose their demands upon us. The basis of Armenian relations with Turkey can not be altered. We are ready to normalize bilateral relations without any preconditions". However still, this is the general outline of the Armenian position and that it does not constitute a reply to Gül's reasoning why bilateral relations could not be normalized.

On the other hand, in his speech in the Azerbaijani National Assembly, the Turkish President addressed the Nagorno-Karabagh problem and emphasized the Turkish position on continuing to provide the necessary support and contribution to the peaceful resolution of this problem while preserving the territorial integrity of Azerbaijan.

3. Statements by Prime Minister Erdogan

Especially during his visits to third countries, Prime Minister Erdogan touched upon the problems Turkey had with Armenia by trying to project the Turkish proposal to establish a joint commission of historians. According to the information gathered up from various resources¹¹, the Prime Minister sent a letter to

10 Zaman, November 12, 2007

11 On this matter, please see the speech of Prime Minister Erdogan on "The Charlie Rose Show" on September

the Armenian President Kocharian on 13 April 2005, where he suggested that the events of 1915 must be evaluated by a joint commission of historians which would consist of historians from the two countries and experts of other nationalities if their participation was necessary. This commission would investigate all the relevant archives and go to public with its findings. In the end, if the genocide was proved, then Turkey would be ready to face its past, while the current documents did not point to genocide. The Prime Minister added that Turkish values did not allow for genocide, Turkish history was not one of genocide, Islam never permitted such an action and that President Kocharian never replied to the Turkish proposal.

Despite this last remark of Erdogan, an official from the Armenian Embassy in Washington argued that President Kocharian had replied to the letter of the Turkish Prime Minister. Indeed Kocharian sent a letter to Erdogan on 25 April 2005, yet he did not address the Turkish proposal to form a joint commission of historians. However, the following statements of the letter orient us to conclude that Erdogan's suggestion was indirectly refused: "Governments are responsible for the development of bilateral relations and we do not have the right to delegate historians"¹². The refusal, in turn, was not made in a clear-cut manner since not only would it antagonize Turkey, but also it would not be welcomed by third countries.

On the other hand, Prime Minister Erdogan also addressed the issue of normalization of bilateral relations. In an interview he gave to an Agency, he was reported to express that as long as Armenia sought to influence bilateral issues through the parliaments of third countries, it would not be normal to nourish expectations for the normalization of relations between the two countries¹³.

In his speech delivered in the 11th Convention on Friendship, Brotherhood and Cooperation between Turkish States and Societies in Baku, The Prime Minister criticized Europe for remaining indifferent to the invasion of Karabagh and called

27, 2007 in the USA, (Armenews, October 4, 2007), and his speech and replies to questions on November 5, 2007 in "National Press Club" (Federal News Service, November 5, 2007), his interview published in the Italian newspaper on the same day (Armenews, November 8, 2007), his interview published in the English newspaper The Times on October 21, 2007, the interview he gave to Azerbaijani Press on 13 November 2007 (Arminfo, 14 November 2007 and Türkiye 15 November 2007)

12 Turkish versions of the letters of Prime Minister Erdogan and President Koçaryan, *Ermeni Araştırmaları*, Vol.16-17, 2005, pp. 27-28, 33; English versions in *Review of Armenian Studies*, vol. 7-8, 2005, pp. 133-134.

13 Reference to the Azerbaijani Press Agency, Türkiye, November 15, 2007

upon Armenia to end this unjust occupation that violates universal values and basic human rights. He also added that on this matter, Turkey has been standing next to its brother Azerbaijan and it will remain so in the future.¹⁴

4. Statements by Armenian Authorities

Within the time span under inquiry, the Armenian authorities too expressed their views on relations with Turkey.

President Kocharian stated “Our relations with Turkey are not simple and they are even more complicated by the facts of our common history. He reiterated the well-known Armenian position that they were ready to start diplomatic relations with Turkey without any preconditions and that the border should be opened”. In a more realist tone than his Foreign Minister, he advocated that neither Russia nor the U.S. would help to open the Armenian-Turkish border and that there was no light at the end of the tunnel yet as long as the commencement of relations with Turkey was concerned¹⁵.

While reacting to former President Ter Petrosyan’s critics about him during the presidential campaign on policies pursued towards Turkey and Azerbaijan, he accused Petrosyan’s Pan-National Movement of being ready to forget the genocide and making Armenia an appendage of Turkey.

On every occasion, Prime Minister Sarkisyan made it clear that Armenia was ready to kick off diplomatic relations with Turkey without any preconditions, they were willing to engage in a constructive dialogue with Turkey after the elections in that country, Turks and Armenians needed to understand each other, the absence of bilateral relations were harmful to both sides, the Armenian insistence of the recognition of genocide should not be an obstacle for the commencement of bilateral relations and that this was why Armenia did not frame the recognition of the genocide as a precondition¹⁶. In one of his interviews, he stated that they were not blaming today’s Turkey or the Turkish government for the genocide and that the non-admission by the Turkish government of today of mistakes of past rulers (Committee of Union and Progress) contained an element of danger for them it was dangerous for the latter to refuse the mistakes of the old ruling power¹⁷.

14 Hürriyet, November 17, 2007

15 PanArmenian.Net, July 11, 2007

16 Interview given to Al Jazeera, Armenews, August 10, 2007

17 Armenian Reporter, October 27, 2007

In the same interview, he said that he was not one of those to argue that it did not matter if relations with Turkey and Azerbaijan remained unresolved and borders closed and that the status quo did not interfere with their development, but on the contrary it sure did. He further pointed out that they should certainly continue to seek a peaceful resolution to the conflict with Azerbaijan and that they should seek to establish normal relations with Turkey and resolve their outstanding issues directly rather than through statements for mass media.

On the other hand, the Prime Minister held a belief that Turkish accession to the EU would enable Turkey to engage in relations with Armenia. Sarkisyan argued that Turkey was the side that set conditions and that the principles of the European cooperation did not allow using inadmissible tools of foreign policy. Therefore, Turkey was losing while they were ready for cooperation without preconditions¹⁸.

As it can be clearly seen, the ideas of the Armenian Prime Minister about the policies that should be pursued towards Turkey are not different than those of President Kocharian. The only significant difference is Sarkisyan's realization that the status quo (the closed border and the problem of Karabagh) impairs the development of Armenia and that if he was elected as the President, he could be inclined to spend more efforts at establishing normal relations with Turkey.

The Foreign Minister Oskanian too appears to make use of the EU in enforcing Armenian demands from Turkey. In his speech delivered in the External Relations Committee of the European Parliament about the Armenian foreign policy on 9 October 2007¹⁹, he asked the EU to put more pressure on Turkey to open a dialogue with Armenia. Attributing a great deal importance to relations with Turkey, Oskanian reiterated that his country was ready to start diplomatic relations with Turkey without preconditions. When it came to the issue of the opening of the border, he stated that this was not only important for Armenia, but also for the EU since Turkey was the natural bridge between the Caucasus and Europe. Moreover, by rejecting the accusation that Armenia did not recognize Turkish territorial integrity, he advocated that the border line had been defined by a treaty signed by Turkey and the Soviet Union in 1922²⁰. Despite that, he did not

¹⁸ PanArmenian.Net, September 25, 2007 and nethaber.com, 26 September 2007

¹⁹ Radio Free Europe, 9 October 2007

²⁰ The Turkish-Soviet border was first defined by the Friendship and Brotherhood Treaty signed on March 16, 1921 in Moscow. This line was confirmed by the Friendship Treaty between Turkey, Armenia, Azerbaijan and Georgia that was signed on October 31, 1921. As far as the bilateral border is concerned, it is thus natural

elaborate on why Armenia had been refusing to sign a document stating that this border line was valid since 1992. He also rejected a call by Turkish Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan to set up a commission to study the events of 1915-18. He said talks on the issue remained impossible as long as Turkey's penal code continued to criminalize any depiction of the mass killings as "genocide". Oskanian added that a bilateral dialogue was impossible as long as the border was closed. Nevertheless, he left out the fact that for 15 years, meetings and negotiations had been held between the Foreign Ministry officials of the two countries.

This speech of Oskanian does not appear to have had a remarkable impact on EU circles. In a decision adopted on 22 October 2007 on relations with Turkey, the European Parliament ignored genocide allegations in spite of the efforts of the diaspora organizations. However, the decision asked Turkey to refrain from any economic blockade even though no specific country was referred to. In turn, Turkey and Armenia were called upon to start a process of reconciliation.

The last point to be made on this topic is the increased expectation of both USA and the EU that bilateral relations could be normalized and the border could be opened after the elections in Turkey. EU's Special Representative for South Caucasus Peter Semneby noted that one should assess the fundamental changes in Turkey from the viewpoint of a favorable prospect for improvement of Armenia-Turkey relations and that the new Turkish government will give a new impetus to establishment of Yerevan-Ankara relations²¹. However, it is hard to notify a difference between the foreign policy decisions of the post and ex-elections Turkish government. Relations with Armenia were not even addressed in the Action Plan of the new government.

One of the deputies of US Secretary of State Matthew Bryza suggested that many officials in Ankara recognized the need to reconsider Turkey's policy towards Armenia and they there were a lot of people in the upper reaches of the Turkish government who recognized that an open border would change the strategic map there in a very positive way. He added that they could convince everybody in the region, including Azerbaijan, which was indeed the case²². Out of these statements arise an impression implying that some of the government circles in

to refer to the Kars Agreement since it was ratified by Armenia as well. Nevertheless, the Armenian Foreign Minister must have adversely referred to only the Moscow Treaty by even giving an incorrect date for it so that it does not bind Armenia.

21 Arminfo News Agency, September 28, 2007

22 RFE/RL, October 24, 2007

Ankara admit that the Turkish policy towards Armenia has been incorrect. However, as it can be understood from the aforementioned statements of Turkish officials, there is no such tendency. Turkey is ready to normalize its relations with Armenia provided that certain conditions are met (recognition of the border line, abandonment of genocide allegations and resolution of the Karabagh conflict). By rejecting to change any aspect of its current position, Armenia, on the other hand, wishes Turkey to open the border and start diplomatic relations with it.

From the information stated above, we can derive the conclusion that in the aftermath of elections in Armenia, the US and the EU are preparing to take off some initiatives and even put pressure for the normalization of relations between Turkey and Armenia.

II. ARMENIAN GENOCIDE ALLEGATIONS AND THE US CONGRESS

We have previously reported²³ that a draft resolution (Resolution No. 106) was presented to the US House of Representatives on January 30, 2007 in an effort to make the House accept the Armenian genocide allegations. That text was almost identical to the draft resolutions that had been presented to the House in 2000 and 2005. These had cleared the Foreign Affairs Committee but were dropped without a House floor vote due to the objections raised by the US administration on both occasions. Despite the fact that it contains wrong assessments and factual mistakes²⁴ the same text has been presented anew almost without any changes obviously because its sponsors feared that if it were to be rephrased its content might be watered down.

The resolution was presented anew mainly because the Democrats won the majority of the House seats in the 2006 election. The Democrats embrace the Armenian allegations more strongly than the Republicans do. There is a 70,000-strong American-Armenian community in the constituency of Democrat Party's Nancy Pelosi, the new spokesperson of the House, and she has always advocated official US recognition of the Armenian genocide allegations. Meanwhile, Tom Lantos, a Jewish-American that has served for a long time as chairman of the US House of Representatives Foreign Affairs Committee, has abandoned his pro-Turkish stance and began to help the Armenians. This is reportedly so because of the

23 Ömer Engin Lütem, "Olaylar ve Yorumlar", *Ermeni Araştırmaları*, No. 23-24, 2007, pp. 39-45.

24 On this subject see Kemal Çiçek, "Ermeni Yasa Tasarısının İçeriği ve İddialara Verilen Cevaplar", *Ermeni Araştırmaları*, No. 23-24, 2007, pp. 103-118.

Turkish government's relations with a Palestinian leader, Khalid Meshal, which has upset him.

The resolution was presented to the House of Representatives with some 140 signatures.²⁵ That number initially seemed insufficient considering the fact that there are 435 seats in the House; however, the number of the co-sponsors of the resolution rapidly increased, reaching 227 in early August when the Congress was in summer recess, that is, well above the 218, the simple majority.²⁶ It became obvious that if the House Foreign Affairs Committee passed the resolution the House floor, that is, the full House, would uphold it with a great majority. It was presumed that many of the non-sponsors would choose to go with the tide when the number of sponsors soared.

At this point we have to dwell briefly on how exactly the Armenians achieved all these. Before everything else we should know that the Armenian Diaspora groups joined hands voluntarily to work against Turkey and the Turks despite their many differences and disagreements.

Secondly, these groups make a point of taking part in the political life in the host countries, operating not only in political parties but also in the media.

Thirdly, unlike the Turks living abroad, members of the Armenian Diaspora donate money for political purposes – at times enormous amounts of it.

Furthermore, in order to attain specific political goals they vote en masse in the same direction. If and when their votes turn out to be inadequate they give pecuniary aid to –or take part in the election campaigns of– those politicians that are inclined to support their cause.

And lastly, they have founded special organizations for initiatives with the political authorities. In the US there are two organizations founded for that purpose: The Armenian National Committee of America (ANCA) founded by the Dashnaks, and the Armenian Assembly of America (AAA) that relies on wealthy Armenians. Despite the rivalry between them, these two organizations do cooperate for anti-Turkey activities.

Getting organized in this manner they have managed to rally support –as co-

25 Zaman, January 31, 2007.

26 Armenian Assembly of America, Press Release, August 3, 2007.

sponsors of the Resolution 106- from more than half of the House members after the Democrats gained control of the House. They have benefited from the fact that Nancy Pelosi has become the House chairman and from the helpful stance Tom Lantos has adopted towards the Armenians.

We previously reported that Turkey opposed the resolution categorically. In fact, the then Turkish Foreign Minister Abdullah Gül declared that its adoption would deliver a big blow to bilateral relations. Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice and Defense Secretary Bill Gates made that point clear officially in their letters to Foreign Affairs Committee Chairman Tom Lantos.²⁷

During the summer recess a Jewish organization, the Anti-Defamation League (ADL), recognized the Armenian genocide allegations. That weakened the position of the US administration that had, just as the Turkish government, announced its opposition to the resolution. (We will examine the stance taken by Israel and the Jewish Americans regarding the Armenian allegations separately at the end of this article.)

When the Congress returned from its summer recess in September, the US State Department at first did not bring place Resolution 106 under the limelight. They chose to focus on some other issues between Turkey and the US. In a speech²⁸ titled “The Future of the US-Turkey Relationship” delivered at the Atlantic Council of the United States (ACUS) on September 13, 2007, Undersecretary of State Nicholas Burns, the number three man in the department, first dwelt on various issues (such as Iran, Cyprus, the PKK, Article 301 and the Fener Seminary) some of which concerned Turkey’s domestic affairs. Then he referred to the Armenian question, saying that President Bush issued a message every year on April 24 on the subject of the “exile and killing of 1.5 million Armenians”. The issue was not for the US to condemn that tragedy; the issue was how to facilitate reconciliation between the parties concerned, he pointed out. He warned that if the Resolution 106 were to be passed, that would “undercut the voices emerging in Turkey for dialogue and reconciliation concerning these horrific events.” He went on to say, “We strongly encourage Turkey to normalize its relations and reopen its border with Armenia, steps that will help bring peace, prosperity and cooperation to the Caucasus. Now, in the wake of the AKP’s resounding electoral victories, is the time for Ankara to make a bold opening toward Armenia.”

27 Ömer Engin Lütem, “Olaylar ve Yorumlar”, *Ermene Araştırmaları*, No. 23–24, 2007, pp. 42–43.

28 State Department, September 13, 2007

Thus the call against the Resolution 106 was issued with a bizarre rationale: the need not to “undercut the voices emerging in Turkey for dialogue and reconciliation”. Though Burns did not identify whose voices these were, one can see that he meant certain “liberal-minded intellectuals” that are more inclined to support the Armenian views and that are being indirectly supported by the US.

It is inconceivable that Turkey alone is being asked to open up its border and to normalize the relations between the two countries. Saying that if Turkey did all that, that would bring peace, prosperity and cooperation to the Caucasus, amounts to ignoring the fact that the region is plagued by highly important problems, first and foremost among them the Karabagh issue.

On September 18-19, Nicolas Burns visited Ankara and İstanbul. The visit did not receive wide press coverage. It is not known what he discussed with the Turkish authorities. Presumably he explained his above-mentioned views and, hopefully, from the replies he received from them he realized that his views were not compatible with Ankara’s stance at all.

Meanwhile, Armenian Patriarch Mesrob Mutafyan who had already announced he was against the resolution went to Washington to attend the Second Interfaith and Intercultural Ramadan Iftar to be given at the US Congress on September 19.²⁹ His scheduled lecture at Georgetown University titled “The Impasse between Turks and Armenians Must Be Overcome” was cancelled by the university citing security considerations.³⁰ Although no one spoke out, it seemed that no one doubted that the Armenians managed to have the event cancelled by way of threats because they worried that the Patriarch’s speech would compromise the resolution’s chances of clearing the Committee. In letters sent to Armenian churches, ANCA said that the Patriarch lived with the fear that he would be punished by the Turkish government and that he was a kind of hostage who had to pursue the Turkish government’s policy.³¹

On this occasion I would like to remind our readers that when I went to the US in March last year together with Mr. Gündüz Aktan to give a series of lectures, attempts were made to prevent these events. Actually, after receiving letters –in a threatening tone- from the Armenians the University of South California cancelled a lecture although the announcements had been made and the invitations

29 Cumhuriyet, September 19, 2007.

30 Hürriyet, September 24, 2007.

31 ANCA, Press Release, September 18, 2007.

had been sent out. We denounce the way the freedom of expression gets to be violated all too easily in the face of threats in America, the “land of the freedoms”.

Turkish officials expressed their opposition to the resolution on every occasion. Prime Minister Erdoğan referred to this issue repeatedly when he visited the US in September to address the UN General Assembly. He stressed that if the Congress took such a decision that would “inflict a serious wound” on Turkish-American relations.³² Foreign Minister Ali Babacan, who was in the US at that time, reiterated that such a decision would harm Turkish-American relations. He further pointed out that the Congress should not support any of the parties to this dispute. This is an issue between Turks and Armenians, and it could be resolved through a candid and open dialogue between them, he stressed.³³

A change was observed in the US policy after it became clear that the resolution would be included in the agenda of the Foreign Affairs Committee and Washington saw beyond any doubt that adoption of the resolution would adversely affect Turkish-American relations. In this framework, eight former secretaries of state³⁴, most probably encouraged by the White House, sent a letter to House Chairman Pelosi on September 25, 2007, expressing concern that the draft soon could be put on vote. They told her, “Passage of the resolution would harm our foreign policy objectives to promote reconciliation between Turkey and Armenia. It would also strain our relations with Turkey, and would endanger our national security interests in the region, including the safety of our troops in Iraq and Afghanistan.” They went on to say that they did not minimize “the horrible tragedy suffered by Armenians” between the years 1915-1923. Pelosi received similar letters from three former secretaries of defense as well. Later, (R) Gen. Brent Scowcroft sent congressmen letters to explain the hazards of passing the draft resolution in question. Scowcroft had been security adviser to two former presidents, namely, Gerald Ford and George Bush senior. He served as chairman of George W. Bush’s Foreign Intelligence Council during the 2001-2005 period.³⁵

In the US, secretaries of state are important and prestigious figures that occupy the third rank in the hierarchy of the US Administration. It is no ordinary event

32 Anadolu Ajansi, September 28, 2007.

33 Armenews, September 24, 2007.

34 Here are the names and terms in office of these persons: Henry Kissinger (1973-1977), Alexander Haig (1981-1982), George Shultz (1982-1989), James Baker III (1989-1992), Lawrence Christopher (1993-1996), Madeleine Albright (1996-2000) and Colin Powell (2000-2004).

35 Anadolu Ajansi, October 4, 2007.

for them to come together like that, rallying for a specific way of thinking. The fact that there are Democrats among them shows that they were not stirred into action with partisan considerations.

The letter the former secretaries of state sent to Pelosi drew reactions from the US-based Armenian organizations as well. In a press statement³⁶, ANCA claimed that the former secretaries of state were “denying House members an opportunity to vote their conscience on Armenian Genocide”. The AAA, meanwhile, said that the letter was “inconsistent with the fundamental tenets of American values”³⁷. There were also claims to the effect that the former secretaries of state were acting under the influence of the lobbying companies hired by Turkey. However, no lobbying company can possibly be powerful enough to make people of such importance undersign the same text.

Meanwhile, the International Association of Genocide Scholars (IAGS) sent a letter to Foreign Affairs Committee Chairman Tom Lantos and Ranking Member Ros-Lehtinen, calling for adoption of the Resolution 106. The IAGS said that it would be a reaffirmation of the “Armenian genocide reality” determined “definitely” on the basis of adequate documentation as a result of decades of scholarly work. It recalled that in a letter³⁸ it had sent to Prime Minister Erdoğan in 2005 regarding Turkey’s proposal for a joint commission of historians, it had pointed out that historical records did not leave room for doubt regarding the Armenian genocide.

Here, we must point out that although its members do include a number of renowned scholars, the IAGS represents only a small segment of the people that work in the field of genocide studies. Also, it must be noted that in recent years the IAGS has unreservedly supported the Armenian views.

The letter sent by the former secretaries of state received wide-scale press coverage but failed to make a considerable effect on Pelosi, Lantos or the co-sponsors of the Resolution 106. Only two co-sponsors (Republican Representative, who has strived for presidency Tom Tancredo³⁹ and, after him, Democratic Representative Russ Carnahan⁴⁰) withdrew their signatures from the draft. Thus the number of co-sponsors declined to 225.

36 ANC Press Release, September 26, 2007.

37 Arminfo Agency, October 8, 2007.

38 Ömer Engin Lütem, “Olaylar ve Yorumlar”, *Ermeni Araştırmaları*, No. 18, 2005, pp. 40-41.

39 Zaman, September 28, 2007.

40 Cumhuriyet, October 4, 2007

Armenian Foreign Minister Vartan Oskanian sent House Chairman Pelosi a letter⁴¹ to express his reaction to the letter written by the former US secretaries of state.

In his letter Oskanian noted that the former secretaries of state had argued that passage of the resolution would hurt Armenian-Turkey relations. He said that it was surprising that “eight experienced diplomats would buy into Turkish manipulations,” that “there is no process in place to promote normalization” of relations between Armenia and Turkey, and that it would be “disingenuous” -to say the least- to say that a nonexistent process would be harmed. He went on to say that not only there was no such process but also they had no hope that Turkey would want to establish relations with Armenia even at a minimal level. He said that whenever they agreed to hold a meeting with Turkey, that came to be used by Turkey to “derail other processes” in the US and in some other countries. The meetings that do take place fail to “open new doors, does not have follow-up”, and there would be no point in “meeting for meeting’s sake”, he added. He said that despite all these, in an effort to make use of any opportunity to develop the relations, he agreed to meet with Turkish Foreign Minister Ali Babacan in New York. However, he went on to say that there were claims that the “still-unheld meeting is part of a process that might be endangered”.

Oskanian said that Turkey was putting forth preconditions for the normalization of bilateral relations, refraining from making any serious commitments during the talks, and that, considering the “prohibitive penal consequences” in Turkey in the field of freedom of expression, “even their call for a historical commission is not serious.”

Oskanian went on to say that “a resolution that addresses matters of human rights and genocide cannot damage anyone’s bilateral relations. Geostrategic interest should move us all to do everything possible to open these borders.”

Oskanian’s letter needs to be explained and assessed. Firstly, we see that the Armenian foreign minister has recently abandoned his policy of not interfering in the affairs of the Armenian Diaspora. In the past years officials in Armenia used to refrain from publicly supporting the Diaspora’s efforts to promote the genocide allegations though they did appreciate these efforts. Thus they would take care not to cause further deterioration of Turkey-Armenia relations. Yet, now Os-

41 PanArmenian.net, October 1, 2007.

kanian feels no need to act in this manner anymore. He has actually complained against Turkey to the chairman of the US House of Representatives, using strong language.

Secondly, by sending the letter to House Spokeswoman Pelosi who openly supports the draft resolution (when he should have sent it to the US State Department) and informing the press of its contents, he went against the established practice. He did that obviously because the State Department was against the resolution. The State Department undoubtedly did not appreciate his conduct.

Let us come to the contents of the letter. Oskanian's main argument is that since no normalization process is taking place between Turkey and Armenia, a potential US House of Representatives decision cannot possibly disrupt any such process. Although that sounds reasonable enough at first, this argument is nothing but a tall story. Such a resolution may well delay for a long time normalization of bilateral relations. It can push Turkey into taking measures against Armenia. It must not be forgotten that when Turkey closed its airspace to the Armenian planes heading for Beirut and Aleppo for some time that caused a lot of consternation in Armenia.

Coming to Oskanian's reference to the meetings held between Turkey and Armenia, in recent years Armenians began avoiding such meetings with the conviction that such meetings ease the pressure put on Turkey to make it accept the genocide allegations. And, by acting in this manner, they have destroyed the negotiations process that could have brought about a normalization of bilateral relations process. Due to Armenia's refusal to have talks with Turkey no meeting took place between the foreign ministers of the two countries for a period of nearly three years. Then they were obliged to come together during last summer's Black Sea Cooperation Organization's summit meeting in İstanbul. Also, they had a talk during the UN General Assembly meeting in September. The Armenian foreign minister seems to have agreed to the New York meeting merely to show that his country has good intentions regarding Turkey in an effort to influence the outcome of the House vote on the Resolution 106.

Let us come to Oskanian's argument that the Turkish proposal for a commission of historians to look into the genocide allegations should not be taken seriously due to the prohibitions placed on freedom of expression in Turkey. He is implying that Turkish historians taking part in such a commission would be faced with imprisonment under Article 301 of the Turkish Penal Code, and that this would prevent them from recognizing the "genocide". Therefore, there is no need for

such a commission, he concludes. Firstly, we must state that though some cases have been opened, no one has been imprisoned in Turkey for saying that the “Armenian genocide” did happen. These historians’ task would be to determine how exactly the relocation of the Armenians took place in 1915 and in the years that followed. According to the UN Genocide Convention of 1948 only a competent court can determine whether a given incident constitutes genocide or not. Meanwhile, let us point out that it is hardly the Armenian foreign minister’s task to feel sorry for the Turkish historians that would take part in the proposed commission if it ever became a reality.

Coming to Oskanian’s argument that geostrategic interests required reopening of the common border, it must be pointed out that from Turkey’s standpoint reopening of the border does not carry importance at a geostrategic level. Meanwhile, it must not be forgotten that reopening of the border would work in favor of Armenia politically while it would put Azerbaijan at a disadvantage.

When it became clear that the Committee would debate the resolution on October 10, 2007, the initial six co-sponsors⁴² issued a statement to thank Pelosi and Lantos and to announce that they would “work to prevent adoption of weakening amendments” during the debates.⁴³ Meanwhile, House Democratic majority leader Steny Hoyer who has supported the Armenian views all along, tried to prevent the “adoption of the draft would harm US-Turkey relations” kind of criticism by saying, “This is not about the present government, nor about the Turkish people. This is about...a previous government almost a century ago... a genocide was perpetrated on the Armenian people.”⁴⁴ Not doubting that the draft would be adopted by the Committee, he expressed the hope that it would then be upheld by the House floor by November 22, that is, before the House went into recess.⁴⁵

On October 5, that is, a few days before the Committee began debating the draft, Prime Minister Erdoğan called President Bush and warned him that adoption of the draft would harm the strategic partnership between Turkey and the US. The US president said he was aware of the fact that such a development would harm the relations between the two countries and he promised that they would work intensely to prevent the draft from being passed. Later, White House spokesman

42 Namely, Frank Pallone (Dem.), Joe Knollenberg (Rep.), Adam Schiff (Dem.), George Radanovich (Rep.), Brad Sherman (Dem.) and Ed Roye (Rep.).

43 AAA Press Release, October 2, 2007.

44 Los Angeles Times, October 3, 2007

45 Cnnturk.com, October 4, 2007.

Gordon Johndroe said, “The President has described the events of 1915 as ‘one of the greatest tragedies of the 20th century’ but believes that the determination of whether or not the events constitute a genocide should be a matter for historical inquiries, not legislation.” He reiterated President Bush’s opposition to the draft resolution.⁴⁶

Erdoğan called former President Clinton too, and asked him to join the loop regarding the draft.⁴⁷

The Turkish Grand National Assembly Speaker Köksal Toptan sent a letter to House Chairman Pelosi, stressing that adoption of the draft would have adverse effects that would take decades to repair.⁴⁸

Meanwhile, the Turkish Embassy in Washington placed a full-page paid advertisement in the Washington Post, stressing that the Armenian allegations amounted to a one-sided interpretation of history, and urging the members of the House to support Turkey’s efforts to introduce a clear and objective perspective about the events of 1915.⁴⁹

The Turkish Grand National Assembly sent a delegation to Washington to make contacts regarding the draft. The delegation, led by AK Party Deputy Egemen Bağış, included CHP Deputy (R) Ambassador Şükrü Elekdag and MHP Deputy (R) Ambassador Gündüz Aktan.

Bağış said they would do their best to prevent the passage of the draft. Adoption of the draft would be more of a problem for the US than for Turkey, he stressed. Gündüz Aktan said that adoption of the draft would trigger a strong reaction from the Turkish public opinion, and that they were telling the US officials that this would harm the US interests in the Middle East.⁵⁰ Şükrü Elekdag said that Armenia was being governed by the Diaspora; that “tiny Armenia” was now playing with Turkey as a cat would play with a mouse, and that it was high time one thought of what could be done against Armenia. In this respect the number of flights could be reduced, the number of international transit trucks going to Armenia could be cut down from 4,000 trucks to 1,000 trucks a month⁵¹ and some

46 Zaman, October 6, 2007.

47 Zaman, October 6, 2007.

48 International Herald Tribune, October 7, 2007.

49 Zaman, October 6, 2007.

50 Vatan, October 8, 2007.

51 Star, October 8, 2007.

of the Armenians working in Turkey illegally could be extradited, he pointed out.

At a briefing given by Assistant Secretary of State Daniel Fried the US Administration stated in detail its position regarding Resolution 106.⁵² Stressing that the Administration opposed the resolution, Fried said, “And we think it would do great harm, both to US-Turkish relations and to US interests. It would hurt our forces deployed in Iraq, which rely on passage through Turkey. It would do far greater harm than good. It would do nothing to advance Turkish-Armenian reconciliation. It is not simply this administration which opposes this bill, but all former living Secretaries of State... They have all expressed the view that this resolution could ‘endanger our security interests in the region, including the safety of our troops in Iraq and Afghanistan.’ Now, no one denies that a terrible and inexcusable tragedy of mass killings and forced exile befell innocent Armenians in the last years of the Ottoman Empire in 1915 and after ... A million and a half Armenian people were killed or forced into exile. The United States has recognized this. President Bush, like President Clinton before him, has formally recognized it in annual statements on Armenian Remembrance Day on April 24th. So the administration does not deny anything. (If the bill were to be passed) ... it is true that the Turkish reaction would be extremely strong ... we have to be mindful of how much we depend and how much our troops and the Iraqi economy depend on shipments from and through Turkey.”

Fried’s statement was thus quite significant in that these words put on record the administration’s stance regarding Resolution 106 and similar bills on the Armenian allegations that may be presented to the Congress during President Bush’s term in office. This stance can be summed up in the following manner: The US administration opposes this resolution because it would harm Turkish-American relations and the US interests. However, its opposition to the draft does not mean that it is denying that Armenians had been killed en masse in the past.

President Bush issued a statement on this issue –personally for the first time- a few hours before the Committee began to debate the draft. He said, “We all deeply regret the tragic suffering of the Armenian people that began in 1915. But this resolution is not the right response to these historic mass killings, and its passage would do great harm to relations with a key ally in NATO, and to the war on terror.”⁵³

⁵² PanArmenian, October 9, 2007.

⁵³ International Herald Tribune, October 10, 2007.

Following a meeting held with President Bush and the officials concerned at the White House prior to the vote, Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice said, “We are all in agreement that the passage of this resolution would be very destabilizing to our efforts in the Middle East, very destabilizing to our efforts in Iraq and Afghanistan, because Turkey is very critical in supporting the efforts that we’re making.” Defense Secretary Bill Gates, who attended the meeting, warned that Turkey is vital in allowing the US troops to use its airspace to fly 95 percent of the US military’s latest protective equipment over to troops in Iraq. And that reliance, he said, was too important to strain ties over an event that took place during the World War I era.⁵⁴

On October 10, 2007 the Committee passed the bill with 27 votes against 21 after a lengthy debate. It is quite significant that though the president and all the other officials concerned said that the passage of the resolution would harm US interests the majority of the committee members did not heed these warnings. In other words, they acted as if they did not attach importance to US interests coming to harm. Obviously they looked at this issue from a different angle, giving priority to satisfying Armenian demands with certain calculations of self-interest. That was reflected in the speech Committee Chairman Lantos made before initiating the debates. Lantos said, “We have to weigh the desire to express our solidarity with the Armenian people ... against the risk that it could cause ... the United States armed services to pay an even higher price.” Since he too voted in favor of the bill, he risked compromising the security of the US troops. On the other hand, one feels that this stance is based on the assumption that Turkey would not dare take the kind of measures that would push the US into a spot if the resolution were to be passed.

The warnings issued by President Bush and his secretaries greatly increased the number of representatives that opposed the resolution while failing to dismiss it altogether. The same draft had cleared the Committee with 38 votes against 12 in 2000 and with 40 votes against 7 in 2005. On both occasions, using his discretion, House Speaker Denis Hastert had refrained from putting those bills to a vote on the House floor.

Of the 27 people who voted in favor of the resolution in 2007, 19 are Democrats and 8 Republicans. Ten out of these 27 were elected from California, a state

⁵⁴ WIBW, KS, October 10, 2007.

with a significant Armenian population. Of the 21 people who voted against the resolution, 13 are Republicans and 8 Democrats. In other words, though the members that rejected the resolution were mostly Republican, the resolution is indeed of a bipartisan nature, a quality to which the Armenians attach special importance.

It must be pointed out that both at the Committee and on the House floor the Armenians staged propaganda shows thanks to the special permission given by Pelosi and Lantos. The House floor meeting began around the same time as the Committee meeting, and Catholicos Karekin II (who is based at Echmiadzin near Yerevan and can be described as the chief patriarch of the Armenians) said the House floor meeting's opening prayer. Then four wheelchair-bound ladies, claimed to be "survivors of the genocide", were brought into the room where the Committee met. Even if these people were born in 1915 they would be 92 years old now. However, on TV screen they definitely did not look that old. That seemed to be a stage show. It is no secret that militant Armenians often attempt to stage such deceptive visual shows but, for the sake of neutrality, Lantos should not have allowed that. After the Committee meeting Karekin II entered the room as well, joining the show.

Since the resolution cleared the Committee the question being asked is when it would be presented to the entire House. It was mentioned above that the House Democratic majority leader Steny Hoyer said that the resolution would be passed (put on the agenda) prior to November 22, that is, before the end-of-the-year recess. However, the person authorized to deal with that issue was Pelosi and not Hoyer. After the Committee voted on the resolution, Pelosi said, "I don't have a date in mind, but it will be before the end of this session. I said if it comes out of committee it will go to the floor. Now it has come out of committee and it will go to the floor."⁵⁵

Pelosi went on to say, "I've been in Congress for 20 years and for 20 years people have been saying the same thing that Turkey's strategic location ... They are saying, 'why do it now?' Because, all of us in the Democratic leadership have supported it ... Ronald Reagan in 1981 referred to the Armenian Genocide." Obviously, according to Pelosi what matters is not Turkey's strategic location but the stance taken by the leaders of the Democratic Party. And, since a Republican President too has recognized the "genocide" it is only normal for the House to pass a reso-

⁵⁵ Armenpress, October 12, 2007.

lution on this issue. We do not think we have to dwell on how meaningless it is—especially from a foreign policy angle—to approach every issue from a domestic politics perspective like that, adopting a kind of egocentric stance.

On the other hand, Pelosi also said, “The US and Turkey have a very strong relationship. It is based on mutual interest and I believe that our continued mutual interest will have us grow that relationship. This isn’t about the Erdogan government; this is about the Ottoman Empire.”⁵⁶

Coming to the reactions to the Committee decision, we will look at these in four categories: in Turkey, in the US, in Armenia and from the Armenian Diaspora.

In Turkey the first reaction came from the president of the Republic. Here is the full text of the statement issued on this issue on October 11, 2007⁵⁷:

Mr. President issued the following statement in reply to a question posed by the Anadolu Ajansı (Anatolia Agency) on the adoption by the US House of Representatives Foreign Affairs Committee of the bill that contains the Armenian allegations concerning the 1915 incidents:

“Regrettably, certain politicians in the United States of America, turning a deaf ear to the calls for common sense, have, once again, attempted to use as a tool—and to sacrifice— major issues for petty domestic politics games. This is not the kind of stance that would benefit or benefit the representatives of a great power such as the United States of America. This unacceptable decision of the Committee has, just as similar texts of the past, no validity or respectability at all for the Turkish people.”

Thus the president has assessed the Committee decision from the standpoint of US domestic politics to which we referred above. The most significant part of this statement is the part where the president stresses that the Committee decision would have no validity for the Turkish people. In other words he has rejected the decision.

The Government too issued a statement on the same day⁵⁸:

56 Voice of America, October 11, 2007.

57 http://www.mfa.gov.tr/MFA_tr/BasinEnformasyon/Aciklamalar/2007/Ekim/cumhurbaskaciklama_11Ekim2007.htm

58 http://www.mfa.gov.tr/MFA_tr/BasinEnformasyon/Aciklamalar/2007/Ekim/hukumetaciklama_11Ekim2007.htm

At its October 10, 2007 meeting the US House of Representatives Foreign Affairs Committee adopted with 27 votes against 21 the H. Res. Resolution 106 which describes as "genocide" the decision the Ottoman Empire had taken in 1915 for part of its Armenian citizens because they were collaborating with the occupation forces.

The nature of the 1915 incidents is still being discussed. Despite Armenian claims, many historians of international renown assess the practice of relocation during that period as a wartime security measure decided upon under World War I conditions.

It is obvious that for the House of Representatives Foreign Affairs Committee it is not a duty or a function to re-write history in a distorted manner especially on an issue which concerns the common history of Turks and Armenians. Parliaments' duty is to ensure further improvement of the relations between the peoples, and to look towards the future and not into the past. All these years our country has maintained that the controversial periods of the past should be assessed not by legislative bodies but by historians. The call we issued in 2005 to have the controversial sections of our common history with Armenia examined on the basis of archival materials --the authenticity of which is beyond any doubt-- by Turkish and Armenian (and third country should that be necessary) historians, was a manifestation of this understanding which our country has maintained until now. Considering especially that the US is our ally, it is quite unfortunate that such a resolution has cleared the US House of Representatives Foreign Affairs Committee while our proposal --which envisages elimination of the difference between the mentalities of the two countries regarding the 1915 incidents by way of a sincere and open dialogue-- is still on the table and Armenia is yet to give a positive response to that proposal).

Meanwhile, it has been noted that Armenia has, rather than accepting our sincere proposal, followed an ill-intentioned agenda towards having the resolution adopted, striving sometimes behind-the-scenes and, as in recent times, out in the open.

Our country regrets that such a decision has been taken and denounces it. It is unacceptable that the Turkish nation should be accused of a crime it never committed in its history.

During the process through which the resolution was adopted by the Committee, US Administration at the highest levels and large numbers of important, experienced and well-aware figures in the US intensely took a stance against the resolution, making efforts to this effect. Despite that, the resolution was put to a vote at the Committee and adopted; and this will render responsible before history those that have voted in favor

of the resolution and those that had advised them to do so.

It is an irresponsible act that a House of Representatives committee has promoted in this manner a resolution that would put under strain at an extremely sensitive period a strategic partnership that has been developed carefully by many generations and, in this context, the relations with a friendly and allied country.

We still hope that the House of Representatives will have enough good sense not to take this resolution further. The responsibility that falls at this point, on all members of the House of Representatives and, especially, on the House speaker, is clear.

Every effort will be made to ensure that the resolution would not be adopted by the House floor.

This statement amounts to a summary of Turkey's views on the resolutions at the US Congress. The most significant part of it is the section that says that Turkey regrets that such a draft has been passed, denounces it, and makes it clear that it is not acceptable. In other words, from Turkey's standpoint, the draft resolution would not be valid even if it cleared the House floor.

The second significant point is that Turkey has thus stressed that the resolution puts under strain the strategic partnership between the two countries, and, in this context, the relations with a friendly and allied country during an extremely sensitive period. Here, it is implied that if the draft cleared the House floor Turkey would take the kind of measures that would adversely affect the strategic partnership with the US and the bilateral relations. And, lastly, it is important that the statement made it clear that Turkey would make every effort to prevent the draft from clearing the House floor. That shows that Turkey will keep up the struggle.

Neither the statement issued by the President nor the one issued by the Government was given wide-scale foreign press coverage probably because these amounted to a reiteration of the statements made by Turkish officials in the past. However, when Turkey's Ambassador in Washington Nabi Şensoy was summoned to Ankara for consultations, that was perceived as Turkey's reaction to the Committee decision and as an indication of Turkey's determination on this issue. As a result, that development received wide-scale press coverage.

Prime Minister Erdoğan had a strong reaction to the Committee decision. He said that the Democrats in the US Congress were doing harm to the US's future,

and that the situation was heading towards a “the rope would just snap where it gets too thin to stand” kind of spot, using a Turkish expression. He thus implied that Turkey would take measures when required. Also, he stressed that steps would be taken to ensure that the draft would not clear the House floor.⁵⁹

Addressing the weekly meeting of his party’s parliamentary group a few days later, the prime minister said, in brief, “The recent developments at the US House of Representatives in regard to the incidents of 1915 have left a deep mark on the memories of the Turkish nation. No one has the right to judge Turkey’s history without any document or evidence in hand. Such a judgment implies execution without trial. In practice, such decisions have no value. No one should expect Turkey to bow its head to historical lies. We have been forced to develop new methods and road maps after countries with which we have close economic, cultural and social relations—such as France and the United States—adopted resolutions in favor of Armenian allegations.”⁶⁰

Chief of Staff General Yaşar Büyükanıt stressed that if the draft cleared the House floor the military relations between the two countries would never be the same.⁶¹

Meanwhile, the Turkish Grand National Assembly delegation held a press conference in the US, with Egemen Bağış pointing out that compared to the similar other occasions in recent years the resolution was adopted with a smaller margin. That was a loss not for Turkey but for the mutual trust between the two countries, the resolution had grieved the Turkish nation and, though it would not be easy to repair that, the Turkish people’s hearts could be won anew if the draft were to be tossed into the garbage bin and the US took steps regarding the PKK, he said. Şükrü Elekdağ said that the Bush Administration had not thrown its weight adequately, that none of the people addressing the Committee had said that what was at stake was a controversial issue, and that the outcome should definitely be debated at the Turkish Grand National Assembly since that was an above-party issue. Gündüz Aktan noted that even the 21 committee members who voted in favor of Turkey had talked about the “genocide” as if that was a fact. This is unacceptable and if the Turkish state failed to display a strong reaction to that situation it would be lacking in seriousness, and, since the committee members expected Turkey to react in some manner the failure to react at all would cause

59 NTV, October 12, 2007.

60 Anadolu Ajansı, October 16, 2007.

61 Zaman Online, October 18, 2007.

Turkey to lose ground, he stressed. He said that if the resolution cleared the House floor a legal dispute would arise between Turkey and the US.⁶²

In Turkey a number of professional organizations and nongovernmental organizations too criticized the Committee decision. Meanwhile, protest marches⁶³ were staged to the US Embassy in Ankara and the US Consulate General in İstanbul, and the US State Department warned the US citizens intending to travel to Turkey about these demonstrations.⁶⁴

Reacting to the Committee decision State Minister (responsible for foreign trade) Kürşat Tüzmen cancelled the lecture he was scheduled to give at the New York premises of the Turkish-American Business Council.⁶⁵ Similarly, State Minister Mehmet Şimşek and Naval Forces Commander Admiral Muzaffer Ataç cancelled scheduled visits to the US. Şimşek was to give a lecture in New York and Ataç was to pay a working visit.⁶⁶

Coming to the reactions in the US, White House spokesman Scott Stanzel made a statement on behalf of President Bush, expressing disappointment over the outcome of the Committee vote. He said that the president was concerned about the possibility of this vote causing tension in relations with a key country such as Turkey. On the other hand he reiterated that they “understand the feelings that people have about the tragic suffering of the Armenian people” and that the President had referred to that in his annual messages.⁶⁷

Secretary of State Rice called Prime Minister Erdoğan to say that the US Administration was deeply disappointed by the vote, and that they would maintain their efforts to prevent passage of the resolution by the full House.⁶⁸

Noting that Turkey is one of the US’s most important and valuable allies in the world, State Department Undersecretary Nicholas Burns expressed the hope that Turkey would not retaliate to the Committee decision. He indicated that they expected Turkey’s disappointment to be expressed mainly in statements rather

62 <http://www.haberler.com/mhp-milletvekili-aktan-türkiye-karşılıkvermese-haberi/>

63 International Herald Tribune, October 11, 2007.

64 Turkish Daily News, October 11, 2007.

65 Anadolu Ajansı, October 12, 2007.

66 Zaman Online, October 18, 2007

67 Agence France Presse, October 11, 2007.

68 Anadolu Ajansı, October 12, 2007.

than by way of concrete actions.⁶⁹

Meanwhile, due to the continuing PKK attacks on the Turkish Armed Forces that caused many to fall in the line of duty, it became necessary to take more determined steps against that organization. The government initiated the process of obtaining the Turkish Grand National Assembly's approval for a cross-border operation. Fearing that the passage of the Resolution 106 would encourage Turkey to stage an operation in Northern Iraq—or cause such an operation to be staged sooner than later—the US Administration sent Assistant Secretary of State Daniel Fried and Defense Department Undersecretary Eric Edelman to Ankara.⁷⁰ Furthermore, Secretary of State Rice urged Turkey to refrain from any major military operation in Northern Iraq.⁷¹ Obviously in response to that call, the Turkish side said that if the resolution cleared the House floor that would do irreparable damage to the Turkey-US relations and harm Turkey-US unity in NATO.

Coming to the Armenians' reaction to the Committee decision, President Kocharyan, who was in Brussels at the time of the voting, said they were highly pleased with that outcome. He urged the US to follow the example set by France in the face of the statements issued by Turkish officials. Recalling that a similar resolution was passed in France last year, he said that at that time it was feared that that would trigger a very strong reaction from Turkey. However, after a few days the reactions ebbed, and, over the year that has passed since then, a one-and-a-half times increase has taken place in trade between France and Turkey, he added.⁷² According to another source, he said that a consensus had emerged in the world as to the nature of the 1915 events in Turkey and that Turkey would no longer be able to force other countries to deny the history. The resolution would not be a factor that would deteriorate Armenia's relations with Turkey, and Armenia was ready to establish full diplomatic relations with Turkey unconditionally and to enter into a comprehensive dialogue on Armenian-Turkish relations, he added.⁷³

During the week that followed the passage of the resolution Armenian Prime Minister Serzh Sarkissian visited the US for talks with Vice President Dick Cheney,

69 Zaman, October 10, 2007.

70 Anadolu Ajansı, October 13, 2007.

71 Reuters, October 13, 2007.

72 NTV, October 11, 2007.

73 Radikal, October 12, 2007.

Secretary of State Rice, Defense Secretary Gates and World Bank officials. According to press reports the resolution did not come up during the talks. On the other hand Sarkissian referred to this issue in the statements he made. Expressing the hope that the resolution would be adopted by the entire House, he said that the “sooner the Turks admit that genocide occurred, the better for the Armenians and Turks.” Meanwhile, despite the statements made by President Kocharian and Foreign Minister Oskanian –given above— Sarkissian claimed that his country was not lobbying on this issue.⁷⁴

Various political parties in Armenia expressed satisfaction over the resolution and praised the members of the Committee. However, there have been no reports quoting Levon Ter-Petrosyan, who is running for president, on this issue.

Aram Hamparian, the executive director of ANCA, the most important Armenian organization in the US, said that with that resolution the Armenians were “reclaiming” their “right to speak openly and honestly about the first genocide of the 20th Century”. These words do not mean much since the Armenians in the US have voiced the genocide allegations in the widest and most exaggerated manner possible all these years.

The AAA, ANCA’s rival which focuses mostly on lobbying for the interests of Armenians and Armenia at the US Congress, congratulated Pelosi and said, “Although the bill is not binding, it can serve as a basis for future documents of the US Administration, which will have the force of law.”⁷⁵ Thus it has become all too clear that the Armenians will not content themselves with that non-binding bill and that they aim to elicit from the Congress a full-fledged law with which the US would recognize the Armenian allegations legally as well - as France has done already.

As we mentioned above, Turkish officials had said that the passage of the resolution would adversely affect bilateral relations but, so as not to take a threatening stance, they had not specified the measures Turkey would take against the US in such a case. However, as we also mentioned above, in an effort to persuade the members of the Committee to kill the resolution, some of the US officials, Defense Secretary Gates among them, started talking about potential Turkish sanctions, saying, especially, that Turkey could prevent the transportation of supplies to the US troops in Iraq.

Thus, with domestic political considerations, US officials have told the American

74 International Herald Tribune, October 23, 2007.

75 Armenian Assembly of America, Press Release, October 11, 2007.

public of a threat Turkey had not openly directed at them. The message they gave the American public was that while they tried to ensure the safety of the US troops in Iraq, those defending the Resolution 106, led by Pelosi, did not care about the troops' fate.

Here, it must be noted that the Democrats who won the majority of the House seats in the 2006 elections and House Speaker Pelosi especially, have taken a stronger-than-usual stance against the President Bush and his policies. Pelosi has surprised everybody by visiting Bashar Assad at a time Syria was getting terrorist state treatment.⁷⁶ It has been claimed that in the framework of this "opposing the Bush Administration" stance, Pelosi's ultimate aim in subjecting the Resolution 106 to a vote was to ensure the withdrawal of US troops from Iraq.⁷⁷ According to one newspaper, Turkey's refusal to let its airspace and the roads leading to Iraq be used by the US forces would adversely affect the combat ability of the US troops and, in the end, these troops would have to be withdrawn from Iraq. Also, the words⁷⁸ of Egemen Bağış, head of the Turkish Grand National Assembly delegation visiting the US (that the US lawmakers were trying to use the resolution as a tool to embarrass the US Administration in Iraq, Afghanistan) indicate that the resolution on the Armenian question concerned the domestic political rivalries in the US as well.

Immediately after the Committee passed the Resolution 106, probably due to the influence exerted by the White House and the State Department a flurry of comments criticizing the resolution and, therefore, the Democrats --and sometimes Pelosi-- began to appear in the American press. That turned into a kind of press campaign which went on until a full House voting on the resolution was postponed. (Meanwhile, there were pro-resolution and pro-Armenian press articles as well. However, these amounted roughly to one-fourth of the anti-resolution articles.) We cannot give examples of such articles here since that would take too much space. These articles said mostly that the resolution was not called for at a time Turkish cooperation was needed to ensure the safety of the US troops, complaining about bad timing. In most of these articles the genocide allegations were recognized. But there were also those that pointed out that, at the same time, contemporary Turkey and Turks are not responsible for the 1915 events, asked why Turkey alone should be condemned for the events of the past, and stressed that the Congress should not play the role of an arbiter on historical events since

76 Town Hall, DC, October 18, 2007.

77 The Conservative Voice N.C., October 13, 2007.

78 Anadolu Agency, October 13, 2007.

congressmen are politicians, and not historians or moralists.

At a press conference on October 16, President Bush criticized the Democrats for failing to pass a number of much-needed bills and said, “Congress has more important work to do than antagonizing a democratic ally in the Muslim world, especially one that’s providing vital support for our own military every day.” That increased the anti-resolution momentum. At the instigation of House Republican Whip Ray Blunt, a 44-strong bipartisan group of representatives sent Pelosi a letter in which they asked her not to put the resolution to a vote on the House floor.⁷⁹

House Appropriations Defense Subcommittee Chairman John Murtha, a ranking Democrat, staged a press conference to call for the resolution not to be presented to the House floor on the grounds that it “could jeopardize the United States’ relationship with one of its few supporters in the Middle East.” He said that 50 to 60 representatives would not vote in favor of the resolution. Also, he said that “many members were not clear as to what they were signing when they had co-sponsored (the draft)... which is why over a dozen have since pulled their endorsement.” That brought down the number of co-sponsors to around 214, that is, less than the simple majority.⁸⁰

These developments caused Pelosi to start speaking more cautiously. She said, “It will be up to the bill’s sponsors, led by Adam Schiff of California, to decide whether the resolution gets a vote in the full House this year.” Thus she avoided undertaking the responsibility for the resolution’s fate. Schiff, meanwhile, told reporters that he would not “ask Pelosi to keep her pledge if she decided that ... lacks enough votes to pass.”⁸¹ Newspapers reported that he would keep up his efforts to get support from lawmakers for the resolution.

American Armenians were worried about that anti-resolution climate. AAA Executive Director Bryan Ardouny on one hand accused Turkey of threatening the US⁸² and, on the other hand, said he was confident that there would be a bipartisan majority to support the resolution.⁸³ Arpi Vartanyan of the same organization said, “If House of Representatives ... votes down the Armenian Genocide

79 Earthtimes, UK, October 17, 2007.

80 The Hill, DC, October 18, 2007.

81 Bloombay, October 13, 2007.

82 The Hill, DC, October 18, 2007.

83 Los Angeles Times, October 18, 2007

resolution it will mean that it joins Turkey's denial campaign."⁸⁴ At that time even the awarding of the Congressional gold medal to Dalai Lama over the objections raised by China was seen as a good occasion to criticize President Bush. Led by Representative from California Adam Schiff who was continuing his efforts to have the Resolution 106 passed, six representatives, all of them members of the Armenian Caucus of the US Congress, issued a statement which boiled down to saying that since the Congress was opposing the Chinese Government's views about Dalai Lama, Turkey's objections to the Resolution 106 too should not be taken into consideration. Ardouny supported them, saying, "If we can stand up to China why we are afraid of standing up to Turkey?"⁸⁵ This argument, which sounds a bit weird, was countered by American Council on Foreign Relations member Steven Cook who pointed out that "unlike China, Turkey is an US ally."⁸⁶

As the opposition to the resolution grew --along with the possibility of its being killed in a vote— four⁸⁷ of the six original co-signers sent Pelosi a letter, saying, "We believe that a large majority of our colleagues will support the resolution recognizing the genocide, providing the timing is more favorable," and promising to "continue to work to plan for consideration sometime later this year, or in 2008." A spokesman for Pelosi said the chairman "respects the judgment"⁸⁸ and thus the vote on the resolution was postponed indefinitely.

In a statement he made on this issue the main defender of the resolution, Adam Schiff, blamed the Turkish lobby (the lobbying firms), claiming that the US State Department was helping them. When they presented the draft they did not doubt that they had adequate support, he said, adding, "... the worst thing would be that you take it up and you're not successful and Turkey argues that it's a denial of the genocide."⁸⁹

In a letter⁹⁰ he sent to House members, ANCA Executive Director Aram Hamparian said, in brief, "Turkey revealed itself to be an unreliable ally. The real danger is compromising American leadership. The facts of Armenian genocide

84 PanArmenian, Net, October 18, 2007

85 Armradio, October 18, 2007.

86 Whittier Daily News, October 18, 2007.

87 Adam Schiff, Frank Pallone, Brad Sherman and Anna Eshoo.

88 The New York Times, October 25, 2007

89 The New York Times, October 25, 2007.

90 ANCA Press Release, October 25, 2007.

are not in dispute.⁹¹ As the confusion over these threats lifts, an even stronger bipartisan majority will stand up against Turkey's intimidations and adopt this human rights resolution."⁹²

In his letter Hamparian said that the American Armenians "remain deeply appreciative" of Pelosi and the eight members⁹³ who made efforts to have the resolution passed. Thus he tried to exonerate them in the eyes of the Armenian voters.

AAA Executive Director Bryan Ardouny said, in a statement⁹⁴ he made well after the postponement of a full House vote on the resolution, that "the Armenian Assembly will continue its efforts to secure passage of the Armenian Genocide Resolution (H. Res. 106)", and he "encouraged community members to rally Congressional support. Ardouny noted that opponents no longer argue the facts of the Genocide. He stated however that they 'will always have an excuse ... America doesn't let any foreign government dictate what it can and cannot do.'"

To sum up, the Resolution 106, which was presented to the House thanks to the great efforts made by the American Armenians, has been suspended indefinitely. This result has been achieved thanks to the fact that the US Administration, President Bush especially, has taken a stance against the resolution. The first factor that made the US Administration oppose the resolution was the possibility that relations with Turkey would be disrupted, and the security of (or the transportation of supplies to) the US troops in Iraq and Afghanistan would be compromised. The second factor concerned domestic politics; there was the desire, by blocking this resolution, to push Pelosi and some other Democrats into a spot for having caused too many difficulties for the Bush Administration.

The weak spot in Turkey's efforts to block the path of that resolution was that by then Turkey had lost its credibility considerably about potential counter-measures. During the 2001 and 2006 crises –especially those involving France– resulting from the Armenian genocide allegations, the Turkish Government, the Turkish Grand National Assembly, certain professional organizations and non-governmental organizations had displayed a strong reaction⁹⁵ and there had been

91 ANCA Press Release, October 25, 2007.

92 ANCA Press Release, October 25, 2007.

93 Adam Schiff, George Radanovich, Frank Pallone, Joe Knollenberg, Brad Sherman, Ed Roycer, Anna Eshoo, Thaddeus McCotter.

94 AAA, Press Release, November 15, 2007.

95 For the 2001 crisis see: Ömer Engin Lütem, "Olaylar ve Yorumlar", *Ermeni Araştırmaları*, No: 1, 2001, pp. 10-25 and, for the 2006 crisis, Ömer Engin Lütem, "Olaylar ve Yorumlar", *Ermeni Araştırmaları*, No. 22, 2007,

statements to the effect that measures would be taken against France. However, in practice, Turkish-French relations were not affected except in the realm of certain arms and military equipment purchasing deals. Economic relations actually flourished. As we mentioned above the Armenians, including President Kocharyan, and their supporters, have underlined this point frequently. On the other hand, Turkey has been successful this time in persuading the US Administration that if the resolution were to clear the House floor that would trigger negative developments in Turkey-US relations. Meanwhile, the US Administration has let itself to be persuaded on this point without undue difficulty so as not meet with fresh difficulties in its Iraq policy and, also, to cause Pelosi and other Democrats to be criticized on a sensitive issue such as the security of the US troops.

Considering the efforts they have made, the outcome is a serious failure for the Armenians. The struggle they are waging against Turkey has suffered another failure when, at around the same time, the European Parliament refused to include the genocide allegations in its report on Turkey despite the Armenians' insistent demands. Despite these disappointments the Armenians will undoubtedly make fresh efforts at the US Congress at the first chance. In the year 2008 they may deem April 24 and the preceding or subsequent days suitable for a new attempt. On second thought, they may well have to wait a lot longer than that to find a suitable occasion since, by now, this issue has been linked to the security of the US troops in Iraq and Afghanistan.

If the Resolution 106 were to be passed by the House, similar bills would inevitably find their way into the agenda more easily in other countries. Now this seems to be a more distant possibility though not altogether impossible.

For the time being Turkey has managed to have the Resolution 106 suspended but, since there is a widely-held belief in the US to the effect that the Armenians had been subjected to a genocide, this issue will reappear on the agenda when the issue of the safety of the US troops no longer has to be taken into consideration. Under the circumstances, it is of primary importance for Turkey to continue urgently with the academic studies revealing the true face of the 1915 events.

III. ARMENIAN GENOCIDE ALLEGATIONS, AMERICAN JEWS AND ISRAEL

According to press reports⁹⁶ a number of Jewish organizations in the US opposed the Resolution 106 (that was presented to the US House of Representatives on January 30, 2007 to have the House recognize the Armenian genocide allegations) and, urged by the Turkish Jews, these organizations informed some influential members of the House that they were against it.⁹⁷ These included the Anti-Defamation League (ADL), an organization that was founded in 1913 and has a reputation for ensuring prosecution of anti-Semitic actions or statements.

ADL's National Director Abraham Foxman said, "The resolution takes a position. It comes to a judgment. Regarding the events of 1915, the Jewish community shouldn't be the arbiter of that story, and I don't think that the US Congress should be arbiter either."⁹⁸

American Armenians had an adverse reaction to these words. The town council of Watertown, a settlement near Boston accommodating some 8,000 Armenians, rescinded unanimously on August 20, 2007 its partnership of the "No Place for Hate", a program co-sponsored by the ADL. The decision was taken on the grounds that the ADL "denies as the fact the horrific Armenian Genocide that occurred from 1915 to 1923 in which the premeditated, systematic and deliberate killing of over 1.5 million Armenians took place."⁹⁹

Afterwards, the Massachusetts towns of Belmont, Arlington,¹⁰⁰ Newton, Needham, Newburyport and Bedford¹⁰¹ too withdrew from the "No Place for Hate" program.

Andrew H. Tarsy, the ADL director for the New England region who had defended Foxman until that moment, changed his mind all of a sudden, influenced by the Armenians. He began to say that the ADL should recognize the "Armenian genocide".¹⁰² As a result, Foxman dismissed him as the regional director.¹⁰³

96 Today's Zaman, April 26, 2007.

97 Jewish Telegraphic Agency, April 23, 2007.

98 Los Angeles Times, April 21, 2007.

99 Armenian National Committee of Eastern Massachusetts Press Release, August 15, 2007.

100 Jewish Telegraphic Agency, September 7, 2007.

101 Armradio, September 11, 2007.

102 Boston Globe, August 17, 2007.

103 Boston Globe, August 18, 2007.

In the wake of the Watertown town council decision, Foxman and the ADL came under fire not only from the Armenians but also from the Jews. His critics included Prof. James Russell who works on Armenian studies at Harvard University, Deborah Lipstadt¹⁰⁴ who is known for her works on genocide and Ronne Friedman, the rabbi of Boston.¹⁰⁵ Some Jewish members of the ADL terminated their membership in the organization.¹⁰⁶

Foxman issued a statement on August 21, 2007, saying, “In light of heated controversy that has surrounded the Turkish-Armenian issue in recent weeks, and because of our concern for the unity of the Jewish community at a time of increased threat against Jewish people, the ADL has decided to revisit the tragedy that befell the Armenians. We have never negated but have always described the painful events of 1915-1918 perpetrated by the Ottoman Empire against the Armenians as massacre and atrocities. On reflection we have decided that the consequences of these actions were indeed tantamount to genocide. If the word had existed then, they would have called it genocide.” Noting that he had consulted with Nobel laureate historians “who acknowledge this consensus”, he went on to say, “We urge Turkey to confront its past and reconcile with Armenia over this dark chapter of history.” A Congressional resolution on such matters would be counter-productive and would not foster reconciliation between Turks and Armenians and it “may put at risk the Jewish community in Turkey and the important multilateral relationship between Turkey, Israel and the US,”¹⁰⁷ he added.

Thus, shortly after he argued that the Congress and the Jewish community “shouldn’t be the arbiter of history to come to a judgment” on the Armenian question, Foxman performed an about-face, delivering judgment himself on a historical event.

Foxman’s statement drew reactions in Turkey. On the next day (August 22, 2007) Turkish Foreign Ministry spokesman said, in reply to a question that describing the events of 1915 as genocide was an act that had no historical or legal basis. Contrary to the allegations, there was no consensus among historians on this issue, he stressed. Turkey was yet to receive a positive answer to its proposition to create a joint commission of historians, the ADL decision to re-write history was self-contradictory, and that the rationale behind that decision could not be

104 Armenews, August 17, 2007.

105 Boston Globe, August 17, 2007.

106 AAA, Press Release, August 20, 2007.

107 ANCA, Press Release, August 21, 2007.

understood, he noted. He stressed that in Turkey the Jewish community was part of the society, that there was no reason for the members of that community to be worried about any developments concerning the Armenian allegations, that the statement was unfortunate for ADL and that it was expected to be corrected.¹⁰⁸

The Jewish Community in Turkey issued a statement, saying in brief that they were dismayed to learn that the ADL had changed its discourse, that they found it difficult to understand the developments taking place on this issue in the American public opinion or the differences of view between certain Jewish organizations. They expressed support for the Turkish thesis that the issue should be debated at an academic level with all of the parties concerned opening their archives, and that parliaments are not places where historical facts are to be determined by way of voting.

We too sent Foxman a letter the full text of which appeared in the August 27, 2007 issue of the daily bulletin of our Institute. In that letter we pointed out that the reason for the change in the ADL's long-held stance had not been disclosed. We stated that the statement –issued without proving the genocide allegations-- did not reflect the truth, that many renowned academics opposed the acknowledgement of the 1915 events as genocide, that there was a big difference between these events and the Jewish Holocaust, and that since the allegations had not been proven the ADL should review its statement in which it had said that the 1915 events were tantamount to genocide.

The letter agreed that the passage of the resolution would not foster reconciliation between the Turks and the Armenians and might adversely affect the relationship between Turkey, Israel and the US. On the other hand, it opposed Foxman's argument that the passage of such a resolution might put at risk the Jewish community in Turkey. The historical ties between the Turks and the Jews are deep-rooted, the Jews are respectable citizens of the Republic of Turkey, and this mostly affluent community benefits from all the freedoms under the protection of the republican laws, it stressed.

The letter recalled that Turkey had suggested to Armenia creation of a joint commission of historians to look into the 1915 events and no positive answer had been received from Armenia. It welcomed the fact that Foxman's August 21 statement contained expressions that indicated support for the Turkish proposal.

108 http://www.mfa.tr/MFA_tr/BasinEnformasyon/SoruCevap/2007/Agustos/SC33-23August

About ten days prior to that development President Ahmet Necdet Sezer had presented Profilo Holding Chairman Jak V. Kamhi with the state's extraordinary service medal with a ceremony attended by the highest state officials. In a letter to Foxman, Kamhi expressed his deep disappointment over the ADL statement. He rejected as absolutely untrue the argument that a consensus had been achieved among the historians as to the nature of the 1915 events. Reputable and serious historians did not accept the allegation that these events were genocide, he stressed. He said: "I cannot understand the rationale for the ADL's action in making a pronouncement on one side of a highly sensitive and delicate matter on which you appear to be either uninformed or uncaring." Saying that by comparing the 1915 events to the Holocaust, "You have committed a very great injustice to the memory and status of the Holocaust and to the people and government of my country," Kamhi pointed out that the statement, just as the resolutions presented to the Congress, would prevent contacts between Turks and Armenians and put at risk the relationship between Turkey, Israel and the US. He expressed the hope that "this unfortunate situation" would be corrected.¹⁰⁹

The ADL statement triggered adverse reactions from the Turkish press as well. Leading newspapers' headlines said: "They officially recognize the genocide allegations: Surprise support for the Armenian thesis"¹¹⁰, "Genocide goal scored",¹¹¹ "Jews that embraced Erdoğan hit Turkey in the back", "Embraces and hits from the back" (with a photo showing Foxman embracing Prime Minister Erdoğan)¹¹², "Jews to call it Armenian Genocide"¹¹³, "The Armenian Genocide rift among the Jews"¹¹⁴, "Jewish lobby in the US changing sides"¹¹⁵, "Ankara-Tel Aviv line tense: It would entail very high price"¹¹⁶, "Has Israel decided to forsake Turkey?"¹¹⁷, "Israel stands to lose more than Turkey."¹¹⁸

According to press reports, when Israeli Ambassador Pinhas Avivi paid him a farewell visit, Abdullah Gül, the then Foreign Minister, expressed his disappointment on this issue, urging the Israeli government to use its influence over the Jewish lobby in the US. The ambassador pointed out that Israel announced, in

109 Vatan, August 24, 2007.

110 Milliyet, August 23, 2007.

111 Sabah, August 23, 2007.

112 Vatan, August 23, 2007.

113 Akşam, August 23, 2007.

114 Zaman, August 23, 2007.

115 Radikal, August 23, 2007.

116 Sabah, August 24, 2007.

117 Sabah, August 24, 2007.

118 Vatan, August 24, 2007.

a written statement, that no change had taken place in its stance. Meanwhile, during a telephone conversation Prime Minister Erdoğan asked Israeli President Shimon Peres to voice the uneasiness being felt and to make certain suggestions to the Jewish lobby in the US. Peres replied by saying that they would do all they could.¹¹⁹ Meanwhile, Ambassador Namık Tan, who was spending his holiday in Turkey, returned to Tel Aviv.¹²⁰

In the face of the strong reactions coming from Turkey, Foxman felt the need to ease the situation. In a joint statement with the ADL's National Director Glen S. Lewy, he expressed support for Turkey's proposal to set up a joint commission to solve the dispute between the two sides. He expressed his conviction that many historians, human rights advocates and political leaders would be willing to devote their knowledge, abilities and judgmental powers to this issue. He noted that earlier that year Nobel laureate Elie Wiesel had called on Turkey and Armenia to take concrete steps towards a reconciliation. Meanwhile, it was noted that a week earlier Wiesel had stated that he would support creation of an institution by Turkish and Armenian experts to re-examine the shared history of the Turkish and Armenian peoples.¹²¹

Furthermore, in a letter to Prime Minister Erdoğan, Foxman said he deeply regretted that he had caused the Turkish people grief on this issue. They had never intended to hurt the feelings of the Turkish people and their leaders, he said, expressing their desire to deepen the friendship and to bolster the relationship.¹²²

Obviously Foxman's letter to Prime Minister Erdoğan was aimed at repairing the mistake that had been made. However, it did not contain any phrase that would indicate that they had decided against describing the 1915 events as a genocide. In other words, Foxman has not altered his stance on the issue that matters most to Turkey.

The ADL's embracing the Armenian allegations made the militant Armenians happy but they had a negative reaction to the ADL's opposition to the resolutions before the Congress. In a statement he issued on this subject, ANCA Executive Director Aram Hamparian said that they were worried about this desire to block the resolution at the Congress, and that "much remains in bringing the ADL fully to the right side of this issue."¹²³

119 Sabah, August 24, 2007.

120 Akşam, August 24, 2007.

121 For Elie Wiesel's initiative see, Ömer Engin Lütem, "Olaylar ve Yorumlar", *Ermeni Araştırmaları*, No. 25, pp. 25-29 and 135-153.

122 Hürriyet, August 24, 2007.

123 ANCA, Press Release, August 21, 2007.

In a newspaper article¹²⁴ on this issue, David A. Harris, the executive director of the American Jewish Committee, a leading US-based Jewish organization that has supported Turkey in general, gave a brief account of the respective stances of Turks and Armenians and stressed that due to Turkey's vitally important strategic position all US administrations had opposed a congressional decision on this issue. Then, commenting on the issue of what kind of stance the Jews should take on this subject, he used vague expressions such as "protecting historical truth ought to be on the top". However, the fact that he referred as credible figures to Henry Morgenthau (who was the US ambassador in Istanbul during the World War I and who accepted the genocide allegations) and Samantha Power (who serves as a professor at Harvard University and is a supporter of the Armenian theses), made it all too clear that he too believes the Armenian genocide allegations. On the other hand, he did say that he was in favor of the Turkish and Armenian historians coming together "to seek a common understanding of the past" and expressed his readiness "to help facilitate such an encounter".

The American Jewish Committee is not the only Jewish organization that recognizes the Armenian genocide allegations. There are others as well, first and foremost the Simon Wiesenthal Center known for hunting down in the wake of the World War II the persons who had organized the Holocaust. Also, Yad Vashem, a Jerusalem-based establishment that maintains Holocaust archives and museums, has accommodated the Armenian genocide allegations extensively in the course of its educational activities. The United States Holocaust Memorial Museum in Washington too engages in similar activities. At the Museum grounds, a wall panel summing up the Armenian genocide allegations –an issue not related to the main theme of the Museum-- has been on display towards the exit and, despite the efforts made by Turkish ambassadors it has not been removed all these years.

According to Armenian sources, there are more Jewish establishments that recognize the Armenian allegations including the Union of Reform Judaism, Americans for Peace Now, the Zionist Organization of America,¹²⁵ American Federation of Jews from Central Europe, American Jewish World Service, Center for Russian Jewry, Jewish Social Policy of Action Network, Jewish War Veterans of the USA, Jewish World Watch, Reconstructionist Rabbinical College, the Workmen's Center/Azbetar Ring, and the Jewish Community Relations Council of Greater Boston.¹²⁶ Though this seems to be quite a long list, these are only a part of the Jewish organizations in the US.

124 Jerusalem Post, August 21, 2007.

125 PanArmenian, September 7, 2007.

126 Armradio, September 8, 2007.

Interviewed by daily Zaman, Israeli President Shimon Peres shed light on his country's stance on this issue.¹²⁷ He said that he thought it was because of inter-organizational pressures the ADL had departed from its traditional path. "I hope they will return to their traditional position," he added. Then he quoted Foxman as saying that they would never support the resolution presented to the Congress and that they would support Prime Minister Erdoğan's proposal to have the issue examined by a commission comprising the historians of the two sides.

Peres was asked whether the change in the ADL's traditional position was a reaction to the Turkey-Iran relations or to Turkey's invitation to Hamas leader Ma-shad to visit the country. He said that he did not think so. The ADL does not have political goals and such organizations do not receive directions from Israel, he maintained.

Peres was then asked whether what the Armenians experienced in 1915 was comparable to what the Jews had experienced in Germany. He said, "No, I don't think you can compare them." He thought that Prime Minister Erdoğan's proposal for a commission of historians was reasonable. That way one would not make the mistake of adjusting the past to today's viewpoint, he added.

When asked whether Israel would change its position regarding the 1915 events, Peres said, "Israel is firm in its position."

Turkey kept up its efforts regarding the change in the ADL position via the Turkish ambassadors abroad as well.

As we mentioned above, Namık Tan, who cut short his holiday in Turkey and returned to Tel Aviv, told the Tel Aviv Post that Turkey's strategic partnership with Israel "involves the whole Jewish world." Stressing that the Turkish people could not differentiate between Israel and the Jewish organizations in the US, he said that these organizations coordinated their activities with those of Israel and that there was nothing Israel would not be able to achieve on certain issues.¹²⁸ In a more recent interview Tan said that the Israeli authorities' stance was being appreciated. They were being asked to explain to the American Jews that history must not be written merely on the basis of daily political considerations.¹²⁹ As you will see below, the Israeli President and Prime Minister had talks with some members of

127 Zaman, September 1, 2007.

128 Today's Zaman, August 28, 2007.

129 Trend (Azerbaijan), October 6, 2007.

the US House of Representatives but they could not prevent the passage of the resolution by the Committee.

Meanwhile, Turkey's Ambassador in Washington Nabi Şensoy told a Boston publication, the *Jewish Advocate*¹³⁰, that efforts to shed light on that period by examining the Ottoman, Armenian and other archives should be supported. It is for that purpose that Prime Minister Erdoğan suggested to President Kocharyan creation of a joint commission of historians, and that other countries including the US are invited to participate in the commission, he noted. However, Armenia failed to respond to that proposal. He went on to say, "In this context, the resolution in the Congress to pass judgment on the events of 1915 in the Ottoman Empire is an effort to rewrite history by a political organ." He noted that it was "heartening" that the ADL has reaffirmed that "this issue does not belong in a forum such as the United States Congress." He went on to say, "We maintain our strong desire to deepen our relationship with the Jewish community in the US, in Israel and around the world."

Referring to the Jewish community in Turkey, Şensoy said the Turkish Jewish community is "an integral part of the Turkish society". There has been "an exemplary relationship between Turks and Jews everywhere for over 500 years," and "We expect the Jewish organizations to stand against an act of great injustice to a friendly nation in the Congress," he added.

Meanwhile, Foxman, criticized by both Armenians and Jews, continued to defend himself on every occasion. In an article that appeared in the September 9, 2007 issue of the *Jerusalem Post*, he said, in brief, that the Armenians of Watertown had started a campaign in which they accused the ADL of "negating the genocide". He reiterated that, "in light of the heated controversy and because of our concern for the unity of the Jewish Community" the ADL reviewed its position and, in the end, came to share Elie Wiesel's view that the treatment the Armenians had received in the Ottoman Empire was tantamount to genocide.

The most significant thing about Foxman's article is the way he stressed that they were "listening to the views of the leaders of the Turkish Jewish Community ... when Jewish Communities around the world appeal to us on matters that may have an impact on their lives ... we pay attention."

130 *Jewish Advocate*, September 5, 2007.

What is to be understood from this vague reference is that the leaders of the Turkey's Jewish Community have appealed to the ADL, saying that their lives would be in danger in Turkey if the Resolution 106 were to be passed, and the ADL had to announce its opposition to the resolution though it did believe the genocide allegations.

It does not make sense to say that the Turkish Jew, who have nothing to do with the Resolution 106, would be adversely affected by the passage of that resolution. Furthermore, implying that such a negative turn would throw into jeopardy the lives of the Turkish Jews amounts to engaging in anti-Turkey propaganda. Striving to explain the why he recognizes the genocide allegations on one hand and he opposes the Resolution 106 on the other hand in such a self-contradictory manner, Foxman has made these meaningless statements. While trying to explain that, he engaged in demagoguery, using the rationale that both the Turkish Jews and Israel would be put at risk. He is obviously taking an exaggerated line – to the point of hurling accusations at others in an effort to save himself. He was exaggerating also when he spoke about Israel, claiming that Jewish people faced “the greatest challenge in decades,” and linking that to the Iranian “nuclear threat”. He failed, however, to explain how Iran, who does not have nuclear weapons, managed to threaten Israel, a country known to possess nuclear weapons.

During the visit he paid to the UN in late September, Prime Minister Erdoğan met with some 20 representatives of the Jewish Community in the US. He told them that the Armenian genocide allegations were not based on any academic or historical grounds, and that Turkey expected support from the Jewish Community against these allegations. He reminded them that Turkey had urged Armenia to accept the Turkish proposal for creation of a joint commission to look into the events of 1915.

Following that meeting Foxman replied to questions from the press. He tried to defend himself with such expressions as, “There may be disagreement between friends from time to time. This does not change friendship or deference.” He said that a problem related to history should be resolved between Turkey and Armenia, and not by any parliament. These statements were close to the Turkish thesis. On the other hand, he did not say that he no longer embraced the view that the 1915 events were tantamount to genocide.¹³¹

Foreign Minister Ali Babacan too took part in the drive aimed at persuading the

131 Turkishny, September 29, 2007 and NTVMSNBC, September 27, 2007.

Jewish organizations in the US. During his talks in Chicago he explained that passage of the resolution would adversely affect not only the Turkey-US relations but also the Turkey-Israel relations. The Armenian allegations should be tackled by historians and not by politicians, he stressed.¹³²

Babacan referred to this subject also during his visit to Israel in early October. He said that the problem should be solved by historians and not by the votes of the parliamentarians. The Turkish side is ready to accept the results to be reached by a commission comprising historians, he added.¹³³

Interviewed by the Jerusalem Post during that visit, Babacan dwelt on the negative implications of the “Genocide Resolution” clearing the House floor. Warning that these adverse effects would harm not only the Turkey-US relations but the Turkey-Israel relations as well, he said, “All of a sudden the perception in Turkey right now is that the Jewish people or the Jewish organizations and the Armenian lobbies are now hand in hand with the Armenian lobbies (Diaspora) trying to defame Turkey, and condemn Turkey and the Turkish people.” He said that if something went wrong in Washington that would inevitably affect the Turkey-US relations and the Turkey-Israel relations, adding that if Israel used its influence in Washington, Turkey would welcome that. Referring to the US-based ADL’s statement which indicated that it recognized the “genocide”, Babacan said that in the statements they made the Jewish organizations used the word genocide deliberately and too freely. “This is a problem for us. This offends Turkey,” he said.¹³⁴

During Babacan’s visit to Israel, President Peres, Prime Minister Olmert, Foreign Minister Tzipi Livni and Defense Minister Ehud Barak reportedly called a number of Jewish American figures, starting with House Foreign Affairs Committee Chairman Tom Lantos, and urged them not to have the Committee pass the resolution.¹³⁵

The Turkish Jewish Community sent to a number of media establishments in Washington a statement listing their reservations about the resolution.¹³⁶ As stated above, despite all these efforts the House Foreign Affairs Committee

132 Sabah, September 22, 2007.

133 Zaman, October 8, 2007.

134 Jerusalem Post, October 9, 2007.

135 Zaman, October 8, 2007.

136 Akşam, October 10, 2007.

passed the resolution on October 10, 2007 with 27 votes against 21. Of the eight Jewish American members of the Committee, seven voted in favor of the resolution.¹³⁷ The only Jewish American member who voted against the resolution was Representative from Florida Robert Wexler, co-chairman of the Caucus on US-Turkish Relations.

Committee Chairman Tom Lantos (California) tops the list of those Jewish American members that voted in favor of the resolution. The rest of the list is as follows: Gary Ackerman (New York), Eliot Engel (New York), Howard Berman (California), Brad Sherman (California), Ron Klein (Florida) and Gabrielle Giffords (Arizona).

After the Committee passed the resolution, the Israeli Government visibly made a greater effort to prevent it from being included in the agenda of the full House. In this context Shimon Peres personally called Nancy Pelosi and Tom Lantos to tell them that passage of the resolution would do great damage to the US and Israel and that it would no longer be possible to have Turkey-US relations based on strategic partnership.¹³⁸ Meanwhile, Prime Minister Olmert too is understood to have called some members of the House to make similar efforts.¹³⁹

Having explained the developments in this manner, now let us come to the differences that exist between the stances the Israelis and the Jewish Americans have taken in the face of the Armenian genocide allegations. There are differences also in the nature of the Israeli and the Jewish American efforts aimed at blocking the resolution's path.

Here are the factors that affect the way the Israelis and the Jews in the US and elsewhere perceive Turkey. Firstly, regardless of where they live, it is hard to say that the Jewish communities have great sympathy for Turkey and the Turks. The Jews' Islamophobia plays a major part in that. Excepts those in Turkey, the Jews have hardly been greatly impressed—or made grateful—by the fact that the Ottoman Empire had embraced the Jews five centuries ago or by the way that a number of Turkish diplomats had helped the Jews during the World War II or by the fact that no considerable anti-Semitic activity existed either under the Ottoman or the Republic of Turkey rule.

The changes that took place in Turkey's foreign policy in recent years, on the other

137 Turkish Daily News, October 15, 2007.

138 Hürriyet, October 19, 2007.

139 Milliyet, October 11, 2007.

hand, have caused exaggerated worries in Israel and among the Jewish Americans. Turkey, who displayed little interest in the Palestinians in the past, have, by now, become more sensitive towards Palestine, the Palestinian people and their problems – so much so that hosting in Ankara Meshal, a person whom Israel describes as a terrorist. Furthermore, Turkey has good relations with Iran, the country that is seen as the greatest threat to Israel. In the field of energy resources especially, Turkey and Iran are about to establish a promising cooperation. For Israel, the US policies and the US aid are vitally important whereas Turkey –although it agrees with the US policies in general-- is against the American plans for Northern Iraq, a region that closely concerns Turkey. Meanwhile, if the rumor that Israel is cooperating with the Kurds of Northern Iraq is then there is a deep disagreement between Turkey and Israel.

Regardless of where they live, the Jews are, understandably, very sensitive to issues related to genocide and crimes against humanity. The Armenian genocide propaganda which Turkey has not been able to prevent despite all its efforts, has affected the Jews as well, causing them to have an all the more negative view of Turkey and the Turks.

On the other hand, for Israel, Turkey is very important, in fact indispensable. This is because Turkey is the only Muslim country that engages in close cooperation with Israel; it has military might, a rapidly developing economy, and a foreign policy that parallels the US foreign policy with some exceptions.

Israel and the Jewish communities' behavior towards Turkey thus take shape under the influence of various factors, some of them negative (that is, negative according to them) and others highly positive.

As far as we know from press reports the Israeli public opinion has a negative view of Turkey (although not excessively so); but Israeli do admit the importance Turkey carries for Israel. The negative points, that is, the aspects that *they* consider to be negative, may be voiced behind closed doors and some former cabinet ministers such as Yossi Sarid happen to be supporting the Armenians but Israeli Governments have given primary importance to the establishment and maintenance of the cooperation with Turkey. The efforts Peres, Olmert and Barak have made to prevent the passage of the Resolution 106 were fresh proof of that.

Starting with those in the US, all Jews in the world have been influenced by the aforementioned “negativities”, especially the genocide allegations. Meanwhile,

they seem to be taking into consideration the “Turkey’s importance for Israel” factor less with each passing day.

In this framework the US-based Jewish organizations’ reactions to the Resolution 106 turned out to be different from one another. Some of them maintained the traditional Jewish stance and opposed the resolution on the basis of the Turkey-Israel relations. Another group which includes the ADL adopted a middle-of-the-road approach, recognizing the genocide allegations and opposing the resolution both at the same time. The third group, more populous but less influential than the first two groups, embraced the genocide allegations and supported the resolution. The rift among the Jewish organizations lessened their overall effectiveness.

Indeed, the fact that seven out of the eight Jewish American members of the House Foreign Affairs Committee voted in favor of the resolution shows that they had not taken into consideration the views of certain influential Jewish organizations, the ADL among them. On the other hand, the vote also showed that the Israeli government cannot make the US congressmen of Jewish origin heed its warnings. This situation causes a problem primarily for Israel and, from Turkey’s viewpoint, it proves that from now on it would not be right for Turkey to trust Israel and the Jewish Americans too much.

What kind of cooperation Turkey can engage in from now on with Israel and the US regarding the Armenian allegations?

The Israeli government is to continue opposing the genocide allegations directed at Turkey – basically not because it necessarily believes that the “Armenian genocide” did not occur but because Israel needs to cooperate with Turkey. If in the future this need abates the Israeli government will not oppose any move on the part of the Knesset to pass a resolution recognizing the Armenian genocide allegations. As we tried to explain above Israeli statesmen’s influence and effectiveness regarding the members of the US Congress about the genocide allegations is not strong.

Again as stated above the Jewish organizations in the US are divided on the Armenian Question and, as a result, they have become less effective than in the past.

As a result one could say that in the forthcoming days Turkey will not be able to get effective help to counter the Armenian allegations from either Israel or the

Jewish organizations in the US. Indeed, neither Israel nor the Jewish organizations had any effect on the postponement of a full House vote on the resolution. The postponement resulted entirely from the efforts of the US Administration, especially of President Bush.

It is also important to know why the Jews in general and the Jewish Americans in particular have lately come to uphold the Armenian genocide allegations. As we stated above, members of the Jewish community in the US have been affected by the intense Armenian propaganda. However, they do not seem to have understood clearly the goals towards which the Armenian allegations are put forth.

Currently, Elie Wiesel is considered to be the authority on genocide-related issues by the Jewish Americans. Wiesel has a prestigious place not only among the Jews but in the entire western world as well as a survivor of the German concentration camps for the Jews, as the author of many books on genocide and crimes against humanity, and, finally, as a winner of the Nobel Peace Prize.

Wiesel has embraced the Armenian genocide allegations and this has led to many other Jews in the US or other countries to believe these allegations. During a newspaper interview¹⁴⁰ in late October, Wiesel said, I have been fighting for the right of the Armenian people to remember for years and years. I believe the Armenians are the victims and, as a Jew, I should be on their side.”

Elie Wiesel was asked, “If the Armenians have a right to remember, don’t the Turks have an obligation to take some responsibility?” His reply was as follows: “No one is asking for the Turks to take responsibility. All the Armenians want is the right to remember. Seven generations separate us from the events that happened in World War I and nobody in his right mind would say that today’s Turks are responsible for what happened. The Armenians don’t want reparations; they don’t even want an apology. They want the right to remember. The Turks would gain a lot if they simply acknowledged the reality of what happened. I have spoken with Turkish leaders at the highest level and their attitude about this issue is totally irrational except for one thing which I do understand. They don’t want to be compared to Hitler. But of course, nobody does.”

As can be seen what Elie Wiesel is saying is that today’s Turks (Turkey) is not responsible for the events of 1915 and that the Armenians want not reparations

¹⁴⁰ Philadelphia Jewish Voice, October 28, 2007.

or an apology but the right to remember (that is, acceptance on the part of Turks that Armenians had been subjected to genocide).

His words were totally at odds with the usual Armenian rhetoric. In fact, Harut Sassounian, the best-known Armenian journalist in the US, promptly objected to these words.

Sassounian said, in his article¹⁴¹, “Contrary to Mr. Wiesel’s assertions, Armenians do not need anyone’s permission to remember or mourn their dead. Their right to remember has never been in question. It is also untrue that ‘seven generations separate us’ from the era of the genocide. There are still surviving eyewitnesses of the Armenian Genocide. Regarding Turkish responsibility, while Armenians do not blame today’s Turks for the killings, they do hold the Turkish state responsible for falsifying and denying the facts of the Armenian Genocide.”

Sassounian went on to say, “Mr. Wiesel is wrong in asserting that ‘Armenians don’t want reparations; they don’t even want an apology. They want the right to remember.’ The fact is that Armenians do not really care whether Turks apologize for the killings or not. Armenians do insist, however, on obtaining adequate restitution for the enormous damages they suffered. Why is it that the victims of the Holocaust are entitled to reparations and Armenians are not? In contrast to the Jews, Armenians were uprooted from their ancestral homeland losing their property, cultural heritage as well as their lives.”

Sassounian said, “Contrary to Mr. Wiesel’s expectations, and probably that of the Turkish government, there can be no reconciliation between Armenians and Turks without justice, which requires the return of the occupied lands and looted properties, and restitution for the 1.5 million murders.”

Thus, while Elie Wiesel says that for a reconciliation between Turks and Armenians it would suffice for Turkey to acknowledge the genocide allegations, Harut Sassounian does not consider that enough; he wants “the return of the occupied lands”. In other words he wants Turkey to cede territory to Armenia. Furthermore, he wants restitution of the property left behind by the relocated Armenians and compensation for the 1.5 million Armenians that were allegedly killed.

Here, a certain point must be underlined with special emphasis. It is with the

141 California Courier Online, October 1, 2007.

conviction that the Armenians are making highly limited demands to agree to a reconciliation with the Turks that Elie Wiesel has urged the Jews in the US and in other countries to recognize the Armenian allegations. He has managed to persuade them to a significant extent. Since the Armenians are making far more extensive demands it is obvious that Elie Wiesel has been wrong. Maybe he has been deliberately misled by some Armenian circles.

On this occasion let us remember that since the Kars Treaty remains in force there is no way the Armenians can make territorial demands in a legally valid manner. The Lausanne Treaty entitled those Ottoman citizens that left their homes during the war to get back their property upon their return but the statute of limitations for that expired long ago and it is not possible to demand restitution of such property now. And, finally, with the Protocol annexed to the Lausanne Treaty the crimes committed during the war with political or military purposes have been pardoned and payment of compensation for the Armenians killed during that period is out of the question.

IV. OTHER DEVELOPMENTS ON GENOCIDE ALLEGATIONS

In this section, we summarize the issues that were discussed in the second half of 2007 on Armenian genocide allegations except for aforementioned developments in the US. In this period there was no national parliament recognizing Armenian genocide allegations; however, there were several activities in some countries by some organizations regarding this matter.

1. Developments in the United Kingdom

There were three significant developments in United Kingdom in the period that we are dealing with: Erection of an Armenian monument in Wales, Canterbury Archbishop's recognition of genocide allegations and the reply of English government towards the demand of recognizing these allegations.

Wales' recognition of genocide allegations is quite old. The Prime Minister of Wales region, Rhodri Morgan put a garland, on April 24, 2001, at the Temple of Peace in Cardiff in memory of the "victims of Armenian genocide". Wales Parliament adopted a statement of opinion on October 30, 2001, with majority voting, in which Armenian genocide allegations were recognized and United Kingdom and Turkey was demanded to recognize it. What is more, Gwyndd

County Council (in 2004) and Cardiff City and County Councils recognized Armenian genocide allegations in 2005 due to Holocaust Day (January 27). Wales Free Churches Council did the same on April 24, 2005. Also, in 2006 and 2007, majority of Welsh members of the Parliament of UK adopted early day motions recognizing genocide allegations.¹⁴²

On November 3, 2007, at the Cardiff Temple of Peace garden, a *khachkar*-type Armenian “genocide” monument was erected. On the monument an inscription, “In memory of the victims of the Armenian Genocide” was written.¹⁴³ In the opening ceremony, Wales region First Minister Lord Elis-Thomas and Armenian Ambassador to London, Vahe Gabrielyan delivered speeches. Lord Elis-Thomas said that the cost of this monument was compensated by the Armenian community of Wales.¹⁴⁴ Hundreds of Armenians (in Turkish sources 300¹⁴⁵), some of which was said to come from Australia, attended to the ceremony.¹⁴⁶ Turks and Cypriot Turks in United Kingdom waged tremendous efforts to prevent the erection of this monument from the beginning; even almost one hundred Turks went to Cardiff for the ceremony; however, they were not allowed to enter the ceremony in the hall and garden of the Temple of Peace.¹⁴⁷ Turkish journalists were not allowed as well.¹⁴⁸

The head of Anglican Church, Canterbury Archbishop Rowan Williams visited Armenian Cathogigos Karekin II at Etchmiadzin by the end of September as a response to the visit of the latter to United Kingdom in 2004. In a joint declaration issued by Williams and Karekin II, it was stipulated that they, together with the members of Executive Committee of World Churches Union, attended to a special ceremony of prayer and recollection at the Memorial to the Armenian Genocide in Yerevan with the members of the Executive Committee of the World Council of Churches in a service of remembrance for the victims of genocide everywhere.¹⁴⁹

Williams delivered a speech in this ceremony and said that in the 20th century there were events of disgrace, brutal massacres of whole peoples on ethnic and religious grounds, which had been turned away of the rest of the world. He further

142 Wales-Armenia Solidarity, Press Release, September 24, 2007

143 South Wales Echo, November 3, 2007

144 Armenews, November 4, 2007

145 CNNTURK.com, November 3, 2007

146 Morning Star, November 7, 2007

147 Zaman, October 8, 2007

148 CNNTURK.com, November 3, 2007

149 Mother See of Holy Etchmiadzin, Press Release, September 26, 2007

complained the denial of the suffering of the victims throughout the 20th century and added that "...as the new century begins we shall learn to put behind us the cruelty and denial and learn to tell the truth".¹⁵⁰

As it can be seen, Williams did mention nothing about Turkey; however, everyone can understand what he really meant in saying these words. Archbishop tried not to conflict with the official position of the UK government, which will be mentioned below. But, in replying one of the questions of an Armenian journalist, he argued that he was one of the official authorities together with the Prime Minister of Wales that recognize the Armenian "genocide" and that he hoped, one day, this issue would be handled throughout the United Kingdom.¹⁵¹

On the other hand, Armenian militants in the United Kingdom within the framework of an organization called Armenian solidarity continued their efforts for the recognition of the Armenian genocide allegations. In this regard, with the mediation of English deputy Andrew George they visited the Minister of European Affairs, Jim Murphy, on October 16, 2007. After hearing the demands of Armenians, Minister Murphy said that he would examine the issue and would contact with other deputies.¹⁵²

As it was mentioned before, an early day motion numbered EDM 357 was submitted to the House of Commons.¹⁵³ The number of signatories of this motion increased to 175.¹⁵⁴ The text of the motion follows as: "That this House believes that the killing of over a million Armenians in 1915 was an act of genocide; calls upon the UK Government to recognize it as such; and believes that it would be in Turkey's long-term interests to do the same".

Another Armenian initiative in United Kingdom was a petition submitted to British government for the recognition of Armenian genocide allegations. The text of this petition follows as: "More than a million Armenians were massacred by the government of Ottoman Empire (now Turkey) in the twentieth century's first genocide. We the undersigned petition the Prime Minister and Her Majesty's Government to recognize the Armenian Genocide of 1915 because denial is "killing them twice"¹⁵⁵

The full text of the reply of the British government to this petition dated De-

150 Ekklesia, UK, October 3, 2007

151 Arminfo, September 25, 2007

152 Armenian Solidarity, Press Release, October 16, 2007

153 Ömer Engin Lütem, "Facts and Comments", *Review of Armenian Studies*, No: 13-14, 2007, pp. 36-37

154 Armenian Solidarity, Press Release, October 16, 2007

155 <http://petitions.pm.gov.uk/armeniangenocide/>

ember 8, 2007 is available in the web site cited in the footnote.¹⁵⁶ We had published before the press declaration issued by the Embassy of United Kingdom in Ankara in 2001.¹⁵⁷ The essence of both texts includes the phrase “neither this Government nor previous British Governments have judged that the evidence is sufficiently unequivocal to persuade us that these events should be categorized as genocide as defined by the 1948 UN Convention on Genocide, a convention which is, in any event, not retrospective in application.” However, the British government also labels the events that had taken place in 1915 as “an appalling tragedy”. The text of 2007 is different from the text of 2001 in some respects.

The first difference is the mentioning of the following phrase: “The British Government acknowledges and regrets the terrible events that afflicted the Ottoman Armenian population at the beginning of the last century, when over a million ethnic Armenian citizens of the Ottoman Empire were killed.”

The second difference is the stipulation envisaging a progressive approach “...to improve the chances for reconciliation between Armenian and Turkish people and to achieve a peaceful and secure future for everyone living in the region.” In order to achieve this, it was offered that the governments of Armenia and Turkey should improve co-operation, economic development and understanding between their countries.

The third difference is the demand from Turkey of demonstrating its commitment to good neighborly relations and undertaking to resolve border disputes. It was determined that the advancement of accession negotiations would be guided by progress made in these, and other areas.

To sum up, United Kingdom continues to label 1915 events as massacres not as genocide. However, it was begun to be argued that more than one million people had been massacred, although how that number was reached remained unclear. Reconciliation of Turkish and Armenian people was tied to the development of cooperation, economic development and mutual understanding between two countries. What is more, advance of accession negotiations between Turkey and European Union was somehow linked to development of good neighborly relations with Armenia and resolution of border disputes (meaning opening of the border). These articulations are close to Armenian perceptions.

To conclude, it can be said that the British government tried to establish a bal-

156 <http://petitions.pm.gov.uk/armeniangenocide/>

157 *Ermeni Araştırmaları*, No. 26, ss. 268-269

ance between non-recognition of genocide allegations and an indirect support towards some of the Armenian views.

2. Developments Regarding Iran

Iranian President, Mahmud Ahmedinejad went Yerevan for a two-day official visit on October 22, 2007. After he met President Kocharian and after a joint press conference, he visited Yerevan State University and made a short speech there, after which he answered the questions of the audience. Meanwhile, to a usual question regarding what position Tehran holds with regard to the issue of the Armenian genocide he answered that they condemned any violation of human rights¹⁵⁸. He added that Iran's position in this regard rested on two principles: "The first principle is that each nation should remember its history but face the future and this must not lead to repetition of the past. Second, Iran will always be by Armenia's side"¹⁵⁹. As it can be seen, these statements were welcomed by the audience; however, they were not the answer of the question that had been asked. It can be said that Ahmedinejad did not want to dwell upon this issue considering Turkish-Iranian relations.

Later, Iranian President was awarded with honorary doctorate. This event was condemned by Jewish¹⁶⁰ and Armenian¹⁶¹ press in the US because of Ahmedinejad's non-recognition of the Holocaust.

It was planned that in the coming day, Ahmedinejad would visit the Speaker of the Armenian Parliament, make a speech in the Parliament, then visit the Genocide Monument and the mosque in Yerevan, and meet the Iranian community in the city. However, he left Armenia after visiting the Speaker of Armenian Parliament, Tigran Torosyan. Torosyan argued that this situation resulted from some internal developments in Iran while Foreign Minister Oskanian tried to conceal the issue through such statements like "[r]elations between the two countries are so friendly that don't think such protocol issues are a problem." He did not admit that Ahmedinejad left Yerevan earlier not to visit the Genocide Monument.¹⁶²

However it is difficult to find another reason for Ahmedinejad's cutting his visit

158 Noyan Tapan, October 23, 2007

159 PanArmenian.Net, October 22, 2007

160 Baltimore Jewish Times, October 29, 2007

161 Armenian Reporter, October 27, 2007, Armenian Weekly, October 27, 2007

162 RFE/RL, October 25, 2007

to Yerevan short. The statement of the Speaker of Armenian Parliament on the internal developments in Iran was not affirmed. It was possible that the Iranian President did not want to disturb his prospective visit to Turkey by visiting Genocide Monument and that this would be perceived as an excuse for not to visit Anıtkabir in Ankara.

Except for the resentment for not visiting the Genocide Monument, it can be said that Ahmedinejad's visit to Armenia was considerably fruitful. Two countries were agreed on establishment of a refinery in Southern Armenia, a hydroelectric power plant on Arax River, a railroad connecting two countries and finishing the natural gas pipeline from Iran to Armenia next year.¹⁶³

3. Developments in Bulgaria

It is known that the Armenian community in Bulgaria is very active for the recognition of genocide allegations in Bulgaria and that these Armenians are supported by both extreme rightist parties and the Bulgarian Orthodox Church.

Within this framework, on October 4, 2007, Community Council of Plovdiv in Bulgaria adopted a resolution appealing to the National Assembly of Bulgaria to recognize the genocide committed against Armenians in the Ottoman Empire between 1915 and 1923.¹⁶⁴

Furthermore, the Synod of Bulgarian Orthodox Church sent a letter to Armenian Cathogigos Karekin II on December 4, 2007, expressing deep sorrow in connection with the the Armenian Genocide, which happened in 1915. In the letter, it was also argued that the Ottoman Empire subjected the Bulgarian people and church to severe persecution for five centuries.¹⁶⁵ We would touch upon the visit of Bulgarian Prime Minister Stanishev to Armenia in the coming pages.

We previously mentioned that a draft resolution submitted to Bulgarian Parliament on the recognition of genocide allegations was dropped through the efforts of the Movement of Rights and Freedoms, a coalition partner composed mainly of the Turks.¹⁶⁶ A new draft resolution prepared by extreme rightist ATAKA party, which had also afforded the aforementioned initiative, was presented to the

163 RFE/RL, October 25, 2007

164 Noyan Tapan, October 17, 2007

165 Noyan Tapan, December 10, 2007

166 Ömer Engin Lütem, Facts and Comments, *Review of Armenian Studies*, No. 10, 2006, pp. 32-34

Bulgarian Parliament; however, it was rejected by 63 votes against 50 on January 17, 2008. Therefore this party was unsuccessful third time.¹⁶⁷

However, 60 abstentions and rejection of the draft by only 13 votes shows that this issue would be brought to the agenda of the Bulgarian Parliament once more. The probability of recognition of Armenian genocide allegations in the Bulgarian Parliament is high in case of the formation of a coalition government excluding Movement of Rights and Freedoms.

4. Developments in Denmark

Morgen Messerschmidt, a deputy of extreme rightist Denmark People's Party asked a question to the government on whether Denmark had officially recognized the Armenian genocide. Danish Foreign Minister Per Stig Moeller replied to this question that the Danish government perceived that, this is a historical question that should be left up to the historians.¹⁶⁸

This answer shows that Danish government had determined a clear stance on this issue and preferred not to intervene any discussion on Armenian genocide allegations which has not interested themselves. On the other hand, this stance indirectly supports Turkish argument of examination of genocide allegations by a joint commission of historians.

5. MERCOSUR

The parliament of an intergovernmental trade organization, MERCOSUR, which had been established by Argentine, Chile, Uruguay and Paraguay in Latin America, issued a declaration on November 19, 2007, stipulating that¹⁶⁹:

“The Parliament of MERCOSUR condemns the genocide committed by Ottoman Turkey from 1915-1923 which took the lives of one-and-a-half million people. The Parliament expresses its support to the righteous cause of the Armenian people. The Parliament also appeals to governments and parliaments, which have not recognized and condemned the Armenian genocide, to adopt similar decisions.”

It can be said that it is meaningless for a parliament of a trade organization like

167 Bugün, January 18, 2008

168 Agence France Presse, January 10, 2008

169 Armenian National Committee of Canada, Press Release, November 22, 2007

MERCOSUR to decide on such a matter and that this declaration has no additional significance since the national parliaments of Argentina, Chile and Uruguay had formerly adopted resolutions recognizing genocide allegations.

6. Ethiopian Orthodox Church

Another significant development regarding genocide allegations was the visit of Cilician Armenian Patriarch situated in Antelias near Beirut, Aram I, to Addis Ababa, the capital of Ethiopia. In this visit, in a joint declaration with the Patriarch of Ethiopian Orthodox Church, Abune Paulos, he emphasized the importance of the first genocide of the 20th century, namely the Armenian genocide and the last one, namely the Rwandan genocide.¹⁷⁰

7. The Visits to the Genocide Monument and Museum in Yerevan

As mentioned before, those official visitors to Armenia were invited by protocol officials to visit the Genocide Monument and Museum. Most of them made such visits for courtesy; however these gestures were perceived by the Armenian press as that these countries are to recognize the Armenian “genocide”.

According to the administration of Armenian Genocide Monument and Museum, significant personalities visiting the Genocide Museum in the second half of 2007 are as follows:

27 June 2007: Greek President Karolos Papulias¹⁷¹. Since Greece recognized genocide allegations in 1996, Papulias’ visit was expected.

6 September 2007: First Secretary of French Socialist Party François Hollande. Since it was thought that French Socialists had been the architects of the 2001 law recognizing Armenian genocide allegations and 2006 draft law aiming to punish denial of Armenian genocide, which had been adopted by the French Parliament and sent to Senate for adoption, such a visit was quite understandable.¹⁷²

19 September 2007. Chairman of Foreign Affairs Committee of Italian Parliament, Umberto Rainier and accompanying officials.¹⁷³ As it is known, Italian Parliament had recognized genocide allegations in 2000.

170 Catholicosate of Cilicia, Press Release, July 11, 2007

171 http://www.genocide-museum.am/delegation_003.html

172 http://www.genocide-museum.am/delegation_003.html

173 http://www.genocide-museum.am/delegation_003.html

25 September 2007. Canterbury Archbishop Rowan Williams.¹⁷⁴ We had previously commented on this visit.

10 October 2007. Romanian Minister of Defense Teodor Melescanu¹⁷⁵. There was no resolution adopted by the Romanian Parliament recognizing Armenian “genocide”. What is more, considering the efforts of Romanian President Triian Basescu for not disturbing Turkey on that matter¹⁷⁶, explaining Malescanu’s visit is difficult.

20 October 2007. The Mayor of Marseilles and Vice-President of French Senate Jean-Claude Gaudin.¹⁷⁷ Together with Paris and Lyon, Marseilles is one of the French cities in which there is a considerable Armenian community. Gaudin was renown for his support to Armenians and he openly declared that he would vote affirmatively for the resolution for the punishment of the denial of Armenian “genocide”, if it would be brought to the agenda of the Senate.

22 October 2007. The Mayor of Nice, Senator Jacques Peyrat. The Mayor of Yerevan Yervand Zaharian Peyrat responded to this visit by going to Nice in November and offered to erect a khachkar to in a park in this city called “Armenian Garden”.¹⁷⁸

23 October 2007. Greek General Chief of Staff General Dimitros Grapsas. He wrote to the special guestbook: “I add my voice to the voices of Thousands of Armenians and say “no” to genocide” I hope such events will not reoccur in the future”¹⁷⁹

26 October 2007. Ministers of Education of Commonwealth of Independent States who were present at Yerevan for a conference.¹⁸⁰ It is interesting that Ministers of Education from Kazakhstan, Kirghizistan and Tachikistan did not refrain from visiting this monument.

8 November 2007. Chairwoman of Swiss National Council Mrs. Christine

174 http://www.genocide-museum.am/delegation_003.html

175 http://www.genocide-museum.am/delegation_003.html

176 Ömer Engin Lütem, “Facts and Comments”, *Review of Armenian Studies*, No. 11-12, 2007, p.18

177 Ömer Engin Lütem, “Facts and Comments”, *Review of Armenian Studies*, No. 11-12, 2007, p.18

178 Noyan Tapan, November 28, 2007

179 Armradio, October 22, 2007

180 <http://www.genocide-museum.am/delegation.html>

Egerszegi-Obrist¹⁸¹: It is known that the Swiss Parliament had recognized Armenian genocide allegations in 2003

11 November 2007. General Secretary of Council of Europe, Terry Davis¹⁸². He wrote to the special guestbook: “We must never allow such terrible things happen again anywhere in the world”. Since Council of Europe has no decision on Armenian genocide allegations and since his home country, United Kingdom, has no such resolutions either, Terry Davis should not have visited the Genocide Monument.

13 November 2007. Latvian Minister of Defense Juozas Olekas. The Minister gave a speech to the journalists and said that he was impressed from what he had seen in the museum. He added that his family was exiled by the Soviets and he was born in Siberia. He argued that such sorrows should not be forgotten, but it was still necessary to look forward.¹⁸³

14 November 2007. Bulgarian Prime Minister Sergey Stanishev. He put a garland to that monument in an official visit to Armenia and wrote in the special guestbook: “Let’s remember the past, live with the present and believe in the future, since the memory of the past is the best impulse of building future.”¹⁸⁴

8.Erection of New Monuments and Khachkars

As mentioned before, the efforts of Diaspora Armenians for the erection of “*khachkars*” (big crosses made of stone) continues.

Within this context, in the opening ceremony of a *khachkar* erected in Rome on October 10, 2007, for commemorating the Armenian “genocide”, Armenian Vice-Minister of Foreign Affairs Armen Baydurdian, Armenian ambassador in Rome, Şugaryan, and some other Italian officials, whose name were not given, were present.¹⁸⁵

Another *khachkar* was erected in Avignon, France on October 8, 2007, in a ceremony participated by the Mayor of Avignon, Mrs. Marie-Josée Roig and

181 <http://www.genocide-museum.am/delegation.html>

182 Armenian Genocide Museum & Institute, November 4, 2007

183 Armenews, November 23, 2007

184 Armradio, November 14, 2007

185 Armenews, October 13, 2007

Armenian ambassador to Paris, Edward Nalbandyan. It was stipulated that this monument represented not only the Armenian genocide allegations, but also all genocide victims and those died for the freedom of France.¹⁸⁶

Meanwhile, after long debates since 2000 regarding erection of a monument commemorating Armenian “genocide” in Rose Fitzgerald Kennedy Park, Boston, US, it was finally decided to prepare a plate for all the immigrants, which included the expression of “Armenian genocide”. It was understood that Armenian Heritage Foundation demanded erection of a monument in expense for its contributions to the construction of the aforementioned park; however, as a result of the reaction of the Turkish community and some other ethnic groups, it was decided to prepare such a plate.¹⁸⁷

There were also some news in the Armenian press stipulating that it was thought to erect a monument, due to the demand of Armenian, Greek and Assyrian organizations, in Södertälje region of Stockholm, Sweden, for “750.000 Assyrian, 400.000 Greek and 1.500.000 Armenian victims of genocide perpetrated by the Turks”. However, again, Turkish community strongly reacted to this project.¹⁸⁸

9. The Activities of the International Association of Genocide Scholars

In a resolution adopted on December 15, 2007, The International Association of Genocide Scholars (IAGS) argued that the Ottoman “genocide” against minority populations during and following the First World War is usually depicted as a “genocide” against Armenians alone. It also stipulated that, in fact, the Ottoman campaign against Christian minorities of the Empire between 1914 and 1923 constituted “genocide” against Armenians, Assyrians, and Pontian and Anatolian Greeks. It added that the IAGS calls upon the government of Turkey to acknowledge the genocides against these populations, to issue a formal apology, and to take prompt and meaningful steps toward restitution.

It was expected from this organization, which was founded in 1994, to make research or to encourage existing researches on the concept of genocide. Indeed, the first article of the statute determines the aim of the organization as “...to further research and teaching on the causes, conditions and effects of genocide as a worldwide phenomenon and advance policy studies on prevention and intervention.”

¹⁸⁶ Armenews, December 11, 2007

¹⁸⁷ Boston Globe, November 17, 2007

¹⁸⁸ Gamk, December 4, 2007

However, there was no regular and continuous activity of the organization on these matters. Since the records of biannual conferences of the organization are unavailable, it was difficult to reach a conclusion on the aims and achievements of the organization. Those, who attended the latest conference of IAGS on July 9-13, 2007, at Sarajevo, said that although its main topic was the genocide perpetrated in Bosnia, Armenian genocide allegations and the efforts to broaden the scope of the concept of genocide came to forefront. In other words, the conference was overshadowed by political aims.

Some awards presented in the conference verified this stipulation. Ragip Zarakolu, the owner of Belge Publishers, was awarded because of “his magnificent contributions to the struggle against denial of Armenian genocide as well as all other genocides.” What is more, former American ambassador to Yerevan, John Evans, was awarded as well due to his demand from Armenian government to recognize the Armenian genocide allegations.

The second indication that the organization supported Armenian genocide allegations and worked for their recognition is that four out of eight resolutions that it adopted since its foundation were about Armenian allegations.¹⁸⁹

In the first resolution adopted in 1997, it was argued that 1915 events could be considered as a case of “genocide”, which conforms to the UN Convention on Genocide. However, in order to call an incident as genocide, it must comply with the conditions stipulated in the Convention. This can only be determined through a competent tribunal (of the state in the territory of which the act was committed, or by such international penal tribunal as may have jurisdiction with respect to those Contracting Parties which shall have accepted its jurisdiction). What is more, in order to comply with the Convention (and to produce legal results) the incident should have taken place after the adoption of the Convention which defines this crime itself. Because, due to the principle of legality, there can neither be crime nor punishment without law. Therefore, there shall be no legal validity of labeling an alleged incident happened during World War I as genocide, as depicted in the Convention. Hence, 1997 Resolution of the organization is legally meaningless and could produce no sanction.

However still, within the context of freedom of expression academicians can de-

189 Two of other four resolutions were on Darfur, one on Zimbabwe and the last one on the Iranian President Ahmedinejad's denial of Holocaust. For the full texts of these resolutions see <http://genocidescholars.org/resolutionsstatements.htm>

clare their views on whether an incident can be labeled as genocide or not. In this case, these views should be substantiated and justified, whereas, there was no such justification in the 1997 Resolution of the organization.

It should be remembered that Prime Minister Erdoğan offered in a letter dated April 14 2005 sent to President Kocharian to form a group comprised of historians and other specialists of the two countries, to investigate the developments and events related to the 1915 period.¹⁹⁰ President Kocharian, on the other hand, de facto refused this offer by giving precedence to normalization of bilateral relations.¹⁹¹

The second resolution¹⁹² of IAGS dated June 13, 2005, was about this issue and penned as a letter addressing Prime Minister Erdoğan. In this letter, it was written that it is not just Armenians who are affirming the Armenian “genocide” but the overwhelming opinion of scholars who study genocide. What is more, it argued scientific proofs demonstrated that more than a million Armenians were exterminated and this situation was documented by thousands of official records of the United States, Germany, Austria-Hungary, by Ottoman court-martial records and testimonies of missionaries and diplomats. It was further asserted that those who were arguing that 1915 events could not be labeled as genocide were affiliated with the state controlled institutions, and are not impartial. Finally, it was written that it was in the interest of the Turkish people and their future to acknowledge the responsibility of a previous government (namely the government of Committee of Union and Progress).

It is not accurate to say that all academic circles recognize 1915 events as genocide. There are those non-Turkish academicians opposing this view. Arguing that they are affiliated with the state controlled institutions and that they are not impartial is disrespect to a world-wide famed historian, Bernard Lewis and those esteemed academicians such as Stanford Shaw, Günter Lewy and Justin McCarthy.

Basic documents of 1915 events are Ottoman archives. Some other archives touched upon in this letter and testimonies were secondary sources which had been produced out of hearsay, not personal observation.

Ottoman martial courts founded after World War I was renowned as a parody of

190 Ömer Engin Lütem, “Facts and Comments”, *Review of Armenian Studies*, No. 7-8, 2005, p. 133

191 Ömer Engin Lütem, “Facts and Comments”, *Review of Armenian Studies*, No. 7-8, 2005, p. 134

192 Ömer Engin Lütem, “Facts and Comments”, *Review of Armenian Studies*, No. 9, 2006, pp. 40-41

justice. Even the British did not rely on these courts and expelled Ottoman statesmen to Malta to try them in their own courts. However, they had to set them free because of the insufficiency of proofs.

The third resolution of IAGS, dated October 5, 2005, was on the draft resolution no. 106 submitted to US House of Representatives and penned as a letter addressing the Chairman of Foreign Affairs Committee of the House, Tom Lantos. It argued for the adoption of this resolution.

The fourth resolution of the IAGS was the aforementioned resolution arguing that the Ottoman Empire committed the crime of genocide not only towards the Armenians but also towards Assyrians and Pontic and Anatolian Greeks. It was dated December 15, 2007, and demanded Turkish government to recognize all these “genocides”, to pardon for these crimes and to pay compensations. There was no justification of this resolution either. On the other hand, since the organization was not a subject of the international community it has no legal right to demand something from a government.

In sum, although there are some prominent figures¹⁹³ among the members of the organization it can be said that the activities of IAGS is more political than academic and especially favoring the perceptions of Armenian diaspora.

193 Among these names were Gregory H. Stanton (Chairman), Israel Charny (Former Chairman), Roger W. Smith (Former Chairman, President of Zoryan Institute), Steven Leonard Jacobs, Alex Hinton, Marc, I. Sherman, Joyce Apsel, Peter Balakian, Ben Kiernan, Henry Theriault, James Farmer,

DECREE OF APRIL 24, 1915 AND ARMENIAN COMMITTEE MEMBERS ARRESTED IN İSTANBUL *

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Abstract:

This article aims to reveal what had exactly happened in April 24, 1915, which has been accepted as the "Armenia genocide remembrance day" by those who supported Armenian genocide allegations. According to archival documents, at that day, what had happened was not a genocide or a massacre but the closure of Armenian revolutionary committees and arrest of 235 prominent Armenian committee members for their activities against the state. This article tries to examine how these arrests were made, how these committee members were submitted to forced settlement or imprisonment in some cities in Central Anatolia such as Çankırı and Ayaş, and which decisions were taken for them.

Key Words: *Armenian genocide allegations, 24 April 1915 decree, Armenian committees, arrests.*

INTRODUCTION

As it is known, April 24 is a day which Armenians commemorate as the "Genocide Day". What did in fact happen on April 24, 1915, which was accepted as "commemoration day of the Armenian genocide" by many countries' parliaments including US and European countries? Here in this article, after a short introduction, the reality of April 24 and the arrests made in Istanbul on that day will be assessed on the basis of archival documents.

The aim of history is to display the events with their causal connection and close

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to the reality as possible based on documentary evidence and to leave the value judgment to the reader. Especially, when the historical event in hand affects today and future as it affected the past, the situation necessitates more attention and objectivity. This objectivity is ensured by applying to the documents, which have an important place among the sources that history refers; because documents are the most reliable witnesses of the history. All the conclusions reached in the absence of these witnesses should be evaluated as questionable. For this reason, it is a must to rely on archives while searching on past events. Scientific works relying on archives will eliminate biased political approaches sprang from prejudices and tendentious information.

As a matter of fact, when the archival documents are evaluated as a whole, it is obvious that Armenian question, making its mark on the last fifty years of the Ottoman Empire, gained international nature with the Berlin Treaty and, as a result of this, with the support of Great Powers, Armenian nationalists intensified their armed operations through establishment of revolutionary-armed parties and organizations inside and outside the Empire after 1890.¹ Between 1890 and 1914, Armenian organizations revolted more than 40 times from Eastern Anatolia to Mediterranean, from Central Anatolia to Istanbul.² There were two important reasons for Armenian organizations in choosing terror as a way of struggle. First of all, despite they followed the same path as Serbs, Greeks and Bulgarians, who attempted independence movements prior to themselves, they did not have majority in any part of the Empire.³ For this reason, Armenian nationalists tried to establish majority through massacring Ottoman-Muslim majority or pressing them to emigrate from the regions they aimed at founding their independent state. Secondly, by propagandizing the events as Armenian massacre, they tried to ensure military and political intervention of Western countries. In this vein, Great Powers both began inserting pressure on Ottoman state to make reforms in favor of Armenians and also encouraged Armenian nationalists to revolt against the Empire.⁴ The pressures of Great Powers on the Ottoman Empire to engage

1 For Armenian organizations see, *Ermeni Komiteleri (1891-1895)*, Prime Ministry State Archives Publications, Ankara, 2001; Esat Uras; *Tarihte Ermeniler ve Ermeni Meselesi*, 2nd Edition, Istanbul, 1987, pp. 421-457.

2 Prime Ministry State Archives (BOA), Yıldız Principal Documents (Y. EE), No: 7/2; 179/5.

3 For broad information on the Armenian population in Ottoman state please look: Kemal Karpat, *Ottoman Population (1830-1914), Demographic and Social Characteristic*, New York, 1985; Justin McCarthy, *Muslims and Minorities: The Population of Ottoman Anatolia and the End of the Empire*, New York/London, 1983; *Memalik-i Şahane'nin 1330 Senesi Nüfus İstatistiği*, Dersaadet 1336; Hikmet Özdemir and et.al.; *Ermeniler: Sürgün ve Göç*, Turkish Historical Society Publications, Ankara, 2004, p. 5-52.

4 For more information see, *Osmanlı Belgelerinde Ermeni-Fransız İlişkileri*, Volumes I-III, Prime Ministry Directorate of State Archives Publications, Ankara, 2002; *Osmanlı Belgelerinde Ermeni-İngiliz İlişkileri*,

in reform for Armenians continued until the beginning of the World War I.⁵ Accordingly, it should be noted that in the events occurred during the 37 years period prior to World War and the Armenian relocation, Great Power's policies played a considerable role.

The outbreak of World War I and the entrance of Ottoman Empire to the war against Allied States together with Germany were seen as a great opportunity by Armenian nationalists to establish independent Armenia. Armenians, forearmed until World War I, collaborated with the Allies, especially with Russia after the outbreak of the war in order to establish independent Armenia through waging war against Ottoman Empire of whom they have citizenship. In parallel to the defeat of Ottoman army in Sarıkamış and following attack by British and French to Gallipoli, Armenian committee members attempted to stab Ottoman army in the back and cut the channels of supply; and they began armed insurgence.⁶

Ottoman Empire first tried to conciliate Armenians through preliminary warnings. In fact, it was declared by Talat Pasha to Erzurum deputy Varteks and renowned members of Tashnak Committee and by Enver Pasha to Armenian Patriarch that the Ottoman state would have to take sharp measures in the case of Armenian attempt to rebel and betray.⁷ Despite these warnings, Armenian deputies of Ottoman Parliament, Vahan Papazyan, Karakin Pastırmacıyan and Viramyan went to Caucasus similar to thousands of volunteers and took the field against Ottoman army. On the other hand, assassination attempt against Talat Pasha organized by Hinchak leader Sabah Gülyan was prevented at the very last minute by the capture of the gunmen.⁸

Volumes I-IV, Ankara, 2004, 2005; *Osmanlı Belgelerinde Ermeni-Rus İlişkileri*, Volumes I-III, forthcoming.

- 5 For more information see, Münir Süreyya Bey, *Ermeni Meselesinin Siyasi Tarihçesi (1877-1914)*, Prime Ministry Directorate of State Archives Publications, Ankara, 2001, Ercüment Kuran "Ermeni Meselesinin Milletlerarası Boyutu", *Yeni Türkiye*, Vol. 37, January-February 2001, pp. 235-244 and Ali Karaca, *Anadolu Islahatı ve Ahmet Şakir Paşa (1838-1899)*, İstanbul, 1993.
- 6 Armenians formed voluntary troops in the beginning of World War I and joined to Russian army in order to fight against Ottoman army of which they had citizenship. At the Eastern Anatolia region they massacred Muslims. For the massacres done in the 1914 and in the first half of 1915 in Kars, Ardahan, Van, Bitlis and etc., see, *Ermeniler Tarafından Yapılan Katliam Belgeleri*, Volume I, Prime Ministry Directorate of State Archives Publications, Ankara, 2001, Moreover for the cooperation of Armenians with Russia, Britain and France see, Özdemir and et.al, *Ermeniler: Sürgün ve...*, pp. 58-60; Recep Karacakaya, *Türk Kamuoyu ve Ermeni Meselesi (1908-1923)*, İstanbul, 2005, pp. 237-248.
- 7 Alpay Kabacalı (ed.), *Talat Paşanın Anıları*, İstanbul, 1991, p. 71; *Ermeni Komitelerinin Amal ve Harekat-ı İhtilaliyesi, İlan-ı Meşrutiyetten Evvel ve Sonra*, İstanbul, 1332, pp. 235-237.
- 8 For this assassination attempt see, *Arşiv Belgeleriyle Ermeni Faaliyetleri*, General Staff Publications, Ankara, 2006.

Ottoman government, at the beginning of the World War I, tried to prevent the events through warnings and administrative measures. The measures taken were intensified in parallel to Armenian terrorist activities, riots and cooperation with the enemy. Accordingly, when we analyze actions taken by the Ottoman government, it can be seen that they were not planned and politically oriented but they should be perceived as military and security precautions related to the developing events.

Decree of April 24, 1915 and the Arrests

As a matter of fact, upon the investigations, it was understood that, despite all the warnings, Armenian organizations were in preparation of a total insurrection. As a result of this, General Command Office of the Ottoman army issued a regulation to all armed forces remarking that weapons, bombs and some encrypted documents captured from Armenians revealed a general uprising preparation and for this reason it was demanded the Armenian soldiers not to be used in armed services, to take all the precautions; however it was ordered not to harm Armenians loyal to the state.⁹ After the defeat of Ottoman army by Russian forces in Eastern Anatolia, Armenians extended their actions in parallel to enemy attacks in the period of the commencement of Gallipoli Wars on March 18, 1915, and Istanbul running the risk of fall. During this era, following the Zeytun, Bitlis, Muş and Erzurum; the Van insurrection broke out and massacre against Turks heightened.

After Ottoman government declared mobilization, it withstood nine months and finally attempted to take necessary measures to prevent the events and to control the activities of Armenian committees. After disarming Armenian privates, it was ordered that Armenian police and administrative personnel, who were determined to participate to the events and not trusted by the Ministry of Interior, to be dismissed or sent to non-Armenian provinces.¹⁰ However, facing these cautions were not yielding any results, Committees which had been arming the Armenians and agitating them to participate the riots, were decided to be closed and leaders to be arrested. So, Ministry of Interior sent the famous decree to 14 provinces and 10 *mutasarrıflık* on April 24, 1915. In this decree, it was stipulated that Tashnak, Hinchak and similar Armenian committees were to be closed, all their documents were to be expropriated, leaders and the Armenians renowned with

⁹ *Askeri Tarih Belgeleri Dergisi*, Vol. 85, December 1985, Document no: 1999, pp. 23-24.

¹⁰ *Osmanlı Belgelerinde Ermeniler (1915-1920)*, Ankara, 1994, p. 7.

their harmful activities were to be arrested and people unfavorable to stay at their actual places among them were to be picked at a suitable destination.¹¹ Another issue showed high sensitivity in this decree was not to bring about an engagement between Armenians and Muslims in provinces such as Bitlis, Erzurum, Sivas, Adana and Maraş. April 24, commemorated every year by Armenians as the “genocide day” in many countries, is the date of Ministry of Interior’s issuing of this decree. On April 26, 1915, the Supreme Command sent a similar decree to Ministry of Defense and Army Commanders; and ordered that any kind of help to implement the decree should be provided to administrative personnel.¹²

Upon the decree of the Ministry of Interior, some of the committee members from Tashnak, Hinchak and Ramgavar organizations were arrested in Istanbul. Anyway, British intelligence also supports that the arrested persons were not the ordinary Armenian citizens, but members of these organizations.¹³ In this vein, according to an information note sent to British military office in Cairo from Dedeğaç; “1800 Armenians including three Armenian chaplains and the owner of the Armenian newspaper *Puzantion* were caught and arrested, then sent to Ankara. 500 of them were partisans of *Tashnak*, 500 of *Hinchak* and the remaining of *Ramgavar*”¹⁴ British High Commissioner, Admiral Calthorpe, who was in Istanbul during the Armistice Period (*Mütareke Dönemi*) wrote in two encrypted telegrams dated May 20 and 21, 1919; “Armenians arrested on April 24, 1915 were volunteers serving the Allies or the responsables of the Muslim massacre”.¹⁵ On the other hand, German Ambassador of the period, Wangenheim, in a report presented to German Prime Minister on April 30, 1915, stated that many explosive materials, bombs and weapons were found in most Armenian houses and churches, there would be an bomb-attack to Ottoman Porte (*Bab-ı Âli*) and certain government offices on April 27, 1915, which was the anniversary of regency of Sultan Mehmed V; and for this reason at the night of 24/25 April and evening of the following day approximately 500 Armenians arrested in Istanbul of being members of Revolutionary *Tashnak* Committee; these people, including

11 Prime Ministry Archives (BOA), Ministry of Interior Cyphering Department (DH.ŞFR), No. 52/96-97/98.

12 General Staff Military History and Strategic Study Archives (ATASE), World War I (BDH) Collection, Vol. 401, File No: 1580, Index No: 1-2.

13 Hikmet Özdemir [et. al.], *Ermeniler: Sürgün ve ...*, p. 62.

14 Cited from United Kingdom (UK) Archives, War Office (WO), 157/691/9. Özdemir [et. al.], *Ermeniler: Sürgün ve ...*, p. 62.

15 Cited from United Kingdom (UK) Archives, Foreign Office (FO), 608/78,(7563 1), No. 869 and 1094. Özdemir [et. al.], *Ermeniler: Sürgün ve ...*, p.62.

doctors, journalists, ecclesiastics, authors and deputies were sent to Anatolia.¹⁶ Besides, while in an American document the number of the arrested was given as 100¹⁷, in a telegram sent to French Foreign Ministry from Thessalonica on May 8, 1915, it was maintained that 2500 prominent Armenians were arrested, multitudinous bombs and related documents were acquired; the aims of the Armenian revolutionary organizations were to assassinate Enver and Talat Pashas in coordination with the Allies and to cause panic among the Muslim population through various bombings.¹⁸ Kamuran Gürün also states that 2345 people were arrested in Istanbul after Ministry of Interior's decree dated April 24, 1915.¹⁹ Despite there is a common point of view among the above cited resources that the arrested were not the ordinary Armenians, but militant Armenians; very different numbers were given about the amount of the arrested.

When the Ottoman documents were analyzed in correspondence with the decree of Ministry of Interior dated April 24 1915, it can be seen that Armenians, who were the members of *Tashnak*, *Hinchak* and *Ramgavar* Committees, were arrested in Istanbul. In an Ottoman publication printed in 1916 among the 77.735 Armenians living in Istanbul only 235 who joined revolutionary activities were arrested and the remaining continued to live in peace and to deal their ordinary professions.²⁰ Moreover, during the days following the April 24 decree, 19 Mousers, 74 Martinis, 111 Winchesters, 96 Manihers, 78 Giras and 358 Flivir weapons and 2591 handguns, 45.221 gun bullets were captured. Afterwards, these weapons were handed in military weapon and ammunition chandlery based on the needs of the Ottoman army.²¹

16 Johannes Lepsius, *Deutschland und Armenien 1914-1918*, Potsdam, 1919, p. 59 from document no. 38. Nejat Göyünç, "Ermeni Tehciri ve Soykırım İddiaları", *Yeni Türkiye*, January-February 2001, Vol. 37, pp. 296-297.

17 Cited from "Papers Relating to the Foreign Relations of the United States", 1915, p. 98; Kemal Çiçek, *Ermenilerin Zorunlu Göçü 1915-1917*, Turkish Historical Society Publications, Ankara, 2005, p. 35.

18 Hasan Dilan, *Fransız Diplomatik Belgelerinde Ermeni Olayları 1914-1918*, Vol. II, Turkish Historical Society Publications, Ankara, 2005, pp. 96-97, Document No. 14.

19 Kamuran Gürün, *Ermeni Dosyası*, Turkish Historical Foundation Publications, Ankara, 1983, p. 332

20 *Ermeni Komitelerinin Amal ve Harekât-ı İhtilaliyesi, İlan-ı Meşrutiyetten Evvel ve Sonra*, Istanbul, 1332, p. 242.

21 Prime Ministry Ottoman Archives (BOA), Dahiliye Nezareti Emniyet-i Umumiye Müdüriyeti (Ministry of Interior Directorate of General Security) 2. Branch (DH.EUM. 2. Branch), 16/48.

Armenian Committee Members Compulsorily Inhabited in Çankırı

In a code sent by Ministry of Interior to Governorship of Ankara on April 25, 1915, it is maintained that with the train number 164, coming that evening, approximately 180 Armenian committee leaders and those whose inhabitation in İstanbul was assessed as harmful would be present, escorted by 75 people force formed by 15 policemen, 2 army officers, 1 commissar, 1 civilian officer and etc. It was added that around 60-70 of them would be remanded in custody in Ayaş military chandlery and approximately 100 would be carried to Çankırı through Ankara and be inhabited compulsorily there.²² Throughout end of April and the first week of May, periodical transfer of committee members to be inhabited compulsorily in Çankırı, continued. As a matter of fact, in a telegraph sent by Çankırı *mutasarrıflık* to General Directorate of Security on June 30, 1915, the number of Armenians residing in Çankırı was given as 140.²³ In the same telegraph, it was stated that inhabitants could tour inside the city freely; they were staying at houses in groups of three or five and even they emanated to countryside far half an hour from the city centre; it was added that they were only obliged to visit police station once a day for signature.²⁴ Ones, who were poor and in necessity among them, were also provided with a daily fee to support their living.²⁵ In this vein, in an act sent from Governorship of Kastamonu to Ministry of Interior on June 3, 1915, Arşak the son of Mardiros was stated to demand daily fee and it was asked to search whether he was really in necessity.²⁶ Moreover Arşak Diradoryan also demanded daily fee with a declaration of poverty.²⁷

Armenians, who had been transferred to Çankırı after arrests in İstanbul, themselves or their relatives applied to the government with petitions, declared their innocence and wanted their release.²⁸ We also determine that Ottoman central government investigated these petitions carefully and wrote off the penalties of innocents, foreign citizens and unhealthy individuals. With the order of Ministry of Interior dated May 8, 1915; Vahram Torkumyan, Agop Nargileciyan, Karabet

22 BOA. DH. ŞFR. No: 52/102.

23 BOA. DH. EUM. 2. Branch. 7/52

24 BOA. DH. EUM. 2. Branch 7/52.

25 BOA. DH. EUM. 2. Branch 6/29.

26 BOA. DH. EUM. 2. Branch 7/62.

27 BOA. DH. EUM. 2. Branch 36/26.

28 As most of the excuse petitions were sent to directly Ministry of Interior and General Directorate of Security, there were also petitions given to Governorship of Çankırı. For such petition examples see, BOA. DH. EUM. 2. Branch 6/10, 7/22, 7/24, 7/56, 7/36, 7/38, 8/82, 9/122, 9/23, 9/46, 9/47, 9/60, 9/79, 10/4.

Keropoyan, Zare Bardizbanyan, Pozant Keçiyen, Pervant Tolayan, Rafael Karagözyan and Vartabet Komidas were freed and permitted to return Istanbul.²⁹ As is known Vartabet Komidas of this returning group was accepted as one of the Armenians, who lost his life during relocation, and a monument was raised in his name in Paris. However, the compulsory inhabitation of Komidas in Çankırı lasted 13 days; after his return to Istanbul, upon his worsening health, he applied to Ministry of Interior, on August 30, 1917, to permit him to leave for Wien for treatment. The permit was given to Komidas and he went to Wien on September 1917.³⁰ Komidas never returned Turkey and died abroad.

Diran Kelekyan, one of the compulsory inhabitants of Çankırı, freed on May 8, 1915 to continue his living with his family in a place other than Istanbul.³¹ Hayik Hocasaryan was set free on May 29, 1915³² and Agop Beğleryan and Vatanes Papasyan on June 27, 1915.³³ With the order of Ministry of Interior, 14 people including Serkis Cevahiryan, Kirkor Celalyan and Bağban Bardizbanyan returned to Istanbul on July 15, 1915 after being set free.³⁴ It was permitted three more people³⁵ on July 18 and Apik Canbaz on August 10 to return to Istanbul.³⁶ It was also understood that Vahan Altunyan and Ohannes Terlemezyan were sent to Kayseri and their return to Istanbul was ensured through an order of Ministry of Interior.³⁷

Except the ones inhabited compulsorily in Çankırı and freed in order to return to Istanbul, Armenians like Bulgarian citizen Bedros Manukyan, Iranian citizen Mıgırdıç İstepniyan, and Russian citizen Leon Kigorkyan were freed to deport out Ottoman borders.³⁸ Moreover some Armenians including Serkis Şahinyan, Ohannes Hanisyan, Artin Boğasyan, Zara Mumcuyan were excused with the condition not returning to Istanbul.³⁹ Serkis Kılınçyan a *Tashnak* member who excused and permitted to leave for Eskişehir, had escaped and went to Istanbul, then with the help of Alman Grubu passed to Bulgaria to continue his activities.⁴⁰

29 BOA. DH. ŞFR. No: 52/255.

30 BOA. EUM. 2. Branch No: 42/69.

31 BOA. DH. ŞFR. No: 52/266.

32 BOA. DH. ŞFR. No: 53/149.

33 BOA. DH. EUM. 2. Branch 8/5.

34 BOA. DH. EUM. 2. Branch 9/10.

35 BOA. DH. EUM. 2. Branch 9/15.

36 BOA. DH. ŞFR. No: 54-A/364.

37 BOA. DH. ŞFR. No: 56/60.

38 BOA. DH. ŞFR. No: 54-A/177; No: 57/57.

39 BOA. DH. ŞFR. No: 55/2 14

40 BOA. EUM. 2. Branch No: 57/23.

Few Armenians were sent to Ayaş⁴¹ in order to be jailed and the others were sent to cities like Ankara, İzmit, Bursa, Eskişehir, Kütahya for compulsory residence. The remaining ones were transferred to the relocation region, Zor, with the order of Ministry of Interior.

Governorship of Kastamonu has sent a detailed list of the compulsorily inhabited Armenians' names and the operation carried on in Çankırı after April 24 to Ministry of Interior on August 31, 1915.⁴² In this list, the number of Armenians compulsorily inhabited for a short or long period in Çankırı between April 24 and August 31, 1915, was given as 155. Among them, above cited 35 persons were found innocent and returned to İstanbul. The convicted 25 persons were sent to Ankara and Ayaş prisons, 57 of them sent to Zor region. Some of the 7 foreign citizens were freed to be deported out the Ottoman borders, and a portion of the remaining was arrested. Most of the other were excused and sent to cities like İzmit, İzmir, Eskişehir, Kütahya, Bursa to continue their life.

Armenian Committee Members Sent to Ayaş

As indicated above, approximately 60-70 of Armenian Committee members were arrested and sent to Ayaş military chandlery with the decree of April 24, 1915.⁴³ There was not a complete list of the arrested people in Ayaş. However, in the amnesty petition written by one of the arrested people in Ayaş, Kris Fenerciyan to General Director of Security, İsmail Canbolat, on May 1, 1915, it was stated that there were 70 persons in Ayaş.⁴⁴ From proxy letters and petitions sent by Ayaş prisoners approximately 60 names could be determined.⁴⁵ In the general list prepared by İstanbul Directorate of Security after the relocation, 71 names were given as the people sent to Ayaş to be arrested.⁴⁶ The main reason of the differences in the numbers given was that while there were people sent to other provinces to be judged, also there were people both freed and people later sent to Ayaş to be arrested from Ankara, Çankırı and İstanbul. For example, in an act sent by Ministry of Interior to Department of Accounts on May 7, 1915, 2897 *kurush* was demanded to be sent to Ankara Governorship in order to

41 As an example member of *Tashnak* Committee Hacı Hayk Tiryakyan. BOA. DH. ŞFR. No: 53/273.

42 BOA. EUM. 2. Branch 20/73.

43 BOA. DH. ŞFR. No: 52/102.

44 BOA. DH. EUM. 2. Branch, 6/32.

45 For the excuse petitions please look: BOA. DH. EUM. 2. Branch 10/4; 9/29, 8/9 1, 8/1,7/69, 8/3, 7/23, 7/14, 8/68, 17/26, 9/45, 7/63, 7/61, 7/47, 7/30, 15/44, 15/45, 15/34, 15/39.

46 BOA. DH. EUM. 2. Branch. 67/31.

compensate transfer cost of Armenians to Ayaş and Çankırı.⁴⁷ As a matter of fact, Kozan deputy Hamparsum Boyacıyan was transferred to Kayseri⁴⁸ and Director of Yenikapı Armenian School Marzaros Gazaryan to Develi⁴⁹, Sivas deputy A. Dağavaryan to Diyarbakır in order to be judged at the Court-Martial⁵⁰, Haçik Boğusyan to Ankara in order to be judged, Hirant Ağacanyan to Istanbul.⁵¹ Teodor Manzikyan and Akrik Keresteciyan were sent to Zor⁵², Şahbaz Parsih to Elazığ as arrested⁵³ and US citizen Leon Şirinyan was deported out of Ottoman borders.⁵⁴ Viram Şabuh Samuelof and Rotsum Rostusyon were first released however then an investigation was reinstated about them.⁵⁵ Hayik Tiryakyan since he has the same name with the owner of *Azadamard* newspaper and Dr Allahverdiyan in the place of his son; was excused because of their wrong arrests.⁵⁶ Akrik Keresteciyan was firstly sent to Zor, then, he was freed.⁵⁷

It is understood that since, except a few excused, all of the people sent to Ayaş were among the leadership cadres of *Tashnak* and *Hinchak* Committees, they remained arrested during the World War I. In fact, Dikran son of Serkis Bağdıkyan, a member of *Tashnak* committee was died on March 9, 1918, in Ayaş⁵⁸, propagandist of *Tashnak* committee Andon Panosyan's amnesty petition with the aim of returning Istanbul, was not accepted.⁵⁹ Karnik Madikyan, Kırkor Hamparsumyan and Pantavan Parzisyanyan were freed after the Armistice of Mudros, on November 10, 1918.⁶⁰ It is also known that other Armenians who were arrested in Ayaş military chandlery were released after the Allies took over the control of Ottoman Empire after the Armistice.

Total Number of Armenian Committee Members in Istanbul

After the April 24, 1915 decree, those who were arrested in Istanbul and obliged

- 47 BOA. DH. EUM. 2. Branch. 6/46.
- 48 BOA. DH. ŞFR. No: 52/222.
- 49 BOA. DH. ŞFR. No: 53/65.
- 50 BOA. DH. ŞFR. No: 57/2 14.
- 51 BOA. DH. ŞFR. No: 54-A/63; BOA. DH. EUM. KLH. No: 1/39.
- 52 BOA. DH. EUM. 2. Branch 14/52.
- 53 BOA. DH. ŞFR. No: 54/5.
- 54 BOA. DH. EUM. 2. Branch No: 6/47.
- 55 BOA. DH. EUM. 2. Branch No: 11/2.
- 56 BOA. DH. EUM. 2. Branch No: 7/7; 6/56.
- 57 BOA. DH. ŞFR. No: 54-A/366.
- 58 BOA. DH. EUM. 2. Branch No: 50/10.
- 59 BOA. DH. EUM. 2. Branch 50/10.
- 60 BOA. DH. EUM. 2. Branch 65/34; BOA. DH. ŞFR. No: 93/120.

to abide in Çankırı were not more than 155; and those who were arrested in Ayaş military chandlery were not more than 80 people. Therefore, the number of Armenians, who were arrested in Istanbul and then sent to Çankırı and Ayaş, is up to 235. Some of them were released in a little while, others were exiled to relocation area or the ones whose crimes were heavy were held under arrest during World War I.

However, it was understood that the Security Organization of Ottoman Empire closely monitored the activities of Armenian committees in Istanbul and prepared a wider list. The list, which was presumably prepared in August 1916, includes many details of the names of notable Armenian committee members in Istanbul, their organizations, jobs and duties in organizations and the procedures about them. In this list, which was prepared by the Security Organization, the number of Armenian Committee members centered in Istanbul is 610.⁶¹ 356 of them are members of *Tashnaksutyun*, 173 of them are of *Hinchakyan*, 72 of them belong to the Armenian organization *Ramgavar* and 9 of them belong to different committees and Armenian organizations.⁶² As mentioned above, around 235 members of organization, whose names and addresses were found regarding to the April 24, 1915 decree, were arrested and sent to Çankırı and Ayaş.⁶³ Most of the 280 Armenian committee members could not be found in their addresses and it was understood that some of them escaped abroad. 53 of them, who were seen linked with insurrection setup, were arrested and sent to İzmit for inquiries and trials. 44 people were determined to be out of country, 14 people were sent abroad for good. The rest were obliged to abide in the inner places of country, especially in Konya (22 people) and some of them were sent to Military Tribunals in order to be judged.

Conclusion

Armenian committees, which fulfilled their organization and became largely armed before the World War I, cooperated with the Allies, especially with Russia, against the Ottoman Empire, of which they were the citizens when the war started. Parallel to the defeat of the Ottoman army against Russia and then the attack of

61 BOA. DH. EUM. 2. Branch No: 67/31.

62 BOA. DH. EUM. 2. Branch No: 67/31.

63 Since when this list was prepared most of the Armenians compulsorily inhabited in Çankırı have been set free, 66 persons were seen on the list, the number of the arrested ones in Ayaş is given as 71.

Britain and France to Gallipoli, the Armenian committee members started to stab the Ottoman armies in the back and cut the supply ways and began armed uprisings. At the beginning of the World War I, The Ottoman government tried to prevent the incidents by some warnings and administrative cautions. However, the cautions were increased since the Armenians raised the terrorist attacks and the rebellions and cooperated with the enemy armies.

In this context; the Ottoman government closed the headquarters of Armenian committees and arrested their leaders, in order to hinder the events, by virtue of the April 24, 1915 decree. As put by documents, there were neither clashes nor deaths during the 24th April arrests. Since Istanbul was the place for the committee headquarters' political planning in Armenian events, most of the arrests were done in this city; there were fewer arrests in other cities. In fact, among the determined 610 committee members, more than half of it (313 people) could not be found in their addresses or they escaped abroad. Not disturbing other 80 thousand Armenians in Istanbul about capturing the committee members not found in their addresses is such an important nuance pointing out the Ottoman government's sensibility in this issue.

Although the picture is like this, why do the Armenians declare, not the date of the relocation law of May 27, 1915, but the date of 24th of April as the "genocide day"? Undoubtedly, the main reason why the Armenians declare the 24th April as the "genocide day" is that the leaders, who were providing the organization within the country and arranging international links and cooperation, were neutralized on this date. Therefore, the Armenians mostly deprived of the leaders to carry them to their aims. Since they could not accept this situation, they created an imaginary memory and artificial history via declaring the 24th of April as the "genocide day" in the world. It is considerably meaningful that the Armenians attach more importance to the date of 24th of April than the relocation date, since it was on this date that their leaders, who would possibly carry them to independence, were arrested.

Ottoman government's closure of the Armenian committees and arresting some members of them were not enough to hinder the events. In parallel to Armenian terrorist attacks and the uprisings, the precautions were increased. Beginning with the areas of uprisings and cooperation with the enemy, the relocation was begun to be applied. The containment of the relocation was widened as parallel to the incidents. Therefore, the first relocation was applied in Konya and then it was shifted to Mosul province and to the southeast of Aleppo and to the zone of Zor.

At first, only Van, Erzurum, Bitlis and Çukurova were included in relocation, and then it was widened towards the other regions. In spite of this, Armenians of Istanbul, İzmir and Thrace were largely exempted from relocation, except for the committee members there. Ottoman government based the relocation application to the laws adopted at that time, it did not act arbitrarily. Possible precautions were taken to ensure the safety of relocated Armenians, their subsistence, sheltering and properties. 1673 people, who did not obey the rules or who were found neglectful, were trialed in the Military Tribunals; most of them were sentenced with punishments, including execution. This situation shows how much sensitive the Ottoman central administration was about the property and the security of the Armenians who were put through the relocation.

AN EVALUATION OF ABANDONED PROPERTIES AFTER THE RELOCATION*

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Abstract:

This article intends to examine the developments regarding the abandoned properties of the relocated Armenians. Indeed, the issue of abandoned properties was one of the major issues of Armenian relocation. In this article, it is aimed to analyze how the Ottoman government tackled this issue through regulations and other legal arrangements. In doing that it aims to show, despite grave difficulties for the retrocession of abandoned goods due to settlement of Turkish war refugees poured from Balkans and Caucasus to the Armenian houses, how Ottoman administration more or less succeeded in resolving relevant disputes regarding that matter.

Key Words: *Abandoned goods, Armenian relocation, Armenian question, Commissions.*

During World War I, the Ottoman government enacted the legislation of "Sending and Settlement Law" (Sevk ve İskan Kanunu) dated May 27, 1915, grounded on military and political reasons. A regulatory statute of 34 articles was prepared on June 10, 1915 in order to set the framework on the abandoned properties of the relocated people.¹ Through the precept sent to the provinces on August 11, 1915, all local authorities were warned about the abandoned properties of Armenians and it was ordered that any abuse of the properties should be prevented.² A provisional law dated September 26, 1915, clarified the details of how the revenues accrued through the liquidation of assets and auction sale would be kept by goods' registry (*mal sandıkları*).³ Government was in the effort to prevent any possible defects regarding Armenians' abandoned properties through many laws and regulations.⁴

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- 1 Azmi Süslü, *Ermeniler ve 1915 Tehcir Olayı*, Ankara, 1990, pp. 117-121.
- 2 Yusuf Halaçoğlu, *Ermeni Tehciri ve Gerçekler (1914-1918)*, Ankara, 2001, pp. 68-69.
- 3 *Düstur*, II. Tertip, Vol. 7, Dersaadet, 1336, pp. 737-740.
- 4 Kemal Çiçek, *Ermenilerin Zorunlu Göçü 1915-1917*, Ankara, 2005, pp. 73-75.

Concrete steps were taken to ensure returning of relocated people to the places where they used to live, during the era of Grand Vizier Ahmet İzzet Pasha on October 14, 1918. However, initial news about the initiatives on this issue were began to be seen in the press since August 1918.⁵ The return of non-Muslims to the places where they used to live and retrocession of their abandoned goods caused the government to spend hard and dense efforts.⁶ Also this situation revealed another problem: The possibility of Muslim immigrants being homeless, since they were temporarily inhabited at the houses of the relocated people. The press tried to warn the government about this issue and demanded necessary measures to be taken about the situation of hundred thousands of Muslim immigrants after the retrocession.⁷ It was also advised that since there would be danger for 400,000 Turks of becoming homeless with the immediate return of those relocated people, passing of winter should be waited for Armenians to be sent to Eastern Anatolia and the subsistence and feeding systems should be reformed.⁸

The government began laboring without delay in order for Armenians to regain their abandoned goods and for the compensation of the damages. In an official dispatch sent by Ministry of Interior to Prime Ministry on October 20, 1918, it was demanded that an order should be made to the Presidency of Ottoman Parliament to convene for an urgent session on Armenian properties. Upon this demand, on the following day, an application was made to the Presidency of Ottoman Parliament for an urgent session.⁹ After this application, in the session convened on November 4, 1918, the provisional law dated September 26, 1915 was abrogated.¹⁰ It was cited in a newspaper account on October 23, 1918, that a commission would be established for Armenians' material losses.¹¹

In a newspaper account of November 18, 1918, it was stated that it was attempted to evacuate the civil servants, officers and the local people from the houses of

5 *İstihbarat-ı Siyasiyye-i Umumiyye Mecmuası (İSUM)*, 10 August 1334, No:135, pp. 20-21.

6 Moreover for a detailed article on the retrocession of the returning relocated people please look: İbrahim Ethem Atnur, "Tehcirden Dönen Rum ve Ermenilerin Emvâlinin İadesine Bir Bakış", *Toplumsal Tarih*, September 1994, No:9, p. 45-48.

7 *Yeniğün*, 25 August 1918.

8 *Yeniğün*, 23 October 1918.

9 Prime Ministry Ottoman Archives (BOA), Government Document Office (Bâb-ı Âli Evrâk Odası) (BEO), 340382.

10 *Meclis-i Mebusan Zabıt Ceridesi (MMZC)*, 4 November 1334 (1918), Term: 3, Year of Gathering: 5, Vol. 1, 11. İnıkad, Ankara, 1992, pp. 112-113.

11 *İkdam*, 23 October 1918.

relocated Armenians.¹² The problem in the meantime was really great. Despite Armenians had returned, the houses were not evacuated; but the government gave strict injunctions to evacuate the houses.¹³ Among other things, another problem of the government was how to deal with the incomers inhabited in these neighborhoods while the houses were being evacuated.¹⁴ The government tried to find solutions for the incomers evacuating the houses in the same time dealing with the resettlement of returning relocatees. For this purpose a regulatory statute was also prepared to settle Turkish incomers. According to this;¹⁵

- Excess properties of returning Armenians and Greeks would be rented by the government and allocated to Turkish incomers.
- Real estate of unreturned and deceased Armenians and Greeks would be rented by the government for the allocation to Turkish incomers.
- The period of rent would be 6 years and the cost would be determined and paid by the municipalities.

The issue was emphasized through orders continuously sent to provinces. In an act sent to province of Hüdavendigar on November 17, 1918, it was ordered that incomers would be inhabited as two families per suitable house, retrocession of the houses to returning Armenians would be realized and the crops would be given to Armenians; it was also demanded that the incomers who were in necessity should be helped.¹⁶ As understood from the news coming up in the press, problems of Turkish incomers continued in the following months.¹⁷

Ministry of Interior reminded the decision that Armenians should be returned their homes and their real estate and properties should be given back through an act dated November 19, 1918.¹⁸ In this period, the government was under permanent pressure despite its well-intentioned efforts. Both Patriarchate and

12 *Ati*, 3 November 1918.

13 *Ati*, 4 November 1918.

14 *Ati*, 6 November 1918.

15 *Hadisat*, 16 October 1918.

16 Prime Ministry Ottoman Archives (BOA), Ministry of Interior, Office of Encoding Documents (Dahiliye Nezareti Şifre Kalemi Belgeleri) (DH. ŞFR), 93/190.

17 Turkish immigrants suffered much since their problems could not be quickly solved and since Christian immigrants were given precedence. Hundred thousands of Muslim immigrants became homeless because of reinstating Armenians. Since the government was unable to help them or since the existing help was insufficient they had established among themselves "Organization of Defense of Rights of and Helping to Muslim Immigrants" centered in Izmir; *Zaman*, 26 March 1919.

18 Prime Ministry Ottoman Archives (BOA), Ministry of Interior Directorate of General Security 2nd Branch (Dahiliye Nezareti Emniyet-i Umumiye Müdüriyeti 2. Şube) (DH. EUM. 2.Şb.), 65/45, leaf 1/1.

Armenian press complained that Armenian properties were not restituted. It was understood that most of these news were baseless. Nevertheless, in some occasions there were drags as a result of local administrators' lack of knowledge on what to do and the procedure to return the properties. It was also not easy to deal with thousands of people's problems every day. The government continuously exchanged letters in order to ameliorate the drags. In a letter sent to Izmit Governorship on November 21, 1918, it was demanded that the news on Armenians returning to Bahçecik informed the government that their properties were not remanded and an investigation should be carried and the result should be send to the government.¹⁹ On the same date, Hüdavendigâr province was warned that the properties of Armenians returning to Pazarköy and Gemlik were not given back, their olives were picked by other people, an investigation was to be made on the issue and the properties and estates should be returned immediately.²⁰ In the meantime, it was understood from the correspondence that sometimes interesting and provocative events happened. After stating that many complications occurred in the returning of Armenians to Eskişehir, it was warned that an Armenian named Agop Arslanyan, playing the village headman (*muhtar*), was demanding "key money" in the very act of retrocession of houses and the same man had previously hid many people in return of money and he should be detained.²¹

The government began to work on preparing a law in order to return the properties. On November 26, 1918, a commission is said to be formed under the presidency of Undersecretary of Ministry of Justice, Yusuf Kemal Bey, in order to prepare a law for retrocession of properties and real property.²² In news dated December 1, 1918, it was briefed that a commission headed by Undersecretary of Ministry of Justice, Yusuf Kemal Bey, would prepare the law proposal on the issue of retrocession of properties and real estate of the relocated Armenians. In the commission, together with Directors of Legal and Criminal Affairs (*Umûr-ı Hukukîyye ve Cezâîyye Müdürleri*), Legal Advisor of Ministry of Interior Osman, Director of Imperial Registry Documentation (*Defter-i Hakani Senedat Müdürü*) Rüştü from Ministry of Finance and Deputy Director of Real Property (*Emlâk-ı Emîriyye Müdür-i Umûmî Muâvini*) Muhlis Bey would be present besides Yusuf Kemal Bey.²³ The commission, convened with the presidency of Yusuf

19 BOA. DH. ŞFR. 93/234.

20 BOA. DH. ŞFR. 93/230.

21 BOA. DH. ŞFR. 93/231.

22 BOA. BEO. 340725.

23 *Hadisat*, 1 October 1918; *Vakit*, 2 October 1918.

Kemal Bey, obtained information from Director of Emigrant Housing (*İskan-ı Muhâcirin Müdürü*) Hamdi Bey and since the law to be prepared necessitated many procedures, it decided to search for an easier way to ensure the retrocession of the properties to their owners prior to the enactment of the law.²⁴ In this vein, the commission decided to return the movable property and real estate that drew no objection immediately and informed the government on the situation.²⁵ In news dated January 2, 1919, it was noted that the legal discussions were going on and the draft was prepared.²⁶ On January 25, 1919, it was made public that General Directorate of Emigrants (*Muhâcirin Müdüriyyet-i Umûmiyyesi*) were pursuing the issues of retrocession of the movable properties and real estates of both relocated people and voluntary migrants who returned back as well as their inhabitation and sheltering.²⁷

The retrocession of the real estates to the owners was begun, while the workings on the law were continuing. It was mentioned that the ratio of the retrocession of the abandoned properties to the Armenian and Greek owners arrived up to the 95%, in the news of February 6, 1919.²⁸ The draft law about the movable estates and real estates of the relocated Armenians was sent to the Council of State (*Şura-yı Devlet*) in order to be investigated by the commission got together under the presidency of Yusuf Kemal Bey.²⁹

The Armenian newspapers accepted as well – despite not all the time – the fact that the houses were given to the returned Armenians and they were living in safety. About this issue it was informed that³⁰;

“The Armenian newspapers’ news,
As it was read from the Armenian newspapers according to a telegram sent by Arabkir to the Armenian Patriarchate, the local church was delivered to the Armenians, with the whole real estates and immovable estates, and the mentioned Armenian community began to deal with their duties and works.
As written from Ayıntab, the emigrants were returning gradually and getting back their houses.”

24 *Hadisat*, 4 October 1918, *Vakit*, 4 October 1918; *Atı*, 4 October 1918.

25 *Vakit*, 5 October 1918.

26 *Atı*, 2 November 1919, p. 2.

27 Prime Ministry Ottoman Archives (BOA), Ministry of Interior Office of Legal Consultancy Documents (Dahiliye Nezareti Hukuk Müşavirliği Belgeleri) (DH. HMŞ.), 4-2/11-20.

28 *Atı*, 6 February 1919, p. 3.

29 *Yenigün*, 10 February 1919; *Türkçe İstanbul*, 10 February 1919.

30 *Türkçe İstanbul*, 16 February 1919.

It was asked in a letter on March 2, 1919, to Elazığ (*Mâimûretül-aziz*) province to give back the movable property to the returned people.³¹ In the news of March 16, 1919, it was declared that the law, which was investigated by the Council of State, was accepted.³²

One of the most important problems during the delivery of the properties was the Armenians' asking for their properties via intercalating the British Extraordinary Commissariat (*İngiliz Fevkalade Komiserliği*) and writing complaint telegrams. The government made inquiries about some controversial properties and their properties were immediately given back to the Armenians if their accusations were right.

The British Extraordinary Commissariat's note in March 1919 mentioned that the British Armenian Samuel Maranyan's house, shop and mill in Samsun were seized. After the inquiries, it was decided to evacuate immediately the mentioned real estate, to deliver them to the owner or the Armenian Church.³³ Moreover, since Samuel Maranyan told he guessed that after their father, Eruk's death during the relocation, his three sisters Araksi, Hagopik and Mari Maranyan would be with Dilberzade family in Trabzon, it was asked from the Trabzon Governorship to find the girls and to send them to their relatives or to the Armenian Church.³⁴ It was asked to give back the real estate and abandoned properties to the owners unconditionally and to deliver the churches and the foundations to their communities.³⁵

Upon the application of Madam Viktoria Stepanyan on March 25, 1919, after inquiries, it was decided to give back to her the garden house and two shops in the Armenian neighborhood across Said Bey neighborhood.³⁶

An Armenian named Ohannes Kalpakçıyan dispatched a telegram from Karahisar-ı Sahib to Prime Ministry and stated that despite he had no debt to the government; he was given the information that his house and stores were

31 BOA. DH. ŞFR, 97/9.

32 *Hadisat*, 16 March 1919; *Türkçe İstanbul*, 17 March 1919.

33 Prime Ministry Ottoman Archives (BOA), Ministry of Interior Directorate of Province and District Affairs Documents (Dâhiliye Nezareti Umûr-ı Mahalliye-i Vilâyât Müdüriyeti Belgeleri) (DH. UMVM.), 160/68, lef 1.

34 BOA. DH. UMVM, 160/68, lef 5.

35 BOA. DH. ŞFR, 97/243.

36 BOA. DH. UMVM, 158/92, lef 1.

sold to municipality for 55.000 *kurush* and not handed over, so he and his family were out in the cold.³⁷ Upon this telegram on April 1, 1919, the Governorship of Karahisar-ı Sahib informed Ministry of Interior on this subject and affirmed that the issue was written to the Ministry of Finance and would be finalized in the possible shortest time.³⁸

Applying through the mediation of British political representative, Dr. M. Altunyan argued that commodities within his house in Bilecik were lost. Hereupon an investigation was instituted and Rıfat Bey, who was living in the house after paying the rent to the Settlement Commission, argued that after his nomination to another province he assigned the house to Ahmed Cevat Bey and, at that time, the entire commodity was recorded to the accounts. He signified that he had no information on the jewels, banknotes, debenture bonds, carpets and commodities that were said to be lost, everything was recorded while he was leaving the house by the Settlement Commission, a few carpets and prayer rugs were present, he consigned the piano to the person coming with the order of the Governorship to be used in the school, informed the commission about the situation and, to be sure, obtained a receipt. From that house, he took some curtains, a couch and a table from the Commission and three carpets without purchasing. This information has been transmitted to Ministry of Interior through Police Department.³⁹

In fact, the British got the opportunity to exert pressure on the Ottoman government regarding the retrocession of Armenian properties. British Political Commissariat continuously extorted pressure on the government about properties, some converted women, orphans and one arrested Armenian criminal of petty offenses. While the government was trying to take care of every kind of complaints and investigating all of them carefully, sometimes Armenians made Turkish properties to be confiscated by applying the British. British was actualizing the same process without any investigation and not feeling any need to inform the government. Moreover, among the British organizations in Istanbul, there was the "Organization to Save Armenians and Greeks from Turkish Oppression".⁴⁰ Even this case is so remarkable in showing how the British perceived the problems.

On April 19, 1919, information was being given upon the demand of British

37 BOA, DH. UMVM, 97/7, leaf 1.

38 BOA, DH. UMVM, 97/7, leaf 3.

39 BOA, DH. UMVM, 159/21, leaf 3.

40 Selahattin Tansel, *Mondros'tan Mudanya'ya Kadar*, Ankara, 1973, Vol. I, p. 69.

High Commissioner on Harutyun Agop Zervestiyen. Adapazarı district governor (*qaimaqam*) informed and İzmit Governorship transmitted to Ministry of Interior that while he was sentenced to one month imprisonment because of touring around with a Bulgarian carbine on December 20, 1918, detained on January 16, 1919 and released on February 13, 1919; he was again arrested because of theft and being shoot off on the same day and again released on March 20, 1919.⁴¹

Press has never lost interest in the issue of retrocession of properties. In news of April 30, 1919, it was stated by the Commission of Investigation for the restoration of abandoned property of Armenians and Greeks that 98% of the Armenian abandoned properties and real estate were restituted. It was expressed that the restituted property was belonging to 271.000 persons.⁴²

Ottoman government demanded immediate retrocession of returning Armenians' real estates without any debate in order not to face any complaints and conceptualized the problem of people actually living in the same properties to be solved after returning. In an encrypted dispatch sent to Kal'a-i Sultaniye Governorship on May 7, 1919, it was reminded that the immediate submission of houses of returning non-Muslims was urgent whoever was residing at those houses.⁴³ In a news dated July 7, 1919, it was noted that member of Martial Court Administration Mustafa Pasha has given back the house which he bought from an Armenian during the relocation upon his request through paying the compensation.⁴⁴

Meanwhile it was notified in the press that through Armistice decisions various commissions were established to investigate the retrocession of Armenian and Greek property in different places.⁴⁵

Upon the applications of non-Muslims whose goods and properties were compulsorily sold as a result of the relocation and the demand of the British representative, it was decided that a commission to be established in Edirne province to examine Edirne and its environs. This commission was to be formed by one person from Justice and Interior Ministries each, one British officer and one from the community to which the applicant belonged to. What is more, it

41 BOA, DH. UMVM, 158/85, lef 4.

42 *Tasvir-i Efkâr*, 30 April 1919.

43 BOA, DH. ŞFR. 99/93.

44 *Memleket*, 7 July 1919; *İleri*, 7 July 1919.

45 *Memleket*, 30 April 1919.

was clearly stipulated that the representatives of Justice and Interior Ministries should be qualified.⁴⁶ In a telegram sent to İzmit and Eskişehir Governorships and Hüdavendigâr province on May 25, 1919, it was ordered that a commission, formed by one British officer, civil inspectors Halil and Rafet Bey, was coming to investigate the operation carried towards Armenian and Greek properties.⁴⁷ It was determined that the commission including Civil Servants of Immigrant Affairs Director (*Muhâcirîn Memûrîn Mûdürü*) Talat Bey to Ankara, Yozgat, Sivas and environs, civil inspector Halil Refet Bey to İzmit and environs, Nedim Bey to region of Bursa and Balıkesir, and Fahrettin Bey to Edirne and Tekfurdağı, would be investigating.⁴⁸ In the following months commissions continued their investigations. It was informed on July 6, 1919 that the commission formed by British officer Mr. Hol and Civil Servants of Immigrant Affairs Director Talat Bey⁴⁹ would come to Eskişehir Governorship and on August 21, 1919, a commission of Mr. Alvin Hadkinson and Civil Servant İhsan Bey to Tekfurdağı Governorship.⁵⁰

Meanwhile, it was written in a news dated July 31, 1919, Emigrant Inspector Rafet Bey was killed by a Greek gang while going to Kal'a-i Sultaniye in order to search the situation of Armenian and Greek emigrants and to help them.⁵¹ Thereby Rafet Bey who was trying to help Armenians and Greeks in returning to the places where they used to live and in making search on their problems, lost his life in this way.

It was asked to the Governorship of Ankara from Ministry of Interior on July 31, 1919, that a claim was made to them about the Armenians returned to Yozgat that they were very miserable and desolate, their houses were damaged. Moreover, they asked how many families the Armenians were and why they did not benefit from any aid sent by the Americans.⁵² In the reply on August 26, 1919, it was mentioned that there were around 150 Armenians returned to Yozgat, some of them were given stores of grain for the maintenance support and some of them got their own sustenance via dealing their craft. Some of them who did not have

46 Prime Ministry Ottoman Archives (BOA), Chamber of Deputies Reports (Meclis-i Vükelâ Mazbataları) (MV), 215/138.

47 BOA. DH. ŞFR. 99/334.

48 *Memleket*, 27 May 1919.

49 BOA. DH. ŞFR, 101/19-5.

50 BOA. DH. ŞFR, 102/209.

51 *Memleket*, 31 July 1919.

52 Prime Ministry Ottoman Archives (BOA), Ministry of Interior Directorate of Principal Clerk Documents (Dahiliye Nezareti Kalem-i Mahsûs Mûdürîyeti Belgeleri) (DH.KMS.), 50-2/46, lef 1/1.

any house got together and some of them were staying at their own houses. Besides, it was mentioned in the reply that the Americans did not send any cash aid to Yozgat Armenians, but just the beneficients sent 5.500 *Liras* for the orphan asylum, which was built in February; however, this amount was not even enough for the bread money of this orphan asylum.⁵³

Another problem was what should be done about the real estate assets of the Armenians who did not return. As a matter of fact, in a letter sent from Trabzon Governorship to the Ministry of Interior that they were hesitating and waiting for an opinion about the request of the Armenian religious deputy to use the abandoned properties of the unreturned Armenians, who were recorded though, to meet the needs of the orphans and the people, and lately a British Commissioner made the same request.⁵⁴ In the reply letter from the Ministry of Interior on August 11, 1919, it was put that a draft law about the not-yet returned Armenians' goods was being prepared and it was discussed in the Cabinet, the law was soon to be declared. Thus the letter ordered, until the adoption of the law, prevention of any illegal activity regarding that matter.⁵⁵

It was understood from the news of August 12, 1919 that the law of abandoned goods was begun to be discussed in the Cabinet.⁵⁶

It was being decided to give back the house of Istepan to him, who was an Armenian from an Armenian neighborhood of Bolu, because he declared, with fear, that he gave his house to the orphans.⁵⁷ In a letter written by Diyarbakır Governorship to Ministry of Interior, it was mentioned that an abandoned house, which once belonged to a person named Bogos, had been used as a police station and since the son of the deceased Bogos showed up, the rent amounted to 3.140 *kurush* should be paid to him via remittance.⁵⁸

It was informed to Çatalca Governorship and Edirne province that a commission composed of Mister Hadkinson and the Director of General Directorate of Emigrants (*Muhâcirîn Müdüriyet-i Umûmiyyesi*), Talat Bey.⁵⁹ With another

53 BOA. DH. KMS, 50-2/46, lef 3.

54 BOA. DH. KMS, 54-2/45, lef 1.

55 BOA, DH.KMS, 54-2/45, lef 2/1.

56 *Memleket*, 12 August 1919.

57 BOA. BEO. 344074; BOA. MV. 2 6/127.

58 Prime Ministry Ottoman Archives (BOA), Ministry of Interior Directorate of General Security Accounting Office (Dâhiliye Nezareti Emniyet-i Umumiye Müdüriyeti Muhasebe Kalemi) (DH. EUM. MH.), 196/116.

59 BOA. DH. ŞFR. 103/37.

telegram on January 21, 1920, Mister Hadkinson and Talat Bey's coming was reminded to Edirne province.⁶⁰

According to the news of September 21, 1919, Hamamcıyan Efendi from the Armenian Patriarchate saw the Grand Vizier and disclosed several demands. The demands included the adoption and application of the draft law on the abandoned goods, which had been under investigation in the Cabinet, the allocation of seeds to the returned Armenians from relocation, the evacuation of the Sansaryan Han which was occupied by the Police Office, and the evacuation or payment of the real estates of the Armenians that were occupied by the Muslim emigrants. What is more, it was demanded that the Armenian orphans should benefit from the tax collected for the children of the soldiers died at war. The Grand Vizier told in his answer that he assumed that most of these demands were fulfilled but he still would deal with them.⁶¹

In a dispatch issued by the Ministry of Finance on October 7, 1919, it was stipulated that a man called Mardiros Sariyan, who had relocated to Syria during the war, had claimed that his factories in Manisa and Sarayköy were seized. As a result, it was also written in the dispatch that the British Political Representative demanded investigation of movable properties of those people who were accused of this seizure and prevention of any selling through applying a distraint until the court's decision.⁶² Mardiros Sariyan, who had relocated to Syria through the decisions of Ministries of Interior and Foreign Affairs on December 15, 1919, complained about İzmir tradesmen Ali Fikri, Zeki and Ahmet Bey's seizure of his Manisa and Sarıköy factories by violence and said that his damage was more than 1.400.000 *liras*. Upon this claim, it was notified that a joint commission was founded in order to distraint the real estate of the guilty people and the issue was decided to be dealt by the Military Tribunal in İzmir.⁶³

The document of the law of abandoned goods oscillated among the commissions, the Council of State and Ministry of Interior. In the news of October 21, 1919, it was said that the document about the properties of relocated people was sent back to the Council of State from Ministry of Interior.⁶⁴

60 BOA. DH. ŞFR. 106/99.

61 *İkdam*, 21 September 1919; *Akvam*, 20 September 1919; *Vakit*, 21 September 1919.

62 BOA. BEO. 344566.

63 BOA. BEO. 345345.

64 *İkdam*, 21 November 1919.

In was written in the newspapers of December 30, 1919, that the draft law on the movable assets and the real estate of the relocated people was sent to *Bab-ı Âli*.⁶⁵ Finally, the abandoned goods issue was finalized as a decree on January 8, 1920. This 33 article decree included the assets, which were recorded by the Finance and Waqf budgets, under the surveillance of Treasure and not recorded in the name of the first owners. With this decree, all the possible problems were handled and solved. Among them, there were retrocession of the whole properties to the owners as soon as possible, the cash payment of the sold assets if they wanted, payment of interest and giving the sum of money, which was collected by the refinement commissions instead of the transferred people.⁶⁶ It was written on the newspapers of January 14, 1920, that a decree was declared about the refined assets of the relocated people.⁶⁷

There was some correspondence in order to make the returned people immune from tax-payment. In a telegram dated February 2, 1929, sent to Hüdavendigâr province as a reply to telegram with the signature of Armenian religious deputy Tomas from Bilecik, telling the request of the returning people to be immune from tax-payment; it was told that they were all immune from the responsibilities and profit taxes before and during the relocation years and immune from the land profit taxes of 1919 and 1920. However, it was not clear that whether they were immune from paying the transfer duty (*tarik-i bedel vergisi*).⁶⁸ In a letter written to Directorate of Tribes and Emigrants (*Aşair ve Muhâcirîn Müdüriyeti*) it was said that the returning Armenians from relocation were in charge of paying the transfer duty of 1919-1920, although they were exempted from all the taxes before and during the relocation years.⁶⁹

The problem of accusation and informing of the Turkish officers connected with the relocation issue was one of the most common issues during the Armistice. There are many examples about this issue: In a letter written on May 6, 1920, it was explained that Ali Rıza Efendi, who was in charge of Keskin district's abandoned goods commission four years ago, was arrested and put into jail by the British police because of an information coming from an Armenian citizen returned to Keskin, although he was not related with the debit.⁷⁰ Certainly, it is

65 Vakit, 30 October 1919.

66 *akvîm-i Vakayi*, 12 November 1336, No: 3747; BOA, MV, 254/15; *Düstur*, II. Tertip, v.11, pp. 553-561.

67 *İkdam*, 14 November 1920, p. 3.

68 BOA. DH. UMVM, 162/52, lef 2.

69 BOA. DH. UMVM, 162/52, lef 4.

70 Prime Ministry Ottoman Archives (BOA), Ministry of Interior Security Office Documents (DH. EUM. AYŞ.), 40/17

thought provoking about the then Turkish authorities that all of these happened to an officer and his being in jail for 25 days was only noticed with an application of his wife.

An investigation was made about the house in Pangaltı in which İshak Muammer Bey was living, related to the objection of the heirs of the deceased Bogos Ananyan, and it was understood that the selling procedure was made on May 2, 1914, before the relocation.⁷¹ Although the issue of retrocession of abandoned goods was finalized substantially, some rejections and requests continued for a long time. There were still some examples until the end of 1921. It was understood from a document dated October 22, 1921, that Halil Efendi had to pay back 500 *liras* to Erakel Serkizyan, because he sold his olives during the relocation according to the decision of the commission and the payment was done to olive trader Agob the son of Levon, the assignee of Serkizyan, with an acquaintance.⁷² On December 15, 1920, it was declared in a letter sent to the Ministry of Interior that a house, in which a person, named Güzide Hanım was living, was given back to Madam Margosyan after the complaint and review.⁷³

Conclusion

In order to arrange the situation of abandoned goods and secure their safety, the government, which took the relocation decision, declared several rules and instructions. It is obvious that the first operations of the then government were about the retrocession of the assets after the adoption of the retrocession decree. It is possible to claim that the process was done as fast as possible, taking into consideration the harsh conditions of the country. The Ottoman State tried to assess every type of requests and complaints, fast and delicate decisions were applied especially about the controversial goods. The assets were returned back to the Armenian citizens without hesitation, when it was understood that they were right. However, as it was mentioned with several examples in the article, the issue of unfair trials of some Turkish citizens and officers were experienced frequently.

In conclusion, the Ottoman State tried to settle the issue of retrocession, this was seemed to be hard to solve, in a fair and fast way. In the light of historical facts and archival documents, it would also be fair to claim that the Ottoman government handled the issue successfully.

71 BOA. DH. HMŞ. 7/3-12, lef 5.

72 BOA. DH. HMŞ. 8/2-27, lef 10.

73 BOA. DH. HMŞ. 7/3,32.

OTTOMAN ARMENIANS IN THE PERIOD OF KOCA RAGIB PASHA*

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Abstract: *This article intends to analyze the life of Ottoman Armenians in Istanbul in the 18th century under the Grand-Vizierate of Koca Ragıb Pasha. In his tenure, Armenians turned out to be one of the most favorable communities of the Ottoman capital, since they began to assume significant economic as well as political posts in the Ottoman administration. Utilizing Ottoman archives as well as Armenian chronicles, prominent Armenian families, their occupations, economic activities, etc. are covered in the article. What is more, the relationship between Armenian Patriarchs and Koca Ragıb Pasha and the privileges and concessions that Armenians of Istanbul obtained are examined. Hence, the article aims to fulfill a significant gap in the literature regarding the “golden age” of the Ottoman Armenians.*

Key Words: *Ottoman Armenians, Koca Ragıb Pasha, Armenian Patriarchate, sarrafs, Ottoman economy.*

Introduction

Turkish-Armenian relations comprise a long and relatively brilliant period that goes beyond centuries. The historian has to consider experienced practices of the past so long as he takes account of and discusses the hot issues of last centuries. This study will narrate sections from a conspicuous period, namely the second half of the 18th century, that is referred as the period of “The Religious and Cultural Golden Age, Armenian Humanism and Renaissance.”¹ The subject

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1 An Armenian enlightenment movement, which is related to the Enlightenment models in the West, appears especially in this period and the Armenian community becomes acquainted with modernity earlier than the society it lived together. In this enlightenment period, which occurred as a result of the printing press and significant capital power, a very close contact was established with the West in the more technical and specialized intellectual areas of activity, significant success was achieved in the mass education of Armenian community. It is interesting that this movement was coincided with the period when the Armenian capital

will be handled especially through Ottoman archival documents and Armenian resources; and some examples from the practice of living together will be presented. These examples will generally be dealt within the context of the period of Koca Ragıb Pasha since this period reflects the main characteristic of the time and provides generous resources. The subject is chosen by considering the relations of Ragıb Pasha (d. 1763) with the leading figures of the Armenian people and by thinking that the activities of a political leader whose career was at its zenith.

Ottoman Armenians in the 18th Century

Armenians preserved their status among the principal elements of the state and their important status in the Ottoman society until the mid-19th century despite both the internal problems of the Ottoman State and the problems with the external roots. Especially in the 18th century, Armenians under the Ottoman administration retained wide opportunities, while Armenians, who had been living in other places, entered into close relations with the Ottoman Armenians. For instance, one of the most important Armenian poets Sayat-Nova (1712-1795) lived in this period and voiced his poems mostly as ‘aşuğ’s, which the Ottoman Armenians could understand. Tanburî Artin the Little, who served as a teacher in the palaces of Nader Shah and Mahmud I, created a school in the music and he was even included in the Ottoman-Iranian ambassadorial mission.² Again in this

was moved from the hands of the “*Khodjas*” to the “*Amiras* and *Sarrafs*”. The World Map, which was among the important masterpieces of this period and was printed by Tovmas and Ğugas Vanantetsi, proves that the scientific developments in Europe were closely followed. The thing that urged these publishers for this initiative is again directly related with commerce and this situation is openly stated in the tag of the book, which was printed for the usage of the book: “For the utilization of the merchants, especially the Armenian merchants”. Boğos Levon Zekiyan, *Ermeniler ve Modernite, Gelenek ve Yenileşme/Özgürlük ve Evrensellik Arasında Ermeni Kimliği*, (trans. Altuğ Yılmaz), Istanbul, 2001, the book thoroughly includes important and valuable notes about the subject. See also, Henry Jewell Sarkiss, “The Armenian Renaissance;1500-1863”, *Journal of Modern History*, Vol. 10, No. 4, pp. 434-448; Bernard Lewis and Benjamin Franklin, “Osmanlı Devleti İçerisindeki Hıristiyanlar ve Yahudiler”, trans. Halil Erdemir-Hatice Erdemir, *Akademik Araştırmalar Dergisi*, No. 4-5, (Special issue on the Ottomans), Istanbul, 2000, pp. 197-206.

- 2 Tanburî Artin the Little wrote a treatise in Turkish with Armenian alphabet regarding the journey of Elçi Mustafa Pasha, his meeting with Nader Shah and his experiences in Iran. This work was published in Venice in 1800. The treatise was translated into Turkish by Esat Uras and published by the Turkish History Society in 1942. The other important work of Artin that he wrote in Turkish with Armenian alphabet, *Müsiki Edvârı (The Periods of Music)*, contains in-depth and detailed information about the theory of performing the 18th century Ottoman Art Music. Artin produced a valuable source collecting many colorful anecdotes throughout his journey to India with the Ottoman legation since Nader Shah was in his campaign against India. For a remarkable review of this treatise see: Eugenia Popescu-Judet, *Tanburî Küçük Artin, A Musical Treatise of the Eighteenth Century*, Istanbul, 2002.

period, among the Armenian community, many famous poets, historians, scientists, and writers contemporary were appeared. The palace jewelers and commissioners of Imperial Mint (*darphane-i amire*) were appointed among the Düzyan family of Divrik, palace doctors among the Sasyan family, palace artists among the Manas family, commissioners of gunpowder factory among the Dadyans, palace architects among the Balyans; and all of them were always received great respect.³

The Armenians nearly monopolized almost all the stages of the trade routes from Istanbul to Iran; the New Jolfa quarter of Isfahan became an Armenian trade center; due to their connections with foreign merchants, they attained important status in the Ottoman commercial and financial life.⁴ Indeed, especially after the mid-18th century, it was possible to see Armenians, who were influential in trade in Konya, Kayseri, Elazığ, Malatya, Sivas, Tokat, which were the centers of agricultural and small-scale production. They were also active in the trade sector of Ankara, which was the center of wool and mohair, Bursa, which was the center of silk and tobacco, and Üsküdar, which was the bridgehead of Istanbul in Asia and the last point of Anatolian and Iranian trade. Armenian merchants coming from different places of the world were meeting, doing business and consociating in the inn near the Galata Surp Krikor Armenian Church.⁵ They were the leading ones among the major wholesalers of the capital in the 18th century.⁶ Ever since Ahmed III, the Armenian artisans and merchants were enrolling in various guilds together with other artisans, who took place in parades in the presence of the Sultan in special days, thereby they proved their presence in commercial life, as well.⁷ In this period, the Armenian population and influence had considerably increased; names of some Armenian families were renowned as the leading *sarrafs* and bankers, in addition to their position of leading silk merchants and wholesalers. Whereas the leading moneylenders and bankers appeared among the Jews

3 Bogos Sasyan (1744-1814), graduated from the Faculty of Medicine of Rome, was appointed as the private doctor of Sultan Mustafa III; Bogos's son Manuel replaced his father's position having graduated from Faculty of Medicine of Padova, and therefore the Sasyans kept their position of palace doctor for a long time. Fatma Müge Göçek, "Osmanlı Ermenilerinin Gündelik Hayatlarına Bir Bakış: XVIII. Yüzyıl İstanbul'unda Ermeni Esnafları", *Osmanlı* (ed. Güler Eren), Ankara, 1999, p. 560.

4 Suraiya Faroqhi, *Osmanlı Dünyasında Üretmek, Pazarlamak, Yaşamak*, trans. Gül Ç. Güven-Özgür Türesay, Istanbul, 2003, pp.16-19.

5 Arman Tayran, *TÜSİAD Görüş Dergisi*, (Special Issue on the Armenians / Culture-Places), August 2001, pp. 57-58.

6 Robert Mantran, *XVII. ve XVIII. Yüzyıllarda Osmanlı İmparatorluğu*, trans. M. Ali Kılıçbay, Ankara, 1995, p. 80.

7 Participation of the Armenian artisans to the parades continued through reign of Ahmed III, until Selim III without break. Göçek, "Osmanlı Ermenilerinin...", p. 561.

until the mid-17th century and even until the early 18th century, Armenians began to capture this sector, starting from the early 18th century, when they ascended in trade sector.⁸

The Armenian officials of the palace and royal institutions were in control of a leading trade activity. They operated as merchant (*bezirgan*) and shopping (*mubayaa*) officials, who were responsible for food supply and transportation (*iaşe ve ikmal*) and logistical support; and *kethudas*, *agas*, doctors, surgeons, money-exchangers and jewelers, who were interested in such kind of business, were usually from among the Armenian community. Some Armenians started to assume important positions in the state administrations; members of royal family including Ottoman princes (*sehzades*), wives of the Sultans (*kadin efendi*), as well as high-rank palace officials including black eunuchs (*kara agas*) and white eunuchs (*ak agas*), even the Sultan himself started to do business with them. Especially due to their skills in precious stones and jewelry, they were the favorites. Eventually, after the second half of the century, the Armenian *sarrafs* and leading merchants replaced the Jews and Greeks in dealing business with leading *pashas*, large landowners (*ayans*) and local merchants in addition to the royal officials. They were doing their money lending and market business; they lend money with high interest rates to almost every level of bureaucracy, and they became payees.

Although the word *sarrafs* is literally defined as those spending money, expending, making business or having business done with money on behalf of another person, it also meant, at that times, a profession like money-lending, financier etc. *Sarrafs*, usually originated as dealer of precious stone and jewelry, worked like money experts; the leading Armenian *sarrafs* were working as state *sarrafs*, as well. They had prominent position in the community, and according to new customs that started in this period, they were settling in Halıcıoğlu district during the winter and in Bosphorus through the summer.⁹ They also dealt with large-scale trade in covered-bazaars (*bedesten*), collecting the revenues of large farms, enterprises,

8 The tradition of Jewish *sarrafs* remained only in the army until the dissolution of the Janissary Corps; and the Aciman family of the Jewish *sarrafs* held its monopoly of the army *sarrafs* for a considerable period of the century. For instance, Yesaya Aciman, among them, was the Janissary *sarrafs* in the period of Mahmud I, and Mustafa III (1730-1773); he was killed with charge of corruption and mistakes. His brother, Meir was one of the last Jewish chief-*sarrafs* of the palace, after Yuda Baruh, the chief-*sarrafs* of Mahmud I. Yusuf Belasel, Istanbul, 2004, p. 45. It is known that line of descent of the Aciman family is continuing.

9 The district was like center of the high-society, in those years. According to Inciciyan, chronicler of the time, Armenians had settled mostly in places like Kumkapi, Yenikapi, Langa, Samatya, Uskudar; majority of the Armenian residents of Halıcıoğlu was the wealthy *sarrafs*. They had 13 churches including the Kumkapi, Balat and Samatya churches in the city, and in Galata, Uskudar, and other districts. P. Ç. İnciciyan, *18. Asırda İstanbul*, translation and review by Hrand D. Andreasyan, Istanbul, 1976, pp. 20, 96, 133-135.

mines, and customs; collecting money, or representing the leading merchants and tax farmers (*multezim*). This situation drew attention of the Europeans traveling the Ottoman territories, and it was particularly pointed out in the reports of the delegates and foreign merchants. According to the account of one of these travelers, “the Armenian nation has become the most crowded, wisely acting, and wealthiest nation by the mid 18th century. This nation is hardworking, tireless, do with less, do not hesitate to lie in clay, do not flee, and do not follow dodge in the midst of the difficult things. (...) [T]he traveler merchants, who constitute the most crowded part of the all caravans, are coming from among them; and they control the most important part of trade with Iran and India. Many of the *sarrafs* are the Armenians. That is why they have great assets. These *sarrafs* are the bankers of the country. They are also acting as foreign exchange agency. (...) The essential part of their income stems from the credits they gave with high interests. For instance, they take 24 to 30 percent interest from their credits to the Turks. Thanks to this profession, many of them accumulated large assets. Among them, there are those trading with Italy and Venice, many of them deals with jewelry commerce. (...) Most of the jewelers and goldsmiths are the Armenians. The Chief of Grand Bazaar (*bezirganbasi*) was also started to be selected among them. (...) The Armenians, who are now more wealthy and respected than the Jews, captured all kind of these services. In order to establish sound relations with trustworthy people, it is a requirement to know at least one Armenian. They should not be kept out of sight since they could coalesce to compete and to resist any nation or community which is superior to them and wants to do business with them.”¹⁰

One of the political leaders dealing with the Armenian *sarrafs* was Koca Ragib Pasha, one of the remarkable grand-viziers of the 18th century, in whose tenure the Armenians were comfortable and came into important positions in the statecraft. It is worth of mentioning briefly about his life, prior to addressing his relations with the Armenians. Mehmed Ragib Pasha (1699-1763) is the son of Şevki Mehmed Efendi, a clerk (*katip*) in the Record Office (*defterhane*). Since his early ages, Mehmed Ragib was subjected to a painstaking education. He took courses from tutors, and by attending to *defterhane* regularly – like his father – he was brought up as a perfect clerk (*kalem efendisi*). He advanced in the ranks of bureaucracy; after his duties such as the secretary of the office of the Grand Vizier (*Sadaret Mektupçuluğu*), envoy, and chief-clerk (*reisulkuttap*), he served as governor in the prominent provinces like Aydin, Rakka, Halep, including Egypt,

10 Halil Sahillioğlu, “Yabancı Gözüyle Türkler, Yahudiler, Ermeniler, Rumlar”, *Belgelerle Türk Tarihi Dergisi*, December 1968, No. 15, pp. 46-48.

until his appointment as Grand Vizier at the time of Sultan Osman III. He was the first and prolonged grand-vizier of Sultan Mustafa III, and the Sultan made him his brother-in-law by marrying him with her sister Saliha Sultan. He was known as one of the leading intellectuals of his era, due to his wise statements, poetry and literal works and he attracted the attention by his intelligence in all duties, his skills, tolerance, cautiousness and dignity. His managerial competence was qualified as extra-ordinary in world politics of the time, and he was admired because he was able to solve the most challenging issues easily. He was successful in state management and he became known to be trustworthy, hard-worker, insightful and politically intelligent outside the country as well as inside. Especially his watchful politics during the Seven-Year Wars (1756-1763) in Europe, and his ability to forestall an Ottoman-Russian war was viewed as accurate, considering the difficult position that the state fell in after the Ottoman-Russian war of 1768. Koca Ragib Pasha, who was one of the few Grand Viziers managed to keep his position until his death, caught the attention due to his close relations with non-Muslims and leaders of them. He ranked in history as ‘the Last Great Grand Vizier of the Glorious Age of the Ottoman Empire’ as he deserved.

With the exception of his probable contacts with Armenians in his youth, Ragib Pasha’s first considerable relations with them started during the Ottoman-Iranian wars. Then, in September 1723, as a young clerk, Ragib was acting as the secretary (*mektupcu*) of commander Arifi Ahmed Pasha leading the Ottoman campaign on Revan (Yerevan). After long fighting, the city was succumbed to the Ottomans, and probably Ragib, who was involved in the negotiating team of the Commander of Janissary Corps (*yeniceri agasi*) (September 28 – October 4, 1724), played an important role in the yielding process of the city. Registration of the newly conquered lands (*tahrir katipligi*) around Revan and Tabriz was among the duties of Ragib; however, with the postponement of the registering activities in order to provide stability and peace in these territories, he could not fill out that duty. After the restart of the recording, he asked the post of record office in Revan; and on December 19, 1727, (5 Cemaziyulahir 1140) “[I]n accordance with his wish, Mehmed Ragib, may the God increase his wisdom, who served in registering important affairs at Tebriz and Revan armies since the initiation of the campaign against Iran, was appointed as the head of the provincial treasury (*defterdar*) in Revan.”¹¹ Ragib, who was assigned to such an important position despite his early age, entered into the first remarkable and formal relations with the Armenians living in the region.¹²

11 Fehameddin Başar, *Osmanlı Eyâlet Tercihâtı (1717-1730)*, Ankara, 1997, p. 270.

12 According to the Ottoman hierarchy, *defterdar* (district treasurer) was the third ranking representative of the

After his post in Revan, his second intercourse with the Armenians took place during his tenure as *reisulkuttab* (1742-1745). One of the duties of *reisulkuttab* in the Ottoman Porte (*Bab-ı Âli*) was pursuance of the legal matters related to non-Muslim Ottoman subjects and those foreigners who were allowed to reside in Ottoman territories (*mus'temen*). All kind of records except financial matters related to non-Muslim subjects of the Ottoman Empire, and conventions related to *mus'temens* were deposited at the *Beylik* department of the office of *reisulkuttab*. Since *reisulkuttab* was briefing the Grand Vizier and the Sultan on matters related with non-Muslims and were summoning the non-Muslim community leaders to *Bab-ı Âli* when necessary,¹³ *reisulkuttab* Ragib was in close relations with the Armenians. It is known that he had good relations with Patriarch Hagop Nalyan, one of the leading Armenian intellectuals at that time, and this friendship progressively continued throughout his tenure as Grand Vizier. In several evenings in every week Nalyan was visiting Ragib Pasha, whose residence was near to Patriarchy, and sometimes he was participating in Ragib Pasha's social gatherings.¹⁴ Nalyan, who was one of the prominent disciples of the respected scholar Hovhannes Golod,¹⁵ the Patriarch of the time, administered the Patriarchy for a while after Golod's death and his first Patriarchy was coincided with Ragib's tenure of *reisulkuttab*. Nalyan was tired of inter-communal problems and the sectarian struggles, and had to resign from Patriarchy; however, he reassumed that post after Ragib's ascendance to the post of Grand Vizier and successfully endured this position until his death.¹⁶ Nalyan, almost in the same age with Ragib, thanks to his intellectual competence and his in-depth knowledge both in his religion and in Islam, took his part among the close friends of Ragib. Through the tenure of Nalyan as Patriarch, who was one of the most prominent Patriarchs of the community after Golod, the education campaign that had been started under the tenure of Golod continued and the Armenians lived one of their brightest times both religiously, and culturally. Due to great financial power and prestige of the Armenian community in this period, together with Pasha's close interest in the community and his friendship, many of the administrative resolutions and directives began to be transformed into the privileges serving the interest

central government after the *vali* (governor), and *kadi* (judge).

- 13 Recep Ahışalı, *Osmanlı Devlet Teşkilatında Reisülküttâblık (XVIII. Yüzyıl)*, İstanbul, 2001, p. 191.
 14 Pars Tuğlacı, *Tarih Boyunca Batı Ermenileri*, İstanbul, 2004, pp. 323, 325.
 15 Patriarch Golod was a remarkable scholar and bureaucrat that served particularly to religious and cultural revival of the Armenian community; and that had very close relations with the Ottoman statesmen. All of the Armenians around the world organized various celebrations in 1978 for the 300th anniversary of Patriarch Golod.
 16 Nalyan died due to his illness after a short period following the death of Pasha (1764).

of the community members. The most influential and powerful section of the newly emerging trade and financial bourgeoisie that appeared among the community members was consisting of *sarrafs* dealing with high level state authorities like Ragib and the palace. That bourgeoisie supported the Armenian churches, schools, charity foundations through its increasing assets; schools, hospitals and printing houses were either established or administered through its leadership. Armenian bourgeoisie was also natural protector of many talented youth coming from the provincial areas. The moral and material rise of those Armenian youth working with the Armenian bourgeoisie trained by them and recommended to important positions at the statecraft. Their assumption of leading posts greatly contributed to the increasing influence of the community over the state and society. Besides social charity activities, wealthy and leading Armenians, most of who were originally from Egin, backed religious and cultural renaissance of the community under the tenure of Patriarch Golod and Nalyan.¹⁷ The Armenian *sarrafs* and merchants were also affiliated to the Armenian Patriarchy via several duties; most of them were heads and leaders of the Armenian community holding the post of *amira*.¹⁸ The *amiras*, the Armenian elite that marked the period that we deal with and constituted almost an oligarchy, profoundly affected the destiny of the community through their role in the selection of the Patriarch, and in the administration of the Patriarchy and other leading churches.¹⁹ In this historical

- 17 In fact, not all the *sarrafs* were trained in working (*alayli*); that is, they did not advanced into the palace *sarraf* coming from among the children from their villages in Egin and Ankara. They became apprentice in goldsmith and jewelry via their relatives in *Simkeshane*. "The strengthened bourgeoisie started to dispatch their children to Europe for college education, having completed their primary and secondary education in great and efficient schools; they had established where they were also educated in commercial account and banking. Eventually, the children, who were different from their fathers and grandfathers, and who had an international reputation through their competence on banking and influence, constituted the new generation of bankers commissioned the state debts after 1854, and started to appear in the financial markets and stock-exchanges." Haydar Kazgan, *Galata Bankerleri*, Istanbul, 2005, p. 15.
- 18 For some considerable studies about the *amiras* that marked the covered period of the Armenian nation as lords and leaders, see Pascal Carmont, *Les Amiras: Seigneurs de L'Arménie Ottomane*, Paris, 1999, p. 191; Hagop Barsoumanian, "The Dual Role of the Armenian Amira Class within the Ottoman Government and the Armenian Millet (1750-1850)", in Bernard Lewis and Benjamin Braude (eds.), *Christians and Jews of the Ottoman Empire*, New York, 1982, p. 171 and afterwards; Vartan H. Artinian, "The Role of the Amiras in the ottoman Empire", *Armenian Review*, Vol. 34/2, No. 134, pp. 189-194; A. Ter Minassian, "Une Famille D'Amiras Armeniens: Les Dadian", in Daniel Panzac(ed.), *Historie Economique Et Sociale De l'Empire Ottoman Et Del Turquie (1326-1960)*, Paris, 1995, pp. 505-519.
- 19 The sectarian differences that increased particularly towards the end of the century, led to split of *amiras* into different sects and diminished their influence. Actually, weakening and split of the *amiras* triggered developments that brought the end of the *amira* system. In line with the developments in the Ottoman country

process, this title was generally held by the great *sarrafs*, high level bureaucrats, commissioners of the Imperial Mint, commissioners of powder factory (*Barutcu-basi*), and royal architects (*Hassa mimari*), most of whom held their positions at the tenure of Ragib Pasha.²⁰

It is possible to call some of the remarkable developments related to the Armenian community, particularly during the tenure of Ragib Pasha as the Grand Vizier, as following: It has already been pointed out that the financial market was greatly monopolized by the Armenian *sarrafs* particularly since the second half of the 18th century until the early 20th century. Indeed, the Armenian jewelers dealing with silver and jewelry were mostly those, who were ascending among the artisans of Istanbul at the term of the Grand Vizier Ragib Pasha. Especially during the reign of Sultan Mustafa III and Abdulhamid I, some Armenian goldsmiths advanced so much that their creations become the third in the world after the English and French ones.²¹ The Armenians replaced the position of the Jews in the market; started to commission finance and account of the palace, viziers, and pashas; many Armenians started to be called among the leading figures. Additionally, after then, the Armenians in metropolitan cities became wealthier than other non-Muslim communities. According to the Armenian researchers, a great part of the community was very rich, a quarter of it was consisting middle class dealing with small-scale industry and artisanship, and only a few of it was poor. In this period, whereas some guilds were cosmopolitan ethnically and religiously, others were composed of almost one religious and ethnic identity. While the number of the Armenian guilds in the cities was 65, it doubled at the second half of the century.²² In those years, it was possible to find many Armenian artisans

and in the world, increasing demand for change and sectarian struggles challenged the position of *amiras* as representatives of the state, traditions and status quo. When the system could not meet increasing demands of the Armenians living in the provincial areas, the *amira* class entirely disappeared towards the mid of the 19th century. Kevork Papazyan, one of the famous *sarrafs* of the 19th century, and the commissioner of the *sarrafs* known as the chief fellow of Mithat Pasha, was the last *amira*. In addition to his various high-level positions, he had drawn attention as one of the fellows accompanied Sultan Abdulaziz in his travel to Europe in 1867. Arsen Yarman, *Osmanlı Sağlık Hizmetlerinde Ermeniler ve Surp Pırgıç Ermeni Hastanesi Tarihi*, Istanbul, 2001, p. 85.

20 Kevork Pamukciyan, *Zamanlar, Mekanlar, İnsanlar*, ed. Osman Köker, Istanbul, 2002, p. 123.

21 Inciciyan, *18. Asırda İstanbul*, p. 37.

22 Göçek, "Osmanlı Ermenilerinin...", p. 558; since the parades to be accepted in the guilds usually included some Islamic dimensions, special parades were organized for the acceptance of the Armenians to the guilds. Hakob S. Anasian, "The Turkish Fütüvvet and the Armenian", *Journal of the Society for Armenian Studies*, No 4, 1988-1989, pp. 161-181, cited in Göçek, "Osmanlı Ermenilerinin...", p. 561; Although it was known that Islam had a special role in the establishment of customs and traditions of artisans, the difference in religion did not let discrimination as supposed to be. In fact, the artisan organizations realized the same success that

and merchants in the two great *bedestens* of Istanbul. Especially in the jewelry bazaar (*cevahir bedesteni*), they had stores full of precious goods like jewels, silver-thread Indian clothes. Sounds of mostly Armenian *sarrafs* were echoed at the door of jewelers, which was one of the four doors of the *bedesten* where jewels embroidered with gold, silver, and precious stone threads were sold by auction; and the auctions were realized on days other than Sundays, Fridays, and days of feast since because majority of the jewelers were Armenians.²³

According to the newly established customs at his era, Koca Ragib Pasha had three Armenian *sarrafs*, as well. Abraham Kuleliyan, cousin of the most famous *sarrafi* of the time, Serpos (Segpos, d.1754) was one of them, and he had a prominent position among the Armenian *sarrafs*. Kuleliyan was known as the *sarrafi* of the personal assets and financier of real estates of Ragib. Kuleliyan, initially, won the recognition as being the cousin of Serpos, and he reached the zenith of his profession particularly at the time of Koca Ragib Pasha. Like Serpos, Kuleliyan had important contacts with the outside, particularly with France and Venice. He was also negatively influenced from the uproar after the death of Pasha, and he lost his great wealth. He was interrogated due to both the sources of his great wealth and inheritance of Ragib as well as his large debts to the artisans. Kuleliyan saved his life on the cost of his wealth and fled as a bankrupt.²⁴ However, after a while—undoubtedly thanks to his skills and relationships— he regained his previous respectability. He found the opportunity to recover himself through assuming the renovation of the French Embassy that heavily damaged by a fire around Beyoğlu in 1760s. Moreover, he appeared as the favorite *sarrafi* of the *Haremeyn waqfs* and dealing with the palace.²⁵ He might found opportunity to reach a wealth near to the previous one since Saint Priest, the French ambassador at the time, stated that he had become one of the richest and most powerful men

the Ottoman system achieved to harmonize various religions, sects, and nations, in their guilds as part of the general structure. It should be stated that the Armenians, Greeks, Jews, Assyrians etc. took part – with different numbers – in the same artisan organizations with the Muslims; and the difference in religion did not harm integration and solidarity in the organization. Leaders of the organizations, elected by majority vote, were indicators of the power of every religion in that organization. Thus, composition of leaders was changing as much as the religious intensity. Mehmet Genç, *Osmanlı İmparatorluğunda Devlet ve Ekonomi*, İstanbul, 2000, pp. 299-300.

23 İnciciyan, 18. *Asırda İstanbul*, pp. 36-37.

24 Kemal Beydilli, "Ignatius Mouradgea d'Ohsson (Muradcan Tosunyan): Ailesi Hakkında Kayıtlar, Nizâm-ı Cedîde Dâir Lâyihası ve Osmanlı İmparatorluğu'ndaki Siyâsî Hayatı", *I. Ü. E. F Tarih Dergisi*, No. 34, 1983-84, pp. 247-314, especially pp. 249-251; Onnik Jamgocyan, "Les Finances de l'Empire Ottoman et les Financiers de Constantinople (1732-1853)," Ph.D., University of Paris (Sorbonne), 1988, p. 285; Carter V. Findley, www.oslo2000.uio.no/program/papers/mlb/-mlb-findley.pdf.

25 Jamgocyan, "Les Finances de l'Empire...", pp. 285, 526.

in Istanbul.²⁶ Thus, his son-in-law d'Ohsson drew attention as the Ambassador of Sweden to the Porte.²⁷ His sorrowful experiences had thought Kuleliyan to be watchful; however, death of Eva, his daughter and wife of d'Ohsson, in an early age left the family with a more bitter sorrow. Throughout the time, thanks to both his friends and relatives, and his associations, Kuleliyan had collected a great wealth in France. After a while, he moved to France with his family and died there on May 13, 1802.

The Armenian *sarrafs* assumed important posts as the commissioner for *sarrafs* (*Sarraflar Kethudasi*) and the chief-*bezirgan* in the guild (*lonca*), as well.²⁸ However, death of their master was a start for the bitter days for *sarrafs* of Ragib, and as far as the appearance of the information on the death of Pasha, interesting incidents for his *sarrafs* started. Upon the suspicion that Pasha had huge money and great wealth kept in secrecy that had been saved and accounted by his *sarrafs*, all three of them were interrogated in detail, and their property was sealed as a precautionary measure. Kazer Amira Arzumanyan (d'Arutin), who had assumed leading posts like the chief-*bezirgan*, commissioner of *sarrafs*, and commissioner of gold standard (*sahib-i ayar*) at the Mint, was the second among the Armenian *sarrafs* of Pasha, and he suffered the highest cost. Arzumanyan and some members of his family were – according to the account of Jamgocyan– heavily tortured, and all family properties were confiscated.²⁹ Stores that belonged to their workshops at *Cuhaci Hani* were sealed. However, “abundant properties” that was supposed to belong to Pasha and money that was searched out for days could not be founded.³⁰ Other merchants in the *Han*, who were seriously discomfited from the extraordinary situation, tried to get rid of that trouble by directing the investigation committee led by a supervisor to another Armenian *sarraf*, Kazer, in Halep.³¹ Thereby they relieved from the heavy investigation, yet, Kazer, Pasha's *sarraf*, could not save himself from a bitter end. He was executed in a morning, in front of *Cuhaci Hani* – that he was working– to frighten the others with the

26 Jamgocyan, “Les Finances de l'Empire...”, pp. 35-36.

27 Kemal Beydilli, “d'Ohsson, Ignatius Mouradgea”, *Diyanet İslam Ansiklopedisi*, Vol. 9, pp. 496-497.

28 The guild leaders were usually selected among the jewelers dealing with the Pasha Kapisi, that is, *sarrafs* of the Grand Vizier.

29 Jamgocyan, “Les Finances de l'Empire...”, pp. 249-250, 358-59, 248, 300, 484; Ali İhsan Bağış, *Osmanlı Ticaretinde Gayr-i Müslimler: Kapitülasyonlar, Avrupa Tüccarları, Beratlı Tüccarlar, Hayriye Tüccarları, 1750-1839*, Ankara, 1983.

30 BOA D. BŞM. MİF 45/20; Ahmed Refik, *Hicri Onikinci Asırda İstanbul Hayatı*, İstanbul, 1988, p. 200; The interrogation about the property of Pasha had continued even after five years of his death; a directive related to the issue was written to the governor of Diyarbakir. Refik, *Hicri Onikinci Asırda...*, p. 214.

31 BOA MD 163, 167.

charge of exploiting his authority at his tenure and concealing the property of Pasha (May 25, 1763).³² Bedros Aleksiyani, associate of Kazer and the third *sarraf* of Pasha, who was once the commissioner of *sarrafs*, was also interrogated. Yet, he managed to save his life like Kuleliyan.

These interesting cases might provide a general overview of conditions of the Armenian *sarrafs*; however, statistical data on the subject, certainly, would make clearer their influence and power at that time. Twenty-four of the twenty-six *sarrafs* that served for twenty-four Grand Viziers through 1718-1852 were from the Armenian origin, which expose the dominance of the Armenians rather than the Turks and other non-Muslim communities in that profession. Any of the *sarrafs* with the exception of the Jewish *sarraf*, Sancino who worked for Tiryaki Mehmed Pasha (1746-1747), and the Greek *sarraf*, Capsaloni, served Mehmed Pasha (1770-1771), reached their position. It was almost the same with the situation over the position of chief-commissioner (*kethuda*). All of the nine people, who ascended to the post of chief-commissioner of *sarrafs* between the tenure of Ragib and 1837, were the Armenians, which was not only by chance.³³ Bogos Nazar and Arslan Amira, who were well-known *chief-bezirgans* between the years of 1760-1763, were also among the influential Armenians of the time. For the same reason, most of the 72 leading *sarrafs* affiliated to the guild officially recognized and headed by the chief-commissioner of *sarrafs* were the Armenians, and number of them was reaching to 137, together with silversmiths and *mulazims*.³⁴

The Jewish *sarrafs* (bankers) endured their significant power on this sector until the mid-18th century; however, conditions had changed after 1758. Under the reign of Mustafa III, and tenure of Ragib Pasha, Jewish dominance on this sector was broken; the Jewish Bonfil Jaco was dismissed from the position of commissioner of gold standard (*sahib-i ayar*) and *sarraf* at the Mint, a critical position related to this sector, and replaced by the Düzyans.³⁵ Mikael Celebi Düzyan

32 BOA MD 163, 117, 167; "1177/1763 On May 25 *sarraf* Gazer was executed."; cited from an Armenian yearbook, Pamukciyan, *Istanbul Yazıları*, p. 26 and afterwards.; Şemdânizâde, who did not like Ragib Pasha, narrated the event in his work to highlight the state of *sarrafs* at that time, and accused the *sarrafs* of abusing their positions through unjust enrichment. Münir Aktepe (ed.), *Şemdânizâde Tarihi - Mür'it-Tevarih*, İstanbul, 1980, pp. 55-56; *Tarih-i Vâsif*, İstanbul, 1216, Vol. 1, p. 221; Tuğlacı argues that *sarrafs* were victim of an intrigue, *Tarih Boyunca Batı Ermenileri*, p. 351.

33 Jamgocyan, "Les Finances de l'Empire...", pp. 14-17; Those *kethudas* were Matos, Kazer, Harutyun, Minas, Çobanyan, Mardires and Karabet Amira Aznavuryan.

34 For the decree on the regular goldsmiths of İstanbul see, A. Refik, *Hicri Onikinci Asırda...*, p. 193-194.

35 Tuğlacı, *Tarih Boyunca Batı Ermenileri*, p. 346; "It is an expression for the official determining dimensions and content of various coins printed in the Mint." Mehmet Zeki Pakalın, *Osmanlı Tarih Deyimleri ve Terimleri*

successfully kept that position until his death. The Düzyans were dealing with jewelry for almost several generations and, in fact, were not far from the state-service. Grandfather of the Düzyans, Harutyun, like his contemporaries, came to Istanbul and started to work as apprentice with jewelers of his own community at *Simkeshane*. He advanced in his profession in a short period and became close friend of the public officials. Initially, he had himself accepted by the circle of Nevsehirlı Ibrahim Pasha, and hence, he became closer to the Sultan. Having gained the favor of the palace and royal circles and embraced by the Sultan, Harutyun and his son, Sarkis, were named with the word “*düz*” meaning ‘right and trustworthy men’ by Ahmet III.³⁶ When the father Sarkis died, he left behind two children named Devlet and Hovhannes. They, like many of their contemporaries, followed their father’s job. One of them died in 1730, and the other in 1744. Hovhannes had four sons. When Mikail Celebi Düzyan was born on January 14, 1724 as the one who would leave a huge inheritance to the family later on, the star of prosperity for the family was also born. He was also trained in jewelry, and he became a great master. Even in his youth, he attracted attention and acquainted to the favorite Armenians dealing with the palace as a teenager at his 18. In a short period, he participated the Armenian jewelers, who were serving Sultan Mahmud I.³⁷ He rapidly advanced in his position at the palace and through his successful professional life, he assumed the post of the Chief Jeweler of the Palace (*Saray-ı Hümayûn Kuyumcubaşısı*) and the *sarraf* of the Imperial Treasury (*Hazine-i Amire*) until the initial years of the reign of Abdulhamid I. In addition to his posts at the palace, together with his son Hovhannes, he was attracting attention to be most favorite dealer of precious stone and jeweler in *Serpos Han* in Galata, and he was serving to local and foreign merchants as banker. However, despite all the achievements and wealth, the zenith for the family led by Mikael Celebi (*Hoca Mikael*) took place in the period of Koca Ragib Pasha in power. Düzyan was at the golden age of his profession in 1758 through eliminating the Jews, who had dominated the sector for centuries. At that time, the control of the Imperial Treasury and the Mint changed hands from the Jewish Bonfil Jaco to the Chief Jeweler of the palace, Mikail Celebi Düzyan. Thereby, the family’s sovereignty over the mint that would be lasted until the end of the 19th century had started.³⁸ At the same time, Bonfil Jaco was seriously interrogated with charge of exploiting his authority, and then, executed. However, Düzyan succumbed to the curses, accusations and slanders from the Jews, who lost their century-long power

Sözlüğü, Vol. 3, p. 93.

36 Jamgocyan, “Les Finances de l’Empire...”, p. 309.

37 Tuğlacı, *Tarih Boyunca Batı Ermenileri*, p. 326.

38 Jamgocyan, “Les Finances de l’Empire...”, pp. 309-311, 543.

to him, and he became paralyzed. Once the increasing diseases deriving from his old ages accompanied to his paralysis, he became confined to the bed, and he died in 1783.³⁹ He left behind a successful and rich professional life and four children, two of whom were males. His son, Hovhannes Celebi Düzyan, born in 1749, also proceeded his fathers trace; also assumed the duty of administrating the mint until his death in the first quarter of 18th century. Although position of the family had shattered for a while, particularly after the death of son, Hovhannes, and due to sectarian struggle, control of administration of the Mint fell to the hands of Düzyans after 1834 and continued by sons' succession of their fathers as predecessor.⁴⁰ The state, pleased with their successful administration of the mint, gave Düzyans some privileges to get rid of arbitrary activities and troubles; the "claw" (*pençe*) concession was one of them. This concession provided them with a shield saving them from fair or unfair assaults, and prevented any decision-making about them without information of the Sultan.⁴¹ Since they have played a remarkable role in the foundation of the silk factory in the early 19th century, that employed more than 150 workers, after a short time, the Düzyans gained the monopoly of the silk trade as well. They shared their prestige, power and prosperity, as well as the risks, with other leading Armenian *sarraf* families and members of the community.⁴² Hence, in parallel with the Düzyans, other Armenian Catholic families originated from Ankara like them, started to play in the financial sector of Istanbul. Male members of the family also continued to work as *sarrafs* of the royal treasury (*ceb-i humayun*); hence, they kept their close relations with the palace. Marrying their sisters with *sarrafs*, in usual, they contributed to their accumulation of a great wealth. It will not be wrong to state that the Düzyans had relationship with other leading powerful and rich merchant-*sarraf* families like the Camciyan, Allahverdiyan, Tingiryan, Hurmuzyan, Aznavuryan, Alexanyan, Kavafyan; all these families protected each other both in commerce and in social life, and even they considered themselves primarily.⁴³ Their lifestyle was so impressive with their numerous servants, pure Arab horses, and their privilege to ride a horse in old city quarter (*suriçi*) coveted even the Pashas. Residences of

39 Tuğlacı, *Tarih Boyunca Batı Ermenileri*, p. 383.

40 Jamgocyan, "Les Finances de l'Empire....", p. 543.

41 This concession was granted to the Armenian royal chief-architects and the Dadyans heading the powder factory (*baruthane*).

42 Then, "it was possible to meet many Armenian official in low or high levels, thanks to their skill in silversmith (*simkeslik*) and jewelry. In many times, the Armenians were in the position of commissioner for the gold standard (*sahib-i ayar*), the highest position after the commissioner of the mint (*darphane emini*)." İnciciyan, *18. Asırda İstanbul*, p. 29.

43 For instance, it is known that Diruhi, daughter of Hovhannes Celebi Düzyan was married to Harutyun, son of Kirkor Tingir. Jamgocyan, "Les Finances de l'Empire....", p. 581- 582.

the Düzyans, the winter-house in Pera, and the summerhouse in the Bosphorus, Yenikoy, were like new milieus of the high society. The other most famous family of the time, the Tingiryans had same privileges as the Düzyans except the family relationships, and they shared the administration of the mint with the Düzyans almost in rotation until the end of the 19th century. Whereas Amira Garabed Manukyan became dominant over the sea trade between Istanbul and Russia thanks to his great fleet,⁴⁴ again in same period the Tingiryans were controlling the Ottoman-Italian trade.⁴⁵

Actually, 1758 appointment was not only a financial operation of Ragib Pasha; many of the high-level positions at the Mint had changed in that process, and it is possible to say that this event profoundly marked the Ottoman financial history. Tracing the process through the history of those families, or even tracing their activities and relationships would be enough to detect those profound marks. Thus, this operation, with its revolutionary impact, decreased the privileged positions of the Jewish *sarrafs* and bankers, and their domination over the sector gradually disappeared. In its aftermath, the palace and almost all of the positions of *sarraf* and the chief *bezirgan* affiliated to the palace were handed over the Armenians, who thereby started to control the whole sector.⁴⁶ It must be the reason that whereas the Armenian scholars naming the appointment as the start of the emergence of the Armenian oligarchy, and a bright century for their community; the Jewish researchers recall it as the unleashing of the bitter and sorrowful days for their community.⁴⁷ Then, why there was a need for such a financial operation?

44 Manuk Han (Hanul Manuc), near the Voyvoda Palace, a commercial and tourist place in Bucharest, is belonged to this family. This Han (inn) is one of the typical socio-economic items both in terms of its hybrid Ottoman-European architecture and its being one of the leading commercial centers of its time, remained from the late 18th century.

45 Göçek, "Osmanlı Ermenilerinin...", p. 558.

46 The precious mines like gold, silver, and copper, which were needed by the Mint, were ensured initially through deposit, and later by leasing to clerks and leaseholders. Since the Imperial Mint operated on the base of leasing, *sarrafs*, close to the palace and dealing with money, conglomerated assets in addition to their own assets. Pakalın, *Osmanlı Tarih Deyimleri*, pp. 294-297; For instance, the Arpiaryan family had assumed leasing and management of the silver mines, in this century. Göçek, "Osmanlı Ermenilerinin...", p. 558; There are many examples on this issue in the study of Araks Şahiner who wrote a valuable thesis on the Armenian *sarrafs* of the 18th century, *The Sarrafs of İstanbul: Financiers of the Empire*, Boğaziçi University, Department of History, unpublished Master's thesis, 1995.

47 Lewis and Franklin, "Osmanlı Devleti İçerisindeki", pp. 449-450: "The Golden Age' of the Ottoman Jews in the 16th and 17th centuries with additional contribution of the effect of the cultural wealth that brought by the Sephardim, endured until the 18th century, gradually losing its influence. However, particularly in the second half of the 18th century, the Jews were in a dark age socially and politically. Their already weakened economic state, also, collapsed after the close of the Janissary that many leading Jews had close relations with it. Serious

Moreover, how these developments shaped the operation to that point? Upon the grievances that some profiteer and briber *sarrafs* were devaluating the money by limiting it, and issuing base coin, nearly more than a century, lots of directives and orders were issued asking to take the necessary measures to prevent such kind of activities.⁴⁸ Smuggling of base coin from Europe to the Ottoman territory, and manipulation of the value of money and gold by some *sarrafs* and great merchants, led some events at the period of Ragib, as well. Changing hands in the administration of the Mint was essentially related with those events. For instance, a new regulation and prohibition related to silver workshops (*simkeshanes*) and workshops of silver thread (*sirmakeshanes*) was issued; moreover, because of the regulation, a workshop employing remarkable number of workers was closed down because of their involvement in abuse. In addition, many workshops had to be closed, since they could not operate within the framework of the new regulation.⁴⁹ Ragib Pasha, when he became the Grand Vizier, deemed it necessary, as an expert on finance, to regulate the financial market that was heavily upset, and wished to control the gold market. It was because those *sarrafs* and brokers had been playing the leading roles in money trade, which was referred as one of the troubles in the Ottoman trade. They had been making remarkable profits through money flow and smuggling (particularly silver money) towards the East; and they were becoming influential in money markets by changing inexpensive silver and gold that they got from the West, at the Ottoman market, or retrenching them.⁵⁰ The European merchants had been introducing law-valued money that they could utilize in nowhere other than the Ottoman domestic market, via those broker-merchants and *sarrafs* – who had also been money-brokers; and

financial problems aroused among the Jewish communities of Istanbul, Izmir and Salonika. Moreover, they had no more a leader on the state level, to save the interests of the Jewish community, directly dealing with the Ottoman authorities, the levels that they entirely lost the Armenians and Greeks.” Siren Bora, *Izmir Yahudileri Tarihi*, Istanbul, 1995, pp.13-16; Y. Belasel, *Osmanlı ve Türkiye Yahudileri*, Istanbul, 2004. For various chapters covering the Armenian-Jewish competition in the 18th century see also, Avram Galante, *Türkler ve Yahudiler*, Istanbul, 1947, p.147 and afterwards; Avigdor Levy, *The Sephardim in the Ottoman Empire*, Princeton New Jersey, 1992. Nevertheless, through the efforts of the Selanik Jews and converted Jews, their status was revived to some extent, if not like the previous one, in the early 20th century. Regarding the rise of the Armenians in this period, Jamgocyan, who wrote one of the important theses related to this subject, states: “In order to determine role of the Armenians in the Ottoman State as *sarrafs* and financiers of the grand-viziers, statesmen, and *ayans* (lords); and to prove their monopoly over the financial markets, even only names of Serpos and Yakop Hovhannesyan are enough.” Jamgocyan, “Les Finances de l’Empire....”, p. 265.

48 It is possible to find many of such kind of orders in archives. For a sample, see TSMA. E. 5212.

49 Although Jamgocyan argued that 400 workshops were closed, and approximately 10 thousand people lost their job, it might be exaggerated, “Les Finances de l’Empire....”, pp. 125, 130; in fact, Historian Vâsîf, mentioning about the 1176 (1763) events, expresses his grievances on devaluation of the money, and the great effect of *sarrafs*’ playing with value of the money, over it.

50 BOA, MD 160 246/1.

some merchants were smuggling the Ottoman money especially to Iran and India.⁵¹ Since the Ottoman markets were functioning as a passage between the Eastern and the Western markets, diversification in types of money and their current prices were empowering their position. An indispensable rule of economy “bad money drives out good money from the market” was also functioning here and after a while, the Ottoman *akce* and gold that remains a bit heavier had to be drown out by base coins.⁵² Both the Sultan and the Grand Vizier had been busy with the issue of base coin smuggling and they had been trying to forestall *sarrafs* and foreign merchants who were faking the contents and standards of money.⁵³ Thus, remarkable improvements took place at the Mint at the tenure of Düzyan. Coining technique was improved, and endeavors were taken place to burnish already coined *sikkas* and gold, which were quite successful.⁵⁴ A delegation led by official imperial historian (*vakanüvis*) Subhî Mehmet Efendi, the then-commissioner of the Mint (*darphane emini*), having compared local and foreign currencies submitted a report on their content and standard; and new regulations on the coins in the market were activated.⁵⁵ Additionally, at the same period, “24 *karat fındık altını*” (a type of pure gold currency) was coined under the control of Düzyan; hence, value of the Ottoman money was intended to improve in relation to foreign currencies.⁵⁶

After that period, a class of Armenian *sarrafs* emerged, who were officially acquainted and called as “tailed” (*kuyruklu*). Almost every high-level political leader had become compelled to appoint a *sarraf* as guarantor either for his assignment, or for his activities, and to borrow money. If he failed to pay in time – it was usual – the guarantor *sarraf* were trying to control them and their income. Hence,

51 There is a great number of documents in which it was demanded that these activities of the tradesmen and *sarrafs* should be controlled. There, it is stated that it was forbidden to take golden and silver coin and goods out and it was stipulated that “merchants could take out material in the same value with the material he brought in.” BOA, MD, 3, 488; Mantran, *XVII. ve XVIII. Yüzyullarda Osmanlı...*, pp. 132-133.

52 Ahmed Refik, *Hicri Onikinci Asırda...*, pp. 193-194.

53 Until the reign of Mustafa III, there were many mints operating on the base of leasing, with a regulation in 1758, the right to coinage was given only to the Istanbul Mint. However, due to the exigency, minting was allowed for an additional period in the far provinces with economic problems like Egypt, Trablusgarp, Tunisia, Algiers; and golden, silver and copper *sikke* was coined in several provinces. Pakalın, *Osmanlı Tarih Deyimleri*, p. 111, pp. 294-297.

54 “*Darphane* (mint) was reformed by the Düzyan family; and Düzoğlu Agop Çelebi and his successor Mihran Bey were regarded as actual founders of the real Mint.” Pakalın, *Osmanlı Tarih Deyimleri*, p. 296.

55 For the report of the commissioner of the Darbhâne-i Âmire (royal mint) Subhî Mehmed Efendi dated 1170, and the royal decree see BOA, Bâb-ı Asâfi, A. AMD. 12/12.

56 For the offer to issue a decree on submission of foreigner *sikke* (*kefere sikkesi*) that was in circulation among people to the mint in return for new *akce*, because the contents of them were different both royal tax-collectors and people were losing; and the royal decree of Mustafa III, dated 1176, see TSMA, E. 7018, II.

people and their *beys*, pashas and *ayans*, as well as the state treasury was to be controlled by the usurers and *sarrafs*.⁵⁷ These two groups, that started to institutionalize at the mid-18th century, had influential lobbies at the capital, even at the palace. Due to the irreparable financial problems, particularly through the mid-19th century, the state had to leave the money market completely to *sarrafs* and bankers, most of whom were members of the Armenian community.⁵⁸

The Armenians and the Certificated (*Beratlı*) Merchants at the Ambassadorial and Consular Services

European commercial companies, which had increased their share in the Ottoman market since 17th century and which were continuing to grow thanks to diplomatic supports, preferred Armenians as natural intermediaries; contributed their role in trade to be more efficient. The Phanariots and Armenians from cities like Istanbul and Izmir replaced converted Jews (*dönme*) and Levantines working as dragomans at European embassies until that time, and gradually prevailed over this sector as well. It was like a custom that the clergy of the places like Syria and Lebanon, and wealthy Armenian families were dispatching their sons to French and Italian universities, particularly Padova, for education for a long time.⁵⁹ By this way, they became acquainted with and even propagated new Western ideas and methods both in terms of language and in terms of intellectuality; and they became agents that were seeking after by state authorities dealing with the West, the missions, and high-level Ottoman public officials. In addition to their missions at European embassies and consulates, most of them gained certificates (*berat*) that provide them with remarkable commercial and financial concessions. The certificates, which were initially given to native dragomans, consulate agents and mobile foreign merchants in order to provide them with some concessions and protection, were granted and even sold to non-Muslim, particularly the Ar-

57 The state sometimes had to take measure against *sarrafs*' oppression over people living in the places they had leased, and making trouble for them high interest rates. The issued decrees were reversing the interest burden and urging the payment of only capital, or principal amount. Led by Mustafa III, many sultans after this period had to pen royal decrees with regard to bankrupted merchants due to over-interest rates that were impossible to pay; and asked cancellation of some amount of debt or decrease of interests. Actually, "One of the topics especially underlined in Tatarcik Abdullah Molla Treatise, one of the leading reformation bills written in the reign of Selim III, was oppression, even robbery, of people due to relations and agreements between *sarrafs* and leaseholders. Lease holders were borrowing from *sarrafs* with high interests to get leasing and paying off people for this loan." For the details about the subject see, Yavuz Cezan, *Osmanlı Maliyesinde Bunalım ve Değişim Dönemi, (XVIII. yüzyıldan Tanzimata Mâli Tarih)*, Istanbul, 1986, pp.145-149.

58 Niyazi Berkes, *Türkiyede Çağdaşlaşma*, Istanbul, 1973, pp. 99-103.

59 Bernard Lewis, *Modern Türkiye'nin Doğuşu*, trans. Metin Kıratlı, Ankara, 1988, pp. 63, 448.

menian, merchants with increasing numbers.⁶⁰ As for them, they rationally and efficiently utilized that opportunity to gain a privileged and protected status by this way. In addition to certain legal, commercial and financial privileges and concessions, the certificates, which were granted under some requirements and having a price, provided these merchants with the monopoly to trade with Europe; hence, they provided non-Muslims of the Ottoman Empire with an opportunity to compete with foreign merchants and merchants under foreign protégé. Thus, a new privileged class was created that was known as the European merchants.⁶¹ The group that mostly benefited from this situation was the Armenian community who already had the best positions and property as the bankers and *sarrafi*. Because the Armenians were more trustworthy than the Greeks, and were better educated than the Jews, they came into positions that were previously held by the other two communities, and played leading roles in subsequent commercial and industrial developments.⁶²

The case of Armenians working in European embassies and consulates and certificated merchants during the tenure of Ragib Pasha is also particularly interesting. Under the power of Ragib, whereas Armenians were allowed to work as dragomans; buying and selling the certificates and increasing number of the certificated merchants that might harm the Ottoman economy were tried to be prevented. Thus, there were many decrees issued and efforts made to determine and purge the dragomans and the certificated merchants.⁶³ Some of the most interesting dragomans in the tenure of Ragib Pasha could be counted as following: Hagop Camciyan, the chief dragoman of the Swedish Embassy, was the most interesting figure of the time, both in terms of his intellectual competence and studies as well as in terms of his professional experience. Upon the suggestion of his

60 Halil İnalçık, "İmtiyazat", *Diyanet İslam Ansiklopedisi*, Vol. 22, pp. 246-252.

61 The Muslim merchants were also included in the certification (*berat*) system in the early 19th century; and there was a wish to establish League of Hayriye Merchants; however, it never could reach to a level to challenge domination of the non-Muslims over the merchant class. For an analysis of the situation at that time and for detailed information on this issue see Ali İhsan Bağış, *Osmanlı Ticaretinde Gayr-i Müslimler: Kapitülasyonlar, Benatlı Tüccarlar, Avrupa ve Hayriye Tüccarları (1750-1839)*, Ankara, 1983.

62 H. A. R. Gibb and Harold Bowen, *Islamic Society and the West: Islamic Society in the Eighteenth Century* London, 1957, p. 233 and afterwards.; Albert Hourani, "The Changing Face of the Fertile Crescent in the XVIII. Century", *Studia Islamica*, Vol. 8, 1968, p.103 and afterwards.; Lewis, *Modern Türkiye'nin...*, pp. 448-450.

63 For the decree on order (*zabita-i nizam*) of the non-Muslim subjects (not to employ of any of the Ottoman subjects under a foreign flag) and for other decrees for determining interpreters of the Christian states and for the control of asylum-seeking Ottoman subjects in consulates to make themselves immune from some taxes see, BOA. MD. 161 the initial items. See also BOA. AD.VN-D VE, 35-1; BOA. B. Asafı, A. AMD, 12/10; BOA. A. E. III. Mustafa, nr. 4881; BOA. MD. 160, p.4; Ahmed Refik, *Hicri Onikinci Asırda...*, pp. 227-228.

good friend Patriarch Hagop Nalyan (1706-1764), he translated several works in French, Italian, Greek and Latin languages to the Armenian. Additionally, he translated two works of Newton about physics and philosophy from French and dedicated them to Nalyan.⁶⁴ Hagop, born in 1695 in Istanbul, was one of the most renowned members of the Camciyans. He was educated well by the Latin missionaries in Istanbul, and when he returned from Paris in 1725, he started to work as interpreter in the Swedish Embassy. Hagop, who preserved that position successfully until his death in 1775, had established good relations with the Ottoman bureaucrats and agents of other embassies through his professional experience, intellectual competence and wide knowledge. Probably, under the auspices of Camciyan, the first Armenian calendar was published in 1758, at the term of office of Ragib Pasha.⁶⁵ Although he was a good Catholic, Hagop was also a close friend of the Armenian Patriarchs; he helped some people either from his family or from the Armenian community to come into positions in several European embassies. Some members of the Camciyan family were also dealing with the trade of silkworm seed and cereal as the embassy-certificated merchants.

After Camciyan, Bagdasar, who worked at the French Embassy, and Serkis Saatici at the earlier years of the century, the number of Armenian dragomans and embassy-certificated men rapidly increased towards the mid of the century; and sometimes, the idea of drawing some regulations related to them came into the agenda.⁶⁶ Kozmas Komurciyan, brother of famous Armenian author and historian Eremya Celebi, grandson of Gomidas Komurciyan, son of Hovhannes Ko-

64 Author Kevork Pamukciyan, a respected scholar who worked in library of the Armenian Patriarchy for long years, states that Hagop's translation of the book on philosophy of Newton, dedicated to Nalyan, is still in library of the Patriarchy as manuscript and registered to the library with number 55. *Zamanlar, Mekanlar, İnsanlar*, pp. 64-67.

65 "The first calendar of our nation was started to be published with the efforts of Hagopos Camciyan in this year, H. 1171 (C.1757-1758)". Kevork Pamukciyan, *Istanbul Yazıları, Bir Ermeni Yılığından Naklen*, Istanbul, 2002, p. 26; It was stated that calendar was published with the efforts of Camciyan with the name of Hagopos, however its worthy to state that there were also a historian named Mikayel Camciyan, in this period.

66 For the decree written to authorities on banning employment of the Ottomans and its subjects in consulates other than an interpreter and two servants of consulate who was allowed to reside for the sake of increase and intensity of trade affairs, and collection of all taxes and custom taxes, see BOA. MD. 161, 17 and afterwards. For an order indicating that jizya and other taxes should be collected from those employed in consulates of Britain, France, Netherlands and Venice other than having the certificates, see BOA. MD. 162, hk. Nr. 1316 and 1318; for a renewal and warning of forbiddance of exemption of the Ottoman subjects from tax and their dress of foreign clothes claiming to be employee of consulates with the exception of two servants of dragomans see BOA. MD. 162, nr. 60; for a decree on registering of names, neighborhoods, period of residence, property and land of non-Muslim merchants in three groups; those married in the Islamic country and got estate, land, and regular income; those having estate and land without marriage; and those only married one ; and not to ignore that order with corruption see, BOA. MD. 162, nr.600.

murciyan, dragoman of the Embassy of the Kingdom of Sicily (1708-1763), was one of the Spanish dragomans in this period.⁶⁷ Bedros Baronyan from Kayseri was chief-dragoman of the Embassy of the Kingdom of Sicily. In the same period, it is worth of stating that Ohannes Muradcan, father of d'Ohsson (Muradcan Tosunyan) was a dragoman of Embassy in Izmir, and d'Ohsson, himself, took office at the Swedish Consulate as an interpreter in 1763.⁶⁸ Additionally, it is known that one of the non-Muslims interpreters was caught on spying by the Sultan, who was walking incognito, and was executed.⁶⁹ Before ending this section, one should mention some other significant personalities among the privileged and certificated merchants: some crafts were known as the profession of one particular family for generations especially among the non-Muslims of the Ottomans state, and those crafts were remaining virtually under the monopoly of them. The Zilciyan family, who was making bells and still active today, establishes a typical sample.⁷⁰ Additionally, Hovseb Amira and his company was attracting attention as a leading merchant having the monopoly to import watch from Britain and distribute it all over the country in the 1750s; the Noratunkyan family held another monopoly, namely supplying the army's requirement of bread.⁷¹

Regulations Related to Dress and Finery of the Non-Muslims

Mustafa III, in his early days in sultanate, issued an order asking the Ottoman subjects, particularly non-Muslims living in Istanbul, to return to their previous clothes and finery, and not to wear fine clothes that were peculiar to the high-level bureaucrats.⁷² He also urged the leaders of communities to help officials to imple-

67 Kozmas Gomidas K m rciyan (1749- after 1805), born in 1749 in Beyo lu, and died on October 29, probably there. He was brother of Eremya Celebi, grandson of Gomidas Komurciyan (1656-1707), who was respected as martyr by the Armenians, and son of Hovhannes Komurciyan (1708-1763), dragoman of the Kingdom of Sicily. He also worked as interpreter initially in the embassy of Sicily, and later in the embassy of Spain in Istanbul. He was known by the Westerners as Carbognano last name (Italian translation of Komurciyan). His valuable work named as *Descrizione Topografica di Costantinopoli* was printed in Italy, in 1794. There are 26 plans of Istanbul and its environs at the end of the book. Pamukciyan, *İstanbul Yazıları...*, p.17.

68 Beydilli, "Ignatius Mouradgea d'Ohsson...", p. 496; Especially in the catalogues of Foreign States in the Ottoman Archives (A. DVN-DVE), there were names of many Armenian interpreters working in consulates in the leading cities like Izmir, Halep, Sayda, Iskenderiye etc. other than Istanbul. Since the names mentioned on this subject were regarded as enough, there is no need to mention additional names. Details are included in our coming book "Osmanlı Ermenileri" to be published in early 2007.

69 Aktepe (ed.), *Şemdanizade Tarihi...*, p. 37.

70 The Zilciyan bells that were firstly made in Samatya, become favorite of the musicians, especially in the second half of 18th century. The company, now centered in the United States, is known to be one of the oldest companies, active in that country.

71 G çek, "Osmanlı Ermenilerinin...", p. 558.

72 J. V. Hammer, *Osmanlı Tarihi*, Istanbul, 1994, Vol. 8, p. 290.

ment this order. However, because it was asking the *dhimmis* not to wear “soft leather shoes (*mest papuc*) and colorful (*elvan*) clothes etc.” it resulted in a wide discontent especially among wealthy Armenians.⁷³ According to the order, the leaders of the Christian and Jewish subjects should also wear black clothes. The leaders of the communities, being discontent by the notification through the police chief of Istanbul (*cavusbasi*), expressed their grievances to Ragib Pasha, whom they believed in his toleration, and who had good relations with them. In spite of Pasha’s request to reverse that improper order arguing that the Christians served well to the state, for instance, they were working as boatmen (*filikaci*) in the ships, dealing with galleons, having a remarkable place in trade, the Sultan insisted on it. Ragib Pasha, who was in trouble, thought about any solution; and eventually he found one. He invited the Greek and Armenian Patriarchs as well as the Chief Rabbi, and mentioned them about the wars that put Europe in disorder and that alarmed the state. He complained about the bitter situation because of a banditry because of which approximately twenty thousand pilgrims had been massacred, and then he kindly added: “The situation is sorrowful, and since our Sultan is in mourning, it was deemed appropriate that even the leaders of communities wear in black.” Quiet and explanatory remarks of Pasha comforted the leaders of communities, and eased non-Muslims’ accommodation with the regulation related to clothes and finery.⁷⁴ Actually, those regulations were neither new nor the first. However, now it is known that it was not just discrimination between the Muslims and the non-Muslims, but based on remarkable socio-economic reasons. It was so, because those prohibitions – or regulations as preferred here – were not composed of orders demanded to be fulfilled by only the non-Muslims, and as indicated, was an outcome of a series of measures based on some considerable reasons. In fact, amount of the goods imported from Europe and especially textile goods coming from India increased for a long time. Although the imported goods were not preferable in terms of durability and fairness; however, they were favored because they were fancy, colorful, and cheap. Moreover, they were presented to the palace, Sultan and high-level authorities at the festivals. Because of that demand for imported goods, especially for cheap weaving either with silk or simple cloths, a huge amount of money was going outside. Additionally, the native industry was weakening; even it faced with the danger to disappear. For a while, Ottoman country was transformed into a place providing raw materials for the European industry rather than manufacturing.⁷⁵ The gravity of the situation

73 See, BOA. MD. 160. p. 69/2; the word of “workshops” in the decision indicates the reason.

74 İ. Hakkı Uzunçarşılı, *Osmanlı Tarihi*, Ankara, 1982, Vol. 4, pp. 396-397.

75 Studies of Mehmet Genç on this period, and his book titled *Osmanlı İmparatorluğu’nda Devlet ve Ekonomi* that composed of his articles related to the issue comprises enough information and statistics.

became more apparent at that period; and the efforts to produce and differentiate domestic cloth with the European one were accelerated as a precaution. For this sake, instead of fancy and pretty silk clothes imported from Europe, which was quickly deforming after some usage, Turkish silk cloth, called as *diba-yi rumi*, was used. Since the Sultan admired the sample cloth submitted to him, utilization of that cloth instead of the imported cloth was urged from then-on.⁷⁶ That order, declared to all subjects of the state whether female or male, was another measure taken to encourage the usage of domestic goods and related to dress and finery, and it proves that the order was not only addressing non-Muslims. Under these circumstances, those measures that were taken particularly “considered as being independent of broadcloth coming from the country of unbelievers,”⁷⁷ and it was endeavored to avoid frequently resorts to import. In this regard, such kind of measures could be viewed as partial prohibition of imported clothes coming from Europe or India. In fact, these efforts to improve domestic textile industry were not new, and some positive results had been achieved since the beginning of the century.⁷⁸ The state supported interested artisans personally and helped the establishment and increase of textile workshops. In this regard, it is known that after the fire that destroyed almost one third of Istanbul in 1756, the state had re-established ten textile workshops.⁷⁹ Those workshops, known to be operative in 1760, as well, were probably manufacturing silk clothes mostly for the palace.⁸⁰ Towards 1760, another establishment with forty weaving machines that

76 H.1172 (1759); Uzunçarşılı, *Osmanlı Tarihi*, p. 570.

77 For the document dated H. 1175 (M. 1761-1762) see TSMA, E. 6074.

78 It is known that Hoca Mahmud was regularly shipping the Indian cloth from India to the Ottoman territories in the 1470s. In the later centuries, the Ottoman import from India had recorded a remarkable increase. It was reported both by the British and the Dutch East India Company that most of the load coming to the Persian Gulf was consist of Indian textile goods. Amount of golden and silver money paid for expensive Indian clothes including the Kashmir shawls increased so much that Naima, official historian of the time, expressed his grievance as following: “The Indian goods are costing treasures, however India do buy anything from the Ottoman territories. Wealth of all world is augmenting in India.” Since the Indian calico was fashioned among both the elites and the people, a similar crisis was erupted in Europe in the 17th century; cotton, silk, and flax industry was depressed; the Indian textile goods were restricted, even prohibited. An important outcome of that crisis was growth of cotton industry in the West, which was in line with developments in the Ottoman Empire. Thus, imitation of the Indian textiles in the Ottoman territories had relieved the situation to some extent. İnalçık, “İmtiyazat”, pp. 210-211; Halil İnalçık-Bülent Arı, “Türk-İslam-Osmanlı Şehirciliği ve Halil İnalçık’ın Çalışmaları”, *Türkiye Araştırmaları Literatür Dergisi (TALİD)*, Vol. 3, No. 6, 2005, p. 48; Ahmet Tabakoğlu, *Gerileme Dönemine Giren Osmanlı Maliyesi*, İstanbul, 1985, pp. 237, 294-295. It is known that some efforts were taken both through the end of the period of Mustafa II, and through the periods of Ahmed III, Mahmud I, Osman III, and Mustafa III for the growth of textile industry in order to limit textile imports from India. Since it is not related to the subject of this article, remaining details were avoided.

79 BOA, MAD 8947, 551; Genç, *Osmanlı İmparatorluğu’nda Devlet ...*, p. 248.

80 TSMA, E 6074; Genç, *Osmanlı İmparatorluğu’nda Devlet ...*, p. 248.

was instituted as *waqf* for the mosque of Mustafa III, in Ayazma, Uskudar. With a consideration to lease the artisans, manufacturing a new kind of silky cloth (*yasdik*) in Istanbul was initiated.⁸¹ Most of the stores belonged to *waqf* of the mosque were also leased to weavers, and another new kind of cloth was tried for the first time, there.⁸² All of these measures are remarkable in displaying the sensitivity of the state on this matter. Relevant researches indicate that the last great ascent of the Ottoman textile industry in that century – both in terms of quality and quantity – was coincided with that period. The next section of this article is on the contributions of the Armenian artisans to these efforts, and it shows that reason for the regulation was well understood at that time than today.

Meanwhile, Armenian artisans dealing with textile in Istanbul had invented another new cloth (*basma*) with a new ornament in Kuzguncuk and had established a small-scale factory. Since the factory was established by Kayserili Serkis Kalfa, the new cloth was named after him as “Serkis Kalfa cloth.” In addition to Serkis Kalfa factory, his grandchildren and other colleagues operated some of the stores of the waqf of Ayazma Mosque for years, because of the efforts to improve textile industry at the tenure Ragib Pasha.⁸³ The initiation that aimed to turn the region into a center of textile became successful; textile production went on here in later years. Thus, *Üsküdar Çatması*, another kind of cloth, became very favorable; *Selimi-Selimiye* clothes that were weaved here through the reign of Selim III, became famous all over the world.⁸⁴ The Armenians had a remarkable place among the so-called tulle-spinner (*bürümcük bükücü*) artisans, as well, at that time. Moreover, their wish to “train apprentices by violating the traditional order” and to establish some new factions by creating a powerful lobby without the consent of the commissioner of the guild (*kethuda*) was marked on the documents. In this regard, eight Armenian artisans engaged in an activity against the *kethuda* by contracting among themselves and with the other *dhimmis* to protect each other, “concluded an agreement among themselves not to deceive, attack and assault against each other.” Agam, Agya, Simcioglu Serkis and Kefter of that group, united against their *kethuda*, Mustafa, and put him under pressure. They engaged in activities like setting up shops, and giving certificate for mastership (*ustalik*), headworker-

81 TSMA, D. 9874; Genç, *Osmanlı İmparatorluğu'nda Devlet ...*, p. 249.

82 Genç, *Osmanlı İmparatorluğu'nda Devlet ...*, p. 258.

83 İnciyan, *18. Asırda İstanbul ...*, p. 133.

84 “It could be stated that the cloth length-wisely weaved with *kilapdan*, embroidered with stylized flower motifs on a spiral branch, which was produced in textile workshops of the foundation of Ayazma camii with name of Selimiye, in 1758, was representative of the Turkish textile until the late 19th century.” Nevber Gürsu, “Kumaş”, *Diyanet İslam Ansiklopedisi*, Vol. 26, p. 369.

ship (*kalfalik*) and apprenticeship (*ciraklik*) without his permission.⁸⁵

Another reason for the regulation related with the non-Muslims was following: various clothes and coats (*kürk*) peculiar to the high-level statesmen were started to be worn widely, by some low-ranking clerks, even by artisans of the market and people in comparative wealth, particularly through the mid 18th century. Since non-Muslims, especially the Armenians became wealthier in this period; they extensively wore coats peculiar to the bureaucrats. Most of these clothes were imported; and since remarkable portion of those belonging to the clerks was financed by the treasury, it was leading a great waste. Additionally, they were causing confusion about the dress and finery, which were like the uniforms. In fact, in accordance with the conditions of that period, the dress to be worn by each group of people was determined, and artisans and merchants could not wear dresses like coat etc., which were worn by the statesmen. What is more, violation of this rule and dressing in coats made of fur of ermine and bobcat by the artisans led to a great discontent; because it was like a butcher dressed in the uniform of a general. Thus, at the period of Ragib Pasha, dressing the “wide-sleeve statesmen coat” with the exception of bureaucrats who were allowed to wear it was forbidden.⁸⁶ Furthermore, it was Koca Ragib Pasha, who had initially implemented this prohibition over his own fellows. Since he appreciated the statements by *reisülkuttab* Recai Efendi, who penned the order on the prohibition of fur of ermine and bobcat, he took off his sable fur (*samur kürk*), rested it on shoulders of Recai Efendi, and gifted it to him.⁸⁷

85 The directive written to the Kadı of Istanbul in 1172, to prevent opposition to the traditional orders, see Ahmet Kala-Ahmet Tabakoğlu, *Istanbul Ahkam Defterleri/Istanbul Esnaf Tarihi*, Istanbul, 1997, p. 220; and for various directives about the Armenian artisans in different guilds in this period see pp. 151, 202, 212, 213, 232, 233, 328-330 and afterwards.

86 Ahışalı, *Osmanlı Devlet Teşkilatında...*, p. 319; “However, because of violation of the prohibition, it was reminded with a new directive dated 17 N. 12 12/5 III 1798. After a while, since these clothes became popular again, those accommodating with the prohibition started to bring different and more expensive kinds of clothes. As a result, a decree was released, which forbade dressing of any cloth other than the costume called as *muvahhidi*, wide-sleeve sable fur, trotters (*paca*), and sable *nafisa* for high-level statesmen, and import of various kind of clothes on 20 *Zilkade* 1237, September 6, 1822. Eventually, after abolishment of the Janissary corps, usage of the old style *kavuk* and heavily ornamented clothes in parades were lasted. However, since anything was determined to replace them, everyone continued to dress as he wished, which caused great disarray. Hence, through a new regulation, which was made to define the clothes of statesmen and *hacegan*, *fez* and dress in harmony with it were urged. It first implemented in the Porte and with an announcement in *Şevval*, 1244, it was decreed for all people.” Ahışalı, *Osmanlı Devlet Teşkilatında...*, pp. 319-320.

87 *Mecmuâ*, TTK. Ktb. nr. 70, yr. 90b. For the directive of Ragib Pasha addressing the *reisülkuttab* to declare the prohibition see BOA, Tahvil Def. nr. 30, pp.12-13.

Some Leading Armenian Figures at the Tenure of Ragib Pasha

This section will present brief information about some of the leading figures who came into prominence due to their work and activities in the term of office of Ragib Pasha. Among these figures, Rafael Manas, an artist who served as the palace painter for three Sultans, should especially be recalled. Rafael Manas (d. January 27, 1780) served both as vocalist (*muganni*) in churches, and as the palace painter through the reigns of Mahmud I, Osman III and as Mustafa III. One of his paintings, where he depicted Selim III with his father, Mustafa III, was included in many albums. Rafael, known also as *Tanburi* (tanbur-player) Rafael, or the “genius painter”, had successful paintings representing various types of Ottoman society, as well. He is renowned as one of the eldest members of the Manas family, a great Armenian family ranked after the families of Balyan, Dadyan, Düzyan and Tingiryan. The family brought up many high-level Ottoman bureaucrats until 20th century including the palace painters, artists and diplomats.⁸⁸

Among those figures, the Patriarch Krikor Basmacıyan is also important. He was born in Samatya district in 1715; and died in Trieste in 1791. He became the Armenian Patriarch in Istanbul between 1764 and 1773. He was known with his chronology titled *Basmacıyan Hisadagaran* and was mentioned in historical sources with his last name, Asdvadzaduryan. He also included in his work some remarkable events in Istanbul at that time.⁸⁹

Another leading figure of the time was Sarkis Hovhanesyan. He was born in Balat district in nearly 1740; and died there on March 7, 1805. One of his two leading studies was the Ottoman history in Armenian and the other was the most worthy study titled *Vibakrutyun Gosdantnubolso* (History of Istanbul), which was written in the early 19th century.⁹⁰

Another prominent figure of the time was Mikayel Camcıyan. He was a famous historian and member of Venice Mechitarist order. He was born in Istanbul on December 4, 1738; and died on November 30, 1823. His three-volume study, *Badmutyun Hayots* (History of the Armenians), published in Venice in the years

88 Kevork Pamukcıyan, “Rafael Manas”, *Dünden Bugüne İstanbul Ansiklopedisi*, Volume 5, pp. 286-287; It is also stated that an artist drawing the icons inside the walls of churches, Kayserili Esai, was also famous in this period; and his brother Barseg worked as the palace-painter and drew portraits of Sultans. İnciciyan, *18. Asırda İstanbul*, p. 102; Yarman, *Osmanlı Sağlık Hizmetlerinde...*, p. 62.

89 Pamukcıyan, *İstanbul Yazıları*, p.16.

90 Pamukcıyan, *İstanbul Yazıları*, p.16.

1784, 1785, and 1786, included some issues related to the history of Istanbul. Pamukciyan states that the most important of them is the part dealing with the conquest of Istanbul (Volume 3, pp. 492-500).⁹¹

D'Ohsson (Muradcan Tosunyan), son-in-law of Kuleliyan – jeweler of Pasha – who was known for his great study on the Ottoman history and his service at the Swedish Embassy, should also be recalled among the most prominent Armenian figures of the time. However, because there are already well-qualified researches on him, no detail will be provided here.⁹² Hereby, it is worthy to recall members of the Tibir family and Bagdasar Tibir (1683-1768) who established a printing house in Istanbul and dealt with translation studies; doctor and author Garabed; Doctor Arzuman (d.1771), son of Doctor Asadur of Samatya; author Tibir Gaseryan (d.1782); and Kevork Gaseryan (d.1771), thinker, writer and professor.⁹³

Although he was not among the figures of that time, it is noteworthy to remember Inciciyan in this section who provided remarkable information about this period through his study. Gugas Inciciyan, a disciple of Venice Mechitarist monastery, was known particularly for his competence over geography and history. He was born in Istanbul, in 1758, and died in San Lazzaro monastery, in Venice on July 2, 1833, leaving three studies on Istanbul and its history. First of them, *Amaranots Püzantyan* (Holiday Resort of Byzantine) was published in Venice in 1794; second was “History of Istanbul” that was published in Venice in 1804. The Turkish translation of this book by Hrand-Der-Andreasyan was printed twice in 1956 and in 1976 with the title ‘*18. Asirda Istanbul (Istanbul in the 18th Century)*,’ which was extensively referred in this article. The third work of Inciciyan was a great study named as *Tarabadum* (History of the Century) that was published in eight volumes, between the years of 1826-1828. Fourth of these volumes include one section covering history of Istanbul.⁹⁴

Allocation of the Area between Kumkapi and Yenikapi for Armenians and Religious Situation of the Community

In the covered period, the atmosphere of peace and tolerance that prevailed all

91 Pamukciyan, *Istanbul Yazıları*, p.17.

92 For authoritative studies on Muradcan see Beydilli, “Ignatius Mouradgea d’Ohsson... p. 34; Beydilli “D’ohsson, Ignatius Mouradgea”; Jamgocyan, “L. M. d’Ohsson: Armenian Au Service De La Diplomatie Ottomane”, Daniel Panzac(ed.), *Historie Economique Et Sociale De L’Empire Ottoman Et Del Turquie (1326-1960)*, Paris, 1995, pp. 619-629; Carter V. Findley, www.oslo2000.uio.no/program/papers/mlb/mlb-findley

93 Pamukciyan, *Istanbul Yazıları*, p. 16 and afterwards.

94 Pamukciyan, *Istanbul Yazıları*, p. 17 and afterwards.

over the country also reflected extensively on non-Muslim peoples. However, the flow of initially Italian and then French missionaries within Armenian community and their efforts to convert Gregorian/Orthodox Armenians to Catholicism for a long time, above all, seriously discomforted the community. The sectarian struggle and even fighting in which Austria, Italy, and France involved from time to time through formal ways, prepossessed the Ottoman authority and the Armenian nation for years. Priests, particularly from Lebanon and Syria, were continuously going to Italy (mostly to Venice which had become a center for the Mechitarist Armenians) where they were educated and trained; and they were propagating Catholicism when they returned. There were efforts to derogate the Gregorian Armenians from their rights and to interfere in their churches; and there were pressures to give the same privileges granted to Gregorian Armenians for years to other Christians as well. The struggles that also especially involved matters related to the Church of Holy Sepulcher (*Kamame*) were drawing attention of foreign states to the region. Both the Armenian Patriarchate in Istanbul, and Armenian Patriarch of Jerusalem were distressing due to these struggles. Since the grievances and problems had increased, upon the request of Nalyan, who had served in Jerusalem and who had to resign from Patriarchy due to sectarian struggles in 1749, the state addressed the issue. The authority related to the Jerusalem Church was given directly to Istanbul, and a decree (*ahidname*) was issued urging not to disturb the Armenians.⁹⁵ Additionally, upon the request of Patriarch Nalyan, another decree was released not to raise difficulty during the pilgrims' travels from Jerusalem.⁹⁶ In the certificate given to Patriarch Basmacian, the Armenian Patriarch, who was appointed to replace Nalyan dying due to tuberculosis in 1764, the statement of "six communities" used for the first time and it was announced that the Patriarch had authority over all Armenians. Thereby, the Patriarchate was backed in the sectarian struggles. Actually, during the term of Golod and Nalyan, against many religious books that were brought from outside and related with the missionary activities, many Armenian clerics and printing-houses were activated. Through publishing hundreds of books,

95 According to the privileges granted to the Armenians in Jerusalem and its surroundings in periods of Caliph Omer and Selahaddin Eyyubi, in any case, involvement in churches, monasteries, and places of pilgrimage was absolutely forbidden. For the *ahidname* related to the Armenians of Jerusalem dated 29 Safer 1171 on the preservation of the privileges of the Armenian people in the region in accordance with previous edicts issued by sultans like Yavuz Sultan Selim, Suleiman the Magnificent, Mahmud I, and praying of them freely and without disturbing each others see BOA. MD. 159, hk. 343/1.

96 Tuğlacı states that this decree, dated 2 *Zilkade* 1171(1758), was also placed in the section consisting originals of decrees with the Armenian alphabet, in the book of Jerusalem numbered 2653 in the archive of Patriarchy. Tuğlacı, *Tarih Boyunca Batı Ermenileri*, p. 324.

Armenians were enlightened on religious and cultural matters.⁹⁷ Religious activities were not located only in Istanbul; an Armenian print-house was activated for the first time in Izmir in 1759 as well, during the tenure of Ragib Pasha.⁹⁸ For this reason, this period is regarded as the age of religious revival and cultural enlightenment by the Armenian researchers and writers; related researches were mentioned in lots of places in this article.

In this period, disputes appeared among senior Armenians and *amiras* led by the wealthy Armenian *sarrafs*; and some of them inclined initially towards Catholicism, and later towards Protestantism. The Patriarchate, official interlocutor of the state, often appealed to the Grand Vizier and the *reisülküttab* and asked them to prevent missionary activities and to punish missionaries. When such kind of matters was brought to the agenda of the Porte, Ragib Pasha ordered relevant authorities to solve the problems of the Patriarchate urgently.⁹⁹ However, either the influence of his *sarrafs*, Catholic Kuleliyan, or the influence of the Düzyans who had been brought to the office by Ragib Pasha, and sometimes, the lobby of French Ambassador Verjen, who had close relations with Grand Vizier, provided some privileges in favor of the Catholics. Because of these activities, the Catholic Armenians were also granted with official rights for the first time in this period, and they were allowed to use a church in Beyoglu as their own church. Although official position of the state was not to involve in those matters, or to interfere in case of request, Ragib Pasha frequently dealt with problems of the Armenian community due to both his friendship with Patriarch Nalyan, and his close relations with Catholic Armenians.¹⁰⁰ Since reparation, renovation or enlargement of churches was tied to resolution of the Porte, such kinds of demands were complied. The state provided all the help that it could in order to meet demands of the non-Muslim subjects, particularly of the Armenian community. In Istanbul, Ankara, Egin, Kayseri, Adana, every corner of the country, many of the Armenian churches were either renovated or rebuilt; the pearl-embroidered door and the pulpit placed in the Surp Garabet Church in Kayseri during its renovation

97 Approximately 60 books in Armenian was printed only with support of Nalyan, in this period. Tuğlacı, *Tarih Boyunca Batı Ermenileri*, p. 323.

98 Tuğlacı, *Tarih Boyunca Batı Ermenileri*, p. 348.

99 Since the Frankish element that was gradually increasing among the Armenian nation, the Armenian male and females were praying in the Frankish churches and converting to the Frankish religion, the directive addressed to the Commander of Janissary corps (*Yeniçeri Ağası*) and Galata *voyvoda* asked prevention of such kind of events according to the royal decree (*emir-i serif*). For the directive, see bk. BOA. MD. 161, hk. 656.

100 For the remarkable decision taken on 20 *Cemaziyülahir* 1171 upon the grievance of the Armenian Patriarch, see BOA. MD. 161, hk.82/1.

in 1761 have remained until today.¹⁰¹ Pasha viewed Armenians as loyal and as a major column of the state. He signed many decrees that could be regarded as privileges for them. Actually, in this period, Armenian community gained many remarkable privileges both religiously and socially. Some important actions, other than mentioned above, could be recalled as follows: A wide bay, Yenikapi, once a small Byzantium port, was filled with large rocks and rubbles, which were extracted through the building of Laleli Mosque.¹⁰² The remaining spaces were leveled through large stones that were brought from the islands at a high expense; additionally a bank was built to prevent strong water waves. This vast area between Kumkapi and Yenikapi was allocated only to Armenians as a settlement place, and anybody else was prevented to settle here.¹⁰³ The Christians living here were provided with some concessions and facilities on construction matters contrary to the practice in many parts of the city. For instance, Armenians were allowed to build their houses in whatever height they wished unless their neighbors did not lodge complaint; they could employ night-watchers only for their own service in their neighborhood against the dangers like fire.¹⁰⁴ Thus, in this period, newly established and developed Yenikapi Armenian neighborhood remained as one of the leading Armenian neighborhoods of the city until the fire after 22 years. After the fire, many of the houses were rebuilt.¹⁰⁵ Additionally, the Armenian Cemetery¹⁰⁶ with its 150.000 square meters area, in Taksim Pangalti, the widest of the Christian cemeteries, was also allotted to the Armenians in this period (21 Safer 1171-1758).¹⁰⁷

101 For a decision dated 20 Ca 1171, on the permission for the renovation and repair of churches and synagogues that burned, referring to traditional practices on this issue see BOA. MD. 160, 198/2; for the directive not to prevent of repair of churches of the Armenian residents of Ismail Passage, far from Istanbul see BOA. MD. 161, hk.1402-1408; for the church of Kayseri see K. Pamukciyan, *Istanbul Yazıları*, p. 45.

102 "Sultan Mustafa begin to build the Laleli Camii. Soil extracted from there filled the Yenikapi shore. Initially he built one minaret and after he became gazi (war-veteran) added the second minaret." (The date 1177 indicates the opening of mosque.) Cited from an Armenian yearbook, K. Pamukciyan, *Istanbul Yazıları*, p. 26 and afterwards.; Gülsün Tanyeli, "Laleli Külliyesi", *Dünden Bugüne İstanbul Ansiklopedisi*, İstanbul, 1994, pp. 196-197.

103 Yarman, *Osmanlı Sağlık Hizmetlerinde...*, p. 31.

104 For the register of certification on water attached to field that newly filled over sea, in Yenikapi and the bath build upon it, see Ahmet Kala (ed.), *Istanbul Su Külliyesi I. Vakıf Su Defterleri, Hatt-ı Hümayun (1577-1804)*, İstanbul, 1997, pp. 313-314.

105 İnciciyan, *18. Yüzyılda İstanbul*, pp. 4-5.

106 It is stated that Hagop Nalyan was initially buried here; later he was moved to the cemetery of clergy in the Sisli Armenian cemetery. The area between Taksim and this cemetery was full of houses in 1802, built by the Armenians came to Istanbul mostly from Rumeli and fled from Bursa after a major fire. İnciciyan, *18. Yüzyılda İstanbul*, p. 110; the district where the Armenians of Istanbul still mostly live, is called as Kurtulus.

107 Tuğlacı, *Tarih Boyunca Batı Ermenileri*, p. 345.

In the fire of May 10, 1762 that lasted for 24 hours, many wooden-houses stretching from Beyazit to Kumkapi turned into ashes and a great destruction occurred in the city. The fire spread into the church in Kumkapi including the Armenian Patriarchate; the building of representative office of the Jerusalem Patriarchate burnt to a cinder.¹⁰⁸ The Patriarchate heavily damaged by the fire in terms of its church, auxiliary buildings and its surroundings.¹⁰⁹ With the support of Grand Vizier Koca Ragib Pasha, a friend of Patriarch Nalyan, the Patriarchate was rapidly renovated and opened for the service; a new building adjacent to the church was also built through renovation.¹¹⁰ Additionally, a small church named Surp Yerronturyon, in Perukar dead-end at Beyoglu Istiklal Street was renovated under the auspices of Ragib Pasha. This wooden-church was completely destroyed by fire in 1762 and upon a decree of Mustafa III, a new church and 7 adjacent houses built by stone. The church which was belonging to the Trinity Priests, after annulment of that order by Joseph II, was given to the residence of the imperial embassy; and it was renovated many times in the later periods.¹¹¹ Additionally, the St. Antoine de Padoue Church in Taksim, which was transformed from a clerical-school of the Conventuel Priests into a church in 1724, was also burnt in the fire of 1762. Through the mediation of French ambassador Verjen with Ragib Pasha, that church was rebuilt with its monastery and given to the service of the primarily Catholic Armenians in this period.¹¹² Additionally, the wooden-church in Pera that had been constructed by Eginli Bagdasar Amira Cerazliyan came into service in this period (1757-1758) as well.¹¹³

The Sariyer Surp Asdvadzadzin Armenian Church in Salih Aga Street in Yenikoy

- 108 The church known as Kumkapi Asdvadzadzin in the Sarapnel street, and called as cathedral of Patriarchate. It was rapidly renovated after it burned in 1718, and came into service in 1719 as the main Armenian Church. It was burned again in the 1762 conflagration. A print-house was founded under the control of the church, and near it in 1767, and many books in Armenian were printed during the periods of Golod and Nalyan. K. Pamukciyan, *İstanbul Yazıları*, p.149.
- 109 This book of Sarkis Tibir Ohannesyan is still in the department of manuscripts in the Mechitarist Monastery in Venice (No. 779), comprises remarkable information about both Istanbul, and the Armenians of Istanbul and gives details about the fire and its outcomes. Tuğlacı, *Tarih Boyunca Batı Ermenileri*, p.324.
- 110 "This time, the church was renovated through the efforts of famous theologian, poet, and Hagop Nalyan (1706-1764) and support of his friend, Grand Vizier Koca Ragip Pasha (1669-1763)" cited from an Armenian yearbook, Pamukciyan, *İstanbul Yazıları*, p.149.
- 111 Four priests established it for Levantines in Istanbul, in 1722. "Through the celebrations in 1762, Kulekapi was fired. Saint Antoine and St. Trinity churches were also flamed due to fire in Dortyol Agzi in Beyoglu. In the same way, fired was appeared in sides of Istanbul, as well. The place stretching from Bugdaycilar Kapisi to the church in Kumkapi were also set on fire. Pamukciyan, *İstanbul Yazıları*, p.26 and afterwards İnciciyan, *18. Yüzyılda İstanbul*, p. 110.
- 112 See footnote 159; İnciciyan, *18. Yüzyılda İstanbul*, p. 110.
- 113 Tuğlacı, *Tarih Boyunca Batı Ermenileri*, p. 346.

is a Gregorian church dedicated to St. Mary. It was built in 1760 by the support of Ragib Pasha, during the period of Patriarch Nalyan. The church in Yenikoy was probably constructed for wealthy Armenians who had summerhouses on the shores of the Bosphorus.¹¹⁴ Nalyan also led the establishment of a church in Alemdag.¹¹⁵

Undoubtedly, the tolerance and the privileges related to the non-Muslims were not only limited to the Armenians. It would be appropriate to resort to two classical samples, leaving the details aside. The Aya Yorgi Monastery on precipices, one of the most important monasteries in Heybeliada, has bore some marks of that period. This monastery, which was attached to the Kadikoy Metropolis (*metropolitlik*) until the last century was renovated and virtually rebuilt by Joannis III with a permission taken in 1758 as happened in many similar cases at that time. Joannis III, known with his soubriquet Karaca, was elected as Patriarch after three years thanks to his services to this church; however, after a short period, he was dismissed with the charge of lavishness.¹¹⁶ The good atmosphere of the period was not limited with the Christian subjects; it extended to the activities of the Jewish community as well. The monthly named ‘*El Amaneser*’ (the Dawn) that was published in Ladino as a supplement to *Shalom* daily of the community, mentioned an old book printed in Istanbul; it was stated that the book, titled ‘*Şivhe a’Ari*’, was a study of Rabbi Avram Abenyakar and was printed in the covered period. It was pointed out that the book that was published by Hayim Evliya Pardo Efendi who was busy with bookselling in Yeni Han (1761), which was constructed in the period of Ragib Pasha,¹¹⁷ was a study covering religious and mystical matters like Torah – Cabbala. Printing date of the book was marked as 5526 in the Jewish calendar, 1765 in the Western calendar; the following statement was introduced to the introduction: ‘*Debasho el governo de nuestro sinyor, el Rey Mustafa*’, that is, “Printed under the government of our Lord, King Mustafa (III).”¹¹⁸

It is also worth of mentioning here some trivial and negative events that took place in this period that were related to the Armenians, which were reflected in the records. One of them was related with an unlicensed church construction by the Armenians in Besiktas, and its destruction. The Armenians, who were

114 İnciciyan, *18. Yüzyılda İstanbul*, p. 118.

115 Tuğlacı, *Tarih Boyunca Batı Ermenileri*, p. 324.

116 Ahmed Refik, *Kafes ve Ferace Devrinde İstanbul*, İstanbul, 1988, p. 139.

117 Büyük Yeni Han, where many Armenian *sarraf* and artisan were working, was built in the period of Ragib Pasha in 1761. Pamukciyan, *İstanbul Yazıları*, p. 130.

118 <http://salom.com.tr/?PID=2&IS=2&Src=Hayim%20Eliya%20Pardo&HID=2224>.

claimed to exploit the excitement of unprecedented celebrations and bedecking in Istanbul for ten days for the birth of Hibetullah Sultan, engaged in some activities benefiting from the tolerant atmosphere of the time. The Surp Asdvadzadzin Church that was constructed through the efforts of the Armenian Patriarch Nalyan, friend of the Grand Vizier, and *Sarrafa* Agob in Beşiktaş, was clandestinely enlarged without permission. However, upon the grievances of the Muslim people of the district, Mustafa III had the chief architect (*mimarbaşı*) destructed some adjacent structures to the church.¹¹⁹ Considering the fact that it was necessary to get permission from the relevant authorities for every kind of construction, it was certain that the construction that was brought into the palace and public would be lasted with destruction; and it was so. Use of condemning statements about the event by those Ottoman sources that provide information about the period and their evaluation of the event as a furor made the situation clear. Thus, İnciciyan, also, reported that attendees of the church were gradually dispersed in a short time after that event derived from an unsavory discord among the people, and some of the Armenians of Beşiktaş moved to other districts like Ortakoy.¹²⁰

Finally, there were some additional personal activities of Hagop Nalyan and Ragib Pasha related with the Armenians. The Surp Hrasdagabet in Kamis Street, where Ayazma Water was believed to be healing by people of the region, was the only Armenian Church in Balat; and it was among the churches under regular maintenance throughout this period. What made it interesting for this article was *Tahta Minare Hamami* (bath) near the church, which was built by Grand Vizier Ragib Pasha in 1760, and came into service of people of the region.¹²¹ It was stated in the foundation charter (*vakfiye*) of Ragib Pasha Library that the bath was next to the Jewish and Armenian houses; and it was known to be a popular place

119 “First daughter of Sultan Mustafa, Hibetullah was born on February 16, 1173. Since there was no child born for a long time, celebrations were ordered for seven days. Since people organized great festivals, it was extended for additional three days. That is, the celebrations were held through ten days. All artisans were dressed in Turkish costumes; it is said such kind of celebration neither was held in Istanbul nor to be held. For this reason, it was called as the great celebration in Istanbul. The church in Beşiktaş was destructed in this year.” Cited from an Armenian yearbook, Pamukciyan, p. 26 and afterwards; Aktepe, 11-A, p. 3.

120 The church in Beşiktaş with the same name today was built by famous Karabet Balyan on the place of the previous one. İnciciyan, 18. *Yüzyılda İstanbul*, p.114.

121 For the registration dated 1175 that one *masura* (spout) of the water that water minister Ibrahim Aga drilled near Pasa Kemerı was sold to Grand Vizier Ragib Mehmed Pasha, and he used it in newly built bath near Phanar, see, Vol. 23, Kala and Tabakoğlu (ed.), *İstanbul Su Külliyesi*, p. 103. For the registration dated 1176 that a half of *masura* (spout) of the water that water minister Ibrahim Aga drilled near Bakrac Kemerı was sold to Grand Vizier Ragib Mehmed Pasha, and he used it in newly built bath near Phanar, see, Kala and Tabakoğlu (ed.), *İstanbul Su Külliyesi*, p. 173.

among the Armenians and Jews of Istanbul.¹²² The hamam, which was known as the Armenian marsh (*batak*) among people, had a special role for the Armenian bridegrooms. The prospective young Armenian grooms were going there on the evening before the wedding, were entertaining and having bath until the morning, and getting ready for wedding night.¹²³ The *Tahta Minare Hamami*,¹²⁴ which was regarded as personal property of Pasha and its income was allocated for needs of the Ragib Pasha Library after his death, is still active and in the service of the Muslim and non-Muslim people as one of the historical artifacts of the region.

The Armenian scholar and Patriarch Nalyan, who is known for his knowledge on the Arabic and Farsi languages, and his Turkish poets and hymns with penname Nihadi, spent much in charity and philanthropic affairs through his personal wealth and efforts. He donated his very rich library to his nation, which, later, constituted the core of Sahag Mesrobyan Nation Library established in Galata in 1877. Additionally, he got the decree of construction of the Armenian Hospital in Beyoglu (1756). He assumed a large part of cost of the fountain that was opened in Izmit in 1764; he built a great inn for travelers and a drinking fountain constructed in his own village, Egin Zimara. He further donated his house inherited from his father to his nation to build a school with his name; made church of his village renovated and dispensed all his wealth to monasteries, churches, and the poor. He assumed wedding costs of especially the young girls and education costs of the poor and orphans. Like many of the leading bureaucrats and riches of the time, with the help and favor of Ragib Pasha, Nalyan made a water system installed for his people in the neighborhoods of Selamsiz and Acibadem in Uskudar and made two magnificent running-fountains constructed establishing a foundation through donations of some of his revenues to the foundation (1761-1763).¹²⁵ The fountain served people of the region besides the Armenians; water systems were renovated in 1798 and they became more efficient.¹²⁶ Nalyan, whose diligent efforts for his community were admired, known, and embraced by almost all of the Ottoman bureaucrats, was frequently invited to their residences and took sit in their boards. Among them, Ragib Pasha became his best friend with whom he had close relations due to their intellectual interests and their affinity as scholars and poets. Nalyan was visiting him in his residence near to the

122 Ahmed İhsan Türek, "Râgıp Paşa Kütüphanesi Vakfiyesi", *Atatürk Üniversitesi Edebiyat Fakültesi Araştırma Dergisi*, Erzurum, 1970, Vol 1, pp. 65-78 (yr. 10b); The place around Balat Tahta Minâre was among the places especially and mostly Jews lived. Belasel, *Osmanlı ve Türkiye Yahudileri*, p. 284.

123 Tayran, *TÜSIAD Görüş Dergisi*, pp. 57-58.

124 Türek, "Râgıp Paşa Kütüphanesi...", pp. 65-78

125 Tuğlacı, *Tarih Boyunca Batı Ermenileri*, p. 324.

126 İnciciyan, *18. Yüzyılda İstanbul*, p. 135.

Patriarchate in the evenings twice or three times a week and was talking about matters related to the community and scholarly topics.¹²⁷ Nalyan was a prolific writer with about 25 works, a skillful trainer with many students and he attracted attention as being an exceptional Patriarch with his knowledge and diligence. He attached a particular importance to Uskudar district. Because of the establishment of Armenian education institutions and the first actual clerical-school in this period in the region, Uskudar district became an important Armenian cultural center after the second half of the 18th century.¹²⁸ Since Mustafa III, bestowed the region near his mosque to the Armenians and people working in textile workshops attached to the foundation of Ayazma Mosque, name of the region has remained as Ihsaniye (the bestowed) until today.¹²⁹

In Lieu of Conclusion

Ragib Pasha period (1757-1763) was one of the brightest and peaceful periods for the Ottoman Armenians; in line with developments in the country; 18th century was regarded as the enlightenment age for this community. The Armenians became stronger religiously, socially, economically etc., in terms of every aspect of the life; and found opportunity to increase their number and influence over the Ottoman State. This period, during which there were no bitter events among the communities, witnessed such developments that would be considered as the Golden Page or the Golden Age of the Turkish-Armenian relations.

This article carefully presented data derived from the archives and studies of foreign and Armenian researchers. It reached into that conclusion through elaborating the issue with examples. It aimed to contribute positively to the relations between two communities. Finally, it is impossible to disagree with Boğos Levon Zekiyani, one of the leading contemporary Armenian intellectuals who once wrote:

“Although the geography where the Armenian modernization process took place encompasses a great region stretching from India to Iran, from the Ottoman and Russian Empires to the west ends of Europe; among all those countries and states, the Ottoman country and the state have a special role. The manner that the Sultan generally approached towards non-Muslim subjects, especially the rights they were granted to, and the trust in the Armenians whom were referred as ‘mil-

127 Tuğlacı, *Tarih Boyunca Batı Ermenileri*, p. 323.

128 Tuğlacı, *Tarih Boyunca Batı Ermenileri*, p.214; Tayran, *TÜSİAD Görüş Dergisi*, p.59.

129 Tuğlacı, *Tarih Boyunca Batı Ermenileri*, p.214; Tayran, *TÜSİAD Görüş Dergisi*, p.59.

let-i sadika' (the loyal nation), made Armenians a community that was gradually growing and an essential column of the life of the Empire as for many aspects."¹³⁰
In fact, the period covered in this article constitutes the landmark on this issue.

130 Zekiyan, *Ermeniler ve Modernite, Gelenek*, p. 38

LIBERTY AND ENTENTE PARTY'S APPROACH TO ARMENIAN QUESTION*

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Abstract: *This article aims to examine the policy of the Liberty and Entente Party (LEP) regarding the Armenian relocation. Founded in opposition to the Committee of Union and Progress (CUP), Liberty and Entente Party produced one of the most ardent critical discourses against the CUP during the Armistice period. In this article, through referring to newspapers and other first-hand sources of the era, it is aimed to reveal how LEP attacked previous administration, and to this end, how they even collaborated with the Allied Powers which had occupied the Ottoman capital. What is more, trials of Military tribunals and how prominent journalists of the period, who actively supported LEP, perceived these trials are analyzed.*

Key Words: *Liberty and Entente Party, Armenian question, Refii Cevad, Committee of Union and Progress, Military Tribunals.*

Liberty and Entente Party's (LEP) approach to Armenian question had been shaped by its general policy of currying favor to the British as in other policies of the party. The components of LEP had never been in harmony and LEP had never assumed power in reality. One of the party members, Refii Cevad confessed this by asking "Would have it happened like that, if LEP had assumed power fully?"¹

Established on November 21, 1911, LEP² advocated that political integrity of the Empire could be provided through giving additional rights to minorities. It believed that provision of new administrative and social rights would enhance the

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1 Refii Cevad, "Zâd Fi't-Tunbûr Nağmeten Uhrâ" (One More Melody in "tanbur"), *Alemdar*, 5 July 1919, No: 192-1502.

2 Ali Birinci, *Hürriyet ve İtilaf Fırkası*, İstanbul, 1990, p. 48

loyalty of minorities to the state. The method to achieve this was decentralization (*adem-i merkezîyet*).³ However, after *Bab-ı Âli* incident of January 23, 1913, it was impossible to talk about a party called LEP in the political atmosphere.⁴

Reactivated on January 14, 1919, it was seen that LEP was able to achieve full support of Sultan Mehmed Vahideddin.⁵ Sultan declared his imperial salute (*selâm-ı şâhâne*) to the party. In *Alemdar* newspaper, Refii Cevad wrote:⁶

“Our Sultan declared his royal salute. This salute has a stimulating effect, which could suddenly efface the sorrow and affliction of those oppressed party members for whole country for years... If His Excellence Mehmed the Sixth had been on the throne when the constitution had been promulgated, this state would have not been the toy in the hands of several insane persons. Even, we would not have entered the catastrophe called the World War... This salute is an unforgettable matter of pride in the hearts not only of party members, but also of all the people. What an honor for the LEP which attained the salute of His Excellence Mehmed Vahideddin the Just!”

Another characteristic of the period was the convergence of pro-British policies of the Sultan and Grand Vizier Damat Ferid, whose ideas had never been in conformity. Rather than touching upon infamous pro-Britishness of Damat Ferid and Vahideddin, one should examine pro-Britishness of the LEP. Among the reasons leading us to think in this way are pro-Britishness of almost all members of the party and its collaboration with the Society of Kurdish Ascent (*Kürt Teali Cemiyeti*) and the Society of Anglophiles (*İngiliz Muhipleri Cemiyeti*) during its reorganization in the provinces.⁷ Of course this was not a coincidence. One document regarding pro-Britishness of active members of LEP is this: On November 21, 1918, British Ambassador in Bern, Rumbold, sent a ciphered telegraph to the Foreign Office and wrote “...if we do not let the return of Turks like Kemal Mithat and Hakkı Halit, who are friends to us, under our protection, they will approach to France for easing their return. This would be a pity.” These Turks returned Ottoman Empire at the end of December or at the beginning of January under British protection.⁸ There were more such names; however, these two

3 Ali Birinci, *Hürriyet ve İtilaf...*, p. 56

4 Ali Birinci, *Hürriyet ve İtilaf...*, p. 202

5 Tanık Zafer Tunaya, *Türkiye’de Siyasal Partiler*, İstanbul, 1999, Vol. 2, p. 272

6 Refii Cevad, “Selâm-ı Şâhâne” (Imperial Salute), *Alemdar*, 7 March 1919, No: 77-1387

7 Tanık Zafer Tunaya, *Türkiye’de Siyasal...*, p. 274

8 Salâhi R. Sonyel, *Kurtuluş Savaşı Günlerinde İngiliz İstihbarat Servisi’nin Türkiye’deki Eylemleri*, Ankara, 1995, p. 3

names were significant. Hakkı Halit was one of the chief columnists of *Alemdar* newspaper, which was supported by the LEP during the Armistice period, whereas Kemal Mithat was the grandson of Mithat Paşa. These two established “The Party of Peace and Liberation” and wanted to establish an opposition front against the Committee of Union and Progress (CUP) through collaborating with Armenians.⁹ In a secret British intelligence report prepared in İstanbul on March 4, 1919, it was written that the intention of the LEP was to work in line with the perceptions and instructions of British authorities.¹⁰

Another conspicuous issue was that it was understood from the news published in *Alemdar* newspaper that the degree of opposition had gradually been increased against the CUP, which had already been attacked regarding Armenian question and some other issues. On January 16, 1919, in an article entitled “May God Helps Us”¹¹ it was written that “our aim is to make the Unionists the real culprits of old sins, unable to make a new *coup d’etat*”. Such statements would harden in the coming days. In these days, there was still the fear that the Unionists might assume power once again.¹²

On January 19, 1919, in an article entitled “The Heart Desired”, it was written that “...the heart desired that likewise the people who try to clean themselves from the evil and badness of CUP leaders which disgust the humanity, the CUP should try to save itself from the dishonor and imputation of that bloody politics. It should work for proving that all responsibility of the atrocities committed belonged to those blood-letting and shroud-raiding men.”¹³ These statements show how LEP approached to the Armenian question; they approached so in order to remove CUP, their major political opponent, from the political scene.

On January 20, 1919, while Refii Cevad, in an article entitled “Public Opinion and Law”, wrote “...we do not want to hang all CUP leaders immediately”¹⁴, in another article entitled “Snakes Raising Their Heads”, he wrote:¹⁵

9 Tarık Zafer Tunaya, *Türkiye’de Siyasal...*, p. 284

10 Salâhi R. Sonyel, *Kurtuluş Savaşı Günlerinde...*, p. 8

11 Refii Cevad, “Allah Yardımcımız Olsun”, (May God Helps Us), *Alemdar*, 16 January 1919, No: 33-1343

12 Tarık Zafer Tunaya, *Türkiye’de Siyasal...*, p. 273; the author writes “...the fear from Unionists had been an unchanging nature of party policies”.

13 Refii Cevad, “Gönül İsterdi Ki” (The Heart Desired), *Alemdar*, 19 January 1919, No: 36-1346

14 Refii Cevad, “Efkar-ı Umumiye ve Kanun” (Public Opinion and Law), *Alemdar*, 20 January 1919, No: 37-1347

15 Refii Cevad “Yılanlar Başlarını Kaldırıyor” (Snakes Raising Their Heads), *Alemdar*, 20 January 1919, No: 37-1347

“We tell clearly. We are hopeless. These snakes are raising their heads. In coming days they will wrap the body of people. Which people? The people of whom they had sucked the blood, of whom they had dried up their life, of whom they left skin and bones... Now they are trying to suck their marrow. We are surprised. While the country is in this situation, is there any rowdy that calls himself as Unionist? They turned these people and Western nations, which have been friends for centuries, into enemies. We perceive foreign powers present in our harbor as guests. Those flatterers of Talat and Enver! You resulted in demonstrations that stuck steels in the heart of people through forcefully alienating the components of the Empire from us. The God may curse upon you!”

According to LEP, the constituent communities of the Empire had been forcefully alienated. The point that this claim reaches is that the Armenians were submitted to a massacre. In one of the publications of the LEP, *Mesuliyet*, during Armistice period, there emerged articles dealing with this claim. It is ironic that there was no mention of imperialist efforts regarding Armenians. On September 7, 1919, in an article written by Ziya Kamil and entitled “Devil Worshippers” it was mentioned¹⁶:

“...A Turkish youngster is to be quarreled with his Arabian wife. It is said to be a nationalist current...the club of deceivable...A Muslim and a Christian being neighbors...That is not worth of mentioning. They are separated from each other not only with a nationalist current but also with a nationalist impact so that they can not be reconciled. You are immediately labeled as unpatriotic; because you are not loyal to CUP and its activities. What do they want more? Why do not let the people go? These devil worshippers!”

One can find the clues regarding the approach of the mentality, which perceived Unionists as more dangerous than the Allied naval power, in the declaration of the LEP and in the articles published in *Alemdar* newspaper. In the declaration, it was stated that the Unionists had produced instigation and disorder among components of the Empire with any kind of tools, that they had committed atrocities and murders towards some communities. It offered detention and trial of CUP central authority which had directed the crimes of relocation and murder, and its responsible members in the provinces where these murders had been committed.¹⁷

16 Ziya Kamil, “Abede-i Şeytan” (Devil Worshippers), *Mesuliyet*, 7 September 1919, No: 12

17 *Alemdar*, 24 January 1919, No: 41-1351

One should mention another significant initiative of LEP to achieve its political aims. On January 23, 1919, in *Alemdar* newspaper, an article published with a title "A petition submitted to the Sultan with signatures of ten individuals from political elites". It was said that these people contacted prominent Allied authorities in İstanbul and presented their observations and comments to the Sultan. They said:¹⁸

"European states are not dealing with you. Decisions about you have already been determined. However, you are still able to change these decisions. To do so, you have to show your power not only by word, but also by action. There is such a massacre. Justice has not yet been implemented since there has been no sentence, so far, for these murderers. They should immediately been effaced. Your presence in Istanbul depends on realizing this civilizational necessity not by word, but by action. We see that you still count on those who are responsible for your current situation. So you are content with your situation. How can those like Halil, Cahid, Cavid, Kemal, Canbulat, Midhat Şükrü, Ahmet Şükrü, Said Halim, Hayri, Rahmi, Ahmed Nesimî, Ali Münif have not been taken under custody, if not submitted to the Military Tribunal. Although they had to be tried and executed by the Military Tribunal up to now, most of them have not already been detained. What are you waiting for? Do you wait for their escape such as Enver, Talat, Cemal, Bedri, Azmi, Bahaddin Şakir, Doctor Nazım?"

It would later be observed that what was expected was a LEP government and it would be Damat Ferid Paşa who would establish that government. Sultan and LEP were not fully content with the policies of Tevfik Paşa government. However, this government was not less pro-British than the Sultan or LEP. Even, Tefvik Paşa said to Ward Price in the first day of his premiership that "his aim was to reestablish the old friendship with Britain". Foreign Minister Mustafa Reşid Paşa also said Admiral Webb, the British High Commissioner on December 30 1918: "I and my friends in the cabinet could openly and seriously assure you on behalf of Sultan and the people that the people's desire is to be administered by the British"¹⁹. However, the British demanded full surrender. That is what Tefvik Paşa had forgotten or had not dared to realize.

The escape of former governor of Diyarbakır, Doctor Reşid Bey²⁰ and similar events strengthened the position of LEP. It was argued in these days that the LEP

18 *Alemdar*, 23 January 1919, No: 40-1350

19 Gotthard Jaeschke, *Kurtuluş Savaşı ile İlgili İngiliz Belgeleri*, Ankara 1991, p. 8

20 *Alemdar*, 26 Ocak 1919, No: 43-1353

should assume power and should punish those who were responsible for the current situation.

Damat Ferid Paşa government established on March 4, 1919, and composed mainly by LEP members was saluted by Refii Cevad with an article entitled “Welcome Friends” and summarized the party program in a couple of sentences: “Provision of presence, absolute justice and sharp actions. It is also your duty to ameliorate our relations with Allied Powers, which had been disturbed by the CUP. Come on friends, get to work!”²¹

The prominent journalist of the LEP, Refii Cevad, argued that this government would protect the rights of all peoples of the Empire together with oppressed Turks and would exalt Ottomanism, which had been tried to be killed by bloody hands.²² Damat Ferid summarized the government program in two sentences: “To show our opposition against the policies of CUP to the Victorious Powers, to punish war criminals and to eliminate some former CUP members among the officials”.²³

Paşa took the first step to ameliorate relations with Allied powers and said Amiral Webb “I am ready to arrest anyone you want to show my favor to Britain”.²⁴ On March 9, he said Webb that “he and his master the Sultan tied their hopes to Britain after the God”.²⁵ On the same day, Unionists, accused for the crimes regarding Armenian relocation were arrested and these arrests were made in accordance with some lists provided by the British.²⁶ In the pro-LEP pres, it was understood that the LEP would not be content whatever punishment would be given to the Unionists: “The CUP hanged, the CUP cut, the CUP stole, the CUP sacked. It took millions from these poor people through force and whip...If someone makes them sunken into deep holes we could not heal them. We have so much suffered.”²⁷

The British took over all the documents of CUP in the center and provinces²⁸ and demanded several arrests from the Ministry of Interior based on these docu-

21 Refii Cevad, “Safa Geldiniz Arkadaşlar” (Welcome Friends), *Alemdar*, 5 March 1919, No: 75-1385

22 Refii Cevad, “Osmanlılık ve Kabine” (Ottomanism and the Government), *Alemdar*, 8 March 1919, No: 78-1388

23 Mehmet Tevfik Biren, *II. Abdülhamid, Meşrutiyet ve Müareke Devri Hatıraları*, İstanbul, 1993, p. 137

24 Sina Akşin, *İstanbul Hükümetleri ve Milli Mücadele*, I, İstanbul, 1983, p. 229

25 Gotthard Jaeschke, *Kurtuluş Savaşı ile İlgili...*, p. 9

26 Maliye Nazırı Cavid Bey, *Felaket Günleri*, İstanbul, 2000, p. 126

27 “İntikam, Kin, Garaz” (Revenge, Grudge, Rancor), *Alemdar*, 10 March 1919, No: 80-1390

28 BOA (Prime Ministry Ottoman Archives), DH-ŞFR, (Interior ciphered), No: 97/169

ments. On March 23, 1919, the governor of Amasya, Sırrı Bey, who had been charged by British Political Representative for being related to relocation and being pro-Unionist, was discharged and sent to Military Tribunal.²⁹

In order to bolster the government, Refik Halit Bey, a prominent member of LEP, from Sabah newspaper, which was another pro-government and pro-LEP newspaper, argued that those who had committed atrocities for ten years must be punished. He wrote: "The sound of justice can not be silenced, the interests of state can not be interrupted; this time not interests of individuals but rule of law should prevail".³⁰ It can be derived from Refik Halit's words that the LEP wanted to hold power for years as the CUP had done, and that the LEP thought that it was their turn³¹. Every method was permissible to achieve this aim. Their efforts to eliminate their arch-rival, the CUP, through accusing them for massacring Armenians would result, in the future, in an imputation of whole nation. They were unaware of that and this was unforgivable. However still, Refik Halit was discontent with the emergence of one-sided revenge. He wrote that the government should not only punish the culprits of Armenian question, but also Armenian bands which killed Muslims and stormed Eastern provinces; thus he was one of rare prudent LEP members.³² On the other side, according to Sheikh-ul-Islam Mustafa Sabri Efendi, "Struggling Unionists resembled struggling with tuberculosis or plague".³³

In the struggle of LEP against Unionists, some infamous persons were appointed to vital posts. One of them, Gümülcineli İsmail Bey, was a former Unionist, who was appointed as vice-governor of Bursa province during the Armistice period. He acted like a representative of imperialists and minorities. Accordingly, he invited French colonial troops to Bursa, opened Greek and Armenian clubs, and arrested and imprisoned many patriotic Turks with the accusation of torturing Christians.³⁴ Ebubekir Hazım Bey found a forgotten notebook within his desk in his office during his second governorship of Bursa. In this notebook, there were names of some people and officials and across these names, there were notes like "He is a Unionist, dismissal" or "punishment" or "He is a Unionist, immediately

29 BOA, DH-ŞFR, No: 97/232; the note of British Political Representative could open the way for dismissal and sending of an official to the Military Tribunal.

30 Nihat Karaer, *Tam Bir Muhalif: Refik Halid Karay*, İstanbul, 1998, p. 63

31 Refik Halid Karay, *Minelbab İlelmihrab*, İstanbul, 1992, p. 99

32 Ferudun Ata, *İşgal İstanbulunda Tehcir Yargılamaları*, Ankara, 2005, p. 7 1-72

33 Ferudun Ata, *İşgal İstanbulunda...*, p. 113

34 Saime Yüceer, *Bursa'nın İşgal ve Kurtuluş Süreci (8 Temmuz 1920-11 Eylül 1922)*, Bursa, 2001, p. 16

be exiled out of the province”.³⁵ It was understood that this notebook was passed from one governor to another who had been appointed by LEP, and it gives an idea on the activities of the party. Another such infamous person was Süleymaniyeli Nemrut Mustafa Paşa, who had been appointed as the vice-governor of Bursa. Ebubekir Hazım Bey once wrote “Appointment of such a wicked person to Bursa, one of the most precious parts of the Turkish lands was as weird as the omens of the apocalypse and a grave administrative fault”³⁶ Nemrut Mustafa was so fanatically supporting LEP that he once said for soldier casualties during World War I that “they have no difference from dead dogs” and such words demonstrate the approach of LEP to the Armenian question.³⁷ In this period such LEP politicians and bureaucrats were labeled by the nation as “Nemrut” or “Artin”. These epithets give an idea about the activities of LEP.

LEP’s activities during the Armistice period has been utilized by those supporting Armenian genocide allegations without taking into consideration the extraordinary conditions of the era within a historical setting. Even the proponents of these allegations could make comments in order to disregard these extraordinary conditions. For example, one such proponent wrote “...Therefore, even some researchers who has limitedly dealt with this issue preferred to evaluate it within the framework of ‘the law of sovereigns’”.³⁸ However, this is not a preference but a necessity. What forced the researchers to make such an evaluation is that they can not disregard what had happened at that period. One has to answer how disregard of the law of sovereigns is compatible with scientific ethics.

The most concrete result of LEP’s approach to Armenian question is the Military Tribunals established on March 8.³⁹ These tribunals were founded to punish Unionists, who were arrested to be tried in these extraordinary tribunals. In the days of these arrests, Refii Cevad wrote “These men do not worth of these execution stands. These heads, which had to be cut off, should be cut on logs and should remain on *seng-i ibret* for days.”⁴⁰ “We are not pleased by the arrests. More violence, more violence, more violence!”⁴¹

35 Yılmaz Akkılıç, *Kurtuluş Savaşı’nda Bursa*, Bursa, 1997, p. 28

36 Ebubekir Hâzım Tepeyran, *Zalimane Bir İdam Hükümü*, İstanbul, 1997, p. 167

37 Saime Yüceer, *Bursa’nın İşgalı...*, p. 19

38 Taner Akçam, *Ermeni Tabusu Aralanırken Diyalogdan Başka Bir Çözüm Var mı?*, İstanbul, 2000, p. 72

39 BOA, DH-EUM-AYŞ, Dâhiliye Emniyet-i Umumiye Asayiş Kalemi, No: 4/20

40 *Seng-i İbret*: It is a stone in the garden of Topkapı Palace and the heads of beheaded bureaucrats were put on that stone in order to make the people afraid of being against the state. Refii Cevad referred to that practice. Refii Cevad, “Bazı Şahsiyetler Etrafında” (About Some Persons), *Alemdar*, 12 March 1919, No: 81-1391

41 Refii Cevad, “Ferid Paşa Hükümetini Nasıl Görmek İstiyoruz” (How We Want to See Ferid Paşa Government),

Civilian members of these tribunals were dismissed and only military members were allowed to work. What is more, the decisions of these tribunals can not be submitted to appeal.⁴² There were non-Muslim interrogators and prosecutors in these tribunals, the decisions of which were utilized by proponents of Armenian genocide allegations as evidence. The tribunals executed Boğazlıyan *Kaymakam* Mehmed Kemal Bey on April 10, 1919, based on false witnesses' testimonies.⁴³ Nusret Bey, the governor of Urfa Province was also executed unlawfully on August 5, 1920 since there were two contradicting decisions regarding him.⁴⁴ These decisions showed how reliable the decisions of these tribunals were. According to LEP circles, Kemal Bey was guilty and he had to be punished. Refii Cevad, who had commented on the defense of Kemal Bey in the tribunal, wrote "... if these tears had been dropped in those days, neither this tribunal would have been established, nor this country would have been in this situation... Not only the perpetrators of relocation and murders, but also those who approved them are suspected, imputed, founded guilty and convicted."⁴⁵ After intensification of debates in the press regarding the trials and the crimes committed by Armenians against the Muslim Turks, he commented that whoever was convicted should be punished⁴⁶:

"...At once, there is the issue of relocation and murder. This is said to be done by both sides... However, of course, atrocities committed by Armenians are cruel. If this action had been done directly against the CUP, we might have accepted it as a mutual war. However it was not like that. It was said that Armenians committed atrocities to many people. We say so because we did not see these atrocities. However, we saw atrocities committed against Armenians. Since we saw it, there emerged a deep impact of what we saw. And therefore we wrote so fiercely."

The article written by Refii Cevad after the execution of Kemal Bey reveals the perceptions of the LEP. He argued that the tribunal trying Kemal Bey was extremely just and wrote⁴⁷:

Alemdar, 13 March 1919, No: 82- 1392

42 Ali Fuat Türkgeldi, *Görüp İşittiklerim*, Ankara, 1987, p. 198

43 *Kaymakam*: Highest authority of a district. Nejdet Bilgi, *Ermeni Tehciri ve Boğazlıyan Kaymakamı Mehmed Kemal Bey'in Yargılanması*, Ankara, 1999, p. 104

44 Ebubekir Hâzım Tepeyran, *Zalimane Bir İdam...*, p. 167

45 Refii Cevad, "Bir Müdafaa Karşısında" (Across a Defense), *Alemdar*, 9 April 1919, No: 108-1418

46 Refii Cevad, "Ne Diyoruz? Ne İstiyoruz?" (What Do We Say? What Do We Want?), *Alemdar*, 10 Nisan 1919, No: 109-1419

47 Refii Cevad, "İdam" (Execution), *Alemdar*, 12 April 1919, No: III-1421

“The corpses of those victims of struggle, who had been executed as a result of Mahmut Şevket Paşa incident, had been exposed for hours and then inversely filled into the hollows in Edirnekapı in couples. However, the execution of Kemal Bey was realized at 7:30 p.m. two days ago and he was immediately buried without exposure. We do not want to compare the current government and band [Unionists] regarding this point; because execution is execution. Kemal Bey was guilty and he was executed. The band killed thousands of people in various ways. What makes us sorrowful is not the execution of Kemal Bey but its presence in the execution stand alone. We have desired that the punishment of execution should have not been started with a single stand. The light columns in the both sides of the bridge should have been decorated by the corpses of those malefactors who had executed my dear country. Then we would have been glad and the malediction of millions of oppressed would have come true. Kemal was an arm. The powerful chopper of *shariah* cut this detrimental organ for humanity. Now, it is time to eliminate the mentality. These heads should be smashed between stones; their wives should be widowed as they had widowed the women of these people. Their sons should be sorrowful orphans as they had made the sons of these people sorrowful orphans.”

These expressions showed how revengeful Refii Cevad was at that time. Two weeks after Refii Cevad wrote “it is time to eliminate the mentality”, prominent CUP members (Said Halim Paşa, Ziya Gökalp, Ahmed Nesimi, Ali Münif, etc.) were put on trial in the Military Tribunal and this showed that the *Alemdar* newspaper acted like the mouthpiece of the LEP government. Appointment of an Armenian called Aşçıyan to the post of interrogating judge gives an idea on the nature of this Military Tribunal.⁴⁸

One of the prominent members of LEP and the first Minister of Interior, Cemal Bey, said to the correspondent of *Vakit* newspaper regarding the ongoing arrests that “these arrests are predicated on legal reasons”. The correspondent asked: “We do not want to think about the existence of other reasons; however, in order to appease public opinion, could you please explain more about the reasons of arrests?”. The Minister answered “we would later appease public opinion”.⁴⁹ With this answer the Minister approved that the arrests were done in order to appease the British not the public opinion. Another declaration of Cemal Bey published on some newspapers on March 15, 1919, was utilized by the proponents of geno-

48 Bilâl N. Şimşir, *Malta Sürgünleri*, Ankara, 1985, p. 82.

49 *Vakit*, 11 March 1919, No: 497

cide allegations. In this declaration Cemal Bey said:

“CUP administration was not different from Bolsheviks. *Paşas* could not escape from the hand of justice. Do you think that the people do not have any right to account? The government would clean the bloody past. You can say that the LEP work for providing order in the country in collaboration with non-Muslim communities. Some of those interrogators and prosecutors appointed to interrogate the Unionists are non-Muslims. They would only apply law.”

In the same declaration, he said the CUP had murdered 800.000 Armenians; however, he later thought that this number was huge and said on March 18 that this number included those relocated Armenians.⁵⁰ Cemal Bey's declaration was criticized much. In an article entitled “That's Enough” İsmail Hami wrote in *Memleket* newspaper that this declaration was inadmissible and reacted: “If I had been the President of Armenia, I would not have hesitated to grant Ararat medal from the first rank to this Ottoman Minister who had strengthened the Armenian cause”.⁵¹

LEP circles also complained about the longitude of trials in the Military Tribunals. Refii Cevad argued that if these relocation and massacre trials would continue as it was, they would last for years. He wrote: “If Nazım Paşa would be fast unlike his predecessor Hayret Paşa who had spent time for very detailed investigation, then the situation of suspects would be cleared, the trials would be done quickly and they would be concluded soon.”⁵² Same circles thought that the arrests were not sufficient as well. Refii Cevad argued that those who had been brought to the Assembly as deputies by the band had to be arrested and declared his revenge against his political rivals with these words:⁵³

“The Band prepared a law immediately and presented it for the approval of its members when it would have committed a massacre which would have resulted in the catastrophe of the country... When one thinks those, he is to be filled with

50 *İkdam*, 15 Mart 1919, No: 7936; Sina Akşin, *İstanbul Hükümetleri*, p. 198. Süleyman Nazif had also criticized the expressions of Cemal Bey regarding the massacre of 800.000 Armenians on March 17 in *Hadisat* newspaper. Zeki Sarihan, *Kurtuluş Savaşı Günlüğü*, Ankara, 1993, p. 175. What the proponents of genocide allegations disregard is the expression of Cemal Bey in correcting his first declaration, which stipulated that the relocated Armenians was to be included in this 800.000 number.

51 Ferudun Ata, *İşgal İstanbulunda...*, pp. 141-142

52 Refii Cevad, “Tehcîr ve Taktîl Muhâkemeleri” (Relocation and Massacre Trials), *Alemdar*, 28 March 1919, No: 97-1407.

53 Refii Cevad, “Tevkifatta Noksan Var!” (There Is Absence in the Arrests), *Alemdar*, 4 April 1919, No: 104-1414

anger and revenge. Yes, we think fanatically in this issue. When we consider the national catastrophe of this country, we could not think a lighter punishment for these men than death.”

What is conspicuous here was the endless examples of an inherent enmity against the CUP, published in pro-LEP *Alemdar* newspaper. The responsible of each and every malice happened in the country was the Unionists. In an unsigned article, it was written:⁵⁴

“Those insane people, who committed the insanity to engage in war against Britain, deserved to be confined in a bedlam. In the country, they committed every type of atrocity, murder and brigandage. They stormed everywhere. They hanged, they exiled, they murdered. They called it as national politics. They stole, they thieved, and they let stealing, and called it as national economics. There were some intellectuals who appraised these murders. They hanged Arabs, they exiled them. They exiled Greeks and murdered them. They murdered Armenians and exiled them... They disturbed our honor. They disturbed our honor so much that today Turkish nation was written and declared as “red nation”... We would be punished as a result of all these faults and murders. It is certain that we would... We surrender with our arms cut, with our legs tied. We have no honor, no money. May the God’s curse be upon them, who were responsible of this situation.”

Refii Cevad gave another example of party fanaticism by laying the responsibility of everything on the shoulders of the Unions and wrote on the transportation of the prisoners held in the headquarters of Bekirağa division to Malta with Princess Ena ship as such⁵⁵:

“...It was necessary to punish these men through an immediate trial after their arrest; but we could not do that... What was the reason? Why did we postpone, up to now, to decide on the guilt of four Unionists, which were acknowledged even by the world? I asked again, what was the reason? Unknown... At last, Entente Powers, which were as bored as we do about this situation, took our culprits from our prisons and brought them... Whoever we talk to, we would be answered as: ‘Yes, the suspects of these men were determined. Your government did nothing about them. We waited, waited, and we had to act by ourselves, because we found their presence as dangerous for the humanity.’ How can we respond these words? Since lands like paradise are disintegrating, the anger and revenge that we feel towards those the real responsible people of ten years of maladministration...”

54 “Allah Belâlarını Versin” (May the God’s Curse Be Upon Them), *Alemdar*, 16 May 1919, No: 144-1454

55 Refii Cevad, “Yeni Bir Hâdise Karşısında” (On a New Event), *Alemdar*, 29 May 1919, No: 157-1467

According to Taner Akçam, one of the ardent proponents of the Armenian genocide, most of the documents regarding Armenian massacres were either destroyed or stolen.⁵⁶ On the other hand, he also wrote “It is an unanswered question that why the documents collected by İstanbul Military Tribunals had not been delivered to the British and why the British had not forced the government to obtain these documents.”⁵⁷ He was in contradiction by asking why the British could not obtain the documents that he claimed to be destroyed or stolen. It is illogical to say that the British, who had a Grand Vizier after the signature of the Armistice and the occupation of İstanbul on November 13, 1918, being aware of everything and being ready to make whatever they want, could not reach those documents.

Another proponent of genocide allegations, Vahan Dadrian, refuted his thesis with one of his arguments. Accordingly, he argued that the expressions of Ahmed İzzet Bey, who had assumed the Ministry of Interior by proxy on January 29, 1919, were a proof of destruction of evidences. Ahmed İzzet Bey said in one interview that “The documents which would prove the guilt of Unionists had been destroyed by them. Therefore, we establish Military Tribunals on ideas of consciousness and witness accounts rather than evidences of proof.”⁵⁸ However, these words prove that the Military Tribunals decide only through the ideas of consciousness and witness accounts.

In an article written by Ali Kemal Bey from pro-LEP *Sabah* newspaper, it was written that⁵⁹:

“Four or five years ago a unique crime in history was committed, a crime that frightened whole world. In order to demonstrate its conditions and magnitude, we should say that there were not five, ten perpetrators but hundreds of thousands... Actually, it was revealed that this tragedy had been planned in accordance with the decisions of CUP central authority.”

In *Alemdar* newspaper he wrote on July 18, 1919, “...Our Justice Minister opened the doors of prisons. We should not hold Armenians responsible, we should not think that the world is full of fowls. We pillaged the properties of those people

56 Taner Akçam, *İnsan Hakları ve Ermeni Sorunu*, Ankara, 1999, p. 555

57 Taner Akçam, *İnsan Hakları...*, p. 556

58 Vahakn N. Dadrian, *Türk Kaynaklarında Ermeni Soykırımı*, İstanbul, 2005, p. 43. For those expressions showing the character of Ahmet İzzet Bey see Galip Kemali Söylemezoğlu, *Başımıza Gelenler*, İstanbul, 1939, p. 94 in which it was written on him as such: “When I was the Minister of Interior, I saw İzzet Bey near chief translator Ryan or standing at his door whenever I went to the British Embassy”.

59 Vahakn N. Dadrian, *Türk Kaynaklarında*, p. 50

that we relocated and killed; we approved this robbery in our Parliament and Senate. We should show that we have the national energy to bring the perpetrators of these bands that had dishonored our nation and that had ignored justice, in front of justice.” These expressions and innumerable similar expressions and articles of LEP members provided significant material for those supporting Armenian genocide allegations. These proponents, who utilized arguments of LEP members for eliminating their political rivals, aim to make people having not much knowledge about these events think that such events had really taken place.

Some academicians like Justin McCarthy support Turkish thesis. He wrote⁶⁰:

“Much was made of post-war courts martial that accused members of the Committee of Union and Progress Government of crimes against the Armenians. The accusations did not state that the courts were convened by the unelected quiescent government of Ferit Paşa who created the courts to curry favor with the Allies. The courts returned verdicts of guilty for all sorts of improbable offenses, of which killing Armenians was only one. The courts chose anything, true or false, that would cast aspersion on Ferit’s enemies. The accused could not represent themselves. Can the verdicts of such “courts” be trusted? Conveniently overlooked were the investigations of the British, who held Istanbul and were in charge of the Ottoman Archives, but who were forced to admit that they could find no evidence of massacres ordered by the Ottoman Government.”

These proponents of Armenian genocide⁶¹, who have even displayed the writings of some Turkish statesmen and authors to support their own thesis, criticized the evaluation of events by opponents of genocide allegations in line with the “law of sovereigns”, while disregarding why this same law did not try and punish the culprits of massacres. In occupied Istanbul, they exiled those, whom they could not try and punish, to Malta and imprisoned them at most 1-2 years without

60 Justin McCarthy, “Bırakın Tarihçiler Karar Versin” (Let the Historians Decide), *Ermeni Araştırmaları*, Vol. 1 No. 2, 2001, p. 124

61 Vahakn N. Dadrian, *Türk Kaynaklarında...*, pp. 83-84. The author argues that after reviewing the words of Interior Minister Cemal Bey about the massacre of 800.000 Armenians, Celal Bayar commented that “the ugliest and most unnecessary indication [of compensating the victims]”. However, in the 25th page of 7th volume of his book, *Ben de Yazdım* (I Wrote As Well), it was written that “Damad Ferid government tried to appease the Allied Powers, particularly Britain, regarding the Armenian issue. The ugliest and most unnecessary indication of this is the declaration of Interior Minister Cemal Bey published in Moniteur Oriental newspaper on March 13, 1919”. There was no such expression like “of compensating the victims”. What is more, Yusuf Hikmet Bayur made a similar comment with Bayar and wrote “Such words did not soften the Great Powers but provided them with evidence and opportunity to crush us.” *Atatürk: Hayatı ve Eseri*, Ankara, 1997, p. 268

trial. If they were guilty, then they had to be tried, if not, they had to be released. The British, on the other hand, could neither try nor release the exiles.⁶² What is interesting was that the names of those which was published on *Alemdar* in January 1919 was the same with the ones which were exiled to Malta. It can be said that the real intention of the imperialists was to apply the Treaty of Sevres, which aimed to solve the "Eastern Question". LEP played a part in this process. Indeed, neither Armenians, nor genocide allegations were given importance by the Great Powers.

Indeed, Great Powers did not envisage certain lands for Armenia in the secret agreements that they had concluded during the war. They rather used Armenians as a tool to interfere Ottoman interior affairs. Their insincerity regarding Armenians can be seen when Treaties of Sevres and Lausanne are compared. In Sevres, while they had agreed to allocate a large piece of territory for Armenians to establish a great independent Armenian state, in Lausanne Treaty, there was no mention of Armenians.⁶³

It is impossible to reveal the truth if those who write history are loyal to those who make it. It can be seen that the proponents of "Armenian genocide" rested their arguments on the activities of LEP made to eliminate their arch-rival the CUP from the political stage. Scientific examinations made objectively showed that such allegations are not valid.

62 Bilâl N. Şimşir, *Malta Sürgünleri*, Ankara 1985, p. 82

63 Bilâl N. Şimşir, *Malta Sürgünleri*, Ankara 1985, p. 82

THE ESTABLISHMENT AND ACTIVITIES OF THE FRENCH LEGION D'ORIENT (EASTERN LEGION) IN THE LIGHT OF FRENCH ARCHIVAL DOCUMENTS (July 1917 – November 1917)

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Abstract:

Being the third one of a series of articles on the establishment and activities of the Eastern Legion, in this article developments occurred between July and November 1917 are covered. This period was the period of the emergence of first significant problems regarding the Legion as well as its enlargement. This article, therefore, aims to analyze the transportation of Armenian and Syrian volunteers to first France and then to the Legion's camp in Cyprus. Secondly, the article examines some reports prepared by French officers on the Legion emphasizing the cleavages between Armenian and Syrian subjects of the Legion.

Key Words: *Eastern Legion, Armenians, Syrians, Latin America, Monarga Camp.*

Introduction

Being the third one of a series of articles intended to analyze the establishment and activities of the Eastern Legion, this study aims to evaluate the developments that happened between July and November of the year of 1917. Temporally, this period might be said to overlap with the emergence of the first problems related to the Eastern Legion. Besides, within this time span the Legion continued to grow and commenced to turn into an army-like entity consisting of eight squads.

This article is constituted by two main parts. First, the situation of the Armenian and Syrian volunteers who were sent to France from the New World, from where they were further positioned to Cyprus. The activities of the delegations dispatched to Latin America, the hardships they had to suffer at recruiting volunteers and the rivalry especially between Britain and France are among the subject of inquiries for this study.

The second part deals with the affairs of the Eastern Legion. This section analyses issues such as the emergence of the Legion as a powerful military division, the rivalry between the Armenians and the Syrians, the reports prepared by French authorities on the Legion.

1. Volunteer Dispatch to France from the American Continent

Seeing that the Armenians from Djebel Musa were not sufficient to constitute an entire legion, Central Armenian and Syrian Committees decided to assign some delegations for the task of recruiting volunteers for the Eastern Legion on December 1916. These groups were formed in order to sign more volunteers among the Armenian and Syrian communities who had immigrated to USA and Latin America, and there, they had undertaken their propaganda activities. When the delegations' efforts paid off, Syrian and Armenian volunteers started to be transferred to France. Some authorities commissioned by Central Syrian and Armenian Committees were ready in the three biggest French port-cities, namely Bordeaux, Le Havre and Marseilles, where they supervised the dispatches. This part of the article brings up the problems concerning the matter of volunteer recruitment from the New World since late June 1917.

When the first American troops reached the shores of France towards the end of June 1917, the First World War transcended into being a European war and turned into an inter-continental one. That was a catalyst for the enrolment of Syrian and Armenian volunteers from the Americas since propaganda activities which had been carried out clandestinely before the USA went into war, could now be publicly operated. This, in turn, led to an increase in the volunteer dispatch from the Americas and necessitated the presence of reliable Armenian and Syrian officers in the French arrival ports.

In a letter addressed to French Foreign Minister Ribot by Shukru Ghanem on 20 June, the President of the Central Syrian Committee (*Comité Central Syrien*), which was located in Paris, he introduced Doctor Samné to the Minister and noted that Samné would be the officer who was going to take care of the Syrian volunteers to the Eastern Legion arriving in Bordeaux from the Americas. Having met with Sevadjian, the President of the Armenian Committee in Paris, Samné had already shown his will to deal with the volunteers which would arrive in Bordeaux¹. If one reads between the cautious lines, one gets the impression that there was a sort of a competition between the Armenian and Syrian delegates. Indeed Ghanem was not happy with the fact that Syrian volunteers sent from the Americas were also received by Armenian officials. The authorization of Dr. Samné was granted by the French Foreign Ministry and the War Ministry was informed about this assignment².

1 Letter addressed to French Foreign Minister Alexander Ribot by Shukru Ghanem, the President of the Central Syrian Committee, 20 June 1917, Archives of the French Foreign Ministry, File No: 892, *Turquie: Legion d'Orient III (Juin-Octobre 1917)*, p. 20

2 Letter addressed to French War Minister Paul Painlevé by the French Foreign Minister Alexandre Ribot, 23 June

The rivalry between the Syrian and Armenian delegates was not the only problem about volunteer recruitment. From time to time, propaganda activities were undermined, especially because of the frictions between the Syrians living in Latin America. In a letter sent to French Foreign Ministry by the French minister plenipotentiary to Rio de Janeiro, Paul Claudel, on 26 June, the latter stated that Brazilian Syrians were feeling sympathetic towards France, yet some personal problems or intracommunal frictions had been keeping them away from contacting the French. Claudel informed the Ministry that they were trying to resolve these personal or collective problems and that the general atmosphere was in favour of France even though some rapid straight-forward steps could not be undertaken³.

French minister plenipotentiary appears more optimistic in a letter he wrote two days later in which he heralded a new Syrian committee being formed in Sao Paolo, which he believed to enroll volunteers in a more organized way⁴. In the meantime, two Syrian delegates, Dr. Lakah and Merdam Bey had arrived in Rio de Janeiro and started to hold contacts with local Syrians to talk them in joining the Eastern Legion. Upon meeting with Syrian delegates, Claudel made up his mind on Brazilian Syrians: "Among the Syrians in Brazil there exist a great deal of patriotism, good will and a French-loving attitude, yet so do frictions emanating from personal or religious reasons"⁵.

Moreover, Claudel suggested that the meetings organized by the delegates could, to a large extent, culminate in a common endeavor, however, the local Orthodox Syrians were under the influence of the Russian Ambassador. This observation of Claudel is interesting since it reveals the density of the international rivalry even in Latin America back then. As it is widely known, the Bolshevik Revolution of February 1917 overthrew the Tsarist regime and established a socialist system. Upon the revolution, Russia declared its withdrawal from the war, which enabled

1917, Archives of the French Foreign Ministry, File No: 892, *Turquie: Legion d'Orient III (Juin-Octobre 1917)*, p. 26

3 Letter addressed to French Foreign Minister Alexandre Ribot by the French Minister plenipotentiary to Rio de Janeiro Paul Claudel, 26 June 1917, Archives of the French Foreign Ministry, File No: 892, *Turquie: Legion d'Orient III (Juin-Octobre 1917)*, p. 33

4 Letter addressed to French Foreign Minister Alexandre Ribot by the French Minister plenipotentiary to Rio de Janeiro Paul Claudel, 28 June 1917, Archives of the French Foreign Ministry, File No: 892, *Turquie: Legion d'Orient III (Juin-Octobre 1917)*, p. 34

5 Letter addressed to French Foreign Minister Alexandre Ribot by the French Minister plenipotentiary to Rio de Janeiro Paul Claudel, 29 June 1917, Archives of the French Foreign Ministry, File No: 892, *Turquie: Legion d'Orient III (Juin-Octobre 1917)*, p. 41

the Russian Ambassador to compete with France's delegates in Brazil in mid-1917. In short, the revolution turned former allies into competitors and cooled down bilateral relations if not torn them all apart.

Claudel proposed Dr. Lakah and Merdam Bey to start a personal propaganda campaign and to arrange the volunteer recruitment on a systematic basis, which were welcomed by the delegates. The main reason why these proposals were made in the first place was that the failure to gather and send needed numbers of volunteers at once was explained by the lack of a systematic propaganda campaign. Claudel believed that a more organized plan of propaganda would increase the number of recruits.

On 2 August, French Foreign Minister Ribot sent a letter to the War Ministry in order to inform the latter about the reports of Claudel. By this letter, it was once again underlined that the campaign of Lakah and Merdam Bey was progressing at a slow pace because of the personal differences of opinion existent among the Syrians⁶.

In his reply to Claudel, Ribot brought up the introduction of certain regulations in order to facilitate the transfer of volunteers. Among these, one of the most significant arrangement appears to be a 30% discount being offered for the boat travel to the volunteers arriving from Latin America. In addition, Ribot attached a letter of Şükrü Ganem to his reply to Claudel for it to be passed on to Dr. Lakah, the Syrian delegate. In this letter, Ganem repeated his request from Dr. Lakah for him to establish a squad consisting of 7000-8000 volunteers and he added that all the expenses would be paid by France⁷. Thanks to these improvements, a group of 40 Syrian volunteers were dispatched to ports of Le Havre and Bordeaux at the end of July⁸. Even though this may sound like a small number, it attests to the fact that there was a significant increase on the show-up of volunteers especially when compared to the number of recruits in the previous transfers. However, it is still far away from what France needs militarily.

6 Letter addressed to French War Minister Paul Painlevé by French Foreign Minister Alexandre Ribot, 2 August 1917, Archives of the French Foreign Ministry, File No: 892, *Turquie: Legion d'Orient III (Juin-Octobre 1917)*, p. 108

7 Letter sent to the French Minister plenipotentiary to Rio de Janeiro, Paul Claudel by the French Foreign Minister Alexandre Ribot, 20 July 1917, Archives of the French Foreign Ministry, File No: 892, *Turquie: Legion d'Orient III (Juin-Octobre 1917)*, p. 79

8 Telegramme sent by the French Foreign Ministry to the French Minister plenipotentiary to Rio de Janeiro, Paul Claudel, 23 July 1917, Archives of the French Foreign Ministry, File No: 892, *Turquie: Legion d'Orient III (Juin-Octobre 1917)*, p. 80

Meanwhile, with the arrival of new volunteers from the Americas, a fundamental problem came along with it: most of them were sick and were thus unable to serve in the military. They got ill either in Brazil or during the boat trip. The telegrams and letters sent to Rio de Janeiro from the French Foreign Ministry since late July were mostly about the unfit quality of the new volunteers. While these volunteers would be sent back, this would have brought extra spendings on the French account. For example, 6 of 28 Syrians, meaning almost one quarter of them, who arrived in Le Havre with the ship *Dupleix*, were too sick to serve in the military. The health inspections carried out in the port revealed that some of the volunteers had serious illnesses such as tuberculosis⁹. The transfer of sick Syrians and Armenians in time reached a level so high that the French Foreign Ministry would officially demand Jusserand, the French Ambassador to Washington, to hold a health inspection for the volunteers before they were sent to France¹⁰.

During the summer, the transfer of the sick volunteers continued. According to the archives, on 6 September 1917, Claudel, the French minister plenipotentiary to Rio de Janeiro, sent to the French Foreign Minister Ribot a long report summing the reports other Syrian delegates, namely Dr. Lakah and Merdam Bey, about the recruitment of Syrian volunteers. The report noted that there were serious obstacles against the realization of these two delegates' mission and Claudel enumerated these setbacks as the lack of organization in the Brazilian-Syrian community, their living over scattered areas and intra-communal conflicts. Claudel pointed out that a great deal of time and effort was required in order to overcome these difficulties, to restore the society's self-respect, eliminate their timidity and especially ending the enmities created by the pro-German Syrians. This task was vital because unless it is fulfilled, the mission could not be based on a system and thus the volunteer recruitment for the Legion would become almost impossible¹¹.

Therefore this time Claudel restated his previous arguments in a more comprehensive manner. The tone of the report seems to suggest a feeling of self-

9 Letter addressed to the French Foreign Minister Alexander Ribot by the French War Minister Paul Painlevé, 1 July 1917, Archives of the French Foreign Ministry, File No: 892, *Turquie: Legion d'Orient III (Juin-Octobre 1917)*, p. 90.

10 Letter sent to the French Ambassador to Washington, Jules Jusserand, by the French Foreign Ministry, 6 August 1917, Archives of the French Foreign Ministry, File No: 892, *Turquie: Legion d'Orient III (Juin-Octobre 1917)*, p. 118.

11 Letter addressed to French Foreign Minister Alexandre Ribot from the French Minister plenipotentiary to Rio de Janeiro Paul Claudel, 29 June 1917, Archives of the French Foreign Ministry, File No: 892, *Turquie: Legion d'Orient III (Juin-Octobre 1917)*, p. 155

defense of a diplomat who was assumed to have failed on the matter of volunteer recruitment by his higher ranked French Foreign Ministry officers. Indeed Claudel wanted to shift the blame on the characteristics of the Syrians. However it was not really possible for France to allocate a great deal of resources for the volunteer dispatches in the fiercest times of the World War I. This represented one of the greatest dilemmas of France at that time. On the one hand, France wished to make use of the Armenians and Syrians who almost numbered half million in the New World, yet, on the other, it had to act economically when it came to spare resources for the transfers. That also explains why volunteer transfers did not yield the desired numbers.

In the same letter, Claudel suggested that despite all the hardships, certain steps had been taken in order to systemize the volunteer recruitment: The Syrian community in Rio de Janeiro and Sao Paulo organized a lunch which aimed to contribute to the budget for the volunteer recruitment. However, what matters more was Claudel's remarks on the views of other foreign representatives in Brazil on the issue of volunteers¹². Accordingly, the host country Brazil, even though it was not officially and openly supportive of the matter, it still secretly underpinned it. For example, an official of the Brazilian Foreign Ministry participated in the lunch organized by the Syrian delegates. It is probable that the main reason why Brazil adopted a supportive line was that it wished to enter the war with the side of the Allied Powers. Brazil indeed declared war on Germany on 26 October 1917 and thus joined the Allied Powers just two months after the aforementioned lunch occasion. This attitude must have been a facilitator for the volunteer recruitment and their dispatch from Brazil.

As far as Russia was concerned, Claudel pointed that the Russian Ambassador was pro-French on the volunteer issue and added that although for some time some Orthodox Syrians tried to provoke the Ambassador against France, he still remained supportive for the French cause¹³. The British position was not that clear since they neither participated the lunch, nor contributed to the organization of it. Having stated that some Syrians had been trying to convince the British Consul Adler to object to the French mission, Claudel advises Ribot to hold some contacts with the British government so that regional British authorities would

12 Letter sent to French Foreign Minister Alexandre Ribot from French Minister plenipotentiary to Rio de Janeiro Paul Claudel, 29 June 1917, ..., p. 156

13 Letter sent to French Foreign Minister Alexandre Ribot from French Minister plenipotentiary to Rio de Janeiro Paul Claudel, 29 June 1917..., p. 157

be instructed not to obstruct against the recruitments¹⁴. The cold state of affairs between France and Britain while War still went on is highly remarkable.

Moreover, Claudel underlines the importance of being on friendly terms with approximately 200.000 Brazilian-Syrians, not only in war time, but also in peace since it would promote France's hold over the region. In other words, local Syrians could be manipulated so as to enhance French interests in Latin America. Claudel suggests that Syrians are amazing merchants and that they exemplify the Levant's characteristic seriousness and hard-working attitude. He even highlights the importance of the necessity to strengthen the communication between the Brazilian Syrians and Armenians¹⁵.

On 19 October, in the reply to this letter, it was stated that Claudel's efforts had been appreciated, his attempts at improving the relations between Brazilian-Syrian community and the Frenchmen living in Brazil were praised, and that it was necessary to develop closer relations along with mutual confidence with British representatives in this country¹⁶.

Another interesting development is the letter written by the French Consul to Valparaiso, Mr. Chausson to the French Foreign Minister Ribot. Chausson informed his Minister about some Syrian volunteers from Chile wishing to join the Legion. This document bears significant importance since it shows that volunteer recruitments, which were had been confined to Brazil and to the US up until September, did now extend to Chile as well¹⁷. The Syrian community in Chile can be traced back to the second half of 19th century. For example, in the census held in 1854, there were two Turks registered to be living in Chile. Since everyone who possessed Ottoman citizenship were called as "Turk" back then, these two "Turks" must have been Syrians or Armenians who had been immigrating to Latin America. By the year 1907, there were 1498 Muslims living in Chile, most of who had emigrated from Syria and Lebanon. They constituted

14 Letter sent to French Foreign Minister Alexandre Ribot from French Minister plenipotentiary to Rio de Janeiro Paul Claudel, 29 June 1917..., p. 157

15 Letter sent to French Foreign Minister Alexandre Ribot from French Minister plenipotentiary to Rio de Janeiro Paul Claudel, 29 June 1917..., p. 157

16 Telegramme addressed to the French Minister plenipotenary to Rio de Janerio, Paul Claudel, from the French Foreign Ministry, 19 October 1917, Archives of the French Foreign Ministry, File No: 892, *Turquie: Legion d'Orient III (Juin-Octobre 1917)*, p. 217

17 Letter sent to the French Foreign Minister Alexandre Ribot from the French Consulate to Valparaiso, Mr. Chausson, 16 September 1917, Archives of the French Foreign Ministry, File No: 892, *Turquie: Legion d'Orient III (Juin-Octobre 1917)*, p. 168

0,4% of the entire Chilean population¹⁸. In short, it is highly probable that the Syrian volunteers from Chile who wanted to join the Legion were among these immigrants.

In a telegraph sent to the French Foreign Ministry by the Governor of Bordeaux on 17 September, an important Armenian person was mentioned to have arrived in the city. This person happens to be Priest Vagharchak, who played an important role in organizing the Zeytun riots and who was, in the Governor's words, "the religious leader of the courageous mountaineers who had been in a constant war against the Turks for centuries"¹⁹. The Governor suggested that Vagharchak be appointed as the priest of the Armenian squads of the Eastern Legion. To assign such a person with religious affiliations, who is overly-experienced about Armenian nationalism and who had played important roles in the uprisings organized against the Ottoman Empire, would be of a clever use on the matter of making the education and national consciousness-wise ignorant Armenians of Djebel Musa and the Armenian volunteers from the Americas to internalize the Armenian nationalism.

By the end of September, France was in a severe financial crisis which caused it to be unable to pay the expenses of the volunteer dispatches in time. This, in turn, alerted the Armenian and Syrian Central Committees. On 9 October, the President of the Central Armenian Committee in Paris, Bogos Nubar Pasha wrote letter to Jean Gout, the Minister plenipotentiary in the Foreign Ministry's Department of Asia. In his letter Nubar Pasha stated that the transfer of the Armenians from the Americas to France cost remarkably, but the applications submitted to the Foreign Ministry and Ministry of War had not been answered yet. Pointing to the impossibility of further new dispatches, Nubar Pasha asked Gout to resolve the problem with the Foreign and War Ministries²⁰. Halts caused by financial shortages were once again brought up by the French Consul to New York. In his letter to the Foreign Ministry, the Consul stated that there were 150 Armenian volunteers in New York, yet they could not be transferred because of the shortages in the budget. Moreover, there were 100-150 new Armenian volunteers

18 Salma Elhamalawy, 'The Muslim Community in Chile: Origins and Dreams', see: <http://www.missionislam.com/knowledge/muslimschile.htm>

19 Letter sent to the French Foreign Minister Alexandre Ribot by the Governor of Bordeaux, 17 September 1917, Archives of the French Foreign Ministry, File No: 892, *Turquie: Legion d'Orient III (Juin-Octobre 1917)*, p. 175

20 Letter sent to French Foreign Ministry's Minister plenipotentiary Jean Gout, by the President of the Central Armenian Committee Bogos Nubar Pasha Fransa, 9 October 1917, Archives of the French Foreign Ministry, File No: 892, *Turquie: Legion d'Orient III (Juin-Octobre 1917)*, p. 192

showing up in New York every week and that the difficulties in sending them to France would result in a decrease in the number of volunteers²¹.

On 10 October, Jean Gout received another letter, this time from the Central Syrian Committee, in which a committee official marked his pride because of an advertisement having been published on 14 July 1917 in an Arabic magazine distributed in New York, called *al-Hoda*: “Syrian and Lebanese volunteers serving in the American army! The American administration does not object you to join the French Army voluntarily”²². The official also added that upon the publication of this advertisement, the Committee received countless letters coming from Syrian volunteers who wanted to shift to the French army. Although this was great news back then, it would be concluded that the American army had not been so keen on this matter. As a matter of fact, the Committee had requested all the Syrians serving in the American army be placed under the command of France. However, General MacKein who dealt with this request in the USA Ministry of War decided that recruitment had to be carried out under the principle of voluntarism. He stressed that those Syrians who wished to shift to the French army were to inform this to their squad’s commander and that if that request was denied; they had to resume their posts in the American army²³. Shortly, the American army had already sent over a million of its soldiers to Europe so as to fight in France, which meant that placing all Syrians serving in the American army under the command of France to be sent to the Middle East would be too much.

In the meantime, the problem of the dispatch of sick volunteers still continued. On 15 October 1917, French Foreign Minister Ribot wrote a letter to the Minister of Interior, Theodore Steeg²⁴, in which he stated that in the last volunteer transfer from the Americas, 17 Syrian and Armenians were detected as unfit to serve in the military and that a part of them had got sick along the journey²⁵. To this letter, a

21 Letter addressed to French Foreign Minister Alexander Ribot, by the French Consulate to New York, 11 October 1917, Archives of the French Foreign Ministry, File No: 892, *Turquie: Legion d'Orient III (Juin-Octobre 1917)*, p. 196

22 Letter sent to French Foreign Ministry’s Minister plenipotentiary Jean Gout, by the President of the Central Syrian Committee, Şükrü Ganem, 10 October 1917, Archives of the French Foreign Ministry, File No: 892, *Turquie: Legion d'Orient III (Juin-Octobre 1917)*, p. 193

23 Letter sent to French Foreign Ministry’s Minister plenipotentiary Jean Gout, by the President of the Central Syrian Committee, Şükrü Ganem, 10 October 1917...., p.194

24 Theodore Steeg (1868-1950): Steeg, who served in many ministerial posts, first took the office as a Minister in 1917 when he was appointed as the Minister of Interior. Then he held the position of Minister of Justice between 1925-1929. He became the Prime Minister in 1930, a post which he occupied until 1931.

25 Letter sent to the French Minister of Interior, Theodore Steeg, by the French Foreign Minister Alexander Ribot,

report showing a list of these 17 people and their current situations was attached²⁶. Accordingly, a part of these volunteers was taken to hospitals of Le Havre, while another part was sent to Marseilles and Paris. All these arrangements constituted an extra burden for France which was already troubled financial-wise.

Subsequent to this, another letter was sent to French Foreign Minister Ribot by the War Minister Painlevé in which the latter stressed that the transfer of the volunteers from Americas who proved unfit for the military was a costly burden and that in order to prevent this, the Consulate officials should subject the volunteers to a full scale health inspection before they were sent to France. Moreover, Painlevé wanted to decrease the financial burden by charging the Syrian and Armenian Committees with the cost of the dispatch of the volunteers. In other words, the expenses for the transfer of those who proved unfit for the military service would be met not by the French government, but by the Syrian and Armenian Committees²⁷. The decision was then formalized by a decree of the War Ministry.

While inter-ministerial efforts tried to overcome this crisis, the Armenian and Syrian Committees fiercely criticized the decision to stop the transfer of new volunteers because of economic reasons. For example, the President of the Central Armenian Committee Bugos Nubar Pasha sent a letter to the French Foreign Ministry on 19 October. In it, he criticized the slow pace at which volunteers were being transferred to either Egypt or Cyprus. Pointing to the inertia in dispatching Armenian volunteers, he added that the number of the Armenians coming to Marseilles from USA was higher than that of those who were sent to Port Said from Marseilles. He suggested that Armenians who were not transferred to Port Said had got sick because of the poor standards of living they had to face. In other words, Bogos Nubar Pasha wanted to show the Ministries who wished to charge the Committees with the responsibility of sending the volunteers that the blame was originally theirs²⁸.

15 October 1917, Archives of the French Foreign Ministry, File No: 892, *Turquie: Legion d'Orient III (Juin-Octobre 1917)*, p. 207

26 Letter sent to the French Minister of Interior, Theodore Steeg, by the French Foreign Minister Alexander Ribot, 15 October 1917..., p. 208

27 Letter addressed to the French Foreign Minister Alexander Ribot by the French War Minister Paul Painlevé, 16 October 1917, Archives of the French Foreign Ministry, File No: 892, *Turquie: Legion d'Orient III (Juin-Octobre 1917)*, p. 209

28 Letter addressed to French Foreign Ministry's Minister plenipotentiary Jean Gout by the President of the Central Armenian Committee, Bugos Nubar Pasha,, 19 October 1917, Archives of the French Foreign Ministry, File No: 892, *Turquie: Legion d'Orient III (Juin-Octobre 1917)*, p. 220

In a letter sent to Painlevé by Ribot on 20 October, the latter stated that two Ottoman Armenians by the names of Monsieur Kertignian and Monsieur Dirats were suggested by the President of the Armenian National Delegation, Mr. Sevadjian, to be appointed as officials to take care of the Armenian volunteers arriving in Bordeaux²⁹. This suggestion was formalized by the War Ministry on 27 October³⁰. In short, the staff who would deal with the Armenian volunteers recruited from the New World in order to fight against the Ottoman Empire were themselves Ottoman Armenians.

2. The Situation of the Eastern Legion

Having had a look upon the problems concerning the volunteer dispatches and their solution processes, now we can proceed with examining the letters and reports prepared on the Eastern Legion, reflecting on its formation and activities between July-October 1917. During this period, internal struggles within the Legion increased and some military plans related with the Legion became remarkable.

According to a letter sent to the French Foreign Minister Ribot by the War Minister Painlevé on 1 July 1917, the British were pressurizing French authorities to transfer all Armenians living at Port Said migrant camp to Cyprus. As it was mentioned before, the British did not want to pay for the expenses of 2000 Armenian women, elderly and children whose male relatives had been sent to the posts of the Eastern Legion in Cyprus. That is why they wished for the transfer of this camp to a French controlled zone from the British-controlled Egypt. However, once it was discerned that it was not possible to move the camp to French controlled areas such as Algeria and Tunisia, the British asked for the transfer of these Armenian families to Cyprus at least. France, on the other hand, strictly objected that. In his letter, Painlevé clearly stated that he was against such a decision and that he had instructed Colonel Romieu, the commander of the Port Said camp, to keep the camp under French control and not to be placed under the command of the British in Cyprus³¹.

29 Letter sent to the French War Minister Paul Painlevé by the French Foreign Minister Alexander Ribot, 20 October 1917, Archives of the French Foreign Ministry, File No: 892, *Turquie: Legion d'Orient III (Juin-Octobre 1917)*, p. 222

30 Letter sent by the French War Minister Paul Painlevé to the French Foreign Minister Alexander Ribot, 27 October 1917, Archives of the French Foreign Ministry, File No: 892, *Turquie: Legion d'Orient III (Juin-Octobre 1917)*, p. 242

31 Letter sent by the French War Minister Paul Painlevé to the French Foreign Minister Alexander Ribot, 1 July 1917, Archives of the French Foreign Ministry, File No: 892, *Turquie: Legion d'Orient III (Juin-Octobre 1917)*,

This matter became the subject of a note prepared for the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in mid-July³². Its main submitter being ambivalent, he was probably an official of the Eastern Legion. The note stated that in January 1916, for the transfer of the Djebel Musa Armenians to Egypt and for them to settle there, a budget of 500.000 francs was requested. 16.000 had been spent to establish the camp facility in which Armenians would live and 30.000 had been spared to finance the provision of living standards.

The note also suggested that these Armenians were rescued by the French and that since they had been living in areas which were promised to France in the aftermath of the World War I, France had a saying on matters related to them. In other words, the Cilicia region would be placed under the French control after the War, thus the authority belonged to the French to deal with the Djebel Musa Armenians who were locals of this region.

The note also brought up the complaints of the British about the Port Said camp. The most prominent of the critics was the British High Commissioner in Egypt, Sir Reginald Wingate. In his meetings with General Romieu or the French Minister plenipotentiary to Cairo Albert DeFrance, Wingate underlined the troubles the British had to suffer because of the Djebel Musa Armenians and that the expenses that had been paid so far earned no significant gains for the British. To put it another way, the British pointed out the fact that to use the Armenians against the Ottoman Empire would not be of their own making, but of the French and that is why they wanted to stay out of this matter. The French authorities, who had been very annoyed with the British demands, stated in the note that: "If we will use these Armenians whatsoever, a decision has to be made as soon as possible: such as to compensate for the expenses of the British and thus prevent the latter to have a saying on these people"³³. In other words, those who prepared this note demanded that the amazingly large budget of 500.000 francs be spent to compensate for the British expenses and end in doing so, end their complaints.

In a report sent to the French Foreign Minister Ribot by the French Minister plenipotentiary to Cairo Albert DeFrance on 26 July 1917, the latter summed up

p. 42.

32 Note sent to the French Foreign Minister Alexander Ribot, 19 July 1917, Archives of the French Foreign Ministry, File No: 892, *Turquie: Legion d'Orient III (Juin-Octobre 1917)*, p. 69.

33 Note prepared for the French Foreign Minister Alexander Ribot, 19 July 1917, Archives of the French Foreign Ministry, File No: 892, *Turquie: Legion d'Orient III (Juin-Octobre 1917)*, p. 69

the situation of the Eastern Legion in Cyprus. Accordingly, the Legion consisted of 6 Armenian squads of 200 men and one Syrian squad of 160 men, which in total amounted to seven squads. Four of the Armenian squads were organized so as to form one battalion. Defrance stated that with the participation of the Syrians arriving from Latin America, there would be eight squads in total, which meant that the remaining four could form another battalion. That amounted to two battalions possessing a force of 1600 soldiers³⁴. These squads were split between two camps in Cyprus. The first one was the Armenian camp in Castellorizo, while the second was the Syrian camp in Rouad. According to Defrance, both camps were inspected by the Army Inspector General Bailloud³⁵. Upon the inspection, Bailloud asked the command of these squads be granted to the French officers but he added that out of the Armenians, two officers could be assigned per one squad³⁶. This stands for another proof of the French confidence invested in the military quality of the Armenians.

Having supplied information on the number of the Legion and the qualities of the camps, Defrance went on with a categorization of the soldiers on the basis of their military capabilities. The best soldiers were the Armenians who had served in the Ottoman army. Then followed the war captives freed from Mesopotamia or military fugitives, Djebel Musa Armenians, Armenians and Syrians coming from the Americas³⁷. What stands out is that Armenians were considered to be far better soldiers than the Syrians. The reason why they were favored in this hierarchy is that they had promoted their military capabilities and experience either while serving in the Ottoman army or when fighting against the latter.

However, in the same report Defrance mentioned his complaints about the Armenians as well. He stated: “Colonel Bailloud praised the Armenians who constituted a remarkable force; yet he also observed that they would not conquer their own lands, the region of Iskenderun (Alexandretta in the original text)

34 Letter addressed to the French Foreign Minister Alexandre Ribot by the French Minister plenipotentiary to Cairo Albert Defrance, 26 July 1917, Archives of the French Foreign Ministry, File No: 892, *Turquie: Legion d'Orient III (Juin-Octobre 1917)*, p. 96

35 General Maurice Camille Bailloud: French military man born in 1847. During his military career that took off in 1868, he served in many countries such as Algeria, Madagascar and China. Having served in the Armenian region between 1888-1891, Bailloud was the one of the commanders who led the French forces attacking to Çanakale during the First World War.

36 Letter addressed to the French Foreign Minister Alexandre Ribot by the French Minister plenipotentiary to Cairo Albert Defrance, 26 July 1917..., p. 96

37 Letter addressed to the French Foreign Minister Alexandre Ribot by the French Minister plenipotentiary to Cairo Albert Defrance, 26 July 1917..., p. 96

without any questioning: [The Armenians] were marching, not enthusiastically, but as if they were sent to an all-out mission or for example to an irrelevant cause such as the restoration of Palestine³⁸. When it comes to the Syrians, the Colonel thought their military capabilities were pretty ordinary; and that they were cynic, hard to manage and undisciplined. The only cause that motivated them was to recapture Syria from Turkish control. Moreover, Bailloud underlined that the Syrians coming from the Americas were fitter for the military than local Syrians and that their participation into the current squads would be a great asset³⁹.

Defrance also mentioned that Colonel Bailloud wanted to enlarge the Armenian Legion. According to Bailloud, the Legion should continue to serve as a threat against the Asian shores and that if the Turks could mobilize their army in the Cilician region, then the Legion should be moved to this area in order to start uprisings and riots⁴⁰. Colonel had two types of operations in his mind: a small squad being sent to the region and undermine the Turkish army through guerilla warfare; or an all-out operation. If the first idea prevails, then it would be better to mobilize Djebel Musa Armenians who were familiar with the landscape. They had to be armed and sent out in full equipment, with the local ammunition storages being ready for their usage. In other words, Djebel Musa Armenians would be used as a fifth column and would serve in a region with which they are familiar, so as to help France rise as the victorious.

Bailloud planned that if an all-out operation was designed, then it would be wiser to commence it over cities such as İskenderun, Trablus or Haifa. According to him, İskenderun was heavily fortified, while an attack over Haifa was objected by the new commander of the regional British forces, General Allenby. That left Trablus as the best take-off point. Since Turkish forces around Trablus were not expecting any military landing there, there was a high chance of success. Moreover, the troops in Cyprus could be deployed to Trablus over one single night and thus the tiny Turkish squad in Trablus could be eliminated in short notice⁴¹.

Defrance ended his report by defending that he always supported an operation

38 Letter addressed to the French Foreign Minister Alexandre Ribot by the French Minister plenipotentiary to Cairo Albert Defrance, 26 July 1917..., p. 97

39 Letter addressed to the French Foreign Minister Alexandre Ribot by the French Minister plenipotentiary to Cairo Albert Defrance, 26 July 1917..., p. 97

40 Letter addressed to the French Foreign Minister Alexandre Ribot by the French Minister plenipotentiary to Cairo Albert Defrance, 26 July 1917..., p. 97

41 Letter addressed to the French Foreign Minister Alexandre Ribot by the French Minister plenipotentiary to Cairo Albert Defrance, 26 July 1917..., p. 98

over Syria and that he preferred an operation that is well-projected, comprehensive and intending to conquer the entire region over a small and limited one⁴². In short, the report was one of the most comprehensive ones dealing with the matter of the Legion's formation and how to use it.

Subsequent to Defrance's, another detailed report was submitted to the Foreign Ministry by Commander Romieu through the War Minister Painlevé. Painlevé presented Ribot a long summary of the aforementioned long report. The most important part of it happens to be where Romieu talks about the internal struggles within the Eastern Legion. Romieu stated that in camps, there sometimes occurred serious disputes between the Syrians and Armenians, which at some cases exacerbated to the extent of actual fighting. That is why Painlevé suggested that the Syrians and Armenians in Cyprus should not be kept together and that the Syrians were unfit for the military service. The Minister also underlined what Romieu had suggested: while transferring the Syrians to Cyprus, a careful evaluation should be in order so that not all Syrians but those who can be beneficial were to be sent. According to Romieu, the reason of "the lack of the military spirit and undisciplined behaviors" on that part of the Syrians was rooted in their ignorance⁴³. Shortly, both Romieu and Painlevé highlighted the difference between the Armenians and the Syrians within the Legion.

In turn, the War Minister stated that for the volunteers coming from the Americas, a positive outcome obtained out of physical health inspection is not enough by itself and that these volunteers should be selected among those who are also spiritually ready to go to war⁴⁴. He also added that the Central Syrian Committee had to come up with more talented volunteers and that it further needed to determine the unfit candidates and rule them out. In other words, once again it was the Central Syrian Committee which was to be blamed for the inadequacy of the Syrians.

Moreover, the Minister noted down that the Syrian squad was established in November 1916 and that by 1 October 1917, there were 264 Syrian volunteers

42 Letter addressed to the French Foreign Minister Alexandre Ribot by the French Minister plenipotentiary to Cairo Albert Defrance, 26 July 1917..., p. 99

43 Letter sent to the French Foreign Minister Alexander Ribot by the French War Minister Paul Painlevé, 20 October 1917, Archives of the French Foreign Ministry, File No: 892, *Turquie: Legion d'Orient III (Juin-Octobre 1917)*, p. 227

44 Letter sent to the French Foreign Minister Alexander Ribot by the French War Minister Paul Painlevé, 20 October 1917..., p. 227

in Cyprus, while he reported the number of the Armenian volunteers as approximately 2000. The latter was also highly praised and appreciated. A report dated to mid-July indicated that the size of the Legion was 1360 soldiers, while in early October this number increased to 2263. Therefore, in two and a half months between July and October, 900 more men joined the Legion.

Painlevé employed words of praise when he mentioned Armenian volunteers. He stated that they had a genuine military discipline and that they were ready and good-willed enough to go for any operation immediately. The Minister ended his letter as follows: “It is not possible to stress better the importance of the utterly careful selection of the potential Syrian volunteers who are untalented and undisciplined, thus able to affect the Armenian troops negatively”⁴⁵.

In another report signed by an official Maugres, sent to the Foreign Ministry on the same day, Commander Romieu was reported to have been so annoyed by the incapacity and undisciplined behaviors of the Syrian volunteers that he was almost ready to dismember these squads. However, the author of the report fiercely objected this and believed that there was no other act that could damage France’s interests in the Middle East more than what Romieu had in mind⁴⁶. Such a decision would on the one hand cause a heavy blow to Syrians’ loyalty to France; and on the other, it would seriously undermine the efforts of the Committees and delegations which had been acting as a bridge between France and Syrians living in the USA, Egypt and Latin America. The author also advocated that Syrian volunteers were not only politically, but also militarily significant in the sense that they could be used in a military campaign that would be launched against Syria⁴⁷.

Shortly, it can be argued that on the matter of the Syrian volunteers, there was no consensus between the French political and military authorities. The military wing, among which Colonel Romieu and War Minister Painlevé were prominent, was complaining about the Syrians and stressed that this group would do no good but only harm to the Legion. Their critics went so far to even wish for the dismemberment of the Syrian volunteer squads. The Foreign Ministry, in turn,

45 Letter sent to the French Foreign Minister Alexander Ribot by the French War Minister Paul Painlevé, 20 October 1917..., p. 228

46 Note pour le Capitaine de Saint Quentin, 20 October 1917, Archives of the French Foreign Ministry, File No: 892, *Turquie: Legion d’Orient III (Juin-Octobre 1917)*, p. 229

47 Note pour le Capitaine de Saint Quentin, 20 October 1917, Archives of the French Foreign Ministry, File No: 892, *Turquie: Legion d’Orient III (Juin-Octobre 1917)*, p. 230

openly disagreed with the military wing and claimed that the Syrians did not only bear military importance, but they also possessed political significance.

In the meantime the Syrians could not avoid frictions among themselves. The internal struggles to which French officials from Latin America had already pointed, had spread to the group's administrative layers. The disputes among the Syrians sometimes reached a level so intense and high that when the President of the Central Syrian Committee, Şükrü Ganem, received a telegramme sent to him by Dr. Lakah in which the latter used incomprehensible words of silence, he went mad and wanted Jean Gout to calm Lakah down and ensure that he preserved his patience: "Make him wait less feverishly and tell him that he is neither forgotten, nor neglected"⁴⁸.

On 23 October 1917, the French Foreign Minister Alexander Ribot was succeeded by Louis Barthou⁴⁹. On 27 October, the French Minister plenipotentiary to Cairo Albert Defrance sent a letter to the new Foreign Minister Barthou in order to inform him that Commander Romieu had sent Defrance a report on the current state of the Eastern Legion. In this report, Romieu continued to complain about the incompetence and undisciplined attitudes of the Syrian soldiers. He added that they should not be employed in any military operation and that their contact with the Armenian Legion carried certain risks⁵⁰. Counting on his sincerity with Defrance, Romieu further offered to dismiss the Syrian Legion. In turn, Defrance advised Romieu to be more calm and patient on the matter and stressed the point that he should ensure that the legion was preserved since its presence had political connotations rather than military ones⁵¹.

In a letter sent to Barthou by Painlevé on 31 October, the latter argued about the report of General Bailloud who was supposed to inspect the Eastern Legion⁵². The

48 Letter addressed to the French Foreign Ministry Minister plenipotentiary Jean Gout by the President of the Syrian Central Committee Şükrü Ganem, 27 October 1917, Archives of the French Foreign Ministry, File No: 892, *Turquie: Legion d'Orient III (Juin-Octobre 1917)*, p. 243

49 Jean Louis Barthou (1862-1934): Originally being a jurist, Barthou was one of those who served the most in ministerial posts in the French history. In 1894, he was first appointed to the Ministry of Public Affairs, then he occupied posts in Ministries of Interior, Postal and Telegramme Services, Justice, Public Works, War and Foreign Affairs. In 1913, he held the position of the Prime Minister for nine months.

50 Letter sent to the French Foreign Minister Louis Barthou by the French Minister plenipotentiary to Cairo Albert Defrance, 27 October 1917, Archives of the French Foreign Ministry, File No: 892, *Turquie: Legion d'Orient III (Juin-Octobre 1917)*, p. 245

51 Letter sent to the French Foreign Minister Louis Barthou by the French Minister plenipotentiary to Cairo Albert Defrance, 27 October 1917..., p. 245

52 Letter, involving the report of General Bailloud, sent to French Foreign Minister Louis Barthou by the French War Minister Paul Painlevé, 31 October 1917, Archives of the French Foreign Ministry, File No: 892, *Turquie:*

first part of the report dealt with the state of Armenians who had come from the Americas. Like Romieu's previous reports, this one also addressed the Armenians as brave and conscious people, while Bailloud departed from Romieu by making his belief that Armenians could never be made soldiers and that they could never benefit from a military training as genuine soldiers. Bailloud underlined the undisciplined behaviors of the Armenians such that they were annoyed with the training or for example, they would object to walk without any legitimate reasons if they had taken a walk the previous day. He also stated that it was becoming harder to manage them. This report bears special significance since there had not been any other ones, which had so directly put forward negative arguments about the Armenians.

The report also argued that the Armenians who had arrived from the Americas did not possess the necessary awareness and enthusiasm since they had not been subjected to "the Ottoman oppressive administration". According to Bailloud, they had to be regarded as American rather than Armenian⁵³. He further noted that from the very beginning, USA had encouraged American Armenians to join the Eastern Legion and for example Rockefeller had granted 25.000\$ for this cause⁵⁴. Being one of the most important businessmen of USA, Rockefeller's contribution to the Eastern Legion is doubtlessly remarkable.

Bailloud pointed to a serious detachment between the American Armenians and the Syrians: "Neither do the Armenians comprehend why they have to fight for the liberation of Syria, nor do the Syrians make sense of the idea of them fighting for the liberation of Armenia". For him, the best solution was to separate two Legions strictly from each other⁵⁵.

Bailloud also gave some information about the Syrian soldiers. Accordingly, from Rouad, the Syrian camp was transferred to Akanbou which was 30kms to Monarga. It was under the management of Commander Beuscher. Beuscher was described as a talented soldier who had had a good grasp of the Syrian mentality. The major problem of the Syrian camp was the hate raised by the Muslim Syrians who had agreed to fight against the Ottomans, against the Christian Syrians and

Legion d'Orient III (Juin-Octobre 1917), p. 250

53 Letter, involving the report of General Bailloud, sent to French Foreign Minister Louis Barthou by the French War Minister Paul Painlevé, 31 October 1917..., p. 250

54 Letter, involving the report of General Bailloud, sent to French Foreign Minister Louis Barthou by the French War Minister Paul Painlevé, 31 October 1917..., p. 250

55 Letter, involving the report of General Bailloud, sent to French Foreign Minister Louis Barthou by the French War Minister Paul Painlevé, 31 October 1917..., p. 251

Armenians. Because they were deemed as unfit for the military, Bailloud asked that no more Muslim volunteers be recruited for the Legion.⁵⁶

In line with the previous reports on how to use the Legion, Bailloud suggested that it should be employed in an operation what would be launched against cities such as Iskenderun, Trablus and Haifa. However, he added that such an operation was becoming harder to realize everyday since the Turks not only had fortified the shores, but they also had enhanced their defenses by forming new squads. Bailloud drew attention to the point that even a mission as well planned and as successfully prepared as Gallipoli, could suffer failure⁵⁷. He stated that the Eastern Legion increased French military prestige on the part of the Easterners.

Conclusion

The main developments that occurred between July and November 1917 could be summarized as follows:

- Despite the activities of Armenian and Syrian delegates, the efforts at recruiting volunteers from Latin America did not yield the outcomes France had desired for. The most important reasons for that were the unclear legal status of the Legion, the discontent caused by the discrepancy between the pension and compensation rights of the Legionnaires and French soldiers at the expense of the former, and most significantly, clashes between Armenian and Syrian communities of Latin America.
- A fundamental problem emerged concerning the transfer of the Armenian and Syrian volunteers. A significant part of the volunteers arriving from the New World were too sick to serve in the military, which imposed an unbearable extra financial burden for France which was already troubled by the hardships generated by the War. France tried to work out these problems by means of foreign assistance, an example of which being the aid granted by the Rockefeller Foundation.
- The Armenian and Syrian Committees in Paris were not on good terms with the War Ministry since the volunteers turned out unfit to serve militarily. In turn, the Ministry asked the Committees to pay for the travel expenses of these volunteers.
- When it comes to the state of the Eastern Legion, on the one hand it was

56 Letter involving the report of General Bailloud, sent to French Foreign Minister Louis Barthou by the French War Minister Paul Painlevé, 31 October 1917..., p. 251

57 Letter, involving the report of General Bailloud, sent to French Foreign Minister Louis Barthou by the French War Minister Paul Painlevé, 31 October 1917..., p. 251

enlarging, yet on the other hand; it gave the impression of a troubled battalion. The reports submitted by Colonel Romieu and General Bailloud specifically underlined the clashes between Armenians and Syrians.

- These reports stated that Armenians were braver and more conscious soldiers than the Syrians. The incompetence of the Syrian forces annoyed their commanders so gravely that their dismissal had been brought to the agenda.
- In the meantime, the idea of sending the Legion over one of the important Ottoman ports in the East Mediterranean was once again considered and this led the authorities to quicken the preparations in order to make the Legion ready for such an operation soon..

INTERVIEW WITH PROF. DR. NURŞEN MAZICI ON HISTORICAL EVOLUTION AND CONTEMPORARY RAMIFICATIONS OF ARMENIAN QUESTION

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Short Biography / Prof. Dr. Nurşen Mazıcı

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The trend of nationalism is often claimed to have led to the deterioration of bilateral relations that had for so long existed peacefully between Turkish and Armenian communities. How would you comment on the role of great powers on the distortion of the relations between these communities?

Such an influence is possible since all trends of nationalism have accommodated it. Nationalism first started to impact on the Balkans because of Russian influence. People were manipulated with the Pan-Slavist aim of uniting all Slavs under

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one banner and in time this notion affected almost all ethnic groups under the Ottoman rule. For example, as far as France is concerned, nationalist aspirations were suppressed, the republic was declared after the French Revolution of 1789, and then came the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. However, this trend was also played down and Napoleon declared his imperial rule, which would subject France to a long-lasting monarchical tradition. When it comes to others, the Armenians were not exceptional since they also came up with the idea of “let us declare our independence”. Back then, the Great Powers helped not only the Armenians, but also Serbs and Greeks too, not because they liked them, but rather it was in their interests to do so.

This holds for the imperialist idea of “divide and rule” because the Great Powers’ assistance was rooted in their self-interests. Especially Russia, which desired to have access to the Mediterranean, greatly pressurized the Gregorian Armenians into converting to the Orthodox faith. It is possible to argue that it was the Armenian community which had to bear the greatest religious pressure. As you might know, Christianity is based on four versions of the Bible, which was set up in 68 A.D and is considered as the departure point for the Christian faith. Nevertheless, objecting that, the Armenians believe “it was Gregori, the representative of the Christian sect, who brought about the Bible, the fundamental book of Christianity, in 34 A.D.” That is why throughout history, Armenians were subjected to religious intolerance by the big powers of the time like the Persians (who worshipped fire), or the Byzantines (Orthodox). They were tortured to convert to other religions. However, when we look at Anatolian Seljuks and to the Ottoman Empire, we can say that Turks never appealed to such a pressure against any ethnic groups including the Armenians. Thus, Turks and Armenians co-existed peacefully for many years. As far as the Russians are concerned, it seems clear that they did not like the Armenians and that they practiced horrible atrocities against the Armenians living within their borders. In short, the Western powers did not promise Kurdistan or Armenia to the Kurds or the Armenians simply because they were sympathetic to them or they wanted them to gain their independence. They rather intended to quicken the process of Ottoman disintegration by encouraging these communities to rebellion. Becoming Great Powers at a later phase, Germany and Italy, on the other hand, were not included in that design. The German opinion during the deportation is as follows: the Germans considered Armenians as a setback for the Ottomans and that they had to be stopped since if the Ottomans disintegrated because of the Armenian question, a foreign intervention would be facilitated. However, Britain, France or Russia, they all played a major role in making Armenians rebel.

Sometimes, especially in the Western public opinion, it is possible to observe similarities being constructed between the events of 1915 and the Holocaust. How would you define these two problems?

As a matter of fact, no such problem exists for the Ottomans. In my books entitled *ABD'nin Güney Kafkasya Politikası Olarak Ermenistan Sorunu 1919-1921* (Armenian Question As Southern Caucasus Policy of the US, 1919-1921) and *Belgelerle Uluslararası Rekabette Ermeni Sorunu'nun Kökeni 1878 – 1918* (The Roots of Armenian Question in International Rivalry with Documents, 1878-1918), I explained the matter of what was necessary for an issue to become an international problem. For example, it is plausible to talk about an Eastern Question or a Jewish Question because Jews neither became public officials, nor worked in government/public sectors. For many years, they lived in ghettos, which imposed a definite curfew on them. The fact that Jews were outstanding in science and art was originated in their being banned from other sectors such as the civilian and the military bureaucracy. In the meantime, some of the surnames given to the Jews by the Germans were animal names just to bring humiliating connotations. By giving the Jews surnames such as deer or goat, the Germans aimed to prevent them from earning respectable social statuses in the society. Only rich Jews could get the surname they wanted. In the Ottoman Empire, there was no such treatment. On the contrary, freedom of action prevailed, for there were more than 20.000 top ranked Armenian bureaucrats. Sultan Abdulhamid the Second had 12 wives, yet his favorite was Dadyan Hatun. Again, Armenians headed the Treasury, the Foreign Ministry or the Ministry of Demographics. Considering the total Ottoman population back then, the number of 20.000 is highly significant. On the other hand, the European Jews could only outstand as scientists like Marx and Freud or artists like Mendelson. The Ottomans had no plans of denying social mobility to the Armenians. They all served as high rank bureaucrats or Pashas during the Seljukid and Ottoman periods. For example, Dadyan Pasha was Abdulhamid's henchman. Armenians were very close to the court where they were respected and appointed for the Foreign Service.

After the collapse of the Ottoman Empire, 24 nation-states emerged. When it comes to the question of why the 25th could not be the Armenian state, the answer is as follows: In the Balkans, people stayed at their homelands, Bulgarians in Bulgaria, Serbs in Serbia, Greeks in Greece. The same held for the Middle East, the Saudis stayed in Arabia, Egyptians in Egypt. The Armenians, on the other hand, had been either sent to major western cities such as Istanbul or Bursa by order of the Sultans of the time; or they had easily found living in western

provinces on their own thanks to their expertise in architecture, construction, jewelry and general craftsmanship. Therefore, they had been scattered around the Empire. In doing so, the missionaries had also been very influential. Besides the Gregorians, some Armenians converted to Protestantism or Catholicism, which resulted in weakening the ethnic bond among them and promoting identity of religious schism. Later, when the Tashnaks demanded to be granted independence in the Eastern Provinces (Erzurum, Van, Bitlis, Elazığ, Sivas, Diyarbakır), they were not numerous enough to found such a state even though the Ottomans consented it. According to Western and Ottoman documents and censuses, Armenians were reported to constitute less than 25% of the total population even in cities where they were densely populated (for example in Van). That points to the lack of one of the sociological element of a state, namely “population density on a territory”. Therefore, even if the Armenian state could be established, it would be very questionable whether it could survive. In short, I argue that the Armenian question is an artificial issue intentionally forged by the imperialist West. Regardless of its artificiality, this problem enabled the British Royal Prosecutor to put some members of the Union and Progress Party on trial for massacres organized by Turkish authorities against the Armenians. Having started with the occupation of Istanbul, these trials, within the framework of the War Tribunals (Divan-ı Harp), would target the exiled members of the Union and Progress Party in Malta. However, prosecutions could not be initiated due to lack of evidence. Therefore, this artificial problem emerged during the Ottoman period while it was solved before the Empire disintegrated. There was no Armenian question that prolonged into the Republican era.

Prior to the events of 1915, how was the Armenian Question framed in the international public opinion?

The Armenian question was internationalized in the Congress of Berlin. The issue was brought up in the Article 16 of the St. Stephanos Treaty that was concluded after the Russian-Ottoman war known as War of 93, as well as in Articles 61 and 62 during in the Congress of Berlin in 1877-1878. They requested that **“to conduct the reform process, as a member of civilized nation, a Turkish governor be appointed to the Eastern Provinces with an Armenian deputy in order for them to protect Armenians against the attacks of barbarian Kurds and Circassians”**.

How do you evaluate Armenia's current policies towards the Caucasus?

Most of the Armenians did not return to their homes after the relocation of 1915. Atatürk interpreted this decision not to return as follows: **“The Armenians were afraid to return to their homes because after the Armistice of Mudros, the French reinitiated the war and employed the Armenians in the Eastern Legion...”**

When we look at Armenian policy towards the Caucasus, it appears to be characterized by aggression. Moreover, this aggressive policy of Armenia is not only limited to Turkey, but it applies to Azerbaijan, Georgia and Iran as well. While Armenia claims over Western Armenia from Turkey, it also has territorial claims over Georgia and did invade Karabagh that had been Azerbaijani territory.

Given the constant rapid contraction in the Armenian population, is it possible to argue that this trend will become more drastic should the border gate be opened?

Yes, a rapid trend of emigration exists in Armenia. Given their affinity with craftsmanship and commerce, the Armenians can easily find jobs in the countries they immigrate to. For example when I went to Syria and Lebanon, I noticed that the Armenians living in both countries were well-off while they were also educated. In the Ottoman system too, they had constituted the bourgeoisie. Again, the best Ottoman musicians were raised among the Armenians: Güllü Agop, Hamparsum, Sarkis Ağa etc... Since they are good at arts, they can easily find a living wherever they go. That is why when they were deported, in the countries where they immigrated to, they found the opportunity to continue to live without any serious setbacks. In Washington D.C., I met an Armenian person in who is a mechanic which brought a good living in the States. Our Turkish students in Washington D.C sought his help when they faced financial or visa problems. In turn, he invited these students to his wedding party where they danced together and sang Turkish songs together. As a matter of fact, there are still some Armenians who immigrated to the US after the Republic was founded and who possessed Turkish citizenship. When I was myself a student in the States and looked up in the newspaper for a room to rent, I received a call from an Armenian by the name of Garo. He told me :**“it would be our shame if you rented a place when we live here. Please come and stay with us in our farm, I can lend you my second car so that you can go to the campus”**. When I was living in

Michigan, I developed a solid friendship with Garo and his wife from whom I got considerable help. I believe it is a big mistake to assume that every Armenian living in the US is automatically hostile towards Turkey. While talking to one of the most extremist person of the Armenian diaspora in the States, if you tell them that “you feel their pain”, you will see that he/she will start a conversation about Istanbul in fifteen minutes. Actually, some Turkish people remarkably led the way for these allegations to reach a considerable level in both the USA and other countries. For example, Orhan Pamuk, Fatma Müge Göçek, Elif Şafak, Halil Berktaş, Taner Akçam are known to have recognized the genocide. Having many scientific publications on the Armenian question, Richard Hovannisian argued how imperialist forces have manipulated Armenians with relevant documents. In my dissertation, I wrote about Armenian riots, which I learned about in a book by Louise Nalbandian.

Coming back to the Armenian policy towards the Caucasus, we can strike this conclusion: while there is an expansionist Armenia in the Caucasus, the country is constantly subjected to emigration. When we open the border, at least 500.000 Armenians will leave Armenia and the only ones who will stay in would be the children and the elderly. In a field research recently conducted in Armenia, when the participants were asked what their most basic problem was, the majority of them pointed to economic hardships whereas the issue of the so-called genocide scores one of the least popular. It would make sense to argue that if Armenia, who has for so long based its policy towards Caucasus on aggression directed to its neighbors, will suffer, as long as it maintains this attitude in the long run, if not in the short term. If a country is on bad terms with its neighbors, there is no possibility of development for it and American or Russian assistance could not save it on that matter.

The fact that Armenia has problems with almost all its neighbors and that it is excluded from many regional projects, undermines not only its economic policies, but also its foreign policy. In that respect, could we argue that Armenia is turning into an isolated state on the international scene?

When Armenia declared its independence, Turkey was one of the first countries which recognized it. During the administration of Süleyman Demirel back then, Turkey pleaded for Armenia to become a member of the Organization of Black Sea Economic Cooperation and it did. It was again Turkey which helped out Armenia by sending wheat when the country suffered from economic problems.

When Armenia declared its independence for the first time, Sultan Reşat officially recognized this country and assisted it with the famine by sending wheat as well. While in 1919 there were genocide allegations, both countries were on good terms in 1918 and that Armenia did not promote such claims. However, today's Armenia is excluded from many cooperation projects because of its hostile attitude. It remains outside of many projects, the most prominent ones being Baku-Tblisi-Ceyhan pipeline and railroad projects. For example, if Armenia was not hostile and aggressive, a highway could be built between Erzurum and Yerevan, which would internationalize Armenia. Nevertheless, these allegations cause Armenia an annual loss of 705 million dollars, which is enormous for a small country as Armenia. Turkey, on the other hand, does not suffer any losses since Turkish goods are traded to Armenia via either Iran or Georgia. Look at how Ter Petrosyan made a promise to increase Armenia's trade volume by 5 million dollars in his election campaign. It is funny that a mansion by the Bosphorus costs the same amount in Turkey, which gives us a clear picture of Armenia's economic situation.

The problem was legally solved with the Lausanne Treaty. However, today Armenia often states that it does not recognize Lausanne and that it follows the Treaty of Sevres.

Actually, the previous government led by President Ter-Petrosyan came up with more realistic policies. However, he was replaced with Robert Kocharian since Ter-Petrosyan did not serve to certain interests. Kocharian is from Karabagh, which does not belong to Armenia originally. It is thus against the Armenian Constitution to elect a person like Kocharian who is not from Armenia as the President. Certain laws were passed so as to make Kocharian eligible to run for elections. Along with not recognizing Turkish border lines, the current administration also refers to Turkish territories as Western Armenia in its declaration of independence. As a matter of fact, this is a cause for war. You can not say that we do not recognize the Treaty of Lausanne or Gyumri (Alexandrapol) and that, for us, it is the Treaty of Sevres which is valid.

For a document to be entitled as a treaty, it first needs to be signed by the contracting parties, then it requires ratification in the parliaments of these parties. It only enters into force if it is then published in the Official Gazette with the signature of the President. However, Treaty of Sevres only met the first requirement, whereas the other two steps were not undertaken by any of the contracting parties, except for Greece. Therefore, it should be underlined that it is a draft rather than a treaty.

Other than that, prior to the Treaty of Kars, there was the Treaty of Gyumri signed on 2 December 1920 by the Turkish government in Ankara and former Minister of Finance of the Tashnak Party, Avram Gülhandanyan, former Prime Minister Alexandr Hadisyan and Deputy Minister for Home Affairs İstepan Gurganyan on behalf of the independent Armenian Republic. The terms of this Treaty were as follows:

Following the Second Article which set the Turkish-Armenian border as it is today with minor changes, the Third Article stated that “... **the Treaty provides that on the legal status of the territories left to Turkey on which it has indispensable historical, legal and ethnic relations with, Armenia reserves its right to hold a plebiscite in three years to ensure the return of the original population of these territories if it wishes so...**”

Article Four states that “**given its good will in no longer allowing the activities of the imperialist countries to appeal to manipulation in order to disrupt order and security, the Republic of Yerevan (Armenia) undertakes the obligation to hold a limited number of military forces which is to be used in establishing internal security...**”

Article Six reiterates that “**The Contracting Parties allow for the return of immigrants to their homelands, except for those who took armed action against their own state by joining the enemy armies or participating in mass massacres in the occupied territories during the Grand War...**”

Article Ten states that “**The government of Yerevan declares its good will in:**

- **regarding the Sevres Treaty which was refused by the Grand Turkish National Assembly, as null and void,**
- **calling back on the [Armenian] delegations in Europe and the USA which were used as means of manipulation by certain imperialist governments and political circles**
- **to rule out any misunderstandings between the two countries**

As a proof to its good will in respecting Turkey’s neighborly rights, the Republic of Armenia...undertakes the obligation to keep away greedy and aggressive persons with imperialist ambitions, who compromise peace and security between the two countries, from the government”.

The Turkish-Armenian border was defined with minor changes introduced to the Treaty of Gyumri by first Treaty of Moscow on 16 March 1921 and then by the Treaty of Kars on 13 October 1921. It was Commissioner for Foreign Affairs Iskinaz Mravyan and Commissioner for Home Affairs Bogos Makizyan who signed the Treaty of Kars on behalf of the Republic of Armenia. Indicating third party acceptance of the Turkish National Pact, the treaty was also called as “the Friendship Agreement between Turkey, Armenia, Georgia and Azerbaijan”. The Treaty of Gyumri was an agreement that officials of the Tashnak Party concluded on behalf of the Armenian state with the government in Ankara. In doing so, they confirmed that they did not recognize the Treaty of Sevres. The treaty somewhat admitted that during the First World War, Ottoman Armenians collaborated with imperialists against the Ottoman Empire and conducted massacres. The Treaty of Kars, in turn, could be argued to have no legal meaning until 1991 since the sovereign state back then was the USSR. However, its historical and political significance can not be watered down. Actually, once Armenia restored its independence and Turkey recognized it, the treaty re-entered into force. In that respect, for an authority to be recognized as a “state”, there are two legal elements that need to be present: “continuity” and “recognition”. The Armenian authorities should be aware of the fact that these two complement each other.

Turkish government in Ankara, which concluded the Treaty of Gyumri, made sure that Lausanne Treaty complied with international law’s three requirements for a document to be entitled as a treaty (signatures of the parties, ratification by the parliaments and publication in the Official Gazette with the signature of the President). The Lausanne Treaty is both the deed and the taboo of the Turkish Republic. Within such a legal framework, to have territorial demands from any “sovereign state”, be it Turkey, or Armenia, would amount to a *casus belli*.

If one of the signatories of this treaty argues that it does not recognize it, then some others might state that they do not recognize any treaties concluded after the Treaty of Karlowitz in 1699 so as to suggest restoring the Ottoman Empire’s 22 million km² wide territories. No state officials with common sense should ever come up with such absurd proposals.

In your book titled *ABD’nin Güney Kafkasya Politikası Olarak: Ermenistan Sorunu 1919-1921* (Armenian Question As Southern Caucasus Policy of the US, 1919-1921), you analyze the positions of the American NGOs towards the Armenian Question. Within the same framework, how would you relate the present support provided by American NGOs to Armenia with that of the past?

Besides the religious organizations of the last quarter of the 19th century, it is possible to identify some Armenian NGOs based on ethnic elements. The most prominent of them were United Friends of America established in 1894 in Boston, Armenophile Association which started to become influential in Washington in 1895, and National Armenian Relief Committee organized in 1895 in New York. Like ANCA which was founded back then, some of these organizations still exist today. Being a real-estate agent originally, Morgenthau is known to have served as an ambassador in 1914 when he employed an Ottoman Armenian by the name of Andonyan as his secretary. Morgenthau lacked objectivity and expertise which are fundamental to any diplomat. This is why, on the basis of the misleading subjective information against the Ottomans provided by Andonyan, he tried to influence the United States Secretary of State in favor of Armenian rebellions and thus attempted to inflict the American public opinion a feeling of protecting Christian Armenians against “barbarian” Muslims. When you add to this the correspondences of Protestant missionaries in the Ottoman Empire and the fact that in the absence of radio and television, the only means to acquire information for the Americans were through the Church, you might spotlight the fact that anti-Turkish public opinion in the USA was rooted in the 19th century. Unlike back in 19th century, today some of the Jewish NGOs support the Armenian lobby. For example, let us have a look at the Director of Anti-Defamation League, Mr. Foxman. It is not because ADL liked Armenians better than the Turks that the organization withdrew its support for Turkey. This action was actually intended to serve as a warning against any anti-Israeli policies that might be pursued by Turkey which was visited by Meshal at that time. In the USA press, there is a general tendency to support the Armenians. Editors of some newspapers such as the **New York Times** or the **Boston Globe** provide considerable support to the Armenians. This is to a large extent caused by the density of the Armenian population in these cities. For example, there is a district in California called “Little Armenia” or “Los Armenio”. The fact that some editors of certain newspapers are Armenian or that they edit the pages in which public comments are published, is a great advantage for the Armenian lobby.

Another reason why Armenian allegations resonate that much among the American community is the Armenian votes. There are so many Armenians, thus voters, living especially in California. For example, an Armenian person living in the USA can donate 5 million dollars to the Church, while he could have used that amount of money in enhancing economic problems of Armenia. What kind of a use could the Church provide for the Armenians? As a matter of fact, it is through these financial campaigns that they secure the financing of

the Armenian lobby. The fact that the law of political parties in the USA allows for such donations further empowers the Armenian lobby to make American congressmen do whatever they wish without any setbacks.

Recently, the American press seems to have adopted a u-turn approach towards Turkey on the Armenian question. How would you elaborate on that?

The emergence of such a change of position at a time when the odds for the American recognition of the so-called genocide are certain, points to the following: The USA does not believe in the Armenian question and if necessary, it goes far even to use the press against Turkey. Therefore, this is not a humanitarian matter for the American interest, but rather a political one. In 2003, when the Turkish Parliament refused to allow the US the right to occupy Iraq from Southeast Anatolia, one of the American officials stated that they would pass a resolution recognizing the genocide. If there is such a document, then it needs to be put forward under normal circumstances. Otherwise, it is a shame. I have been involved on this matter for 26 years, yet I am not in possession of such a document. If I did, then I would go public with it. As an academic, it is not my duty to support the Turkish state opinion, so I would publish this document. I have never worked on the basis of prejudices. If I possess such a document, then I have to go public with it since there are diplomats, soldiers or policemen to protect this country. After a while, it was understood that these news were without any substance because they simply do not have such a document. While I worked in the American National Archives for more than a year, I did not come across with such a document. All American records seemed to confirm Ottoman archives. It is a strategy to shape their policies on the Caucasus and the Middle East over Turkey by threatening the latter every now and then: “Support us in Afghanistan, otherwise we reveal the genocide document, give us the permission to use your territory, otherwise we reveal the genocide document, do not speak out about Northern Iraq or we shall reveal the genocide document”. If Turkey stood firm and asked to reveal the genocide document, it will be understood that there is no such record. However, there is no such political will in Turkey either.

What do you think about the common problem of separating the society from politicians in Turkey, like distinguishing between the Armenians living in Armenia and the Armenian Diaspora?

Now, I prefer to use the term “Armenian lobby” instead of the “Armenian diaspora”

because even though every Armenian living in the States counts as a member of the diaspora, not all of them live up to the genocide allegations. Without the pressure exerted by the Armenian lobby, Turkey and Armenia could work out their problems more easily since lobbies in the USA are always very strict. For example, without the pressure of the Jewish lobby, Israel could have solved its problems with Palestine by now. It is the strict position of the American Jews that leads to the current deadlock. Or, the Greek lobby suggests that a harder position should be taken against Turkey instead of a rapprochement, more than Greek governments. I guess this is a problem related the immigrant psychology. This stubbornness of the Armenian Lobby, in turn, harms the Armenian population the most. We do not have a problem with the Armenian state. We are not hostile towards the people. The problem we have is with the Armenian government, the Armenian lobby to a great extent and the radical nationalist Kocharian government of the Tashnak Party. During the term of Ter-Petrosyan, Turkish-Armenian relations were on very good terms. Turkey has no hostile approach not only towards the Armenians, but towards any other nations. For example, even though there are 50.000 illegal Armenian immigrants in Turkey, the latter does not deport them in spite of the genocide allegations. Turkey also accommodated 500.000 Kurds who fled from the Khalabdjé massacre in camps at a time when fighting against the PKK climaxed and that the financial situation of the country was not very solid.

How do you evaluate the Armenian Presidential elections that are going to be held in February 2008?

As you know, former President Levon Ter-Petrosyan also runs for the Presidential elections. Although the chances for him to be elected are low, as Turkey, we should support Ter-Petrosyan's campaign, which could be either financial or through media. For example, Turkey could allocate a budget of 100.000 dollars to underpin Ter-Petrosyan's campaign in the media. Or it can be declared that should Ter-Petrosyan win, Turkey will offer some price reductions on certain goods. Another option can be to advise 50.000 Armenians in Turkey and their families in Armenia to vote for Ter-Petrosyan.

Is it then possible to direct 50.000 illegal Armenian workers in Turkey to vote for in our interests?

The illegal Armenians in Turkey have families in Armenia, which makes a total of 350.000 Armenians. I believe it would make a difference if Armenians in Turkey

could write to their families and tell them if they vote for Ter-Petrosyan, then they can travel to Turkey more easily, the border may be opened, their stay in Turkey would be strengthened, whereas in the case of the triumph of a more radical candidate, tension between Turkey and Armenia will rise to the extent that they may be deported. It might be equally feasible to mobilize institutions of art or the businessmen. TRT-INT is being watched in Armenia, thus this channel may broadcast in Armenian so as to promote Ter-Petrosyan's campaign.

What will happen to our relations with Armenia if a pro-Kocharian candidate, most probably, Serge Sarkisyan, wins the elections?

If the next administration insists on pursuing Kocharian's irrational policies, it will still be Armenia who is going to lose. As long as the Armenian administration continued its occupation of Karabagh and that it kept on referring to Turkey's Eastern Anatolian region as Western Armenia, we shall neither open the border, nor improve bilateral relations. Even some stricter measures like closing the air space might be brought to the agenda.

On the matters of the Armenian question and PKK, both the EU and the USA have sometimes produced policies that pressurized Turkey. Given the current circumstances, is it possible to argue that there emerged a necessity to give in to compromises on either of these subjects?

The Tashnaks submitted a draft resolution on the matter of Armenian genocide in the European Parliament. According to this text, the EP frames the recognition of the genocide as a precondition for the Turkish accession. Out of 784 parliamentarians, only 2 MPs were in favor. Developments of the PKK issue were influential in this outcome. When the Turkish National Assembly gave authority to the army to launch incursions on PKK, Lagendijk warned the terrorist organization and advised DTP not to support PKK and thus operate as an ordinary political party. What can be discerned from all these is that if a country acts unitarily and firmly, it shall always have the upper hand. England being the most ardent supporter, all European press underpins Turkey against PKK and that it states Turkey has the right to defend itself. As it can be remembered, the Turkish public opinion was pervaded with huge indignation when PKK ambushed a Turkish military squad in Dağlica. Many rallies with a participation exceeding 10.000, were organized from Edirne to Hakkari. Both European and American politicians and press follows the Turkish public opinion carefully and respect the latter's reactions. Indeed, the Western press and politicians took a greater interest in the rallies of Republic rather than their Turkish colleagues.

That points to the fact that we are able to affect international actors and political decision-makers provided that we remain sensitive to this country's fundamental problems. The current positions of the EU and the USA seem to support Turkey for the moment. Yet again, it is too soon to jump into hasty conclusions.

In your book titled *Uluslararası Rekabette Ermeni Sorunu'nun Kökeni 1878 – 1918 (The Roots of Armenian Question in International Rivalry with Documents, 1878-1918)*, you indicate that the origin of the Armenian question can be traced back to 1878. Are there any similarities between the developments on the Armenian question of the past and those of today?

There is a big similarity because the time span that my book deals with overlaps with the collapse of the Ottoman Empire. Today the Western countries frame the Kurdish issue in the same way as they did in the late 19th century when the Armenians were used as a tool to disintegrate the Empire. It is interesting to see how these issues become more tangled as Turkish economy gets worse. What we experience is an attachment formed between these problems. In his book "Milliyetler ve Sınırlar", Stefonos Yerasimos successfully addresses this connection in the sense that he analyzes how the Armenians and Kurds cooperated and got organized in rebelling against the Ottomans in detail. He also brings up how the Kurds changed their sides to align with the Ottomans once Russia weakened. Relations between the Ottoman ambassador to Stockholm Kürt Şerif Pasha and Bogos Nubar can be easily observed. It is common knowledge that in the Paris Peace Conference and London Conference, both sides wanted to gain their independence and found Kurdistan and Armenia by uniting against the Ottomans. Both communities were first manipulated by Westerners, but then they were let down once they had accomplished their mission. It was again these Westerners who despised both Armenians and Kurds in the sense that they were labeled as having no capacity to found their own states.

Considering the developments of the Armenian Question during the Republican period, what kind of a connection can be established with the current state of affairs?

Legally and politically, the Armenian question did not come to a solution by itself with the Republic, thus the Lausanne Treaty. Nevertheless, with the foundation of the Republic, some Armenian nationalists organized rebellions with the help

of certain Western countries. For example let us have a look at the first and the second Ağrı rebellions which took place in 1926 and 1927. They were organized by the Kurdish-Armenian Community of Hoybun in Lebanon. This amounts to argue that the problem continued to exist under different forms. The emergence of PKK once ASALA was terminated, or the development of Hezbollah at a time when PKK was brought under control all take their root in similar factors.

How do you evaluate Turkey's policies towards the Armenian Question?

As it was the motto during the Atatürk period, Turkey still continues to employ the principle of **"Peace at Home, Peace at World"**. Thus, it is a country wishing for no problems with any of its neighbors, be in Armenia or Greece. It is important to remember that **"once the flood withdraws, sand remains"**. When the US or other actors leave the region, it will be us and our neighbors who will have remained. Eastern societies, including Turks, Arabs, Persians, Armenians, Jews and Kurds, were constantly antagonized among themselves by the imperialist forces. In the 21st century, we need to recognize this fact and stand against the expansion of the imperialists by uniting together.

It has been recently reported that PKK might leave Northern Iraq and settle in the Caucasus. Given the close bilateral relations, Georgia and Azerbaijan will not let that happen, which is not valid for Armenia. With respect to that, how would you comment on the possibility of PKK settling in Armenia, especially in Karabagh?

For the starters, we should question why there was some news about a potential PKK deployment in Karabagh, but not in Georgia or Azerbaijan. We all know that neither Georgia nor Azerbaijan would allow it. The authorities of both countries expressed their recognition of PKK as an international terrorist organization. However, Armenia did not come up with a statement of similar nature. There have been reports indicating that Armenians hold meetings with PKK where it was decided that Armenia would provide PKK a considerable amount of financial support (75%). According to this plan, the Turkish economy would be undermined by the fight against PKK and that in the end Turkey would be divided between Armenians and Kurds. However, these are speculations without substantive documentation. Moreover, unlike the practice towards Northern Iraq, we can not either send a correspondent to Armenia to make him "observe what happens

in Armenia, prepare a report and return”, we do not have diplomatic relations with that country. In Iraq, journalists may travel to this country and prove the existence of PKK bureaus with photos. Even though these are speculations for the Armenian case, it would be wise to act cautiously. It is highly probable that such a plan was negotiated, yet it is not possible to know at what stage it currently is. Fight against terrorism is intended to result in a civil war in Turkey, which would in turn lead to the establishment of a Kurdish and an Armenian state. Despite the Armenian statement that they did not support PKK”, some terrorists are known to have crossed to Ağrı or Kars via Armenia in the previous years.

Recently, it was announced that the military service in Armenia was extended. Could we argue that this change is related to developments on PKK?

All these developments point to some preparations in Armenia on the PKK issue. Many Western or Turkish sources state that Kurds and Armenians acted together throughout history. However, as an academic, I should also argue that it is still too soon to speak with precision.

How would the possibility of a PKK deployment in Karabagh affect the already troubled Turkish-Armenian relations?

In Kelbecer, Armenians not only killed Azerbaijanis, but also Caucasian Kurds. Therefore, it might be problematic for the Kurds living in Nagorno-Karabagh to accommodate PKK in this region. Armenians could not produce strong statesmen. Turks or Persians were and are wiser and more rational in their state policies. If Armenia allows PKK to settle in Karabagh, this would be highly against its interests since it would be stuck between two Muslim countries with same ethnic background. Turkey has always been a peace-loving country which refuses to go into war. However, if there is a party that constantly causes problems, then Turkey has a military capacity to remove it, including all its neighbors within 3 days. In arms purchases, Turkey diversified its clients to 20 different parties, and is no longer confined to the USA. Such an act is naturally undesirable and the resources that would be spent to armament could easily be spared for education, health care and infrastructure. Let us not forget that the war triumphant will not be the loser in peace.

How would it be possible for PKK to leave Northern Iraq, go to a Western country and then come back to Karabagh?

Why would PKK go to a Western country while they have the possibility to go

to Armenia via Van or Iran, to where they already do. They have close relations with the Party for Free Life in Kurdistan (PJAK). The only exit out of Northern Iraq is through Incirlik, as Barzani did when he went to Milan, Italy. He had to go through Incirlik in order to proceed to Italy. Actually Incirlik became a place for everybody. There used to be 19 American military bases in Turkey. When Çetin Altan was an MP of the Labour Party (*İşçi Partisi*) objected that on the grounds that “the Americans occupied a territory of 35 million m2, which is against out territorial integrity”. In 1969, Süleyman Demirel was the Prime Minister from the Justice Party (*Adalet Partisi*) when he changed the status of Incirlik to a facility rather than a military base while half of the American personnel was deported. We should be more careful when referring to Incirlik since it is a base that was established before the NATO, to which we joined in 1952. Incirlik, on the other hand, was founded in 1947 under the CHP administration that received an American grant of 100 million dollars under the Marshall Fund that granted 300 million dollars to Greece. Many military bases used to exist in Turkey when Incirlik was to be established: a radar station in Sinop or Hopa. When the communist threat ceased to exist with the collapse of the Soviet Union, Turkey declared that it would dismantle these bases since the Eastern bloc no longer existed. Stations in Sinop and Hopa were closed down. Incirlik too should have been closed. Even though this base had been established on the basis of bilateral relations, they were to be used should there be an attack on either Turkey or NATO. Therefore, the Turkish Foreign Ministry should have issued a note stating that the base could not be used in operations launched against Muslim countries. A man, who claims that he would not even give Turkey his cat, is able to use Incirlik to go to Europe. This is terrifying. How would you prevent members of PKK from going to Europe through Incirlik?

What ought to be done for the solution of the problem in the short term?

If a country refers to Turkish territories as Western Armenia in its declaration of independence, why would not it provide support for PKK? For example, there are no similar concerns as regards to Georgia, Ukraine and other neighbors of Turkey since they do not claim that the Black Sea region is their expanded living space. This is why we would ignore similar speculations if they targeted Ukraine. However, Armenians do have such claims and that recently, Kiro Manoyan from the Tashnak Party and the former Armenian ambassador to Canada Ara Papyan declared that Armenia should demand compensation from Turkey. We have already seen the President of the Armenian Scientific Research Center suggest that it was now time to lay down territorial claims.

BOOK REVIEW 1

Mustafa Serdar PALABIYIK

Research Assistant
Middle East Technical University
Department of International Relations

ERMENI SORUNU: TEMEL BILGI VE BELGELER (ARMENIAN QUESTION: BASIC KNOWLEDGE AND DOCUMENTATION)

Ömer Engin Lütem (ed.)

Ankara: ASAM Yayınları, 2007, 440 pages.

The term “Armenian question” has long been referred in the academic as well as political circles for years, while it has not defined properly and sufficiently enough to make the student of early 20th century acquainted with this issue more. This difficulty of defining “Armenian question” is a grave problem, which resulted in multiple definitions. Like the oriental story of blinds seeking to name an elephant by holding one part of it, Armenian question has generally been perceived through referring to one aspect of it. It has either been taken as a mere historical event, which indeed reduces the concept to some historical events started in late 19th century and ended in early 20th. Or, it has been perceived as a legal issue, which requires the review of international conventions and agreements for a proper definition. Armenian question has also been contextualized in a political framework, as not a historical but a contemporary phenomenon, which resulted in another reductionism, or presentism, meaning that its historical roots are generally underestimated.

A review of Turkish literature on Armenian question reveals that this question has generally been handled as the simple narration of historical events. However, today, Armenian question requires more than illumination of a historic incident

The book entitled *Ermeni Sorunu: Temel Bilgi ve Belgeler*, edited by Rtd. Ambassador Ömer Engin Lütem aims to overcome the problem of defining the Armenian question through approaching it as a multi-dimensional phenomenon. It rests on the assumption that a proper understanding of this phenomenon requires utmost interest in every aspect of it. Hence it develops a multi-disciplinary as well as inter-disciplinary approach to review Armenian question in a holistic sense. Various disciplines of social science such as political science, history, law, psychology,

sociology and international relations might contribute to better understanding of Armenian question. In sum, this book intends to give a holistic perception of Armenian question by utilizing all these aforementioned disciplines and hence constitutes a novelty in this regard.

The book was composed of five parts which are categorized in accordance with different aspects of the issue at hand. The first part of the book carries the title “Historical Dimension of the Armenian Question” and this historical review of Armenian question is provided by three articles written by Mustafa Serdar Palabıyık and entitled “An Introduction to the Armenian Question: From the Beginning to the Treaty of Lausanne”; by Rtd. Ambassador Gündüz Aktan with the title of “Lausanne Peace Treaty and Armenian Question” and by Rtd. Ambassador Ömer Engin Lütem with the title of “Armenian Question after Lausanne Peace Treaty”. Hence these three articles cover a vast period in history, ranging from ancient times to 21st century. What is more, under the heading of “Related Articles” two speeches delivered in recent years in Turkey on the evolution of Armenian question and the critique of historiography regarding this issue by reputable historian Prof. Justin McCarthy are included in the book. In order to be benefited while reading these articles, texts of relevant treaties as well as some maps are added at the end of the book as well.

In the second part of the book entitled “International Relations Dimension of the Armenian Question” there are two articles written by Rtd. Ambassador Ömer Engin Lütem. The first article entitled “Armenian Question Today” examines the resolutions adopted by European Parliament as well as some other national parliaments particularly in Europe as well as other parts of the world. Regarding this article, the texts of the aforementioned resolutions, as well as the list of states and city councils adopting resolutions recognizing the genocide allegations and the 24 April speeches of American Presidents are added. The second article carries the title of “Possible Developments Regarding Armenian Question” and examines the prospective developments regarding this question for Turkey, Armenia and other related states and international institutions.

The third part of the book entitled “Legal Dimension of the Armenian Question” is significant because since the concept of genocide is a legal concept, Armenian allegations have to be examined legally. Within this framework, the 1948 United Nations Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide, to which both Turkey and Armenia are parties, have to be examined. Although having a very significant importance regarding Armenian question,

genocide law has been dealt very rarely in Turkey. This edition provides a valuable contribution in covering this legal aspect by two articles. The first article written by Ret. Ambassador Gündüz Aktan entitled “Armenian Question According to International Law” and the second one is written by Assoc. Prof. Dr. Sadi Çaycı, entitled “International Law and Armenian Question”. This part also includes several legal documents including the aforementioned Genocide Convention.

The fourth part of the book is devoted to the “Psychological and Sociological Dimensions of the Armenian Question”. Armenian Diaspora is still the closest defender of the genocide allegations. It was the Armenian Diaspora that also inspired Armenian terror costing 70 casualties and injury of more than 500 people between the years 1973 and 1986. Since understanding of this extreme attitude could be possible through psychological analysis, there are two articles regarding this dimension: The article entitled “Turkish-Armenian Question: The Psychology of Victimization and the Effect of Large Group Identity” written by Specialist Clinical Psychologist Sevinç Görül Alkan and, “Psychological Dimension of the Armenian Question: The Unnoticed Side” by Assoc. Prof. Dr. Erol Göka. What is more, there is racism at the basis of the genocide crime and if there is no racial hatred then it is difficult to speak about intention, one of the preconditions of the crime of genocide. Racism is a phenomenon born and developed in Europe. Rtd. Ambassador Gündüz Aktan examines this phenomenon in his article entitled “Etiology of Racism in Europe”.

The fifth and last part of the book is composed of two articles on the “Problems of Turkey and Azerbaijan with Armenia.” In his article entitled “Turkish-Armenian Relations (1918-2007)” Mustafa Serdar Palabıyık examines the 90 year old relations between two countries by dividing this period into three, namely, Soviet Union era, Levon Ter-Petrosyan era and Kocharian era. Karabagh question between Armenia and Azerbaijan, which is important for Turkey due to Turkish support to Azerbaijan, is covered with an article written by myself. To this part, United Nations Security Council decisions on Karabagh Question, the resolutions adopted by European Council Parliamentary Assembly and the Islamic Conference Organizations as well as maps showing Armenian occupation of Azeri territories and Karabagh region are added.

As it can be seen, this edition was different from a bulk of literature written on Armenian question since it approaches the issue holistically by examining different aspects of it. The book is easy to read, although it is composed of academic articles, since it is intended to reach majority of the population to make them

more acquainted with the concept of Armenian question. The book includes 71 documents and 6 maps at the end, which provides the reader with all relevant information without boring the reader with details within the articles. Hence this edition was a significant contribution to the literature on Armenian question through its novel multi-disciplinary approach as well as its academic and objective stance.

BOOK REVIEW 2

Yıldız Deveci Bozkuş

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ÜÇ JÖNTÜRK'ÜN ÖLÜMÜ: TALAT, CEMAL, ENVER (DEATH OF THREE YOUNG TURKS: TALAT, CEMAL, ENVER)

Prof. Dr. Hikmet Özdemir

İstanbul: Remzi Kitabevi, 2007, 336 pages.

This book entitled *Üç Jöntürk'ün Ölümü: Talat, Cemal, Enver* (The Death of Three Young Turks: Talat, Cemal, Enver) written by Prof. Dr. Hikmet Özdemir, the Director of Armenian Studies Department of the Turkish Historical Society examines the assassinations of three prominent leaders of Committee of Union and Progress in the years between 1921 and 1922 through referring to domestic and foreign archival documents.

As known, there were many Armenian revolts in the Ottoman Empire starting from 1882 onwards. These revolts, which were generally inspired by Russians, aimed at weakening the Ottoman sovereignty and strengthening Armenian revolutionary organizations, thereby facilitating establishment of an independent Armenian state in Eastern Anatolia. The suppression of these rebellions by the Ottoman Empire produced the misleading perception of Turkey as an oppressor towards the Armenian community.

During World War I Armenian rebellions continued and Armenian bands served for Russian army in cutting logistical lines of Ottoman army as well as directly attacking Ottoman troops under Russian flag. As a result of atrocities committed against the Muslim population of Eastern Anatolia at those times resulted in mass migration of Muslims from the region to the interior parts of Anatolia.

Armenian terrorist activities took a different form in the aftermath of World War I with the end of Armenian dreams to acquire Eastern Anatolia to establish an independent state. They began to target the members of Ottoman government and prominent leaders of Committee of Union and Progress, whom were perceived

BOOK REVIEW

as the perpetrators of Armenian relocation. In a meeting in Yerevan in 1919, some Armenians sentenced several Ottoman bureaucrats of war-time Ottoman governments to death.

The book written by Prof. Dr. Özdemir reveals that not only Talat, Cemal and Enver Pashas, three major leaders of the Committee of Union and Progress, but also some other 200 people were listed in the death list, prepared by Tashnaks. Many of the people listed would be killed in coming years. The issue of assassinations perpetrated against Turkish officials in accordance to a prior list was also taking place in the letters of the exiled Young Turks.

The first assassination was that of Talat Pasha in Berlin in 1921 by an Armenian called Soghomon Tehlerian. In the book, Prof. Özdemir utilizes several new documents regarding the trial of Tehlerian in Berlin. He also cited the “Open Letter” of General Bronsart von Schellendorf, published in *Deutsche Allgemeine Zeitung* on July 24, 1921, who served as the Commander of Land forces in the Ottoman army during World War I. In this letter, von Schellendorf wrote that only those who heard about Armenian relocation had been listened as witnesses during the trials and the testimonies of German soldiers served in the Ottoman army during the war had been generally neglected. He also argued that Armenians initiated rebellions in Eastern provinces during the war, which would have grave consequences for Ottoman Empire and that many weapons, brochures, propaganda materials and arsenals belonging to Armenian rebels were found. He wrote on Talat Pasha as such: “Talat was not a vindictive murderer whose actions could not be guessed, but a far-sighted statesman. Talat... avoids any kind of hard measures. Propaganda was initiated and in everywhere abroad, this stupidity of perceiving that Christians were committed to atrocities was accepted.”

Another prominent member of Committee of Union and Progress, Cemal Pasha was also assassinated. In the book, there are three arguments regarding his assassination. The first one is that he was killed by Bolsheviks. Accordingly, Enver Pasha’s attempt against Russians in collaboration with Afghans resulted in decreasing confidence towards Cemal Pasha by the Russians and Soviet administration clandestinely ordered assassination of Cemal Pasha by Armenians in Tbilisi. The second argument is that Cemal Pasha was killed as a result of a British conspiracy. Accordingly, he was killed by the British with the concern that Cemal Pasha tried to mediate a Russian-Afghan agreement against British interests in the region. The final argument is that Armenian organizations in the US ordered Cemal Pasha’s assassination. The documents regarding the

correspondence between these Armenian organizations and assassins consolidated this argument as well.

Regarding Enver Pasha's assassination, similar to that of Cemal Pasha, Prof. Özdemir argued that there are two scenarios. The first one is that the assassination was organized by Russians for Enver Pasha's anti-Russian activities in Afghanistan. The second one, on the other hand, is that he was assassinated by Armenians as other members of the Committee of Union and Progress. In some Azeri sources, it was also stated that Enver Pasha was killed by an Armenian called Saruhanyan from Nagorno-Karabagh.

Besides the detailed analysis of these three prominent leaders, there are other information regarding Armenian attempt to assassinate İsmet Pasha during Lausanne Conference and the correspondence between Atatürk and these three Pashas.

In the book, the documents are presented to the reader without much comment which contributes to the objectivity of the arguments. The book is also significant for understanding the connection between the former version of Armenian terrorism in the first decades of the twentieth century and the later Armenian terror of 1970s, perpetrated by ASALA and other terrorist organizations.

RECENT PUBLICATIONS

Yıldız Deveci Bozkuş

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ASAM Institute for Armenian Research
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Ermeni Sorunu: Temel Bilgi ve Belgeler

Ed. Ömer Engin Lütem

In Turkish

440 Pages

Ankara, Avrasya Stratejik Araştırmalar Merkezi

Ermeni Araştırmaları Enstitüsü Yayınları, 2007

ISBN: 978 975 63 62

Armenian Question: Basic Knowledge and Documentation

Armenian Terror

Ömer Engin Lütem

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56 Pages

Ankara, Avrasya Stratejik Araştırmalar Merkezi

Ermeni Araştırmaları Enstitüsü Yayınları, 2007

Osmanlı Ermeni Belgelerinde Ermeni-Amerikan İlişkileri (1839-1895) I-II

Recep Karacakaya, Ümmihani Ünemlioğlu, Salih Kahriman,

Seher Dilber, Hüseyin Özdemir, Aziz Mahmut Uygun,

Numan Yekeler, Mustafa Çakıcı, Ahmet Semih Torun

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Yusuf Halaçoğlu

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I Learn Armenian

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Candan Badem-Rober Koptaş

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İstanbul, Aras Yayınları, 2007

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Hikmet Özdemir

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Türk-Ermeni İlişkileri: Ermeni Meselesi

Erhan Metin

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Çankırı, Çankırı Belediyesi Dr. Rıfki Kamil Urgan Çankırı Araştırmaları Merkezi

Eğitim ve Kültür Yayınları, 2007

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Arşiv Belgelerine Göre Trabzon'da Ermeni Faaliyetleri I-II

Süleyman Beyoğlu, Ali Mesut Birinci, Sezgin Demircioğlu, Dr. Recep Karacakaya

In Turkish, Ottoman Script

I.Cilt: 439, II.Cilt: 456 Pages

Trabzon, Trabzon Belediyesi Kültür Yayınları, 2007

ISBN: 978 975 77703 29

Armenian Activities in Trabzon According to Archival Documents I-II

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Vartkes Yeghian

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Fahri Parin-Gökhan Balcı

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Armenian Activities in and around Yalova

Bitlis (1915-1916) Tehcir-Göç-İşgal ve Kurtuluş

Mehmet Törehan Serdar

In Turkish, Ottoman Script

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Bitlis, Bitlis Valiliği Kültür Yayınları, 2007

ISBN: 978 975 585 82 03

Bitlis (1915-1916) Relocation-Immigration-Occupation and Liberation

Agos: Türkçe-Ermenice Bir Gazetenin Tarihi

Hülya Eraslan

In Turkish

229 Pages

Ankara, Gazi Üniversitesi İletişim Fakültesi'nin 40. yıl Yayınları, 2007

ISBN: 978 975 483 7490

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Ömer Karayumak

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Edition

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Serdar Sarısır

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Osmanlı Devleti'nin Son Dönemlerinde Sivas ve Suşehri Bölgelerinde

Ermeni Faaliyetleri

Gürsoy Şahin

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Armenian Question from The First World War to The Treaty of Lausanne

Haluk Selvi

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Karşılaşma

Markar Esayan

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İstanbul, Hayy Kitap, 2007

ISBN:975 90593 67

Encounter

Hrant'a... 'Ali Topu Agop'a At!'

Fahri Özdmir, Arat Dink

In Turkish

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İstanbul, Kırmızı Yayınları, 2007

ISBN: 978 975 9169718

To Hrant... "Ali, Throw the Ball to Agop"

Rum ve Ermeni Dönmeler

In Turkish

256 Pages

Süleyman Yeşilyurt

Ankara, Kültür ve Sanat Yayınları, 2007

ISBN No: 9758997157

Greek and Armenian Convertees

RECENT DOCUMENTS

THE LETTER SENT BY DIRECTOR OF ASAM
INSTITUTE FOR ARMENIAN RESEARCH, RTD.
AMBASSADOR ÖMER ENGİN LÜTEM TO THE
DIRECTOR OF ANTI-DEFAMATION LEAGUE
27 AUGUST 2007

Ankara, August 27, 2007

Dear Mr. Foxman,

On August 21, 2007, you issued a statement on behalf of the Anti-Defamation League (ADL) to the effect that the events of 1915 were tantamount to genocide. However, you have not clarified on what basis the ADL has altered its long-held position in this regard.

Without substantiating this claim by authentic documentary evidence, the statement in question cannot be viewed as grounded in historical truth. Thus, as it presently stands, it appears highly questionable that the ADL's reversed position is of any benefit to our shared goal of precluding defamation.

It should be recalled that several distinguished scholars of Ottoman history such as Bernard Lewis, Stanford Shaw, Pierre Oberling, Roderic Davison, J.C. Hurewitz, and Justin McCarthy, among many others, have rejected describing what occurred as amounting to genocide. As such, describing the events of 1915 as genocide is a matter which remains highly controversial whereby it differs greatly from the reality of the Holocaust.

Having said that, I would like to emphasize that making statements pronouncing that the events of 1915 amount to genocide, devoid of the substantiation of such allegations, only works to strengthen a legacy of prejudice as opposed to one upholding historical truth. It is for this very reason that I believe the statement issued on behalf of the Anti-Defamation League to the effect that the events of 1915 are tantamount to genocide should be revised.

No doubt, uncritically accepting the view that the events of 1915 constitute genocide will preclude a full and impartial discussion of the issue at hand.

In this light I agree that a Congressional resolution to that effect would be a “counterproductive diversion”. I also share in the belief that this would not foster reconciliation between Turks and Armenians, and would seriously impair the relationship between Turkey, Israel and the United States.

However, I contest that such a resolution may put the Turkish Jewish community at risk. Not only are the historic ties between the Turks and Jews profound, but the members of the Jewish community are esteemed citizens of the Turkish Republic. The Jewish community in Turkey continues to thrive, benefiting from all freedoms including the right to freedom of religion. Furthermore, the institutions of the Jewish community are protected by the law of the land.

Addressing the gap in perceptions over how to classify the events of 1915 and the promotion of understanding thereof, can only be fostered by engaging in honest debate and promoting unrestricted academic research. As is known Turkey, with this view in mind, officially proposed to Armenia in April 2005, to establish a Joint History Commission for the purpose of conducting historical research on what occurred prior to and following 1915 by utilizing Turkish, Armenian and third party archives.

Unfortunately, Armenia still has not responded favorably to this proposal. I firmly believe that the materialization of this proposed initiative would foster reconciliation between Turks and Armenians. As such, I welcome your statement of August the 23rd and view it as an important step forward in this regard.

Furthermore, I would like to inform you that upon the initiative of our Institute; 86 Turkish scholars, writers and retired diplomats answered favorably to the “Nobel Laureates call for tolerance, contact and cooperation between Turks and Armenians”. We are presently awaiting a response from the Elie Wiesel Foundation in order to materialize and further this initiative.

Sincerely,

Ömer Engin LÜTEM
Ret. Ambassador
Director of the Institute for Armenian Research

RECENT DOCUMENTS 2

THE LETTER OF EIGHT FORMER US SECRETARIES OF STATE THE SPEAKER OF US HOUSE REPRESENTATIVES, NANCY PELOSI, 25 SEPTEMBER 2007

September 25, 2007

The Honorable
Nancy Pelosi
Speaker of the House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515-0508

Dear Madam Speaker:

We are writing to express concern that H. Res. 106 could soon be put to a vote. Passage of the resolution would harm our foreign policy objectives to promote reconciliation between Turkey and Armenia. It would also strain our relations with Turkey, and would endanger our national security interests in the region, including the safety of our troops in Iraq and Afghanistan.

We do not minimize or deny the enormous significance of the horrible tragedy suffered by ethnic Armenians from 1915 to 1923. During our tenures as Secretaries of State, we each supported Presidential statements recognizing the mass killings and forced exile of Armenians. It has been longstanding U.S. policy to encourage reconciliation between Turkey and Armenia and to urge the government of Turkey to acknowledge the tragedy. We understand the Administration continues to urge the Turkish government to reexamine its history and to encourage both Turkey and Armenia to work towards reconciliation, including normalizing relations and opening the border. There are some hopeful signs already that both parties are engaging each other. We believe that a public statement by the U.S. Congress at this juncture is likely to undermine what has been painstakingly achieved to date.

We must also recognize the important contributions Turkey is making to U.S. national security, including security and stability in the Middle East and Europe. The United States continues to rely on Turkey for its geo-strategic importance. Turkey is an indispensable partner to our efforts in Iraq and Afghanistan, helping U.S. troops to combat terrorism and build security. By providing the U.S. military with access to Turkish airspace, military bases, and the border crossing with Iraq, Turkey is a linchpin in the transshipment of vital cargo and fuel resources to U.S. troops, coalition partners, and Iraqi civilians. Turkish troops serve shoulder-to-shoulder with distinction with U.S. and other NATO allies in the Balkans. Turkey is also a transit hub for non-OPEC oil and gas and remains key to our efforts to help the Euro-Atlantic community bolster its energy security by providing alternative supply sources and routes around Russia and Iran.

RECENT DOCUMENTS

-2-

It is our view that passage of this resolution could quickly extend beyond symbolic significance. The popularly elected Turkish Grand National Assembly might react strongly to a House resolution, as it did to a French National Assembly resolution a year ago. The result could endanger our national security interests in the region, including our troops in Iraq and Afghanistan, and damage efforts to promote reconciliation between Armenia and Turkey. We strongly urge you to prevent the resolution from reaching the House floor.

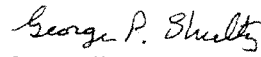
Sincerely,



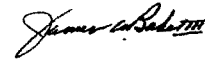
Alexander M. Haig, Jr.



Henry A. Kissinger



George P. Shultz



James A. Baker III



Lawrence S. Eagleburger



Warren Christopher



Madeleine K. Albright



Colin L. Powell

RECENT DOCUMENTS 3

STATEMENT OF TURKISH-JEWISH COMMUNITY 29 AUGUST 2007

As Turkish-Jewish Community in Turkey, we learned with sorrow that a prominent civil society organization of United States, Anti-Defamation League, has changed its discourse on 1915 events.

Abraham Foxman, the National Director of ADL, which is one of the most important Jewish organizations in the US has supported Turkish state for years, especially in its lobbying activities in the US. Yesterday, in a press conference, he declared that they reviewed their perceptions that they have been pursuing for years, which argue that 1915 events can not be considered as genocide.

We have the difficulty of understanding recent developments in US public opinion as well as this sudden change in perceptions, which resulted in divergent opinions among some Jewish organizations. Despite this changing discourse, other Jewish organizations in the US declared that they would not support House Resolution No 106 on Armenian allegations regarding 1915 events since it would not serve for desiring reconciliation between Turks and Armenians.

We want clearly to stipulate that the news starting as “the Jews” in some local web sites could be misleading for the public opinion and this opinion reflects only ideas of “relevant organizations” of American Jews.

We also declare that we support, as we have so far supported, Turkey’s theses on the issues of the necessity of academic discussion of the issue through opening up all the archives of interested parties and that it is not appropriate for parliaments to “determine historical facts through voting”.

Our state organizations appreciate the efforts that the members and leaders of Turkish-Jewish Community have shown for years for defending the interests and theses of Republic of Turkey and these efforts would continue.

Source: Şalom, 29 August 2007



Center For Eurasian Strategic Studies
Institute for Armenian Research