



REVIEW OF  
**ARMENIAN STUDIES**

A Quarterly Journal of History, Politics and International Relations

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**ARTICLES**

Facts and Comments

**Ömer Engin LÜTEM**

Establishment and Activities of the French Eastern Legion in the Light of French Archives (November 1917-April 1918)

**Mustafa Serdar PALABIYIK**

The French-Armenian Relations in Light of the Published Ottoman Archives (1879-1918)

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US-Turkish Relations and the Effects of American Missionary Activities on US Foreign Policy towards Turkey

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Armenians in the Ottoman Millet System and the Reasons for the Emergence of Armenian Nationalism

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**BOOK REVIEWS**

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no. **17**

ISSN 1303-5304



9 771303 530402

Number 17, '08

Price: 7.00 YTL, 7.00 \$

REVIEW OF ARMENIAN STUDIES

A Quarterly Journal of History, Politics and International Relations

No. 17, 2008

PUBLISHER

On Behalf of Avrasya-Bir Foundation, Şaban GÜLBAHAR

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**Review of Armenian Studies** is published two times a year (Summer and Winter)

**Review of Armenian Studies is a refereed journal.** Articles submitted for publication are subject to peer review. The editorial board takes into consideration whether the submitted article follows the rules of scientific writing. The articles are then sent to two referees known for their academic reputation in their respective areas. Upon their decision, the article will be published in the journal, or rejected. The reports of the referees are kept confidential and stored in the Journal's archives for five years.

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<http://www.eraren.org>

ISSN: 1303-5304

Design: **Graft Adv. / [graft.com.tr](http://graft.com.tr)**  
Çobanyıldızı Sok. 14 / 7 Kavaklıdere - Çankaya - Ankara - Turkey

Printing: **Saner Basım Sanayi**  
Ostim Organize San. Bölgesi Turan Çiğdem Cad. No: 15  
Yenimahalle - Ostim - Ankara- Turkey Tel: +90 312 385 91 03

Printing Date: 30.07.2008

**Annual Subscription:** 25 US \$  
25 YTL.

Please send your payment to the following bank account  
For YTL - 304400-2001540  
For US \$ TH-4001541  
Vakıflar Bankası  
Yıldız Branch Ankara Turkey

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Review of Armenian Studies is a publication of the Institute for Armenian Research.

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CONTENTS

This issue begins, as usual, with the article entitled “Facts and Comments”, in which issues regarding Turkish-Armenian bilateral relations, Armenian genocide allegations and their international ramifications as well as the other related developments in Turkey and Armenia that took place in the first half of 2008 are examined. Within this context, recent discussions for the opening of Turkish-Armenian border, renewed attempts for passing resolutions recognizing Armenian genocide allegations in Argentina, Israel and Bulgaria, Armenian presidential elections and its prospective implications on Turkish-Armenian relations are covered.

As the fourth one of a series of articles published in this journal, in his recent article entitled “Establishment and Activities of the French Eastern Legion in the Light of French Archival Documents (November 1917-April 1918)” Mustafa Serdar Palabıyık examines the disputes between Armenian and Syrian components of the Legion, disruption of volunteer recruitments from Latin America and the attempt of some prominent Armenians to participate in the Legion.

In his article entitled “The French-Armenian Relations in the Light of the Published Ottoman Archival Documents (1879-1918)”, Yıldız Devci Bozkuş elaborate upon the Armenian-French relations particularly on the basis of Ottoman Armenians’ migration to France, the activities of Armenians in this country, the French diplomats’ support to Armenians, and the relations between French missionaries and Armenians in the light of Ottoman archival documents published by the General Directorate of State Archives.

Pinar Özbek analyzes, in her article entitled “US-Turkish Relations and the Effects of American Missionary Activities on US Foreign Policy towards Turkey”, the US policy towards Turkey around three basic issues, namely missionary activities, the Armenian Question and the Near East Relief Society (NERS), which, for the most part were highly effective in shaping American foreign policy. Therefore, the focus of the study will be on the interaction of the politics and the religion in the US case.

Melek Sarı examines the Ottoman *millet* system and the Ottoman-Armenian relations within the context of Ottoman political structure as well as the nationalist tendencies prevalent in the nineteenth century in her article entitled “Armenians in the Ottoman *Millet* System and the Reasons for the Emergence of Armenian Nationalism”.

There are also two reviews of the books edited by Ahmed Akgündüz, Said Öztürk and Recep Kara, entitled *Sorularla Ermeni Sorunu (Armenian Problem in Questions)* and written by Assist. Prof. Dr. Gürsoy Şahin, entitled *Osmanlı Devleti'nde Katolik Ermeniler: Sivaslı Mihitar ve Mihitaristler (1676-1749) (Catholic Armenians in The Ottoman State: Mkhitar Of Sebastia And Mkhitarists (1676-1749))* as well as a list of recent publications.

With best wishes...

*The Editor*



# FACTS AND COMMENTS

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**Abstract:** *This article aims to analyze bilateral relations between Turkey and Armenia as well as the developments regarding the Armenian question in the first half of 2008. Within this context, the article is composed of four chapters. The first chapter analyzes the recent discussions regarding normalization of relations between Turkey and Armenia and the opening of the Turkish-Armenian border as well as recent developments in Kars-Akhalkalaki railway. In the second chapter, the attempts in various countries and cities for the recognition of the Armenian genocide allegations are covered. The third chapter mainly elaborates on the presidential elections in Armenia while the last chapter examines the establishment of the new Armenian government*

**Key Words:** *Turkish-Armenian relations, Armenian genocide allegations, Armenian presidential elections, Israel, Serzh Sarkisyan*

**Öz:** *Bu makalenin amacı 2008 yılının ilk yarısında Türkiye ve Ermenistan arasındaki ikili ilişkileri ve Ermeni sorunu konusunda yaşanan gelişmeleri analiz etmektir. Bu çerçevede makale dört bölümden oluşmaktadır. Birinci bölümde Türkiye ve Ermenistan arasındaki ilişkilerin normalleştirilmesi konusunda yapılan son tartışmalar ve Kars-Ahalkelek demiryolu konusunda yaşanan son gelişmeler incelenmektedir. İkinci bölümde ise adı geçen dönemde çeşitli ülkelerde ve şehirlerde Ermeni soykırımı iddialarının tanınması yolundaki çabalar analiz edilecektir. Üçüncü bölüm Mayıs ayında yapılan Ermenistan başkanlık seçimlerine odaklanırken, dördüncü ve son bölüm bu seçimlerin ardından kurulan hükümetin oluşum süreci üzerinde duracaktır.*

**Anahtar Kelimeler:** *Türkiye-Ermenistan ilişkileri, Ermeni soykırım iddiaları, Ermenistan başkanlık seçimleri, İsrail, Serzh Sarkisyan*



## I. BILATERAL RELATIONS BETWEEN TURKEY AND ARMENIA

### 1. Normalization of Relations with Armenia and Opening of the Turkish-Armenian Border

After the Turkish Parliamentary elections held in 2007, both the US and the EU circles heightened their expectations about the normalization of bilateral relations between Turkey and Armenia, especially with regard to opening the Turkish-Armenian border.

In this sense, the issue of opening the border has been addressed in some of the decisions of the European Parliament. For example the decision adopted on 24 October 2007 in the Progress Report of 2006, the European Parliament wished that Turkey would abandon its decision of closing the borders. The document also called upon Turkey to engage in serious and intensive efforts for the resolution of outstanding disputes with all its neighbours.

In another decision adopted on the matter of EU's Southern Caucasian policy on 17 January 2008, the European Parliament called on the Commission and the Council to address the opening of the Turkish-Armenian border in cooperation with the authorities of these two states. In turn, the request to Turkey to engage in serious and intensive efforts for the resolution of outstanding disputes with all its neighbours was reiterated.

In a draft decision on the issue of the 2007 Progress Report on Turkey, which was accepted with 62 against, 61 abstentions and 467 in favour votes,<sup>1</sup> the Parliament called upon Turkey to end the economic blockade and reopen its border with Armenia. It also encouraged once again the Turkish and Armenian governments to start a process of reconciliation for today and for the future, allowing for a frank and open discussion of past events with the Commission being called on to facilitate this reconciliation process.

However, because of certain setbacks against the Turkish accession into the EU, it is difficult to anticipate to what extent the EU will be successful in its initiatives aiming for the normalization of Turkish-Armenian relations.

The United States has for so long been known to advocate for the reopening of the Turkish-Armenian border and the normalization of bilateral relations. According to an Armenian source,<sup>2</sup> while the US employs official channels in Turkey, it also increasingly makes use of "the intelligentsia" in order to promote its

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1 Hürriyet, 21 May 2008.

2 PanArmenian.Net, 16 January 2008.

requests. Some of the columnists of Turkish newspapers did take a positive stance on the opening of the border. One of these articles<sup>3</sup> argues that the US generally supported the Turkish position and that the Americans remained determined to continue the joint efforts in the struggle against the PKK. The article also asserts that the US has tried to support Turkey on the Cyprus issue and Ankara's bid to the EU, and then poses the question of "whether all these favours would not be returned" in order to point to the idea that the US has also some requests from Turkey including the Armenian problem. If the Turkish-Armenian border is opened, this would comfort the US administration and enable it to deal with the House draft resolution (H.RES. 106) more efficiently.

As far as American officials are concerned, the issue is handled by the Deputy Secretary of State, Matthew Bryza. In an Armenian source,<sup>4</sup> Bryza was reported to have stated that at their meeting held in Washington, Turkish President Gül and President Bush had adopted a new approach with respect to the South Caucasus and Armenia. He emphasized that this, however, did not mean that Turkey had engaged in new commitments, that the border would be opened immediately or that new pipelines and routes would pass through Armenia. In turn, according to a Turkish source,<sup>5</sup> the US called on Turkey to normalize its relations with Armenia without involving Azerbaijan as a third party and without stipulating any preconditions. Furthermore, the article suggested that the slogan of 'one nation, two states' had to be given up. It argued that although Armenia was right to urge Turkey to abandon yielding to any preconditions, it had to recognize the borders of modern Turkey. It went on to underline that the establishment of diplomatic relations and the opening of the border were among the most important goals. It was also claimed that the opening could start partially and that joint economic projects and development of economic ties should be encouraged.

On the issue of the so-called genocide, Bryza referred to 1915 incidents as a grave tragedy which resulted in horrible human suffering. However, he also stated that it was necessary to refrain from taking political decisions based on parliamentary resolutions over how to describe those events.

3 Mehmet Ali Birand, "*ABD Karşısız Sırt Sıvazlamaz.*," *Milliyet*, 10 January 2008. Published almost around same time, see Yasemin Çongar, "*Normalleşme Geciktikçe Türkiye Kaybediyor.*," *Taraf*, 11 January 2008 and Anberin Zaman, "*Ermenistan'ın Esas Talebi Barış.*," *Taraf*, 4 January 2008.

4 Noyan Tapan, 15 January 2007.

5 Today's Zaman, 17 January 2008.

On the basis of Bryza's remarks, the American position could be summarized as follows: the US supports the normalization of bilateral relations between Turkey and Armenia. It also wishes to see the border opened even if the Nagorno-Karabagh problem has not been solved. It can be argued that priority is given to the establishment of diplomatic relations and a partial opening of the border, which might in time lead to a full-scale border opening. If this formula is accepted, Armenia will issue a declaration indicating its recognition of Turkey's territorial integrity.

For the Turkish side, the establishment of diplomatic relations has for so long been conditioned upon the recognition of Turkey's territorial integrity. However, it is certain that Turkey would not move to normalize its relations with a country such as Armenia, which constantly brings up the issue of the so-called genocide and strives for the recognition of these allegations in other countries as well as in international organizations. Indeed, in a speech he delivered in the Turkish National Assembly, Turkish President Gül indicated that it was Armenia's antagonistic attitude that prevented the restoration of diplomatic relations. This attitude includes both the genocide allegations and non-recognition of Turkish territorial integrity. The reason why Turkey keeps the border closed is the Armenian occupation of Karabagh and adjacent Azeri territories. Turkey has stated its intention to open the border once the Karabagh conflict is resolved or is progressing towards a solution.

## **2. Sessions of Armenian Parliament on the Relations with Turkey**

The Permanent Committee on External Affairs of the Armenian Parliament held some sessions between 19-20 December 2007 with the title of "Turkish-Armenian Relations: Problems and Expectations."

The press reported that approximately 20 Turkish people were invited to these sessions.<sup>6</sup> Among them, there were some who fully believed in the Armenian claims, and there were those who were sympathetic towards the Armenian position, and regarding the issue from the perspective of the European Union. Only three persons were invited to voice the Turkish perspective. The Armenian Patriarch of Istanbul, Mesrob, was likely invited in order to represent Turkish Armenians. Since the sessions were organized by the Armenian Parliament, some of the members of the Turkish National Assembly should have been invited, too. However, there was no information provided on that issue either by the Armenian Parliament,

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6 Nethaber.com, 19 December 2007.

the Turkish press or the Armenian press.

None of the Turks who had been invited attended these meetings, including those who sustained a firm belief in Armenian claims. The Chairman of the External Affairs Committee of the Armenian Parliament, Armen Rustamyan, stated that the invited guests could not attend because the Turkish government was against these meetings even though he had provided the guests assurance for their security.<sup>7</sup> Nevertheless, Turkish officials had not told anyone not to attend the meetings, and they actually had no right to do so. On the other hand, it was not that Armenia was not a secure country which prevented the invitees from participating in these sessions. The reason for the absence was mainly the unavailability of the invitees at that time and the sessions overlapping with religious holidays in Turkey.

When invited Turks did not attend, except for the EU Representative to the South Caucasus, Peter Semneby, it was only the Armenians who took the floor. A summary of the most significant views expressed during the meetings will be presented below.

To start with, the Chair of the Armenian Parliament and a prominent politician in Prime Minister Sarkisyan's Republican Party, Tigran Torosyan argued that such organizations constituted the first steps towards the process of amelioration of Turkish-Armenian relations.<sup>8</sup> He claimed that Armenia attached great importance to European values, integration and principles, and that Armenia's current stance coincided with such guidelines. After these general remarks, he stated that it was not possible for Armenia to accept the preconditions put forth by Turkey.<sup>9</sup>

Having argued that the stagnation that pervaded Turkish-Armenian relations originated in Turkish preconditions laid down for establishing diplomatic relations, Armen Rustamyan outlined basic points as such: recognition of Turkish territorial integrity, unification of Nakhichevan and Azerbaijan, termination of the efforts towards the recognition of the genocide allegations, a solution to the Karabagh problem and withdrawal of Armenian soldiers from the region.

7 PanARMENIAN.Net 19 December 2007.

8 Armenpress, 19 December 2007.

9 ARKA, 19 December 2007.

Regarding Turkey's requests to drop Armenian genocide allegations, Rustamyan believes that such requests are designed to force Armenia give up its territorial or other material demands. If the Treaty of Kars is still valid (and it is still valid), Armenia is not entitled to claim any territorial demands in the first place. Other types of material compensation refer to restoring the properties of and payment of financial compensation to the relocated Armenians. However, legally, the Lausanne Treaty no longer allows for discussion on such matters.

Labeling Turkish support given to Azerbaijan on the Karabagh problem as "highly irrational," Rustamyan stated that in today's world, relations between two countries (Turkey and Armenia) cannot be bound to relations with a third country (Azerbaijan). Frankly, he seems to be missing the point that diplomacy, as it was in the past, is still about inter-state conflicts in which states support or object third parties and even establish multilateral organizations such as NATO or the Warsaw Pact.

The Political Director of the Dashnak Party, Kiro Manoyan<sup>10</sup> argued that Armenia recognized the border, which was inherited from the USSR; yet the legitimate borderlines were those drawn by the Sèvres Treaty. He went on by suggesting that the Armenian Parliament should adopt a legal mechanism which would bar the Armenian government from signing any documents recognizing any borderlines other than those determined in the Sèvres Treaty. He also advised the government to work for making this Treaty's validity discussed in international forums and that the Parliament should accept a binding program on that matter. According to Manoyan, the main problems in Turkish-Armenian relations that prevented the establishment of diplomatic relations were closure of the border, Turkish denial of the Armenian genocide, its refusal to pay any compensation and doing away with territorial concessions.<sup>11</sup>

Minister of Foreign Affairs Vartan Oskanyan, pointed out that Turkey opened up the Treaty of Kars for discussion by asking Armenia to ratify it for the second time. He asserted that the Treaty of Kars and the Treaty of Moscow were still valid and that they did not need another ratification. However, Turkey did not wish it to be ratified for another time (there is no such principle in international law). It has simply demanded that two neighbouring countries officially recognize each other's territorial integrity since 1992, even though Armenian officials have not

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10 The full title of this person is "The Director of the Department of Armenian Cause and Political Affairs of Armenian Revolutionary Party." What is meant by the Armenian Cause (Hay Dat) is international recognition of the genocide allegations including Turkey, payment of indemnities to the "victims of genocide" or to their heirs and handing over some territories from Eastern Anatolia.

11 Asbarez, 19 December 2007.

responded positively. What Turkey asks of Armenia is the confirmation of the Treaty of Kars, a procedure which is often used in international law. Refusing to confirm something that is stated to be valid is a suspicious stance. The aforementioned remarks of the coalition party, the Dashnaks, in favour of the current validity of the Treaty of Sèvres testify to the legitimacy of the Turkish insistence of Armenian confirmation of the Treaty of Kars. Lastly, the statements of the Foreign Minister on how Armenia could not influence the states, which recognized the so-called genocide, are just dishonest, since Armenia openly strives for the acknowledgment of the genocide in many countries.

Oskanyan also stated that Turkish-Armenian relations are complex and that Armenia evaluated historical problems with respect to contemporary necessities in the sense that it can only begin to address historical questions once Turkey agrees to establish normal diplomatic relations and opens the border.<sup>12</sup> Turkey, on the other hand, was said to have an opposite approach of prioritizing first the historical problems and then contemporary issues. Oskanyan also argued that Turkey had problems with some of European states, yet Turkey did not choose to close borders or stipulate preconditions for any of these states. What the Armenian Minister omitted on that matter is that none of the European countries occupies 20 percent of one of its neighbours. As it is known, the reason why Turkey closed its border with Armenia is the Armenian occupation of Azeri territories.

Oskanyan also expressed that the Armenian government supported Turkish accession to the EU, yet he maintained that this could only be achieved if Turkey gave up its preconditions and opened the border.<sup>13</sup>

As it was mentioned above, these meetings were organized by the initiative of the Parliament, not the government, and the organizer was Armen Rustamian, the Chairman of the Parliamentary Committee on External Affairs and member of the Dashnak Party. The meetings witnessed the views of the Dashnak Party, rather than those of the government. Bearing this in mind, this series of meetings were related to the upcoming presidential elections, and they were organized out of the feeling that President Sarkisyan has avoided using a sharp discourse against Turkey and that he even argued in favour of the settlement of current problems. These remarks must have caused grave concerns for the Dashnaks, which resulted in such an effort to prevent any détente with Turkey through emphasizing nationalistic feelings.

<sup>12</sup> Panorama.am, 19 December 2007.

<sup>13</sup> Asbarez, 19 December 2007.

### 3. Kars – Akhalkalaki Railway

The Armenian government and especially the Armenian Diaspora in the US strongly object to the construction of the Kars-Akhalkalaki railway claiming that it renders their own railways inert. For this sake, regulations of the American Export-Import Bank were changed in the end of 2006 so as to prevent any funds being dispatched for the project. In the year 2007, with the initiative of pro-Armenian Representatives, the Subcommittee for the Terrorism, Prevention of Proliferation of Weapons, and Trade of the US House of Representatives managed to have an article added to the Allotment Law of the Overseas Private Investment Cooperation (OPIC) in order to prevent this organization from providing credit or guarantee to this railway project.<sup>14</sup> What was interesting about these developments was that none of the parties of this project, namely Turkey, Azerbaijan and Georgia, had applied neither to Export-Import Bank nor to OPIC for credit.

The foundation of the Kars-Akhalkalaki railway was laid on 21 November 2007 by the three Presidents of the participant countries in a ceremony held in Tbilisi. In a speech he delivered during this ceremony,<sup>15</sup> Turkish President Gül indicated that this railway would connect not only Baku, Tbilisi and Kars, but also China to London. Indeed after passing the Caspian Sea via ferry, the trains leaving from China could enter Turkey through the Kars-Ahalkelek line, after which they would cross the Bosphorus through Marmaray which is being built. Next, they would travel through Europe and would arrive in London through the Channel Tunnel. This line would be a true “Orient Express.” It would also be much a shorter route than the Trans-Siberian railway, which extends to the Far-East from Europe through Russia.

The President also mentioned that once the railway begins to operate, the historical Silk Road would be brought back to life in railway form and that the participation of Kazakhstan enabled the project to work. Moreover, President Gül drew attention to the highway being built between Tbilisi and Baku, which will be connected to the Black Sea Highway constituting a major motorway between Baku and Istanbul. Lastly, President Gül stated that all projects on the Caucasus were open to every country and stressed that “... as long as peace and stability exist, there is no will to leave anyone behind.” He believed that one day this project would not stay confined to these three states and that it would reach a greater scale to serve the entire region.

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14 Armenian Assembly of Armenia, Press Release, 22 June 2007.

15 [http://www.cankaya.gov.tr/tr\\_html/KONUŞMALAR/21.11.2007-3706.html](http://www.cankaya.gov.tr/tr_html/KONUŞMALAR/21.11.2007-3706.html).

According to the press, the project will be completed in three years.<sup>16</sup> For the Turkish area of 76 km<sup>2</sup>, 286 million YTL, for the Georgian area of 29 km<sup>2</sup> and reforming the country's railways 314 million YTL will be allocated. The railway is expected to receive a load of 5 million tons in the first year and after 2010, this number will increase to 15 million tons and 30 million tons after 2020.<sup>17</sup>

Apart from leaving Armenia out, the political significance of this project is emancipating Georgia, Azerbaijan and Central Asian states, especially Kazakhstan, from the railway monopoly of Russia.

While Armenian political circles remained silent as the Kars-Akhalkalaki railway took off, there were severe accusations about this project aiming to isolate Armenia<sup>18</sup> or harboring political and military goals rather than economic concerns.<sup>19</sup>

The US government remains silent on this matter, whereas the EU seems divided. The Commissioner responsible for External Relations and European Neighbourhood Policy, Ms. Benita Ferrero-Waldner, stated that the Commission supported the development of existing transit roads and helped building new parallel routes such as Kars-Akhalkalaki. In addition, she asserted that the Transport Corridor Europe Caucasus Asia (TRACECA), which includes all regional states including Armenia, was supported and that the funds which were allocated for this project would not be used for the Kars-Akhalkalaki railway, and that the Commission had informed both the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD) and European Investment Bank (EIB) on that matter. In short, this project would not receive any funding from the EU.<sup>20</sup> Interestingly, there had never been a request submitted to the EU about the project.

The European Parliament's decision taken on 17 January 2008 on the EU's South Caucasus policy included the following remarks about the railway project: "... [the EU] notes inter-regional initiatives such as the Baku-Tbilisi-Kars Railway Project; ... believes that this initiative opens the way for a better economic and political integration of that part of the world into the European and international economy and that it will contribute to economic and trade development in the region."

<sup>16</sup> Zaman, 22 November 2007.

<sup>17</sup> Emosia Daily Monitor, 27 November 2007.

<sup>18</sup> Noyan Tapan, 23 November 2007.

<sup>19</sup> Pan Armenian, 26 November 2007.

<sup>20</sup> Today's Zaman, 24 November 2007.



Having emphasized the importance of the Kars-Akhalkalaki railway for the region's integration to the European and international economy and for regional development, the European Parliament then stressed that the project bypassed the existing and fully operative railway line in Armenia. It also urged the South Caucasian states and Turkey to pursue effective policies of regional economic integration and to refrain from any short-sighted and politically-motivated regional energy and transportation projects, which violate principles of sustainable development envisaged by the European Neighbourhood Policy. Apparently, this word of caution targeted all Caucasian countries including Armenia; thus, it was not limited to Turkey alone.

Before independence, Armenian railways were very active: in 1988 they received a load of 30 million tons and approximately 5 million passengers. Nevertheless, the Spitak earthquake of 1988 severely damaged the lines in Gyumri and its environs. Afterwards, because of the Karabagh problem, the railway connection to Azerbaijan was shut down in the early 1990s. Turkey, in turn, stopped the Kars-Gyumri line in 1993. All these developments left Armenia with only one active line connecting it to Georgia. However, since this line was also cut off in Abkhazia, Armenian railroads no longer reached Russian territories. This led to a significant regression in Armenian railways. They were used only for domestic transportation and in reaching Batum and Poti ports of Georgia. In 2006, only 2.7 million tons of goods and 675,000 passengers could be transported.<sup>21</sup> When the Kars-Akhalkalaki project was made public, the last hopes of conducting railway transportation through Turkey were bashed. This gloomy picture culminated in proposals of privatizing Armenian railways.

Two offers were made to the Armenian railways: an Indian company named RITES and the Russian Railways. RITES withdrew very soon and the Russian Railways moved to buy Armenian railways.<sup>22</sup>

According to the terms of the agreement, the Russians will use the Armenian railway network for 30 years, with an optional extension of 20 years. For the fee, Armenia will receive 5 million dollars and 2 percent of the annual revenue. For the first five years 220 million dollars would be allocated; a total of 570 million dollars would be spent on the rehabilitation of Armenian railways.

If the Turkish-Armenian border will not be opened and if the Abkhazian railway line will not start to function, there is no way for the Armenian railways to gener-

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21 Railway Gazette International, UK, 16 January 2008.

22 Radio Liberty, 11 December 2007.

ate profits. Therefore, the purchase made by the Russians seems to be a political one, rather than a decision taken with economic rationality.

There are important indicators of how Russia makes use of Armenia in sustaining its presence in the South Caucasus, thus preserving close relations with Armenia: Armenian borders are protected by Russian troops, there is a Russian military base in Armenia, Russia has tried to exert a strong position within the Armenian economy in recent years through controlling the Armenian telecommunication and energy sectors.<sup>23</sup> The Russian purchase of Armenian railways needs to be interpreted within the same context.

## II. DEVELOPMENTS ON THE GENOCIDE ALLEGATIONS

### 1. Argentina

In recent years, Argentina has been the most active country with its parliamentary resolutions in recognizing the so-called Armenian genocide. On that issue, the Argentinean Senate adopted the first resolution in 1994. After roughly ten years, the Senate adopted similar resolutions each year starting from 2003. In 2007, a law, which declared 24 April as the “Action Day for Toleration and Respect between Peoples” and excused students and civil servants of Armenian origin for a day, was passed by the Parliament. Turkey undertook necessary measures against this act and the Turkish Foreign Ministry issued several declarations on the matter.

This year the Argentinean Senate adopted a new resolution in respect to 24 April. As a reply, a statement was released from the Turkish Foreign Ministry on 25 April<sup>24</sup> in which it was stated that State Minister Mehmet Aydın cancelled his trip to Buenos Aires and would not attend the meeting that would be held on 28-29 April 2008 within the framework of the “Alliance of Civilizations Initiative.” The statement also argued that the Senate’s resolution did not comply with historical realities; it violated the principles of international law. It was added that necessary measures were being undertaken and a note of protest was sent to the Argentinean Ambassador to Turkey on that account.<sup>25</sup>

Since diplomatic measures could not suffice, it becomes compelling for Turkey to consider some sanctions. According to a source,<sup>26</sup> it is under consideration that

23 Armenia Now, 18 January 2008.

24 [http://www.mfa.gov.tr/sc\\_10---25-nisan-2008\\_-disisleri-bakanligi-sozcusunun-bir-soruya-cevabi-\\_arjantin-senatosunun-kabul-etigi-metin-hk\\_.tr.mfa](http://www.mfa.gov.tr/sc_10---25-nisan-2008_-disisleri-bakanligi-sozcusunun-bir-soruya-cevabi-_arjantin-senatosunun-kabul-etigi-metin-hk_.tr.mfa).

25 Today’s Zaman, 15 May 2008, “Argentina Losing Us Over Genocide Row, Warns Ankara.”

26 Ibid.

the Turkish Ambassador to Buenos Aires could be withdrawn and, as a result, an extension the Argentinean Ambassador return to his country. However, given the attitude of the Argentinean Parliament and of the government so far, such a reaction will have a limited impact. This is why economic sanctions, too, may be taken into consideration.

## **2. The 24 April Statement of President Bush**

As he did every year for the past eight years, President Bush issued a statement on 24 April. Identical to his previous remarks, Bush avoided the word “genocide” and used instead a similar term, ‘mass killings’. Moreover, he deemed this incident as one of the greatest tragedies of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. On the other hand, he reiterated the claim that as many as 1.5 million Armenians lost their lives even though this information is not supported by scientific evidence.

The statement praised the individuals in Armenia and Turkey who have worked to normalize the relationship between two countries without any reference to who these people actually are.

The remarks on the need for a sincere and open examination of the historical events and the appreciation of those who are working to build a shared understanding of history show that the US supports the Turkish proposal to establish a commission of historians from both sides. In a presidential statement in 2005, Bush had clearly underpinned Turkey’s proposal by even referring to the declarations of Prime Minister Erdoğan. However, because of Armenian objections, he could now only express the American support by such indirect formulations.

The statement also notes that the US remains committed to promote a peaceful settlement of the Karabagh conflict.

Major Armenian foundations in the US were not pleased with this statement and criticized President Bush for not fulfilling his promise of recognizing the Armenian “genocide” before he leaves office in the next elections.

## **3. Israel**

The Israeli Parliament, the Knesset, accepted the proposal submitted by the leader of the left-wing party Meretz, Haim Auron on 26 March 2008 in order to discuss “the Armenian Genocide.” During the proceedings, Minister of Agriculture Shalom Simhon, who was present on behalf of the government, voted in favour too. Simhon argued that this subject was very sensitive for the Jewish nation and that Israel did not want to be a part of this dispute between the Turks and the

Armenians.<sup>27</sup> He was also reported to have used the word ‘tragedy’ instead of genocide.<sup>28</sup>

In previous years, Haim Auron attempted to prompt the Knesset to recognize the Armenian “genocide” on 24 April.<sup>29</sup> Professor Yair Auron, who is the author of books trying to prove that the Armenians were subjected to “genocide”, is Haim Auron’s brother.<sup>30</sup> Haim Auron’s proposal is going to be debated in the respective committee and, if accepted, it will be put to vote by the General Assembly of the Knesset.

The Turkish Government immediately reacted against this development and Turkish Ambassador to Tel Aviv, Namık Tan, applied to the Israeli Foreign Ministry in order for them to stop the process. However, he was given the answer that Israel’s position had not been changed.<sup>31</sup>

Around ten days after this incident, the Chairman of the External Affairs Committee of the Turkish National Assembly, Murat Mercan, visited Israel with a delegation. He met many Israeli officials, including President Simon Peres. There were meetings on regional security, relations between Israel and Palestine, Iran and Iraq as well as the proposal on the ‘Armenian Genocide’ submitted to the Knesset. The Turkish delegation reported that they received signals about the failure of this initiative<sup>32</sup>.

The Chairman of the Knesset Association between Parliaments of Israel and Armenia, Zeev Eklin, stated that for the past 20 years the issue of the Armenian “genocide” had not been discussed in Israel and in fact, it was a great achievement to bring the to the agenda. He added that every year, this topic was brought to the agenda, but this time not only the opposition but also a party from the coalition gave its support. The deputies, to his opinion, were experiencing great pressure from the Israeli Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Turkish lobby, which had the support of Azerbaijan.

For obvious reasons, Jews are very sensitive to the issue of “genocide” and its allegations. Up until now, due to the importance of Turkish-Israeli relations, Ar-

27 Milliyet, 27 March 2008, “1915 Olayları İsrail Parlamentosu’nun Gündeminde.”

28 PanArmenian.Net, 27 March 2008, “Israeli Knesset to Debate Armenian Genocide.”

29 Radikal, 28 March 2008, “Soykırım’da Sıra İsrail’de.”

30 Yair Auron’s most famous book on this matter is *Banality of Indifference: Zionism and the Armenian Genocide*.

31 Cumhuriyet, 28 March 2008, “İsrail ile Ermeni Krizi Kapıda.”

32 Milliyet, 8 April 2008, “Ermeni Soykırımı İddiası İsrail’in Gündeminde.”

menian claims have thus far been downplayed despite Armenian efforts in both the US and Israel. However, coupled with stronger Armenian propaganda and the closer relations that Turkey has developed with Palestinians over the last years resulted in Jews' changing their attitudes vis-à-vis Turkey. The clearest example of this change can be observed when last year American Jewish organizations adopted different positions towards H.RES.106 discussed in the House of Representatives addressing Armenian genocide allegations. Some foundations maintained their traditional positions and refused this draft resolution while some others acted in favour of it. One of the largest organizations of this sort was the ADL which struck a balanced way through recognizing genocide allegations on the one hand and supporting the prevention of the adoption of H.RES.106 on the other. This recent vote in the Knesset demonstrates that some Jewish circles have been changing their positions towards Turkey. Nevertheless under normal conditions, this proposal does not possess the chance to get through. The problem lies in what kind of means the Knesset considers to adopt in order to resist constant efforts working for the recognition of the Armenian "genocide".

#### **4. Bulgaria**

Up to now, the draft resolutions submitted to the Bulgarian National Assembly have been diluted through the efforts of the ruling coalition partner, Rights and Freedoms Party.

Then some of the Armenian associations in Bulgaria joined with the ultra-nationalist ATAKA Party in order to influence city assemblies to recognize the so-called genocide.<sup>33</sup> City Assemblies of Burgaz, Philippopolis, Stara Zagora, Rusçuk, Silistre, Dobriç and Varna adopted decisions of this kind.

There was another initiative, towards the end of March for the Sofia City Assembly to issue a parallel decision, which was prevented by the Bulgarian government. The Bulgarian government was motivated to do so since this issue came to the agenda on the eve of Prime Minister Erdoğan's visit to Bulgaria. The ATAKA Party worked to prevent Erdoğan from attending meetings in Bulgaria. A second proposal was introduced in almost two weeks-time, yet the vote was not sufficient for the issue to be brought up in the Sofia City Assembly. However still, in the Assembly, a minute of silence remembering the victims of the "genocide" was organized. The Mayor of Sofia, Boyko Borisov, informed the press that he met with some prominent members of the Armenian community and expressed his sympathies. He cited that the reason why the proposal was not brought to the

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33 Zaman, 28 March 2008, "Bulgaristan, Erdoğan'ı Jestle Karşladı: Ermeni Tasarısı İptal."

agenda was his reluctance to confront Turkey.<sup>34</sup>

According to the Bulgarian press, the Rusçuk City Assembly accepted a statement on 17 April 2008 in which it declared that it recognized “the genocide over the Armenians and Bulgarians carried out by the Turkish Army and State.” The document also asserted that between the years of 1903 and 1913, tens of thousands of Bulgarians were slaughtered by Turks living outside the Bulgarian State and that between 1915 and 1918 over 1.5 million Armenians were killed, as between 1895 and 1896 some 100.000 or 200.000 Armenians were butchered. The statement also called upon Turkey to recognize these extreme atrocities that occurred in the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, take responsibility for them, and apologize for enslaving Bulgarians for five centuries and for the crimes committed and mass murders perpetrated towards all Bulgarians who had to remain within Turkish boundaries under the Treaty of Berlin (1878). Turkey was urged to pay indemnities to the heirs of the refugees for their suffering and for the confiscation of their properties and possessions. It was decided that this document would be forwarded to the Turkish Embassy in Sofia and to the Human Rights Commission of the European Parliament.<sup>35</sup>

This statement was the same as the one that was adopted in Burgaz City Assembly. Upon its acceptance in Burgaz, the officials of Turkish city of Edirne terminated all the joint projects it had been carrying out with Burgaz.

Obviously, the main theme in these documents is not the recognition of Armenian claims but rather accusations and demands of ultra-nationalist Bulgarians. Armenian allegations were used as a pretext to bring up such demands.

Similar to the way how the Diaspora Armenians try to preserve their identities through the genocide allegations, Bulgaria, for the first time, had to create nationalistic feelings in order to maintain the territories it was granted by Russia after the war of 1877-1878. In achieving this, it invented some myths such as the enslavement of Bulgarians by the Turks (Ottomans) for five centuries as the cause of their backwardness. Another myth is that the newly independent Bulgaria was far smaller in size compared to the Bulgarian State in the Middle Ages. Therefore, the new state aimed to establish Greater Bulgaria, which would occupy the territories of the previous state. Bulgaria took part in the Balkan Wars, the two World Wars with the same goal, yet it was defeated in all of them. Such failures further

34 Sofia News Agency, 24 April 2008, “Sofia City Council Fails to Vote on Armenian Genocide.”

35 Frontier Times (Bulgaria), 19 April 2008, “Recognition of Genocide.”

exacerbated the already powerful Bulgarian nationalism which encouraged the feelings of revenge and retaliation. The Communist regime, which took over the control of the country in 1944, gave up its territorial claims on its neighbours as a result of the Soviet policy of keeping the *status quo* in the Balkans. However, ultra-nationalist feelings were soon directed towards the Turkish minority. The policy of pressure and assimilation towards the Turks escalated in time and climaxed when in early 1985 Turkish names were obligated to be changed to Bulgarian ones and Turkish language, music and traditional outfits were forbidden. This policy of assimilation ended only after Jivkov had been toppled in 1989. After the elimination of the Communist regime, extreme nationalism arose within rightist circles. Though very marginal, it managed to survive and, as in the example of ATAKA, it even became stronger when Bulgaria acceded to the EU. The current strategy of ATAKA is to highlight ultra-nationalist Bulgarian demands by combining them with Armenian genocide allegations since the latter enjoys sympathy in many EU countries.

### **5. Karekin II's visit to the Holy See**

Karekin II, who is the Catholicos (Patriarch) of all Armenians, paid an official visit to the Holy See in the beginning of May in which genocide allegations and the conflict of Karabagh were addressed.

On 7 May 2008, Karekin II was accepted by Pope Benedict XVI after the public communion that is held every Wednesday in the Vatican. Addressing genocide allegations in his long speech, Karekin II pointed out that Armenians were a people who had survived “genocide” and they highly appreciated the value of love, brotherhood, friendship, peace and a secure life. He also stated that many countries in the world recognized and condemned the ‘genocide ‘committed by Ottoman Turkey. He stated that in his visit to the Holy See in the year of 2000, Pope Jean Paul II had acknowledged the Armenian “genocide” and urged all nations to condemn all genocides committed throughout history and those that currently continue.<sup>36</sup>

The Pope, in turn, indirectly touched upon the issue and sufficed to mention “severe persecutions suffered by Armenian Christians especially in the last century.”<sup>37</sup>

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36 Press Release, Mother See of Holy Etchmiadzin, 7 May 2009, “First Message of His Holiness Karekin II, Catholicos of All Armenians.”

37 RFE/RL, 7 May 2008, “Garegin Urges Armenian Genocide Recognition Before Pope.”

It is commonly known that the Holy See pursues a policy of rapprochement with non-Catholic Christians of the world. Because powerful churches such as the Orthodox Church do not find it appealing to engage in closer relations with the Vatican for various reasons, the Holy See now tries to employ this strategy vis-à-vis smaller churches. Within this context, negotiations with the Armenian Church have been conducted for a long time. First, the Holy See wanted Karekin II to visit the Pope and in return, the Armenians wished for the Pope to recognize the “genocide,” which he did during Karekin II’s visit to Rome in 2000 and reconfirmed in 2001 when he returned Karekin’s first visit. At present, the Holy See is observed to avoid the issue of the Armenian “genocide” as much as possible given Turkey’s reactions. However, even though the Pope informed Karekin II that he would not use the word “genocide” in his speeches, the Catholicos insistently brought it up in his own statement. In doing so, Karekin II must have aimed to comfort the ultra-nationalists within the Diaspora and in Armenia.

Two days later on 9 May, Karekin II visited the Pope. Except for religious affairs, the Pope’s following remarks were significant:

“The recent history of the Armenian Church has been written in the contrasting colors of persecution and martyrdom, darkness and hope, humiliation and spiritual rebirth. The restoration of freedom to the Church in Armenia has been a source of great joy for us all.”<sup>38</sup>

The Pope’s statements about this recent history are highly vague. Nevertheless, his remarks on the Armenian Church and its independence must be remindful of the Soviet era, not the Ottoman period.

Karekin II, in turn, stated that Pope Jean-Paul II was being received under the gaze of biblical Mount Ararat and pointed to the triumph of the Armenian people in the national liberation struggle for a free and self-determined Republic of Nagorno-Karabagh whose international recognition shall be achieved “...through the will of God and the assistance of humanitarian and righteous governments.”<sup>39</sup>

The conflict of Karabagh is a contemporary problem. Since the Papacy has a principle of not interfering in political affairs except those with religious aspects,

38 RFE/RL, 12 Mayis 2008, “Pope Recalls Armenian Martyrdom.”

39 Press Release, Mother See of Holy Etchmiadzin, 9 Mayis 2009, “Second Message of His Holiness Karekin II, Catholicos of All Armenians to His Holiness Benedict XVI, Pope of the Catholic Church.”



Karekin II's statements must have caused serious discontent at least on the part of Azerbaijan. Karekin II always displays such behaviours on his visits, as it was exemplified when he visited Istanbul as a guest of Greek Orthodox Patriarch Bartholomeos.

## **6. The European Parliament (EP)**

The European Parliament has been involved in the Armenian problem since the Turkish application for full membership to the EU in 1987. In the resolution entitled "A Political Solution to the Armenian Problem" adopted in the same year, the European Parliament accepted the incidents of 1915 as constituting a "genocide" and asked Turkey to recognize this fact without which it could not achieve membership. With the rejection of Turkey's application, this resolution produced no significant outcome.

Upon the acceptance of Turkey's candidacy to the EU membership in 1999, the Armenian problem resurfaced. Except for one year, the European Parliament addressed genocide allegations in each of its decisions in the Progress Reports that are prepared annually by the European Commission. In the resolution accepted on 28 September 2005, the recognition of the Armenian "genocide" was framed as a precondition for Turkish accession.

The EP's stance on that matter started to change in 2007. In the decision accepted on 24 October 2007 on the 2006 Progress Report, the issue of "genocide" was not brought up. However, the assassination of Hrant Dink was condemned and Turkey was called on to terminate any type of isolation (referring to Armenia) and open its border. The same report encouraged both Turkey and Armenia to start a process of reconciliation.

In another resolution adopted on 17 January 2008 by the EP on the policy of the South Caucasus, there were no references made to the so-called genocide. The text only urged Turkey to work efficiently for an honest and public discussion of past events. The same request of both Turkey and Armenia to take up a process of reconciliation for the past and today was once again repeated.

The resolution endorsing the 2007 Progress Report on Turkey (which was accepted with 467 in favour, 62 against and 61 abstain votes<sup>40</sup>) did not address genocide allegations and repeated the call on the Turkish and Armenian governments to start a process of reconciliation allowing for a frank and open discussion of past

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40 Hürriyet, 21 May 2008.

events. The Commission was also called upon to facilitate this process.

### **7. Presidential Elections in the US and the Armenians**

The Presidential elections in the US are regarded as a suitable opportunity by the Armenian foundations in America to put forward Armenian demands and seek their realization in return for votes in the elections.

The most active organization in this respect is the Armenian National Committee of America (ANCA), which has a pro-Dashnak stance. As it did in the previous elections, this organization sent the major candidates a statement seeking answers to eighteen questions on the following points: the confirmation of the Armenian “genocide,” economic, military and political relations between the US and Armenia, self-determination of Karabagh, the Turkish and Azerbaijani embargo on Armenia and the Darfur genocide.<sup>41</sup>

Both leading candidates of the Democrats, namely Barack Obama and Hillary Clinton already gave statements on their recognition of the genocide allegations and supported the H.RES.106. John McCain, the Republican candidate, on the other hand, also acknowledged the “genocide” but objected the draft resolution.

In a speech delivered on 19 January 2008, Senator Obama claimed that the Armenian “genocide” was not an allegation, a personal opinion or an idea, but a “documented undeniable reality.” He added that if he was elected president, he would recognize the “genocide,” sustain the aid granted to Armenia, work for the termination of Turkish and Azerbaijani isolation in order to strengthen Armenian security, strive for a permanent solution to the Karabagh conflict, increase the volume of trade relations with and aid to Armenia, and consolidate bilateral political, military and cultural ties so as to promote Armenian development.<sup>42</sup>

In a statement made on 24 January 2008, Hillary Clinton argued that the treatment of the Ottoman Armenians amounted to a clear definition of “genocide” and that should she be elected, she would recognize this “genocide,” enhance trade with Armenia, develop economic ties, maintain the military partnership, further promote co-operation with NATO, and increase the aid offered to Armenia and Karabagh.<sup>43</sup>

<sup>41</sup> ANCA, Press Release, 9 January 2008.

<sup>42</sup> ANCA Press Release, 30 January 2008.

<sup>43</sup> Ibid.

Apparently, both candidates explicitly promised to recognize Armenian genocide allegations if they are elected president. However, it is commonly known that the presidential candidates hand out promises without careful deliberation but once they are elected, they do not fulfill these promises because of certain realities. The most obvious example of that is President George Bush who had promised to acknowledge the “genocide” before the elections but never actually did.

In the meeting of his party group, Prime Minister Erdoğan stated that as election campaigns were run in the US, some remarks of certain politicians seemed to be showing that they were not comprehensively informed about the official American policies. He argued that if the draft resolution was accepted, it would inflict an irreversible wound to US-Turkish relations which would benefit no one. Erdoğan criticized Obama and Clinton by saying that Turkish-American relations could not be sacrificed either to slandering efforts of some lobbies or to the poor calculations of domestic politics.<sup>44</sup>

When it comes to the Republicans, Senator McCain sent a short letter to ANCA on 2 February 2008 in which he affirmed that 1.5 million of Armenians were murdered in the Ottoman Empire, but he avoided using the word “genocide” to describe these events.<sup>45</sup>

After the candidates revealed their positions on the Armenian genocide allegations, Armenian foundations were expected to declare their favoured candidate. The President of ANCA, Ken Hachikian, stated on 31 January that they supported Barack Obama to become the candidate of the Democrats since he appeared to be the one who would resolve the issues that interest American Armenians the most.<sup>46</sup> The next day, AAA declared its support for Hillary Clinton and the appointment of Paul Krekorian as the Vice President of the campaign “Armenians for Clinton.”<sup>47</sup> There has been no Armenian organization that is reported to support the Republican candidate.

### III. PRESIDENTIAL ELECTIONS IN ARMENIA

#### A. Candidates and Their Perspectives

There were nine candidates in the Armenian presidential election; however, this paper deals only with Sarkisyan, Ter-Petrosian, Bagdasarian and Hovanissian,

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44 CNN Türk, 29 January 2008.

45 ANCA, Press Release, 2 February 2008.

46 PanArmenian, 31 January 2008.

47 Press Release, Office of the Assembly Member Paul Krekorian, 1 February 2008.

who obtained the majority of votes in the elections. Respectively, their opinions revealed during their electoral campaigns will be analyzed regarding Armenia's relations with Turkey and the conflict of Karabagh. Although he lost the elections, Levon Ter-Petrosyan will be referred to the most because of the competition that existed between Sarkisyan and Ter-Petrosyan, while the latter's speeches and critics shed light upon both Armenia's internal and foreign affairs.

### **1. Serzh Sarkisyan**

For 14 years from 1993 to 2007, when he was appointed as the Prime Minister, Serzh Sarkisyan managed the Armenian army and domestic security forces under the posts, in which he served as Minister of Defense, Minister of National Security and Minister of Home Affairs. Within this period, Sarkisyan was known to be the most powerful man in Armenia and the executive force behind the doors. After the sudden death of former Prime Minister Antranik Markarian on 25 March 2007, Sarkisyan was appointed as the new Prime Minister. He was also brought to the Presidency of the Armenian Republican Party, which Markarian had presided over. Therefore along with President Kocharian, Sarkisyan acquired an excessively powerful position. In the elections held on 12 March 2007, the Armenian Republican Party secured most of the votes, which enabled Sarkisyan to lead a coalition government. Moreover, since Kocharian could not be re-elected, Sarkisyan now had the chance to run for the presidency. In all the opinion polls carried out throughout the elections, Sarkisyan led much ahead of the other candidates.

The election campaign witnessed a fierce debate between Ter-Petrosyan and President Kocharian (who was not a candidate) while Sarkisyan tried to avoid entanglement as much as possible, thus giving him the opportunity to keep its profile untainted. That was one of the reasons why he won the election with a clear majority. The other and more important reason was the portrayal of Ter-Petrosyan with a negative image by the Armenian media (press, TV and radio) while Sarkisyan enjoyed a good reputation. That was also noticed by the reports of some international organizations which oversaw the elections in Armenia. Another factor was people's awareness of the fact that it was during the office of Ter-Petrosyan that Armenia went through serious economic hardships because of the dissolution of the USSR and the war in Karabagh.

Serzh Sarkisyan's position on the Karabagh conflict and relations with Turkey does not, in principle, differ from those of Kocharian since they have been working together for over ten years, during which Kocharian served as the President. Indeed, Sarkisyan defends the same policy of normalizing relations with Turkey without any preconditions, just as in the Kocharian era.

During Sarkisyan's office, it is highly probable that the Russian Federation will preserve its undisputable hegemony over Armenia, for Sarkisyan has been known as the 'man of the Russia' for a long time, more than the extent to which Kocharian was regarded. The fact that the Prime Minister of the Russian Federation, Victor Zubkov, visited Armenia and met with Prime Minister Sarkisyan<sup>48</sup> shortly before the elections on 5 February 2008 was interpreted as evidence of Russian support for him.

As far as Sarkisyan's election program is concerned, except for its big size, it does not tell much, likely so to ensure his being elected. Economically, Sarkisyan aims to establish a prosperous Armenia and he plans to double salaries and the state budget by 2012 when income per capita is promised to have risen to 7,000 dollars.<sup>49</sup>

## **2. Artur Baghdassarian**

Born in 1968, Arthur Baghdassarian is the youngest of all candidates. He was elected to the Presidency of the Armenian National Assembly in 2003, a post which he occupied for three years. The reason why he quit this position was the critical stance he took toward the government. Moreover, he also claimed that there had been some misconduct in the Constitutional Referendum of 2005.

After his resignation Baghdassarian was replaced by Tigran Torosyan from the Armenian Republican Party. In the 2007 elections, Baghdassarian's party, the Party of the Rule of Law, did not manage to gain the half of the 18 MPs it possessed during the 2003 elected for this term. While in these elections the party received 6.85 percent of the votes, the presidential elections saw Baghdassarian receiving 16.2 percent of total votes, which made him the third candidate after Sarkisyan and Ter-Petrosyan. If he keeps up this trend, he might have a chance for the next presidential elections (2012) or the one after it. At the age of forty, Baghdassarian has time.

Among the most famous Armenian politicians, Baghdassarian is known to be the one who is closest to the West, especially to France. Indeed, during his election campaign, he stressed that membership to the EU should be the most important goal of Armenian foreign policy and in addition to that, deepening the cooperation with NATO carried special importance. He also argued that relations with the US should be based on the principle of friendship and partnership, whereas

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48 Largir, 4 February 2008, "Russian Prime Minister Arrives In Yerevan."

49 Armenpress, 28 January 2008, "Prime Minister Reiterates His Pledge to Double Wages, Pensions and GDP"

those with Russia should be run on the principle of equality of rights and mutual interest.<sup>50</sup> Thus, Baghdassarian implied that in its relations with Russia, Armenia was not still in an equal position.

### 3. Vahan Hovannisian

Hovannisian was appointed to the highest rank of his party, the Dashnak Party in 1992. He also served as the Vice President of the Armenian Parliament in 2003.

In an interview he gave, Hovannisian expressed the following views on the Karabagh conflict, relations with Georgia and peace with Turkey:

“There are those who believe that the Karabagh conflict is a matter on its own whose resolution will bring regional stability once and for all. To us (Dashnak Party), the Karabagh question is only one of the components of the permanent struggle for the Armenian Cause. Therefore, any resolution that can be worked out today is a stage after which we must prepare for subsequent stages that may take decades. Moreover, Karabagh was lost 700 years ago and can only be restored through a miracle rather than one blow.”<sup>51</sup>

What can be interpreted from these highly vague statements is that the expression of the ‘Armenian Cause’ refers to the establishment of a prosperous and greater Armenia whose certain parts lay outside of contemporary Armenia, namely Eastern Anatolia, Javakheti, Nakhichevan and Karabagh. Within this framework, a solution to the Karabagh problem is only a part or a phase of a greater plan whose following stages would come along.

Hovannisian stated that he supported the efforts of the Minsk Group to find a peaceful solution to the problem, which ultimately requires mutual concessions. However, he added, Azerbaijan wished to restore the state of affairs under the Soviet rule, which was naturally unacceptable. In Soviet era, Karabagh was an autonomous region within Azerbaijan. The Azeri views on this matter remain to allow comprehensive autonomy to the Karabagh region provided that it belonged to Azerbaijan. Given that, the Dashnak perspective can be said not to be facilitating a solution to the Karabagh problem in the short-run.

For the Javakheti region which is a part of Georgia populated by Armenians, the Dashnaks believe that it should join Armenia in the future. On that matter,

50 Noyan Tapan, 25 January 2008, “Artur Baghdasarin Attaches Importance to Deepening of NATO-Armenia Cooperation.”

51 Armenian Reporter, 26 January 2008, “The Candidates: Vahan Hovhannesian Seeks to Restore Checks and Balances in the Armenian Government.”

Hovannisian exemplified a moderate position and suggested that he would take the example of the European Union and in creating a common customs and economic zone between Georgia and Armenia, which would in time lead to a situation where border controls between the two countries are rendered meaningless. Apparently, Hovannisian hopes that the Armenians of Javakheti will in time *de facto* join Armenia. He further asserted that with the Kars-Akhalkalaki railway and various energy programs, Turkey and Azerbaijan seek to close off the neighbourly relations of the Georgian and Armenian peoples, inserting a Turkish-speaking wedge.

Under these circumstances, it was expected that the low possibility for Dashnaks to win the elections and the desire not to divide Sarkisyan's votes led the Party not to nominate a Dashnak candidate. However, although they are in the coalition, the Dashnaks still wanted to assert their separate identity. On the other hand, it is also possible that they entered the elections just to accrue revenues from Diaspora Armenians.

Hovannisian used the following remarks regarding Turkey:

“We understand very well that the geopolitical reality that has taken shape over decades cannot be changed easily. And our issue today is not to snatch something from Turkey. Our issue is to have our just cause recognized. When it is recognized, and first of all Turkey recognizes the Genocide, this will bring us unavoidably to the idea of reparations. Turks as well as Armenians could benefit from a just resolution of the Turkish-Armenian conflict. Armenians must operate in such a flexible and smart manner with the powers of the world and with Turkey, so that the Turkish people and the Turkish state begin to understand that warming relations with the Armenian people and the Armenian state also benefits them. The future will show which points of the ARF (Dashnak Party) program can be achieved in what order and at what time for those reparations. In recent years, efforts towards the recognition of the genocide worldwide are having very positive results.”<sup>52</sup>

The ambiguity of these remarks can be interpreted as follows. Given the geopolitical realities (Turkey being a much stronger state than Armenia), Hovannisian wanted to point out to the difficulty in claiming territory from Turkey. However, referring to the idea of acting in a gradual way, the Dashnaks, for the moment,

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52 Ibid.

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can be said to have given up territorial claims from Turkey. In return, their main strategy concentrates on the realization of Turkey's recognition of the "genocide," which would obligate the latter into paying indemnities. Actually, the rational consequence of such recognition would really point to the direction of indemnities because it would mean that Armenians were deliberately hurt, which would require indemnity payments as a general law principle.

Hovannisian's statements do not specify how Turkey will be persuaded into acknowledging the genocide allegations. What is meant from the expression "acting rationally" is very vague. It is correct that normalization of relations with Armenia is in Turkish interests. However, recognizing genocide allegations and paying indemnities is and will be out of question for any Turkish government. The Dashnaks seem to believe obsessively that emotional reactions triggered in Turkey after foreign parliamentary resolutions recognizing the so-called genocide point to the weakening of Turkish resistance. As an extension, they advocate the idea that increased pressure will prompt Turkey to comply with "genocide" recognition and indemnity payments.

However, a detailed examination reveals that it is not Turkey but the Dashnaks who are in a difficult position here. Although it is obvious that the policy of claiming territory and indemnities does not and will not go anywhere, the Dashnaks are in denial about this fact. They appear to have abandoned the territorial claim for the moment and frame the issue of indemnities with a highly ineffective argument such as serving Turkish interests. In addition, the point that Hovannisian never pays attention to is that, like former President Kocharian, current President Sarkisyan, who is also the leader of the main partner of the ruling coalition, the Armenian Republican Party, does not bring up the issue of Turkish recognition of the "genocide" or the payment of indemnities. He rather draws attention to the international recognition of the "genocide" that needs to be realized by the Diaspora. Actually, the official program of the government does not accommodate Dashnak views either.

Hovannisian received the 6.2 percent of the total votes, which signaled a clear defeat for the Dashnaks who lost half of their constituents compared to their 12.2 percent in the elections held in 2007. Hovannisian resigned from his position as Vice President of the Parliament. He further argued that there had been serious flaws in the elections, votes had been bought, violence had been exercised



in some polls and fake votes had been cast.<sup>53</sup> Nevertheless, the Dashnak party did not hesitate to take part in the coalition formed after the elections. The post of Vice President of the Parliament was given to another party member, Hrayr Karapetian.<sup>54</sup> Hovannisian, in turn, became the chairman of his party's group in the Parliament.

#### 4. Levon Ter-Petrosyan

Levon Ter-Petrosyan was born in Syria in 1945. He was elected to the Armenian Parliament during the Soviet era in 1989. A year later, he was appointed to the post of Presidency of the Supreme Council, which in a sense amounted to the Presidency of the State. He was then elected president after Armenia declared its independence in 1991 and he remained in power after the 1996 elections.

Ter-Petrosyan's presidency was plagued by the Karabagh war, severe economic problems and domestic instability. He also closed down the Dashnak Party because of its illegal activities. When the war ended, he worked with the Minsk Group to find a peaceful settlement to the Karabagh conflict. He accepted the incremental plan proposed by the Minsk Group, yet had to resign when Prime Minister Robert Kocharian and the Armenian Parliament rejected it in February 1998. He was then replaced by Robert Kocharian.

After he resigned, Ter-Petrosyan engaged in scientific studies and although there were rumors that he would run for Presidency in 2003 elections, he remained out of the presidential race.

In the 2008 presidential elections, he had to run his campaign by himself alone because the Party of Armenian National Movement, which he had led, was too weak. Since the majority of the Armenian press supported Serzh Sarkisyan, he felt compelled to organize large meetings on the streets in order to make his voice heard. Ter-Petrosyan also chose to severely criticize the Kocharian-Sarkisyan tandem. His remarks offer valuable information about Armenia's recent past and today's circumstances. The most important on these are summarized below.<sup>55</sup>

##### *a. The Karabagh Conflict and Armenia's relations with its neighbours*

During the electoral campaign, Ter-Petrosyan argued that Kocharian and Sarkisyan, who had rejected the kind of the resolution he had endorsed in 1997-98 on

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53 RFE/RL, 22 February 2008, "Dashnak Leader Resigns from Parliament Post.

54 Armradio.am, 20 May 2008, "Hrayr Karapetyan Elected NA Vice-Speaker"

55 Radio Liberty, 26 October 2007, "Ter-Pedrosyan Declares Presidential Bid in Yerevan Rally."

the Karabagh problem as being defeatist, now accepted it. Referring to Kocharian's policy of preservation of the status quo as the solution to the Karabagh problem, Ter-Petrosyan suggested that Armenia need not be afraid of compromising by moving to an understanding of solving the problem.

He also believed that unless the Karabagh problem is solved, the blockades are lifted (borders being opened), relations with neighbours are normalized, the country is integrated to regional and international systems, Armenia will not be able to develop and become stronger in accordance with the demands of the contemporary world.

*b. Armenia's mistakes in the realm of foreign policy*<sup>56</sup>

Ter-Petrosyan asserted that within the past ten years Armenia made many mistakes in its foreign policy which then culminated in its isolation. He suggested that the greatest of these mistakes was not to hold a vote on the issue of the "genocide" in the UN.<sup>57</sup> The second most important mistake was allowing Georgia to close down the Russian base in the Akhalkalaki area, which affected the economy badly in a region highly populated by Armenians. The third point was the commencement of the Kars-Akhalkalaki railway construction.

*c. On Kocharian and Sarkisyan*

Ter-Petrosyan accused the rule of Kocharian and Sarkisyan of being based on the tight control of the security apparatus, the judicial system and electronic media as well as an "atmosphere of fear. For the two, homeland was a conquered territory or a business entity. In other words, he wanted to argue that having lived and served in Karabagh almost for their entire life, after they gained power, Kocharian and Sarkisyan considered Armenia as a country, which they conquered. He also implied that Kocharian's son Sedrak and Sarkisyan's brother Alexandr accumulated unusual wealth in a short period of time and took the money abroad. He even claimed that in the last five years, the criminal regime stole at least three to four billion dollars from the people and that if that sum had been invested in Armenia, the people would have had a qualitatively different country while if it had been invested in Karabagh, it would have already been independent.

<sup>56</sup> Armenews, 12 December 2007. "Ter Petrosian déclare que l'Arménie ne devrait pas s'appuyer sur un intermédiaire dans ses relations avec la Turquie."

<sup>57</sup> The Armenian "genocide" is not on the agenda of various UN bodies. Ter-Petrosyan must have referred to Robert Kocharian's speech delivered at the UN General Assembly in 1998 where he brought up the issue of genocide but never succeeded in obtaining a UN resolution on that matter for over ten years.

*d. Armenia's economic situation*

Under the office of Kocharian, the Armenian economy had undertaken a significant leap, especially within recent years. For example, according to official statistics, Armenian GDP increased by 12-13 percent annually. Ter-Petrosyan suggested that these figures are forged and that economic growth had actually been much slower and largely resulted from remittances from hundreds of thousands of Armenians living abroad.

*e. The assassination on 27 October 1999*

In a year and a half after Kocharian was elected president, an armed group raided the Armenian Parliament on 27 October and murdered Karen Demircian, the Parliament's President, Prime Minister Vazgen Sarkisyan and some other MPs. The fact that Demircian and Sarkisyan could qualify as rivals to Kocharian were remindful of a possible involvement of the President in the assassination even though there was neither any evidence nor any testimonies in that direction by the criminals.

Ter-Petrosyan created an analogy between this incident and the execution of hundreds of intellectuals in Istanbul which marked the start of the Armenian genocide on 24 April 1915. He further claimed that Kocharian greatly benefited from this tragedy and that he obstructed the research for possible masterminds.

*f. Kocharian's replies*

In his reply to Ter-Petrosyan on 30 October, President Kocharian addressed life standards under Ter-Petrosyan's presidency and stated that when his party, the Armenian Pan-National Movement, established the government in August 1990, Armenia was one of the most developed industrial republics in the USSR. Moreover, he claimed that the country was equally developed agriculturally. However, he argued that in three to four years Armenia became one of world's poorest countries. Kocharian further argued that state budget in 1997 was even less than the current national budget.<sup>58</sup>

It is interesting to note that Kocharian avoided replying to Petrosyan's claims about the former's family acquisitions and his alleged involvement in the incidents of 27 October 1999.

In return, one of the Prime Ministers of Ter-Petrosyan era, Hrant Bagratian, asserted that Robert Kocharian and Serzh Sarkisyan controlled 17 percent of the Armenian GDP. At least two bask were said to be under the personal control of

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<sup>58</sup> Arminfo, 31 October 2007, "Incumbent President of Armenia About Ex-President."

Kocharian who harbored private interests in the mining and construction sector. Serzh Sarkisyan, on the other hand, was claimed to own Armavia, the major aviation firm of Armenia, which had been privatized.<sup>59</sup> Because he was running for the presidency, Sarkisyan had issued a statement of his properties which included co-ownership of an apartment in Stepanakert, the capital of Karabagh, 191,000 dollars cash and some antiques.<sup>60</sup>

In a long speech he delivered in a meeting held on 16 November 2007, Ter-Petrosyan replied to Kocharian by drawing attention to economic hardships and the energy insufficiency (scarcity of electricity) under his term. He argued that the country suffered from an energy shortage until the end of the war in Karabagh and that Kocharian, who criticized him now, had praised him well in the past. He also stated that contrary to the common knowledge, Armenian military forces joined the war in Karabagh, too.<sup>61</sup>

What seems to be the most interesting among these remarks is where Ter-Petrosyan seeks forgiveness and apologizes for his “sins” for having brought Robert Kocharian and Serzh Sarkisyan to Armenia from Karabagh and put them in office. He confessed to have made mistakes which actually constituted a calamity and that he was asking for help to save the people from it.

In his reply to Ter-Petrosyan, Kocharian argued that one of the few true decisions taken by Ter-Petrosyan was to appoint himself as the Prime Minister.<sup>62</sup>

*g. Differences of opinion over Turkey and Karabagh*

By blaming Ter-Petrosyan, Kocharian stated that the Armenian Pan-National Movement, which has been presided over by Ter-Petrosyan, lacks a national ideology and is ready to forget the “genocide” and turn Armenia into Turkey’s appendage.<sup>63</sup> Regarding Ter-Petrosyan’s proposal to narrow down the size of the Armenian army, Kocharian labeled him as a man who was going to cede Karabagh, refuse international recognition of the Armenian genocide and become the little brother of Azerbaijan, thus needing no army at all.

In a speech he made at a meeting held on 8 December 2007, Ter-Petrosyan ad-

59 Largin, 21 December 2007, “Two People Hold 17 Percent of the GDP of Armenia.”

60 RFE/RL, 12 December 2008, “Armenian Presidential Hopefuls Declare Assets.”

61 RFE/RL, 16 November 2007.

62 ArmInfo, 26 January 2008. “Robert Kocharyan: One of the Few Levon Ter-Petrosyan’s True Decisions was to Appoint Me Armenian Prime Minister.”

63 Armradio.arm, 6 December 2007. “.AMM is Ready to Forget The Genocide and Turn Armenia into Turkey’s Appendage.”

dressed this statement by pointing out that those who blamed him for being pro-Turkish (Kocharian and Sarkisyan) were top ranked officials of the Communist Party in Karabagh when it belonged to Azerbaijan and that they served Turks sheepishly for a long period. He also mentioned that three generations of his family fought against the Turks in one way or another and that his grandfather had fought in the Mount Musa war. He further stated that at a time when Kocharian and Sarkisyan never heard of the word “genocide,” he was arrested and imprisoned for a week because he had attended a ceremony for the anniversary of the genocide in 1966.<sup>64</sup>

In the same speech, Ter-Petrosyan pointed out that the Armenians did not have the right to repeat the same mistakes they had made at the end of 19<sup>th</sup> and beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> centuries and that they could not trust a third party in Armenian-Turkish relations. He suggested that unless Armenians freed themselves from old complexes and overcame the victim psychology that surrounded them, it would not be possible for them to become a modern nation. Unlike Kocharian, he believes that placing the issue of “genocide” at the centre of Armenian foreign policy is very untimely and that no one can force Turkey to recognize the Armenian “genocide” by sending ultimatums and attempting to cornering Turkey. Another point he made was that the Diaspora should bring the issue of “genocide” up in their respective countries and that Turkey should distinguish between Armenia and the Diaspora since the latter was a consequence of the “genocide.” He also advocated for acting realistically in Turkish-Armenian relations and added that while the events of 1915 constituted “genocide,” Turkey would recognize it sooner or later but it would be realized only in an atmosphere of normal and good neighbourly relations between the two countries.

Ter-Petrosyan stated that Turkish membership to the EU is beneficial for Armenia in economic, political and security terms and that Armenia should refrain from interfering in Turkish-EU relations, for Armenia can neither facilitate nor impede the Turkish bid. He argued that instead of obstructing Turkish membership, Armenia should strive for pressuring Brussels into playing the Armenian card in its relations with Turkey and that once the parties are ready, the EU can set aside Armenian claims including the issue of “genocide”. As it is commonly known, Kocharian governments also supported Turkish membership to the EU but defended the idea that it could happen only after Turkey dropped its pre-conditions for normalizing relations with Armenia. In turn, the Diaspora has

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<sup>64</sup> Arminfo 12 December 2007, “Levon Ter Petyrosyan: We Must Not Base on A Third Party in Armenian Turkish Relations” and Radio Liberty, 10 December 2007, “Ter-Petrosian Reaffirms Conciliatory Line On Turkey.”

adopted a stricter position and wished to see the recognition of the genocide as a prerequisite for Turkey's EU membership.

On the other hand, Ter-Petrosyan believes that Turkey's proposal to establish a joint commission of historians is unacceptable because this would examine whether mass murders of Armenians constituted "genocide." He also criticized Turkey for giving furious reactions to "genocide" resolutions adopted in various countries.

These statements of Ter-Petrosyan disclosed differences between his office and the term of Kocharian when it comes to policies pursued towards Turkey. Sarkisyan, too, is expected to follow a strategy that is mainly in line with that of Kocharian.

*h. Ter-Petrosyan's election manifesto*

In his long election manifesto, if elected, Ter-Petrosyan promised to strive for the dismantling of the existing kleptocratic system and the establishment of full-fledged democracy anchored in free elections, protection of human rights and judicial independence.<sup>65</sup> Also, he made a commitment to end the law-enforcement bodies and the military being used as tools for governmental repression. The manifesto broadly addressed economic issues and included promises on ensuring fair economic competition, absolute protection of private property and the retrieval of huge amounts of money stolen from the people by the wealthy government-connected businessmen. Another important commitment was to crack down on tax evasion. According to Ter-Petrosyan, only 22 percent of the state budget is currently paid by big entrepreneurs, which should have been 75 percent. He also promised that these measures would double the national income per capita and triple the budgetary revenues. He added that in case of a resolution found for the Nagorno-Karabagh conflict, the lifting of economic blockades and the opening of the Turkish-Armenian border would enable more impressive results to be achieved.

The foreign policy section of the manifesto is not very detailed. Ter-Petrosyan argued that he would strengthen Armenia's relations with Russia, Georgia and Iran and that he would spend constructive efforts to normalize relations with Azerbaijan and Turkey.

<sup>65</sup> RFE/RL 7 January 2008, "Ter-Pedrosyan Unveils Election Manifesto."

His remarks on the Karabagh conflict are ambivalent. Ter-Petrosyan promised to show the political will to achieve a compromised peace deal with Azerbaijan that would enable the Karabagh Armenians to exercise their right to self-determination. In doing so, Ter-Petrosyan aimed to prompt the people of Karabagh to determine the status of their country through a referendum (in line with the views of Kocharian). He wants to persuade Azerbaijan to go along with the referendum formula. However, since there are no Azerbaijani people left in Karabagh, there is no point for Azerbaijan to accept this deal.

Many newspapers and numerous TV channels in Armenia belong to wealthy businessmen who support Kocharian and Sarkisyan. These media companies paid attention to Ter-Petrosyan's election campaign as little as possible and also worked to slander the former President. They also made sure that Ter-Petrosyan was to be portrayed as pro-Turkish. For example, a newspaper (Hayots Ashkharh) published some forged photos showing him wearing a fez and waving a Turkish flag, while some others labeled him as "Levon Efendi." This biased attitude of a major part of Armenian media was criticized by the Secretary General of the European Council, Terry Davis, and the EU's Special Representative for the South Caucasus, Peter Semneby.<sup>66</sup>

The most important organization that observed the elections in Armenia was the Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR) which is a branch of the OSCE in Warsaw. In its first interim report, this organization, too, indicated that the majority of the Armenian media was disproportionately against Ter-Petrosyan, while Serzh Sarkisyan was highly favoured.<sup>67</sup>

### **B. Election Results and Demonstrations**

Constant demonstrations by Ter-Petrosyan and his followers before the elections were not tolerated by the Armenian security forces. Every action that exceeded legal limits was investigated with the proponents arrested and prosecuted. Among those who were arrested were Ter-Petrosyan's campaign coordinator Alexandr Azrumyan, a former Minister of Foreign Affairs, who was still in prison by the end on May 2008. However, these arrests did not appear to have drawn ODIHR's attention since the latter only emphasized the bias that favoured Sarkisyan at the expense of Ter-Petrosyan by the media.<sup>68</sup> In return, Ter-Petrosyan appealed to the Constitutional Court of Armenia in order for the Court to postpone the elections

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66 Transitions Online, 14 January 2008, "Presidential Ambitions."

67 RFE/RL, 30 January 2008, "OSCE Deplores 'Excessive' TV Coverage of Sarkisyan."

68 Ibid.

because the obstacles yielded against his campaign had rendered it impossible to maintain. However, this application was rejected.<sup>69</sup>

Aside from the allegations of improper activity, the elections that were held on 19 February 2008 went relatively calm. The votes of the aforementioned four candidates amounted to 97 percent of the total votes. Each candidate's percentage of votes is presented below<sup>70</sup>:

Serzh Sarkisyan	52.8 percent
Levon Ter-Petrosyan	21.5 percent
Arthur Baghdasarian	16.2 percent
Vahan Hovhannissian	6.12 percent

All the opinion surveys indicated that Serzh Sarkisyan would win the elections. The most recent ones also showed that he would be triumphant in the first round. In the beginning, the same polls predicted that Ter-Petrosyan would receive very few votes, yet, as time went by, his share gradually increased. Although there were some rumors of an alliance between Ter-Petrosyan and Baghdassarian, this was never realized. However, it was still clear that even this alliance would not suffice to reach Sarkisyan's numbers.

In their first reports, observers of the Council of Europe, the European Parliament and the ODIHR of the OSCE confirmed that presidential elections were administered mostly in line with the OSCE and the Council of Europe standards, and those official authorities made genuine efforts to address shortcomings noted in previous elections.<sup>71</sup> These observations stood for the legitimization of Sarkisyan's victory, yet Ter-Petrosyan rejected the results and argued that if votes were recounted, he would win with a 65.66 percent while Serzh Sarkisyan would only be the fourth most-voted-for candidate. He also claimed that Baghdassarian would come in second place and Dashnak candidate Hovannissian would be in the third place.<sup>72</sup> Upon his application to the Constitutional Court for the annulment of the elections results,<sup>73</sup> the Court ruled that the former Armenian president and his representatives failed to substantiate their claims that the vote

69 Arminfo, 11 February 2008, "Constitutional Court Starts Considering Presidential Candidate Levon Ter-Petrosian's Application."

70 Armenews, 21 February 2008, "Résultats finaux des élections présidentielles en Arménie."

71 RFE/RL, 20 February 2008, "Armenian Vote 'Largely Democratic.'"

72 Arminfo, 24 February 2008, "Levon Ter-Petrosyan Gives His Version of Results of Past Presidential Election in Armenia."

73 Interfax News Agency, 29 February 2008, "Armenian Presidential Candidate Ter-Petrosian Challenges Election Results in Court."



was manipulated in favor of Serzh Sarkisyan, alleged violations could not have affected the election outcome and that it found only some of the purported evidence of election fraud presented by Ter-Petrosyan as credible, ordering the Office of the Prosecutor-General to investigate it.<sup>74</sup>

Right after the elections, Ter-Petrosyan and his followers held large demonstrations almost everyday to oppose the results. Most of them were organized in the Freedom Square in Yerevan where tents enabled the protest to go on without any pause. There was the impression that Ter-Petrosyan wanted to inspire an 'Orange Revolution' in Armenia as it happened in Ukraine. He was also joined by some retired army generals and officers, some ambassadors from the Foreign Ministry and one of the assistants of the Prosecutor-General. Kocharian, in turn, had some of these people arrested.<sup>75</sup>

On 1 March 2008, the police and other security forces moved to dissolve the demonstrations. As a result of long clashes that lasted until the day after, demonstrators agreed to go home when Ter-Petrosyan called on them to do so.<sup>76</sup> There were ten casualties, one being a policeman, and many injuries.<sup>77</sup> Seventy people, among which there were MPs, were arrested, and these arrests were approved by the Armenian Parliament.<sup>78</sup> President Kocharian declared a state of emergency for twenty days, which was also approved by the Parliament.<sup>79</sup> The state of emergency not only banned all demonstrations, but it also exercised a form of censorship on the press.<sup>80</sup>

Throughout the course of these events, while Sarkisyan was observed to keep a low profile, Kocharian was full-time on stage. This can be explained by Kocharian's need to take measures until Sarkisyan took the presidency. However, it is very obvious it is a huge responsibility to kill some people just because they participated in demonstrations even if they were illegal.

Given these developments in Armenia, the US, the OSCE, the EU, officials of the Council of Europe and UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-Moon stated their concerns. Moreover, representatives of the OSCE and the EU in Armenia met with Kocharian and Sarkisyan in order for the government to normalize the state

74 RFE/RL, 8 March 2008, "Armenian Court Rejects Ter-Petrosian Election Appeal."

75 Eurasia Daily Monitor, 26 February 2008, Armenia in Turmoil after Presidential Election Praised by West."

76 RFE/RL Newline, Vol.12, No.42, Part I, 3 March 2008, "Defeated Armenian Presidential Candidate Tells Supporters to Go Home."

77 Ibid., and RFE/RL, 14 April 2008, "Death Toll in Armenia's Post-election Melee Rises to Ten."

78 RFE/RL Newline, Vol.12, No.44, Part I, 5 March 2008, "Armenian Parliament Gives Green Light for Deputies' Arrest."

79 Le Monde, 1 March 2008, "L'Etat d'urgence en Arménie contre les manifestants de l'opposition."

80 Panorama.am, 2 March 2008, "Extraordinary Circumstances in Armenia."

of affairs and minimize the period allocated to the state of emergency.<sup>81</sup> Later, US Secretary of State Rice stated that some of the foreign aid granted to Armenia could be frozen.<sup>82</sup>

In a resolution it accepted on 13 March 2008 on the post-election incidents in Armenia, the European Parliament expressed its regret for the losses of life, urged all parties to act responsibly, called on authorities to investigate the violence, lift the state of emergency, to restore media freedom, and to release citizens detained for exercising their right of peaceful assembly.<sup>83</sup>

Just a few days before the state of emergency ended, the Armenian Parliament adopted a new law forbidding holding demonstrations under certain circumstances. Accordingly, local authorities have the right to deny permission to demonstrations which are deemed to endanger the public security and the constitutional system.<sup>84</sup> When the state of emergency ended on 21 March, small-scaled demonstrations started again, which motivated the police to interfere and arrest approximately 50 people.<sup>85</sup>

The Council of Europe Parliamentary Assembly accepted a comprehensive resolution on 17 April 2008 on the issue of the functioning of democratic institutions in Armenia. In sum, the text condemned the violent post-election crackdown on the opposition; called for an independent, transparent and credible inquiry on the 1 March incidents; asked the government to release persons detained on politically motivated charges and to annul the law that banned some demonstrations. The resolution further stated that failure to comply with these points would mean that the credibility of Armenia as a member of the Council of Europe is put into doubt and that unless there was significant progress on these requests, the Advisory Board might consider the possibility of suspending the voting rights of the Armenian delegation at the opening of its June 2008 session.

Apparently the Advisory Board of the Council of Europe severely condemned the treatment of the opposition by government officials and warned Armenia that the voting rights of its delegation at the Board might be suspended unless some

81 RFE/RL Newswire, Vol.12, No.42, Part I, 3 March 2008, "OSCE, Council of Europe, USA Condemns Armenian Violence."

82 Medimax, 13 March 2008, "U.S. Secretary of State Stated That the Realization of MCA Program in Armenia May Suffer from the State of Emergency."

83 PanArmenian.Net, 18 March 2008, "EU Adopts Resolution Calling on RA Authorities to Lift Emergency Rule"

84 Armenews, 19 March 2008, "Le parlement arménien adopte une loi visant à restreindre les manifestations."

85 RFE/RL Newswire, Vol. 12, No. 56, Part I, 25 March 2008, "Armenian Opposition Resumes Protests After State Of Emergency."

measures to consolidate democracy are taken.

In meetings held with officials of the Council of Europe, the agreement reached with leading state representatives to make changes to the recently-amended assembly law was welcomed by the Council of Europe and the OSCE.<sup>86</sup>

#### **IV. THE NEW PRESIDENT AND THE NEW GOVERNMENT**

Serzh Sarkisyan took up his post as the new president after he took oath at a ceremony held on 9 April 2008 in the Opera where MPs and some other guests were present. The Opera and its surrounding areas were encircled by security forces who did not tolerate any demonstrations. However, approximately a thousand people protested Sarkisyan in another part of the city.<sup>87</sup>

In the speech he made in this ceremony, Sarkisyan praised Robert Kocharian and thanked him. Along with some general promises, the new president declared that he would carry out a proactive foreign policy and do everything to find a just, peaceful and favourable solution to the Karabagh conflict.

Despite the fact that Serzh Sarkisyan won the elections with a decisive majority of 52%, violent incidents that followed the elections culminated in a political crisis in Armenia. For the sake of overcoming this calamity, the new government should rely on the broadest possible constituency, which was also thought to serve to isolate Ter-Petrosyan and his followers.

It was first Sarkisyan and Baghdassarian who signaled readiness to co-operate. In an article they co-submitted to the Washington Post on 17 March 2008 entitled "Moving Forward in Armenia," Sarkisyan and Baghdassarian strongly criticized Ter-Petrosyan's pre-election and post-election attitudes and claimed that they were competitors in the presidential elections but they were united in a desire to end the current crisis and put Armenia back on track. They argued that for this sake, they formed a political alliance that stood for a majority of 70 percent of the votes of the Armenian people, which was a serious and solid mandate. They promised that they would pursue ambitious but realistic reforms that would strengthen their democracy and the nation's socio-economic progress. In that moment of crisis, they stated that they had agreed to assume responsibility for joint governance.

The article also suggested that the first of the foreign policy problems was the Karabagh conflict while the second was normalization of relations with Turkey. It was asserted

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86 Press Release, Council of Europe Press Division, 22 April 2008.

87 Voice of America News, 9 April 2008, "Armenia Inaugurates New President."

that only a government with such a wide popular support could successfully resolve all these problems. On the genocide allegations, the article repeated the discourse of Kocharian and stated that Sarkisyan and Baghdassarian would also continue to ask the international community to recognize the Armenian “genocide”, though this issue should not prevent them from moving forward. The expression of “moving forward” must have referred to the establishment of diplomatic relations with Turkey.

On 21 March 2008, four political parties signed a protocol to form a coalition government.<sup>88</sup> They were the Armenian Republican Party, the Party for Prosperous Armenia, the Party for the Rule of Law, and Armenian Revolutionary Federation. According to the results of the 12 May 2007 elections, this coalition possessed 113 seats in the 131-seated Armenian Parliament, thus enjoying a majority of 86 percent. The only party which stayed out of the coalition was Raffi Hovannisian’s Heritage Party that had seven seats. In addition, there were 11 independent MPs the majority of which were pro-government. Within this framework, it can be argued that opposition does not exist in the Armenian Parliament. However, it should not be forgotten that opposition operates outside the Parliament since Levon Ter-Petrosyan received 21.5 percent of the votes and that his supporters did not hesitate to go outside, protest and clash with the police if necessary.

For a while, there was ambiguity about who was going to be the new Prime Minister and there were even rumors that Robert Kocharian might be up for the job. Kocharian’s dissolution of the demonstrations by force and his image of consolidating security in the country strengthened these views. However, in a speech he delivered on 14 March, Serzh Sarkisyan declared that he would not appoint Kocharian as the new Prime Minister and that if this was planned, it would have been announced before the elections in line with the way Russian President Vladimir Putin and Dimitri Medvedev did such an action.<sup>89</sup>

Surprisingly, Sarkisyan appointed the President of the Central Bank, Tigran Torosyan as Prime Minister on 9 April 2008. Born in 1960 and aged 48, Tigran Torosyan had been appointed to the Presidency of the Central Bank in 1998.<sup>90</sup> Tigran Torosyan is known to be a respected expert on finance and economics. Although he has had good relations with Kocharian (and Sarkisyan), he did not have a proper political profile. He owed this post to Sarkisyan and in return Sarkisyan will have the opportunity to control the government closely.

88 Armradio.am, 21 March 2008, “Four Parliamentary Forces Sign a Coalition Agreement.”

89 RFE/RL, 14 March 2008, “Sarkisyan Rules out Job Swap with Kocharian.”

90 RFE/RL Newswire, Vol. 12, No. 68, Part I, 10 April 2008, “New Armenian Premier Appointed.”

The new government was declared on 21 April 2008 and the composition of the ministers was as follows: 2 Republican, 3 Armenian Revolutionary Federation (Dashnaks), 3 Prosperous Armenia, 2 Rule of Law and 7 not party-associated including the Prime Minister. It would be appropriate to conclude that the latter category consisted of those chosen by the President or the Prime Minister.

For the following reasons Serzh Sarkisyan is in a position to control the government: he was the president of the Republican Party before the elections, he had close relations with the Party for Prosperous Armenia, and he appointed the Prime Minister and non-party associated ministers.

The new Foreign Minister of Armenia is Edward Nalbantyan, who was born in 1956 and graduated from the International Institute of Moscow. Having served in Libya and Egypt embassies as a member of the USSR foreign service until 1992, he was then transferred to the Armenian Foreign Affairs where he was appointed to Egypt, Morocco and Oman. In 1999, he began to serve as the Armenian Ambassador to Paris until his appointment as the Minister of Foreign Affairs.

The former Minister of Foreign Affairs, Vartan Oskanyan, was a member of the Diaspora (Syria) and had acquired Armenian citizenship only after he was appointed as the Minister. He was regarded as the representative of the Diaspora by the Armenian government. Oskanyan did not pay much attention to Russia, which was directly addressed by Kocharian. On the contrary, Nalbantyan is a product of the USSR, where he studied and worked. That is why it is certain that he will seek closer relations with Russia during his office. Furthermore, Serzh Sarkisyan has intimate relations with Russia as well, probably more than what Kocharian had built.

When Oskanyan left the Ministry, there were rumors that a Diaspora Ministry would be formed. Although this was not realized, a new department entitled “State Committee for Relations with the Diaspora” was established in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.<sup>91</sup>

Prime Minister Torosyan declared the Government Plan on 28 April 2008 in the Parliament and, as was anticipated, he comfortably received the vote of confidence (88 for and 3 against) two days later. The Government Plan did not address foreign policy matters and confined itself to general remarks and socio-economic issues.<sup>92</sup>

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91 Ibid.

92 RFE/RL, 30 April 2008, “New Armenian Cabinet Wins Vote of Confidence.”

# ESTABLISHMENT AND ACTIVITIES OF THE FRENCH EASTERN LEGION IN THE LIGHT OF FRENCH ARCHIVES (NOVEMBER 1917-APRIL 1918)

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**Abstract:** *This article is the fourth one of a series of articles regarding the establishment and activities of the Eastern Legion and intends to examine the changes in the structure of the Legion and the debates about the composition and activities of it between November 1917 and March 1918. In this period, the Legion was still far away to be perceived as a battalion ready to attack, since its recruitment system as well as its institutional structure had not been well established yet. What is more, between the last months of 1917 and first months of 1918, disputes between Armenian and Syrian components of the Legion continued; recruitments from Latin America had been disrupted due to several problems; and because of some prominent Armenians' demand to participate the Legion, there emerged significant debates. In sum, this article analyzes developments regarding the Eastern Legion in the aforementioned period through French archival documents.*

**Key Words:** *Eastern Legion, Armenians, Syrians, Mouchégh Seropyan, Latin America.*

**Öz:** *Bu makale Doğu Lejyonu'nun kuruluşu ve faaliyetleri ile ilgili olarak kaleme alınan bir dizi makalenin dördüncüsüdür ve 1917 yılının Kasım ayından 1918 yılının Mart ayına kadar geçen dönemde Lejyon'un yapısında meydana gelen değişiklikler ve Lejyon hakkındaki tartışmaları ortaya koymayı amaçlamaktadır. Bu dönemde Lejyon halen saldırıya hazır bir birlik imajı vermekten uzak, askere alım sistemini ve kurumsal yapısını oluşturamamış bir görüntü arz etmektedir. Bunun yanı sıra, 1917 yılının son ayları ile 1918 yılının ilk ayları Lejyon'u oluşturan iki ana topluluk olan Ermeniler ve Suriyeliler arasındaki çatışmaların su yüzüne çıkmaya devam ettiği, Amerika kıtasından yapılan gönüllü sevkiateilerinin aksadığı ve Lejyon'a bazı önemli Ermenilerin katılımı ile ilgili sorun yaşandığı bir dönem olmuştur. Kısacası bu makale Fransız arşiv belgelerinden yararlanarak adı geçen dönemde Doğu Lejyonu ile ilgili gelişmeleri analiz etmektedir.*

**Anahtar Kelimeler:** *Doğu Lejyonu, Ermeniler, Suriyeliler, Mouchégh Seropyan, Güney Amerika.*

## **Introduction**

This article is the fourth in a series of articles written about the establishment and activities of the French Eastern Legion. The aim of this study is to present the changes in the structure of the Legion from November 1917 to April 1918 and other significant debates about the Legion. In this period, the Legion displayed an outlook that was still far from reflecting an image of a military entity ready for attack. Furthermore, the Legion could not strongly establish its system of recruitment and institutional structure. The last months of 1917 and the first months of 1918 had been a period in which clashes between two main groups that constituted the Legion, namely the Armenians and Syrians. Additional obstacles plaguing the Legion included the transportation of volunteers from the American continent being hindered and encountering problems regarding the participation of upper-strata Armenians in the Legion.

The article comprised of four parts. In the first part the developments of the Eastern Legion is briefly summarized. Particular emphasis is placed of why, especially, the Syrian volunteers were relegated to the secondary status in the Monarga Camp of the Eastern Legion. After analyzing the dynamics involved in the dispatch of volunteers from the American continent and problems experienced during these dispatches in the second part, the third part addresses the financial and administrative problems of Legion. The last section analyzes why some Armenian elites who wanted to join the Eastern Legion developed into a problematic issue between the French Ministry of War and Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

As in other articles of this series, this article is also based on the documents provided from the French State Archives. These authentic archival documents are extremely important not only they reflect the general mood of the period but also they present how Armenians and Syrians were perceived by the French. These documents have been carefully examined in an impartial manner, and the findings are presented in this article without biased interpretation. Scientificity and impartiality unfortunately are disregarded in many works written both in the West and in Turkey on the Armenian question. To distance this study from this problem as much as possible, the archival documents were consulted to provide the researcher with the primary material of first-hand sources. In brief, this article makes use of only these primary sources. The developments regarding the Eastern Legion in the period from November 1917 to April 1918 are presented in an impartial manner to the degree that the social sciences methodology allows.

## 1. Developments Regarding the Eastern Legion

It is understood from the telegrams of Commander Romieu, the Commander of the Eastern Legion, that he sent to the French Ministry of War that there was some friction between the Armenians and Syrians in the Famagusta Camp of the Eastern Legion in Cyprus. Military capability of the Syrians was low, and they made trouble for the directors of camps, especially for Commander Romieu who was in charge of the camp. The French officers of the camp described the Armenians as being more conscious and braver than the Syrians. Furthermore, the officers were so dissatisfied with incompetence of the Syrian soldiers that even the abolishment of the Syrian troops from the Eastern Legion was discussed at some point.<sup>1</sup>

Through a secret telegram on December 5, 1917, the Ministry of War assessed all of these complaints, but rejected the request of Commander Romieu to expel the Syrians from the Legion. In the telegram signed by General Alby, Chief of the African Department of the Ministry, George Clemenceau,<sup>2</sup> who replaced Paul Painlevé as Prime Minister and Minister of War on November 16, asked Commander Romieu not to dismiss the Syrians admitted to the Legion until that day. The Ministry also asked the officers to discipline the Syrian soldiers by treating them with patience and good-will and to trying “to yield maximum performance” from them.<sup>3</sup> Additionally, it was stated in the telegram that retaining the Syrian troops had a political importance. In brief, having already been faced with difficulties in recruitment, France did not have the luxury of wasting the Syrian volunteers. Despite the complaints, it was necessary for the Eastern Legion to have remarkable number of soldiers – even though they lacked military qualities – to be operational.

In this regard, efforts to increase the number of conscripts for the Eastern Legion were sustained in the early days of 1918. In his letter to Foreign Minister Stéphane Pichon<sup>4</sup> on January 2, 1918, Clemenceau mentioned an interesting idea that

1 Mustafa Serdar Palabıyık, “Fransız Arşiv Belgeleri Işığında Fransız Doğu Lejyonu’nun Kuruluşu ve Faaliyetleri”, *Ermeni Araştırmaları*, No. 25, (July-November 2007), pp. 116-117.

2 Georges Benjamin Clemenceau (1841–1929): French Statesman. He served as the prime minister of France through 1906–1909 and 1917–1920. Clemenceau, who was a physician, joined the French National Assembly after the Prussia-French War of 1870-71 and played a leading role in the Paris Commune. The politician, who also served as the Minister of Interior and the Minister of Justice, provided stability to the French politics in the later years of the WW I following rapidly changing governments throughout the war.

3 The classified telegram to Commander Romieu from George Clemenceau, President of the Council and the Minister of War, December 5, 1917, the French Foreign Ministry Archive, File No. 893, *Turquie: Legion d’Orient III (Novembre 1917-Avril 1918)*, p. 58.

4 Stéphane Pichon (1857-1933): French Statesman. Pichon, who served as the Minister of Foreign Affairs in many governments



was offered to him. Accordingly, a French squad – that was composed of Syrian volunteers – was to be joined to Syrian troops of the Eastern Legion in Cyprus. Clemenceau stated that Commander Romieu corresponded affirmatively with this regard; hence, it was decided to move this squad to the base in Cyprus.<sup>5</sup> This movement intensified frictions between the Syrians and the Armenians in the Eastern Legion.

It appears that an attempt took place in late 1917 to appoint Commander Romieu as military attaché to Athens. A classified telegram from the Prime Minister and the Minister of War to the Chief of the French Military Delegation in Athens on January 13 underlined the necessity Commander Romieu continuing his post as the commander of the Eastern Legion in Cyprus. Moreover, the telegraph stated that it would be inappropriate to appoint him as military attaché to Athens.<sup>6</sup> It was further counseled that another officer should be designated to that position. Clemenceau, who was in charge of the Ministry of War in addition to his premiership and command post, opposed the appointment of this outstanding officer – who assumed the administration of the Legion since its foundation – to a passive mission such as military attaché to Athens. There is no clue in the archival documents as to why Commander Romieu was attempted to be assigned in Athens; however, it appears that some officials in the Ministry of War were disturbed with his sharp manner and clearly-stated ideas.

Consequently, regarding the Eastern Legion it was decided to increase the number of soldiers to be deployed in the Legion, to take extra care in the training of the Syrian troops; command of the Legion remained in the hands of Commander Romieu in the period between November 1917 and February 1918.

## 2. Dispatching Volunteers from South America

Since the number of recruitments from territories under Ottoman sovereignty to the Eastern Legion that planned to be composed of Ottoman Armenians and Syrian Christian-Arabs remained limited, the French Ministry of War appealed

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between the years of 1906-1920, was a politician whom Clemenceau trusted. The experienced politician who also served as the Minister of Foreign Affairs in the Cabinet of Clemenceau through 1917-1920 played a leading role in the Paris Peace Conference that was convened in 1919.

5 The Correspondence to the Foreign Minister Stephen Pichon from George Clemenceau, President of the Council and the Minister of War, January 2, 1918, the French Foreign Ministry Archive, File No. 893, *Turquie: Legion d'Orient III (Novembre 1917-Avril 1918)*, p. 71.

6 The classified telegram sent to the Chief of the French Military Mission in Athena by Gramat from the Office of George Clemenceau, President of the Council and the Minister of War, January 13, 1918, the French Foreign Ministry Archive, File No. 893, *Turquie: Legion d'Orient III (Novembre 1917-Avril 1918)*, p. 85.

to Armenian and Syrian communities living in South and North America for enlistment. These communities included Armenians who emigrated from the Ottoman territories to the Americas for employment since the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century; however, the Armenian national consciousness remained very high. As for the Syrians, they were living in South America in dispersed communities; therefore, in comparison with the Armenians, gathering around a common ideal among them was very low. Hence, sending two well-known delegates to the region, the French Ministry of War attempted to mobilize the Syrians under the French flag to struggle together against the “common enemy,” the Ottoman State. As a result of the intensive propagation, Armenian and Syrian volunteers from the New World started to be dispatched to France.

The dispatches continued, albeit decreasingly, in the period covered in this article, i.e. November 1917 – April 1918. However, there were also some large-scale dispatches. For instance, the departure of an Armenian group of 88 people from Marseilles to Port Said on November 17 to join the Eastern Legion was reported to the Foreign Affairs Ministry in a correspondence sent from the Ministry of Interior on December 18, 1917.<sup>7</sup> Up to then, it was one of the largest dispatches. It is known that volunteers coming from America were gathering in the centers such as Marseilles and La Havre; having received health check-ups and registered in these centers, they were then dispatched to the Legion. Thus, the transfer of November 17 provided the induction processing for most of the Armenians waiting in Marseilles to the Eastern Legion.

Meanwhile, transfer of the Syrian volunteers from South America continued. According to a telegram dated December 24, 1917, seven Syrians were sent to Marseilles from Rio de Janeiro via the ship *Plata*, five Syrians via the ship *Garona*, and three Syrians by the ship *Samara* were sent to Bordeaux.<sup>8</sup> On another occasion, it was stated that an additional 19 Syrians, this time from Buenos Aires, came to Brest with the ship *Ouessant* on January 8, 1918.<sup>9</sup> According to the information given in a correspondence of the Governor of Finistère dated December 27, 1917, passports of those Syrians were regular and approved by the French Consul

7 The Correspondence from Interior Minister Jules Pams to Foreign Minister Stephen Pichon, December 18, 1917, The French Foreign Ministry Archive, File No. 893, *Turquie: Legion d'Orient III (Novembre 1917-Avril 1918)*, p. 62.

8 The Telegram from French Minister Emerat in Rio de Janeiro to Foreign Minister Stephen Pichon, December 24, 1917, The French Foreign Ministry Archive, File No. 893, *Turquie: Legion d'Orient III (Novembre 1917-Avril 1918)*, p. 63.

9 The Correspondence from Interior Minister Jules Pams to Foreign Minister Stephen Pichon, January 8, 1918, The French Foreign Ministry Archive, File No. 893, *Turquie: Legion d'Orient III (Novembre 1917-Avril 1918)*, p. 74.

in Buenos Aires.<sup>10</sup> In the same manner, Minister of Interior Jules Pams<sup>11</sup> informed Foreign Affairs Minister Pichon on January 14, 1918 that an additional seven Syrians came to Le Havre city by the ship *Dupleix*, and stated that their passports were given by the French Consul in Rio de Janeiro and there was no problem in their entry to the country.<sup>12</sup> In brief, in accordance with the instructions given by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the French missions in South America prepared the passports of Syrian volunteers to be sent to France with great care and tried to prevent any problem with their entry to France. Otherwise, every Syrian who has denied entry into France meant an additional financial burden for the French government.

The dispatch of volunteers continued in January 1918, as well. In the correspondence of Minister of Foreign Affairs Pichon to Prime Minister and Minister of War Clemenceau on January 23, it was noted that two Lebanese from Montevideo were also sent to Bordeaux by the ship *Garona*.<sup>13</sup> In a telegram sent from the French mission in Rio de Janeiro by Mr. Emerat to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs on February 5, 1918, it was stated that 35 Syrian volunteers were dispatched to the port of Le Havre by the ship *Santarem*.<sup>14</sup>

The continuing dispatch of volunteers included some persons lacking necessary requirements for military service. The problem which led to heavy financial burdens for the French officials could not be solved in the period under study. For instance, a Syrian volunteer, Samaha Dimitri, whose health was inadequate for military service, died in Pasteur Hospital in Le Havre on September 8, 1917. Burial of his corpse and informing his family about his death caused a great problem.<sup>15</sup>

- 10 The Correspondence from the Governor of Finistère to Interior Minister Jules Pams, December 27, 1917, The French Foreign Ministry Archive, File No. 893, *Turquie: Legion d'Orient III (Novembre 1917-Avril 1918)*, p. 75.
- 11 Jules Pams (1852–1930): French politician and statesman. Pams, who endured his political carrier that started in 1889 as radical socialist deputy from the region of Pyrénées-Orientales from 1893 to 1904, served as the Minister of Agriculture through 1911-13, and as the Minister of Interior in the Clemenceau Cabinet of 1917-1920. Pams, who was elected as Senator in 1904 sustain this position until his death in 1930.
- 12 The Correspondence from Interior Minister Jules Pams to Foreign Minister Stephen Pichon, January 14, 1918, The French Foreign Ministry Archive, File No. 893, *Turquie: Legion d'Orient III (Novembre 1917-Avril 1918)*, p. 86.
- 13 The Correspondence from Foreign Minister Pichon to Prime Minister and War Minister Clemenceau, January 23, 1918, The French Foreign Ministry Archive, File No. 893, *Turquie: Legion d'Orient III (Novembre 1917-Avril 1918)*, p. 96.
- 14 Note from the French Mission in Rio de Janeiro to the Foreign Ministry, February 5, 1918, The French Foreign Ministry Archive, File No. 893, *Turquie: Legion d'Orient III (Novembre 1917-Avril 1918)*, p. 114.
- 15 The Correspondence from President of the Council and Minister of War Clemenceau addressed to Foreign Minister Pichon, February 1, 1918, The French Foreign Ministry Archive, File No. 893, *Turquie: Legion d'Orient III (Novembre 1917-Avril 1918)*, p. 110.

In another instance with regard to the dispatch of volunteers unsuitable for military service, the correspondence of Minister of Interior Pams to Minister of Foreign Affairs Pichon on January 4, 1918, reveals that two Syrian volunteers, namely Jorge Pedro Ahesse and Jose Kurl Aziz, were not fit for military service.<sup>16</sup>

Meanwhile, correspondence sent from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs to French missions in the Americas on February 16, reveals another interesting detail.<sup>17</sup> According to that correspondence, the Ministry stated that one Belgian, one Portuguese, one French, one British, and two Greek citizens came to port Le Havre with the ship *Santarem* together with the Syrian volunteers, and warned the missions that they should not engage in recruiting volunteers in such a way from that time on, for only the Armenians and the Syrians living in the Ottoman Middle East were admitted to the Legion; it was viewed as inconvenient to include citizens from other countries in the Legion no matter how willing they were to join it.

### 3. Financial and Administrative Issues Regarding the Legion

An additional problem with regard to the Legion was related to payment of travel costs of the volunteers dispatched from the Americas. It was stated above that the French government was paying the travel costs of volunteers coming from the Americas via the Armenian and Syrian institutions in France; however, there was some friction with regard to payments for those volunteers deemed unfit for military service. This time the problem stemmed from the fact that a large sum amount of payment was failed to be made due to the disagreements among the French state institutions.

Correspondence between Prime Minister and Minister of War Clemenceau to Minister of Foreign Affairs Pichon sent on December 26 reveals the details of that issue.<sup>18</sup> According to that correspondence, the President of the Armenian National Delegation (*Délégation Nationale Arménienne*), Bogos Nubar Pasha asked Prime Minister to take an initiative to pay 20.798,50 US dollars to match the cost of dispatches from South America between June 9 and August 2. Soon later, Sevadjian, President of the Central Committee of Armenian Volunteers (*Comité*

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16 The Correspondence from Interior Minister Jules Pams to Foreign Minister Stephen Pichon, January 4, 1918, The French Foreign Ministry Archive, File No. 893, *Turquie: Legion d'Orient III (Novembre 1917-Avril 1918)*, p. 73.

17 The Correspondence from the Foreign Ministry to the French Missions in America, February 16, 1918, The French Foreign Ministry Archive, File No. 893, *Turquie: Legion d'Orient III (Novembre 1917-Avril 1918)*, p. 139.

18 The Correspondence from President of the Council and Minister of War Clemenceau to Foreign Minister Pichon, December 18, 1917, The French Foreign Ministry Archive, File No. 893, *Turquie: Legion d'Orient III (Novembre 1917-Avril 1918)*, p. 66.

*Central des Volontaires Arméniens*) reiterated the same demand. Following these demands, a bill was sent to the French Treasury asking to pay 118.106,85 Franks, the equivalent of 20.798,50 US Dollars. That payment was to be made out in the name of Sevadjian. The bill that had been sent to the Treasury on December 12 was refused to be paid on December 18; that is, the Treasury rejected to pay that bill because Sevadjian had no legal title. The refusal letter included:

“Mr. Savadjian could provide neither seals of the *Comité Central des Volontaires Arméniens* and documents to certify his legal status, nor certification of Mayor of the Region (*le Maire de l'Arrondissement*) to confirm that the aforementioned Committee exists and it is operating.”<sup>19</sup>

In brief, the French Treasury did not accept the Committee as a legal collocator. Upon that refusal, Sevadjian appealed again to Clemenceau and asked him to provide legal personality for himself and for the Committee. Otherwise, he would never be paid because the Central Committee of the Armenian Volunteers lacked a legal existence according to officials of the Treasury, and he had no authority to collect that money. In brief, the Committee acted until that time without a legal status; that is, it had sustained its activities illegally. The question of how and why this committee from whose existence even the French Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs were informed was regarded as collocator is remarkable since it adds a different dimension to the French-Armenian relations and status of the Armenians for the French.

Upon Sevadjian's appeal to entitle the Committee – hence himself – with a legal status, Clemenceau asked the Minister of Foreign Affairs to report to whom previous payments were made. He thought that if there was not a committee with legal status in France, then, the address might be a committee in the United States. Consequently, Clemenceau ended his correspondence asking for a probe into the issue and to report outcomes to himself.

Meanwhile, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs decided to seek approval for paying 118.106,85 Franks to Bogos Nubar Pasha, President of the Armenian National Delegation (AND) which was recognized by the French government as a legal organization. In his response to the demand of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Clemenceau stated that the Treasury document numbered 7606 included the

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19 The Correspondence from President of the Council and Minister of War Clemenceau to Foreign Minister Pichon, December 18, 1917, The French Foreign Ministry Archive, File No. 893, *Turquie: Legion d'Orient III (Novembre 1917-Avril 1918)*, p. 66.

order to pay that amount of money to Bogos Nubar Pasha; hence funds were released.<sup>20</sup> However, in his letter to the Minister of Foreign Affairs dated February 12, Bogos Nubar Pasha expressed his grievance that the order of payment from the Ministry of War was not received by the AND. Having recalled that he and the Minister of Foreign Affairs had agreed to solve technical problems on this matter, Pasha reiterated his request for payment. This issue was left hanging in the air in the period under study.

The problem of payments was not the only hurdle with regard to the Legion in this period. It is known that there were some troubles with regard to recruiting volunteers. The French Consul in New York strived to explain reasons that were causing those problems in correspondence to Jules Jusserand, ambassador of France to the US on January 2, 1918.<sup>21</sup> According to that correspondence, the Syrians were no more willing to enlist as in the previous times; the major reason for this was disagreement among the Syrians and the Lebanese. It was argued that as long as the animosity between these two people decreased, the number of volunteers would increase. The contestation between the Christian Arabs living in Lebanon and Syria, which would be two substantial components of the Greater Syria Project of France, was running high not only in their own countries but also among the Christian Arab communities in South America. That, in turn, led to troubles in conscripting volunteers.

According to his correspondence, the Consul did not trust the committees that were active in the United States; he described them as passive and badly organized entities, arguing that those committees should not be relied upon for their willingness to recruit volunteers. He recommended that volunteers should be conscripted from among those unrelated to the committees rather than people suggested by them. Nevertheless, the important thing in admission of volunteers was not the suggestion of the committees, but the convenience for volunteers for military service and their willingness to participate in the Legion. In the Consul's view, those sorts of independent volunteers could easily be managed if they were not under the control of the committees. In other words, in view of the French diplomats, those committees were the structures that were harming the strength and the prestige of France in the region; as such these structures should not be relied upon much.

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20 The Correspondence from Prime Minister and Minister of War George Clemenceau to Foreign Minister Stephen Pichon, February 11, 1918, The French Foreign Ministry Archive, File No. 893, *Turquie: Legion d'Orient III (Novembre 1917-Avril 1918)*, p. 120.

21 The Correspondence from the French Consul in New York to French Ambassador to New York, Jusserand, January 2, 1918, The French Foreign Ministry Archive, File No. 893, *Turquie: Legion d'Orient III (Novembre 1917-Avril 1918)*, pp. 82-83.

The Consul had an additional suggestion: At that time, France had commissioned recruiting volunteers to the officials of the American army. Those volunteers were registering to the lists of American volunteers. Direct recruitment by France would necessitate expensive propaganda, and despite that propaganda the outcome would not be better; therefore, the Consul recommended continuation of that practice. The US participation in the war alongside the Allied powers helped France, which was faced with economic difficulties; and France tried to decrease costs of conscripting by commissioning conscription process to the US.

Approximately one week after the correspondence, the Consul wrote another letter addressing Minister of Foreign Affairs Pichon on January 10, 1918.<sup>22</sup> He reported in the letter that the friction between leaders of the Lebanese and Syrian communities in New York had decreased to some extent, yet some of the Syrians had begun to question the loyalty and reliance of those leaders to France. It affirmed the righteousness of the Consul in his suggestions which were made in his correspondence to Jusserand.

In the meantime, a note submitted by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs to the Cabinet on January 22 stated that Dr. Lakah and Mr. Merdam, the two delegates of the Central Committee of Syria, completed their activities in South America, and they would leave the region for France on February 2.<sup>23</sup> Having praised their dedicated service to France and having underlined the delicate material situation of the Committee, it was stated in the note that a decision was made to allocate some funds through the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, at least to cover the costs of the return trip of the delegates. According to the note, Dr. Lakah and Mr. Merdam traveled to, and operated in, Brazil, Argentina, Chile, and some other South American countries; throughout these travels and activities, they spent their own money in some urgent cases in addition to all money allocated to themselves. For that reason, they asked the French government to pay 3000 Franks. Foreign Ministry Official Margerie argued to be more generous; according to him, it was appropriate to pay 13,000 Franks from the Special Funds to the two delegates. It was requested to deposit the money into the account of the two delegates in Santiago de Chile. Later, it was stated in a letter to Sukru Ganem, Chairperson of Central Committee of Syria, that the money could be taken from the French minister in Buenos Aires, and it was underlined that since mission of the commit-

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22 The Correspondence from the French Consul in New York to Foreign Minister, January 10, 1918, The French Foreign Ministry Archive, File No. 893, *Turquie: Legion d'Orient III (Novembre 1917-Avril 1918)*, p. 81.

23 The Briefing note prepared by the French Foreign Ministry for the Cabinet, January 22, 1918, The French Foreign Ministry Archive, File No. 893, *Turquie: Legion d'Orient III (Novembre 1917-Avril 1918)*, p. 95.

tee was ended in South America, the Foreign Ministry would not pay anymore.<sup>24</sup> All of these events reveal that France took serious measures to decrease the cost of conscripting volunteers.

Henceforth, troubles in North America with regard to recruiting volunteers became apparent in South America as well. A telegram of the French minister plenipotentiary in Rio de Janeiro, Claudel, to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs on January 28 demonstrated that this problem reached critical levels.<sup>25</sup> In the first paragraph of the telegram, Claudel had to suggest ceasing the recruitment of Syrian-originated volunteers in Brazil in accordance with the letters of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Ministry of War. It was emphasized that the recruitment activities were going very slowly especially in recent times. Furthermore, the telegram stated that it seemed unreasonable to anticipate positive outcomes in the future as well.

In spite of all discouraging developments, Claudel disagreed with the idea of the complete uselessness of the recruitment activities, which was increasingly adopted by some pundits. According to him, the propaganda activities resulted in bringing dispersed Syrian communities in the region together, and stimulated some sense of responsibility towards France. Claudel implied that this sense might contribute to the economic interests of France in the future, despite the Syrians not positively contributing to France's military interests: "The Syrian is a bad soldier as much as he is a good merchant" (*Autant le Syrien est mauvais soldat, autant il est bon commerçant*).<sup>26</sup> According to Claudel, the Syrians in South America were "very precious instruments of action" for France (*un instrument d'action très précieux*). In short, whereas Claudel was rather cautious for cooperation with the Syrians in South America on military issues, he underlined the necessity to avoid any action to estrange them further. Those communities that would be grateful to France after the war could be utilized for French economic interests.

#### 4. The Issue of Participation of Some Leading Figures to the Legion

As it is stated above, the Eastern Legion was designed as an initiative to include mostly middle and low-class Armenians and Syrians. However, in time, some leading and well-known Armenians started to insist upon the issue of joining the Legion.

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24 The Letter from the French Foreign Ministry to Sukru Ganem, President of Syria Central Committee, January 28, 1918, The French Foreign Ministry Archive, File No. 893, *Turquie: Legion d'Orient III (Novembre 1917-Avril 1918)*, p. 104.

25 The telegram from French minister in Rio de Janeiro, Claudel to the Foreign Ministry, January 28, 1918, The French Foreign Ministry Archive, File No. 893, *Turquie: Legion d'Orient III (Novembre 1917-Avril 1918)*, p. 103.

26 The telegram from French minister in Rio de Janeiro, Claudel to the Foreign Ministry, January 28, 1918, The French Foreign Ministry Archive, File No. 893, *Turquie: Legion d'Orient III (Novembre 1917-Avril 1918)*, p. 103.



These Armenians were mostly clerics who wished to assume the religious affairs of the Legion. Those requests constituted the subject of a series of correspondence between the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Ministry of War and the commanders of the Eastern Legion.

Initially, the French minister plenipotentiary in Cairo sent a telegram on December 29, 1917 stating that an Armenian archbishop named Daniel Agapian requested to join the Eastern Legion as a cleric (*aumônier*).<sup>27</sup> According to the telegram, Daniel Agapian was a former delegate of the Armenian Patriarchate in Istanbul, and he was a refugee in Jerusalem at that time. He expressed that some other bishops also wanted to join the Legion for fighting, and they considered to take active role in the struggle carried out by their fellow citizens, as well. In response to the telegram on January 19, 1918, it was denoted that minister's recommendations regarding the political dimensions of the issue were under consideration; the minister was certainly asked to consult with Romieu, Commander of the Eastern Legion, before the final resolution.<sup>28</sup>

According to the view of Commander Romieu, which was transmitted on January 15, in principle, he had no objection to this appointment.<sup>29</sup> In fact, there was already a cleric in the Legion, named Vartabed Bekiarian; however, Romieu thought that a more efficient cleric would be more influential over the civil Armenians who were still hesitant and shy. Being over the age of 60, Agapian was not a very active cleric. For this reason, it was suggested that more passive posts should be offered to him. Considering the view of Romieu, General Alby, who was writing on behalf of Prime Minister and Minister of War Clemenceau, affirmed that appointment; it was decided that Agapian would be designed as a religious official of the Legion with the rank of *lieutenant auxiliaire*, and with a salary of 301,50 Franks. If he accepted that post, he would travel to Cyprus via Port Said, and he would reside in a place chosen by Commander Romieu. Finally, it was decreed that the Armenian Catholicos would be informed about the appointment and its affirmation would be sought out.

However, whatever the reason, the point to inform the Catholicos made Bogos Nubar Pasha, President of the Armenian National Delegation, hesitant. Bogos Nubar Pasha wrote a letter addressing Foreign Minister Pichon on January 24.<sup>30</sup> He expressed his

27 The telegram from the French minister in Egypt to Foreign Minister Stephen Pichon, December 29, 1917, The French Foreign Ministry Archive, File No. 893, *Turquie: Legion d'Orient III (Novembre 1917-Avril 1918)*, p. 70.

28 The correspondence from President of the Council and Minister of War Clemenceau to Foreign Minister Pichon, January 19, 1917, The French Foreign Ministry Archive, File No. 893, *Turquie: Legion d'Orient III (Novembre 1917-Avril 1918)*, p. 91.

29 The crypto telegram from Commander Romieu to the Minister of War, January, 15, 1918, The French Foreign Ministry Archive, File No. 893, *Turquie: Legion d'Orient III (Novembre 1917-Avril 1918)*, p. 92.

30 The letter from Bogos Nubar Pasha, President of the Armenian National Delegation to Foreign Minister Pichon, January 24,

pleasure for the designation of Daniel Agapian as religious official to the Eastern Legion, and stated that this decision of Prime Minister and Minister of War Clemenceau was an indication of goodwill towards the Armenians. However, he added that because Agapian had no mission of diaconate, there was no necessity to consult the Catholicos for Agapian's appointment (*il n'est nullement nécessaire de consulter S. S. le Catholicos*).

The Foreign Ministry asked Picot, the French High Commissioner in Palestine, via a telegram dated January 26 to inform Agapian about the conditions of his appointment.<sup>31</sup> In his response on January 31, Picot stated that he contacted Agapian who accepted the conditions stipulated by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.<sup>32</sup> In an encrypted telegram of the Ministry of War sent to Picot on February 16, it was pointed out that Agapian's appointment was confirmed.<sup>33</sup>

Agapian's appointment had become the beginning of a new process. Thus, Prime Minister and Minister of War Clemenceau sent correspondence that was classified as "confidential" and "urgent" to Minister of Foreign Affairs Pichon on January 31, 1918.<sup>34</sup> In that correspondence, it was stated that three important Armenians who came from the American continent of America to France were willing to join the Eastern Legion. The first of them and the most important was the former bishop of Zeytun. His name was not written clearly, but some information was provided about him. Accordingly, the bishop was well-known among Armenians because the episcopate was surrounded by the Turks "during the years of many Turkish attacks" at the time of the reign of Sultan Abdulhamid II. In other words, having played an active role in the Zeytun uprisings, the bishop was heroized by Armenians at the time of quashing the riot, and by French at this time. Thus, it was stated in the correspondence that the bishop's participation to the Legion would be a great source of morale for the Armenians in the Legion; yet, his influence might lead to the languishing of authority of the French officials in the Legion. That concern would lead to remarkable troubles in the Ministry of War and foreign relations circles.

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1918, The French Foreign Ministry Archive, File No. 893, *Turquie: Legion d'Orient III (Novembre 1917-Avril 1918)*, p. 97.

31 The telegram from the French Foreign Ministry to French High Commissioner in Palestine, Picot, January 26, 1918, The French Foreign Ministry Archive, File No. 893, *Turquie: Legion d'Orient III (Novembre 1917-Avril 1918)*, p. 101.

32 The telegram from French High Commissioner in Palestine, Picot to the French Foreign Ministry, January 31, 1918, Foreign Ministry Archive, File No. 893, *Turquie: Legion d'Orient III (Novembre 1917-Avril 1918)*, p. 105.

33 The telegram from the French War Ministry to French High Commissioner in Palestine, Picot, February 16, 1918, The French Foreign Ministry Archive, File No. 893, *Turquie: Legion d'Orient III (Novembre 1917-Avril 1918)*, p. 104.

34 The correspondence from President of the Council and Minister of War Clemenceau to Foreign Minister Pichon, January 31, 1918, The French Foreign Ministry Archive, File No. 893, *Turquie: Legion d'Orient III (Novembre 1917-Avril 1918)*, p. 106.

The second Armenian was not a cleric. Although it was stated that he lived in America for almost 20 years and was known by the Armenian community there, like the bishop of Zeytun, his name also was not written clearly.

The third person who was mentioned in the correspondence was the only person whose name and title was given clearly. He was the former archbishop of Adana, Mouchégh Seropian. The archbishop, who was described as being wealthy and very influential, led to the same concerns as the bishop of Zeytun in terms of potentially decreasing the authority of the French officers.

The bishop of Zeytun was not a figure favored in the correspondence; in fact, it appeared after some inquiry that he approached the French in not such a friendly mode. Therefore, the bishop of Zeytun not only revolted against the Ottoman state at the Zeytun uprising in 1907, but also “engaged in a struggle directly against the French influence” (*il entreprit de combattre directement l’influence française*) in the region. In this regard, preparing a brochure that was “full of slanders” (*calomnieuse*) about the French schools in the region, he endeavored to convince the Armenian families not to send their pupils to those schools.<sup>35</sup> For this reason, Prime Minister and Minister of War underlined that the bishop’s joining the Legion might lead to some negative outcomes for the Armenians in the Legion and that he might affect the discipline of the Legion negatively. Nevertheless, Clemenceau asked the opinion of the Minister of Foreign Affairs and wanted to know whether or not he saw any impropriety in admitting the bishop to the Legion. He added that if insistence for admission of those persons to the Legion persists, it must be decided only after his approval.<sup>36</sup>

With regard to the appointment of Agapian – that is stated above – the Prime Minister and Minister of War stated that it was an “exceptional” (*exceptionnel*) case and approved by himself.<sup>37</sup> As to Archbishop Mouchégh Seropian, he stated that the inquiry about him was still continuing and if the inquiry were to be concluded positively, Seropian might be allowed to join the Legion.

The answer of the Foreign Ministry came on February 6.<sup>38</sup> It was underlined

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35 The correspondence from Prime Minister and Minister of War Clemenceau to Foreign Minister Pichon, January 31, 1918, The French Foreign Ministry Archive, File No. 893, *Turquie: Legion d’Orient III (Novembre 1917-Avril 1918)*, p. 106.

36 The correspondence from Prime Minister and Minister of War Clemenceau to Foreign Minister Pichon, January 31, 1918, The French Foreign Ministry Archive, File No. 893, *Turquie: Legion d’Orient III (Novembre 1917-Avril 1918)*, p. 106.

37 The correspondence from Prime Minister and Minister of War Clemenceau to Foreign Minister Pichon, January 31, 1918, The French Foreign Ministry Archive, File No. 893, *Turquie: Legion d’Orient III (Novembre 1917-Avril 1918)*, p. 107.

38 The correspondence from French Foreign Minister Stephen Pichon to Prime Minister and Minister of War George

briefly that the Foreign Minister also shared the same concerns with the Prime Minister and Minister of War, and agreed with him on the issue of not allowing similar participations without his approval. It was also stated that the Minister of Foreign Affairs would give instruction to the missions in South America to reject requests of persons having great importance in the social life of Armenians if they asked to join the Legion. As to Archbishop Mouchégh Seropian, Pichon stated that if the inquiry conducted by the Ministry of War concluded negatively, his ministry would contact Bogos Nubar Pasha, President of the Armenian National Delegation, to ensure that the Archbishop would give up the thought of joining the Legion voluntarily.

Meanwhile, General Légrand of the Ministry of War sent a report of the inquiry that was conducted about Mouchégh Seropian from Marseilles to the Minister of War as “classified” on February 10.<sup>39</sup> It was reported that Archbishop Seropian came to Marseilles together with two Armenians named Chanaklian and Ruben Herian on January 19; passports of each was regular. It was reported that Seropian went to Paris to take permission from the British officials to go to Baghdad to be appointed as Archbishop by the Armenian Catholicos.

After the Foreign Ministry officials established contact with Bogos Nubar Pasha, his response was not delayed much. In his letter addressed to Foreign Minister Pichon on February 14, Pasha stated that the information which had come from the Ministry of War was erroneous and leading to misperceptions about the Archbishop.<sup>40</sup> He also attached a letter of the Archbishop addressed to him dated February 11.<sup>41</sup> The Archbishop said in his letter that news about the inquiry carried out by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs upon demand of the Ministry of War embarrassed and shamed him (*votre lettre ... qui m'a grandement étonné, pour ne pas dire peiné*); and added that as a disciplined person he was discomforted by waiting for the end of the inquiry process as asked by Bogos Nubar Pasha. Additionally,

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Clemenceau, February 6, 1918, The French Foreign Ministry Archive, File No. 893, *Turquie: Legion d'Orient III (Novembre 1917-Avril 1918)*, p. 115.

39 The letter from General Légrand addressed to Prime Minister and Minister of War George Clemenceau, February 10, 1918, The French Foreign Ministry Archive, File No. 893, *Turquie: Legion d'Orient III (Novembre 1917-Avril 1918)*, p.147.

40 The letter from Bogos Nubar Pasha, President of the Armenian National Delegation to Foreign Minister Pichon, February 14, 1918, The French Foreign Ministry Archive, File No. 893, *Turquie: Legion d'Orient III (Novembre 1917-Avril 1918)*, p. 128.

41 The letter from Archbishop Mouchégh Seropian to Bogos Nubar Pasha, President of the Armenian National Delegation, February 11, 1918, The French Foreign Ministry Archive, File No. 893, *Turquie: Legion d'Orient III (Novembre 1917-Avril 1918)*, p. 129.

he requested Bogos Nubar Pasha not only to actively protest that situation, but also to ensure a clear investigation of who invented negative conclusions about him in the Ministry of War or Foreign Ministry. In his subsequent letter addressing this time directly to the Foreign Minister on February 14, the Archbishop denied negative convictions reported about him and asked that difficulties not be created for his admission to the Eastern Legion.<sup>42</sup> He added the following:<sup>43</sup>

“If I believed in the necessity to devote myself to serve to the cause of my country to which I feel clearly adhered and of France, I would be happy to fight for humanity and justice under the flag of France without trying to conceal my status as the Armenian Archbishop.”

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs sent a long directive to all of the French missions of the American continent on February 16, which was in line with the previous response to the Ministry of War.<sup>44</sup> It is stated in this direction that three important Armenians had applied to enlist in the Eastern Legion; however, the Ministry of War did not want to allow their admission considering that they might disrupt military discipline and weaken the authority of the French officers over soldiers. However, it was clearly indicated that the related department of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs did not agree with the consideration of the Ministry of War (*Mon Département ne peut que partager les sentiments du Ministère de la Guerre à cet égard*). Nevertheless, in accordance with the request of the Ministry of War, the missions of the American continent were asked not to send such important persons to France in order to enlist in the Legion. In spite of that, recruitment of volunteers to fight under the flag of France might continue. It was stated with regard to this point that missions of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in America were not in charge of establishing an organization to recruit volunteers, but were to encourage and to lead people who were living in those regions and wished to side with France to fight against the common enemy, Turkey (*contre notre ennemi commun, la Turquie*).<sup>45</sup>

42 The letter from Archbishop Mouchégh Seropian to the Foreign Minister Stephen Pichot, February 14, 1918, The French Foreign Ministry Archive, File No. 893, *Turquie: Legion d'Orient III (Novembre 1917-Avril 1918)*, p. 129.

43 The letter from Archbishop Mouchégh Seropian to Foreign Minister Stephen Pichot, February 14, 1918, The French Foreign Ministry Archive, File No. 893, *Turquie: Legion d'Orient III (Novembre 1917-Avril 1918)*, p. 129.

44 Collocutors of this direction included missions in Washington, New York, Rio de Janeiro, Montevideo, Buenos-Aires, Caracas, Havana, Port au Prince, Bogota, Santa Domingo, Saint Paul, Santiago, Mexico, Lapaz, Lima and Quito. The directive from the Foreign Ministry to the French missions in America, February 16, 1918, The French Foreign Ministry Archive, File No. 893, *Turquie: Legion d'Orient III (Novembre 1917-Avril 1918)*, p. 137.

45 The directive from the Foreign Ministry to the French missions in America, February 16, 1918, The French Foreign Ministry Archive, File No. 893, *Turquie: Legion d'Orient III (Novembre 1917-Avril 1918)*, p. 138.

## Conclusion

In this article, developments regarding the Eastern Legion in the period between November 1917 and April 1918 were analyzed. It can be argued that remarkable troubles related with the Legion appeared in this period. Whereas it was possible to find information about soldiers in the Legion and comments about their high morale in the previous periods, that was a period when correspondences about the problems of the Legion come into prominence.

The principal trouble with the Legion was the decrease in dispatching volunteers and failure of the Syrian troops in the Legion to reach to the desired levels. Additional tensions arose from the requests of some leading Armenians wanting to join the Legion, which disturbed the French commanders who were concerned about influence of those Armenians over soldiers that might challenge the authority of the French officers. For this reason, whereas admission of apparently passive Armenians to the Legion faced little objection, the Ministry of War, which was directly in contact with the French administrators of the Legion, opposed enlistment request of vigorous and influential Armenian clerics.

Matters concerning dispatching volunteers from South America were another issue that was on the agenda in this period. In accordance with the reports sent from South America, frictions among the Christian Arab communities frustrated recruitment efforts so that the Foreign Ministry was advised to give up recruiting Syrian volunteers. Nevertheless, the idea of utilizing the Syrians living in South America economically rather than militarily was proposed.

The third issue was disagreement between the French state institutions about the costs of forwarding the volunteers from South America. Whereas the Ministry of War ordered the Treasury to pay, the Treasury refused to pay because persons and institutions to be paid had no recognized legal status. However, it was decided to pay the expenses of the two delegates who were sent to South America and not to pay anymore.

In short, the period covered in this article was a heavily troubled term for France and for the Legion; whereas in the correspondence of previous periods the Legion had been mentioned as an offensive force ready for action with plans of attack at the ready, in this period, only the problems related to the Legion were tried to be solved. One of the leading reasons for these troubles was the fact that France had entered in this period with a new government, which was just beginning to adjust itself to the affairs related with the Legion. Developments after April 1918 that will display the extent of success of the policy of the government with regard to the Legion will constitute the topic of the next article.



# THE FRENCH-ARMENIAN RELATIONS IN LIGHT OF THE PUBLISHED OTTOMAN ARCHIVES (1879-1918)\*

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**Abstract:** *French-Armenian relations before, during and after World War have been a long-examined issue due to its significance in understanding the Great Power's intervention in the Eastern Question in general, and in the Armenian Question in particular. Therefore, the aim of this article is to elaborate upon the Armenian-French relations particularly on the basis of Ottoman Armenians' migration to France, the activities of Armenians in this country, the French diplomats' support to Armenians, and the relations between French missionaries and Armenians. Such a survey will be done through the Ottoman archival documents published by General Directorate of State Archives, in other words primary sources will be referred to analyze Armenian-French relations and the aforementioned themes.*

**Key Words:** *Armenian-French relations, Ottoman Empire, Armenian question, missionary activities, migration.*

**Öz:** *Birinci Dünya Savaşı öncesinde, sırasında ve sonrasında Fransız-Ermeni ilişkileri genelde Doğu Sorunu, özeldense Ermeni sorununa Büyük Devletlerin müdahalesinin anlaşılması açısından önemi dolayısıyla uzun süredir incelenen bir konudur. Bu nedenle, bu makalenin konusu da özellikle Osmanlı Ermenilerinin Fransa'ya göçleri, Ermenilerin bu ülkedeki faaliyetleri, Fransız diplomatların Ermenilere yönelik desteği ve Fransız misyonerlerin Ermenilerle ilişkileri çerçevesinde Fransız-Ermeni ilişkilerini değerlendirmektir. Bu araştırma Devlet Arşivleri tarafından yayımlanan Osmanlı arşiv belgeleri esas alınarak yapılmıştır; diğer bir deyişle Ermeni-Fransız ilişkilerini ve yukarıda ifade edilen konuları analiz etmek için birincil kaynaklardan yararlanılacaktır.*

**Anahtar Kelimeler:** *Fransız-Ermeni ilişkileri, Osmanlı İmparatorluğu, Ermeni sorunu, misyoner faaliyetleri, göç.*

\* This article was presented at the Second International Social Research Symposium of Erciyes University on 22-24 May 2008.



## Introduction

The spread of nationalism in the 19<sup>th</sup> century was an outcome of the French Revolution. Nationalism, as an ideology, entering the Ottoman Empire from the Balkans, influenced many ethnic groups, causing the Serbian and Greek uprisings in the first decades of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. It also caused the loss of a considerable part of Ottoman possessions in Europe. The success of Greece and Bulgaria in acquiring their independence encouraged other minorities in the Ottoman Empire through nationalist movements. In this sense, it is possible to argue that the French Revolution had a great impact on the rise of Armenian nationalism. The influence of the French Revolution on the ethnic groups of the Ottoman Empire played an important role in the beginning of what was termed as the “Armenian question”. The plans of the Western states aiming to disintegrate and share the remnants of the Ottoman Empire, known as the “Eastern Question,” were the basis of the Armenian question, which has been on the agendas of the Western states since 19<sup>th</sup> century.

In the course of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the Great Powers - Britain, France and Russia - were signing secret agreements such as the Istanbul, the Sykes-Picot, and the Saint Jean de Maurienne in order to protect their interests, although they continued to actually hinder each other's interests.

France was eager to establish a colonial empire in the Mediterranean, since Britain had seized its trans-Atlantic colonies. The French settled in Algeria by 1830, after unsuccessfully attempting to occupy Egypt in 1798. However, they chose the policy of cooperating with the Turks against Britain, Austria and Russia as they tried to be the only hegemonic power in Europe. Hence, France needed Ottoman support in order to materialize its political aims in Europe and in the Mediterranean. Moreover, due to the capitulations, France gained several privileges from the Ottoman Empire with the Franco-Ottoman Trade Agreement signed in 1838, prompting trade between the two countries to increase substantially after 1839. In the end, the French appeared to be supporting the Ottoman Empire's territorial integrity and strengthening it with several reform attempts, implemented especially after 1839, in order to maintain its political and economic interests in the Eastern Mediterranean. Besides, with the desire of having political superiority in Europe, after the 1856 Paris Agreement, France turned to the idea of the establishment of new nation-states under its custody.<sup>1</sup>

1 Bige Sükan Yavuz, “Türk Kurtuluş Savaşı Sırasında Fransa'nın Anadolu'daki Çıkarları ve Ermeniler,” *Ermeni Araştırmaları*, No. 9, 2003, p. 146.

At the same time, the Great Powers began to interfere with the Ottoman Empire by using the Armenian question, in order to protect their own interests. The role of the French is very important in explaining these interventions. The focus of this article is centered upon the role of France in the rise of the Armenian question in the second half on the 19<sup>th</sup> century. This study draws upon the archival sources published in the book entitled *The Armenian-French Relations in the Ottoman Documents*. In this context, Armenian-French relations are evaluated both through exploring Ottoman diplomatic activities in France, and Armenian-French relations in the Ottoman Empire and in France.

### **I. Ottoman Diplomats' Activities in France**

Several Ottoman diplomats served in France between 1879 and 1918. Among them, especially Mavroyeni Bey, Esad Paşa, Rıfat Paşa, Ziya Paşa and Münir Bey are important for this study since the telegraphs, letters and reports they sent include crucial information regarding French-Armenian relations.

It is possible to say that among the Ottoman diplomats who served in France between 1879 and 1918, Mavroyeni Bey was more active during his time than the others. In his reports, Mavroyeni Bey, who prepared a list of Armenian committees, provided information concerning which organizations financially supported the Armenian committees, family details and duties of the committee members. Since the Armenian question escalated in France during this period, Mavroyeni Bey sometimes used the paid Armenians in order to access information related with Armenian activities.

Another Ottoman diplomat who served in France was Ziya Paşa. Upon the request made by the then Minister of Foreign Affairs Said Paşa regarding the members of the Armenian committees and their activities in Europe, Ziya Paşa informed Said Paşa that, although he had sent a telegraph to Ottoman bureaucrats in many French cities regarding the Armenian activities, neither the French local officers nor the French Foreign Affairs were cooperating with the Ottoman diplomats. The response of the French Foreign Ministry can be interpreted to mean that there were either no Armenian committee in France, or the Ministry could not provide the lists of these committees. Thus, Ziya Paşa said that “under these circumstances, since the French government refused to cooperate, [they] need[ed] to do [their] own investigation in order to reach the results that [they] want[ed].”<sup>2</sup> One of these special investigations was conducted by the Ottoman

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2 M. Serdar Palabıynk, “Fransız Arşiv Belgeleri Işığında Doğu Lejyonu'nun Kuruluşu ve Faaliyetleri,” *Ermeni Araştırmaları*, No:

Consul in Marseilles, who was able to obtain a report from a high ranking officer showing the list of suspects who were members of an Armenian committee. What was also of interest was that the Consul complained about the Ottoman officers in Nice and Toulon. The Consul said that these officers did not reply to him for eight years, and his request from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs on changing these officers was not fulfilled. Hence, once again, the Ottoman government was unable to follow the developments in France, which were vital for the Ottoman Empire.<sup>3</sup>

Another issue was that the Ottoman diplomats did not work effectively. Mavroyeni Bey explained the communication gap between the Ottoman Embassy and France with the following words:

“About the officers in Nice and Toulon who did not reply any of my letters, His Excellence is not ignorant of my request of my will to change them, for a long time. However, although it is not accepted in principal, there still is no positive precaution about this proposition by our government.”<sup>4</sup>

The issues of how and when the Armenian political criminals came to France can be seen in the correspondence of the Ottoman diplomats. Hence, the telegraph sent from Mavroyeni Bey to Tevfik Paşa, the Ottoman Foreign Minister, on May 3, 1896 dealt with the news about the Armenians who came to France by the ship named “Gironde,” which was announced in the newspaper of *Illustration* published in Paris. It was mentioned that although Mavroyeni Bey requested to take the pictures of the Armenians just before the newspaper went to press was not prohibited because of the secrecy of this issue. Thus, it was said that the published pictures under the name of J. Fabre in the *Illustration* newspaper, did not belong to Armenians, but the *Illustration* newspaper was trying to get attention from its readers in this way.<sup>5</sup>

In order to impress the Western public opinion, the Ottoman diplomats who

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26, 2007, pp. 78-79.

3 M. Serdar Palabiyık, “Fransız Arşiv Belgeleri...,” pp. 78-79.

4 From the Ottoman Government’s Paris Ambassador S. Münir Paşa to Ottoman Foreign Affairs Minister Tevfik Paşa, BOA. HR. SYS. 2802-4,2749/25, 19 November 1896, *Osmanlı Belgelerinde Ermeni-Fransız İlişkileri* (1879-1918), Ankara: Başbakanlık Basımevi, 2002, Vol 1, pp.111-112.

5 From the Ottoman Government’s Paris Ambassador S. Münir Paşa to Ottoman Foreign Affairs Minister Tevfik Paşa, BOA. HR. SYS. 2802-4,2749/25, 19 November 1896, *Osmanlı Belgelerinde Ermeni-Fransız İlişkileri* (1879-1918), Ankara: Başbakanlık Basımevi, 2002, Vol 1, pp.111-112.

began to be more active, began to place advertisements in the French newspapers. For example, the article about “the Muş Chaos” aimed to explain the reality about the Armenian events to the Western public. In this article, it was mentioned that the news appearing in the French media had claimed the places as Armenian places, which had to be questioned, and this news was distorted on purpose. Therefore, the reports of the diplomats who came to interrogate the events in Anatolia had to be reconsidered.

An article entitled “the Issues of the Ottoman Country” was published in another French newspaper *Aurone*. The article indicated that the Armenian activities in Sason and Bitlis were organized by the *Hinchak* Committee and were supported by several other Armenian committees abroad. Furthermore, it was mentioned that some clergymen were sent in order to hinder these activities of the Armenians and give them advice, but it did not work, and, since these events did not settle down, the Ottoman army had to intervene.

On the one hand, it can be seen that the Armenian committees in France seriously made an effort to organize the Armenians in this country, while they also tried to inform the French public opinion against the Ottoman Empire via the media on the other.

## II. The French-Armenian Relations in the Ottoman Empire

### 1. The Activities of the French Diplomats in the Ottoman Empire

Münir Süreyya Bey (1871-1932),<sup>6</sup> one of the key Ottoman officials writing on the Armenian question, wrote in his memoirs that the French diplomats who served in the Ottoman Empire acted against the Ottoman Empire regarding the Armenian question. He wrote:

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6 Münir Süreyya Bey was the son of the Chief Clerk of the Palace Emin Bey-zâde Ahmed Süreyya Bey. He was born in 1871 in İstanbul. After elementary school, he graduated from the the Imperial School (*Mekteb-i Sultani*). He spoke French. When he was 22 years old he began to work as a French teacher in *Mekteb-i Sultani* on September 13, 1892. He was rewarded with *Nişân-ı Ali-i Osmânî* on July 9, 1896 because of his success. The rank of *sâlise* was given on January 17, 1897. On November 8, 1898 his rank was raised to French Assistant Chief Clerk. He was appointed as Ottoman Consul-General (*Başvebender*) in Barcelona on September 11, 1899; Ottoman Consul-General in Siroz on April 24, 1904; and Ottoman Consul-General in Nice on April 5, 1905. Since he could not get along with the climate of Nice, he wanted to move to the Ottoman Embassy in Bern and was appointed to this position on June 10, 1905. He was appointed as the Chief Clerk of Ottoman Embassy in Vienna on November 29, 1906 (BOA., Foreign Ministry Records, 224-260/228). He was assigned as the Chief Clerk of the Ottoman Embassy in Brussels on November 9, 1908 and other various posts as Consul-General. He was unseated from his position on November 1, 1922. He was appointed as the Vice-Secretary of the Ottoman Caliph on March 19, 1923, but on March 5, 1924 he was unseated from this position, too. Münir Süreyya Bey, *Ermeni Meselesinin Siyasi Tarihçesi (1877-1914)*, Ankara: Başbakanlık Devlet Arşivleri Genel Müdürlüğü Osmanlı Arşivi Daire Başkanlığı Yayınları, 2001, p.XVII.

“The French did not refrain from supporting nationalism from time to time. Generally, almost all of the French ambassadors in Istanbul were away from friendly activities for our benefit regarding the Armenian question. Especially Monsieur Cambon, who was in Istanbul during that period, sometimes did not hesitate to work against us.”<sup>7</sup>

Among the documents about the French diplomats’ relations with Armenians and the other ethnic groups, there are those showing these diplomats’ political and financial support to the Armenians. In an encrypted telegraph from the Commander of Aleppo and Adana, Muhsin Paşa, on September 30, 1897, it was mentioned how the French and English diplomats escalated the tension by safeguarding the politically organized Armenians:

“This time during my tenure, the notables and the clergymen of all Armenian villages were invited and the necessary advices were told again. They answered in one voice that they would declare their adherence and allegiance to the Sultan, the protector of their communities and representative of justice, whenever he has an order, and they will pray for the sake of the Caliph. Isa and his brother Karabet, who are members of Süveydiye Armenian community and Kebusiye(?) village, were taken into custody after an official investigation about their being involved with the unfavorable people attached to the Hinchak committee, and then they were released with amnesty. However, they were not behaving well and were irritating the Armenian community in Süveydiye. About this issue, it is understood that the French Deputy Consul Monsieur Potun(?) and English Consul Monsieur Safovik (?) of Antakya are protecting and safeguarding the mentioned people in secrecy.”<sup>8</sup>

Another important development concerning the Armenian-French relations and their impact on the Ottoman Armenians is the “Monsieur Barthélemy Incident” which started in May 1896. The French Consul to Aleppo, Monsieur Barthélemy, went to Maraş in order to conciliate between the Armenian and Muslim communities. The Muslims were disturbed by his attitude of advocating the Armenian cause. While the situation escalated, there were some rumors about the French government’s assignment of Barthélemy as the permanent vice-consul to Maraş, which can be understood from the encrypted telegraph of the governor of Aleppo, Raif Bey, who warned the government to take necessary precautions,

7 Münir Süreyya Bey, *Ermeni Meselesinin Siyasi...*, s.103.

8 Secret telegraph from the Commander of Aleppo and Adana, BOA. Y.PRK:ASK 133/9, 30cSeptember 1897, Osmanlı Belgelerinde..., pp. 120-121.

too. However, the attempts of the Ottoman government were not enough, and Monsieur Barthélemy was assigned as the vice-consul to Maraş. The latter telegraphs included detailed information about Monsieur Barthélemy, including reports about his hatred of the Muslims in the Maraş region and his tolerance to the massacres perpetrated by the Armenians. It was understood from the other documents that a conspiracy against the Ottoman government was arranged in order to ease the French intervention. In this context, the French ambassador to Istanbul, in his application, told the Ottoman Prime Ministry that he was informed about the planned assassination of Monsieur Barthélemy and he said that the Sublime Porte would be the only entity responsible if such an incident happened. Consequently, the Ottoman government took the necessary precautions in order to prevent the attack. However, the Monsieur Barthélemy incident is important since it demonstrates how a small case can cause international opposition.<sup>9</sup>

In conclusion, the French diplomats' activities can generally be summarized, according to the documents provided by various consulates in different locations of the Ottoman Empire since the 19<sup>th</sup> century, as influencing Armenians in these places (Trabzon, Erzurum, Zeytun, etc.), especially supporting the Catholic Armenians and using Armenians as commercial mediators. Moreover, it was understood that French missionaries got in touch with minorities wherever they went. Furthermore, the French indoctrinated the new ideas of the French Revolution to the other Ottoman minorities via the French support and provocation of the Catholic Armenians in the Ottoman Empire in cooperation with the Papacy.<sup>10</sup>

## 2. The French Diplomats' Intervention into Ottoman Internal Affairs

In the documents which are examined in this article, there is sufficient information indicating that the French governments of the period intervened into Ottoman internal affairs. For example, the French Embassy sent an oral note to the Ottoman government as a reaction to the arrests made after the Zeytun Incident. The French thought they had the right to demand to hinder the judgment process and arrestment of Armenians. The French government justified this intervention by invoking the 23<sup>rd</sup> article of the Berlin Agreement,<sup>11</sup> and the French demanded the establishment of a commission concerning the arrestments and the legal fulfillment of this agreement.

<sup>9</sup> M. Serdar Palabıyık, "Fransız Arşiv Belgeleri ...", p. 83.

<sup>10</sup> Bige Sükan Yavuz, "Türk Kurtuluş Savaşı...", p. 150.

<sup>11</sup> The Berlin Agreement was signed in Berlin between the Ottoman Empire and Russia, England, Germany, Austria-Hungary Empire, Italy and France on July 13, 1878. With this agreement, the Ottoman Empire was obliged to draw off from two third of its territories in the Balkans. Moreover, it lost a great deal of imperial revenues. Stanford J. Shaw and Ezel Kural Shaw, *Osmanlı İmparatorluğu ve Modern Türkiye*, Volume 2, İstanbul, E Yayınları, 1994, pp. 238-239.

Moreover, the French wanted the Ottoman officers to remedy the existing situation of Armenians wherever they were living and secure the future of the non-Muslims in accordance with Berlin Treaty. In a telegraph from the French Embassy it was stated: “The French Embassy believes that making the necessary changes and fulfillment of the Berlin agreement, which was undertaken by the Sublime Porte, would be the best attitude in order to hinder the petty incidents in Armenia.”<sup>12</sup>

Another point worthy of note was the intervention of the French administration into Ottoman internal affairs by alleging their protection of Armenians as a pretense. For example, the interference of a French delegate with the sentence of death that had been given to seven Armenians by the Adana Criminal Court happened as follows: The French delegate interfered with the judgment process by attempting to postpone the execution of the punishments of Armenians during the period between investigation and affirmation of the judgment.<sup>13</sup>

We see the similar attitude of the French diplomats in another judicial case. The Minister of Internal Affairs, Memduh Bey, gave information to the Ottoman Prime Ministry about how the local consuls exaggerated a small problem between a Christian and a Muslim in Maraş.<sup>14</sup> It was said that, regarding this very simple and ordinary affair, the local consul tried to interfere which was beyond his authority.

In fact, during that time under consideration, this small case was exaggerated by the vice-consul and was carried even to the French Embassy. When the Ottoman government replied to the French Embassy that this news was baseless, the embassy replied in its telegraph that the work of the consul was done under its instruction and that the Embassy supported the Consul:

“The information from the province against the mentioned delegate do not have a base. It is a duty given from the embassy to protect Maraş Christians’ comfort and security, which are jeopardized all the time. His attempts, which he has always to repeat in front of the local officers, are appropriate. The recent affairs prove that the Muslim community is evidently hostile because of the recent year’s

12 From the Embassy of France to Ottoman Foreign Minister Caratheodory Paşa, BOA. HR. SYS. 78-6/60, 8 March 1879, *Osmanlı Belgelerinde...*, p. 5.

13 From Ottoman Foreign Minister Tevfik Paşa to the Ottoman Prime Ministry, BOA. A.MKT.MHM.617/9, 25 September 1896, *Osmanlı Belgelerinde...*, p. 86.

14 From the Minister of Internal Affairs, Memduh Bey to the Prime Ministry, BOA. A. MKT. MHM. 652/28, 10 April 1897, *Osmanlı Belgelerinde...*, pp. 117-120.

horrible clashes, yet those responsible were not punished. At the same time, the French officers cannot be condemned since they inform the Ottoman officers about the dangers of the Anatolian Christian community.”<sup>15</sup>

The letter from the French Embassy to the Ottoman government can explain why it charged Vice-Consul Monsieur Viet with protecting the Christians in Maraş:

“The instruction given to Monsieur Viet is related to the protection of Maraş Christians’ comfort and security, which are always jeopardized by the Muslims. Therefore, the embassy considers the mentioned person’s attempts right which he always has to repeat in front of the local officers of this city. The recent incidents prove that all the Muslims are in an evident animosity because the responsables of the horrible atrocities in November 1895 have not been punished yet. The behaviors and activities, such as the incidents in that region and the murder of Priest Salvator, the abstention of the Ottoman government from following the responsables of this incident and its late apology from the French Government after the murder of this person [what the Sublime Porte did cannot be forgotten] do not fit into friendly relations that the Ministry of Foreign Affairs wanted to establish between the two states. It is obvious that the Ministry of Foreign Affairs does not condemn the French officers and Monsieur Viet because they inform the Ottoman officers about the dangers the Anatolian Christians come under.”<sup>16</sup>

This telegraph of the French Embassy is spectacular in that it involves serious criticism towards the Ottoman government, more than pointing out the limits of Monsieur Viet’s task. This telegraph, written in a heavy style and, in fact, a threatening manner, is important since it claims that the Ottoman government was responsible for the developments in the region. In consequence, the Ottoman government evaluated Monsieur Viet’s information to the consulate and embassy in a way of exaggeration and veiled the truth as a kind of interference in the internal affairs of the Ottoman government.

In yet another document, it is demonstrated that how far the French diplomats could interfere with Ottoman internal affairs through the Armenians. In 1905, the French consul in Van arranged several trips in the region, including visits to Muş. During the times when there were some arrests in Muş, in order to establish

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15 From the Minister of Internal Affairs, Memduh Bey, to the Prime Ministry, BOA. A. MKT. MHM. 652/28, 10 April 1897, *Osmanlı Belgelerinde...*, pp. 117-120.

16 Warning sent by the French Embassy to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, BOA. A. MKT. MHM. 652/28, 12 March 1897, *Osmanlı Belgelerinde...*, pp. 118-119.



public order, the French delegate to Muş, Monsieur Rupen, went to the region, became involved in the affair and provoked it:

“...[S]ince some members of the highlander community do not crave for mercy and are still doing brigandage, two unknown men were arrested by Police Abdülhakim Efendi and taken to Çarşı Police Station. During the inquiry and investigating their identities, the French Government’s Van Consul Rupen and his translator Mihran entered into the office, made noise and insulted the guarding officer Ziya Efendi. Then it was seen that they took the unknown people out of the station and this was signed and arranged by the present people.”<sup>17</sup>

All the police officers who were on duty on the above-mentioned day were deposed one by one. The claim about the French diplomats who took the two Armenians out of the police station by force and insulted Officer Ziya Efendi was investigated, and all the policemen on duty gave their testimonies. Among all the policeman’s depositions, Officer İstevan Efendi’s statement was very striking:

“...I was upstairs during that day. I heard some angry words and noises. I went downstairs and saw that the mentioned consul and the translator were bawling out Officer Mehmet Ziya Efendi with anger and fury. I could not understand his words. But the translator was saying ‘Do you have the right? How can you take them here?’ I asked the situation to Officer Ziya Efendi. He said ‘They sent two highlander Armenians to the office in order to understand whether they have identities and asking for mercy. They were shouting at them and taking them from me.’ When I looked behind them I really saw that the consul and the translator took the two Armenians after themselves.”<sup>18</sup>

The French Consul’s occupation of the police station, the taking of the mentioned Armenians and the insulting of the responsible policemen well demonstrate how the French diplomats could easily act in the Ottoman territories. Moreover, the French diplomat’s dare in taking the suspects out of the police station by force encouraged the Armenians who were threatening the order during the mentioned period. There was the possibility that this attitude could damage the internal security and order. Furthermore, the consul’s attitude has to be considered as a clash with the international law. Besides taking men from the police station by

17 Encrypted telegraph from the Governor of Bitlis, Ferid Bey, BOA. A. MKT. MHM. 673/25, 18 May 1905, *Osmanlı Belgelerinde...*, pp. 157-158.

18 Encrypted telegraph from the Governor of Bitlis, Ferid Bey, BOA. A. MKT. MHM. 673/25, 21 May 1905, *Osmanlı Belgelerinde...*, pp. 160-161.

force, the consul's fiscal help to the ethnic groups other than the Muslims and secretly meeting with Armenian clerics were tracked by the Ottoman government because of a reasonable doubt.

### **3. The Financial Support of the French Government to Armenians**

During the last century of the Ottoman Empire, the French government made direct and indirect financial support to the Anatolian Armenians. It supplied financial support through the missionaries in the region or through the Armenian committees in France. These activities are quite well-noted in the archival documents. In one such document, there is information about the French Foreign Ministry's financial support to the Armenian committees, which was verified by the London press.<sup>19</sup>

The encrypted telegraph of Bitlis Governor, Ferid Bey, on June 8, 1905 is an important document which puts forth what kind of activity the French Consul Monsieur Rupen expected from Armenians in return for the support of the French:

“Thirty eight thousand five hundred *kurush* was allocated to Armenians for eleven villages by the French consul in Van. The Governor of Muş was informed by a policeman in Gelikozan that there was some separatist stimulation during the allocation. The translator Mihran told the Armenians that the reason for allocating them money and animals was to encourage them to act on their previous ideas, and they should not act contrarily.”<sup>20</sup>

The activities of Monsieur Rupen the financial support to the rebellious Armenians, Rupen's travel to the region with his translator without taking any permission from the Ottoman government and especially his close relations with Armenians (who engaged in activities against the Ottoman government) were deemed direct interventions in the internal affairs of the Ottoman Empire. The Ottoman government was very much disturbed by these kinds of activities and sent several warning telegraphs especially to the Ministry of Internal Affairs, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the French Embassy, but it could not get an answer. In fact, since the Armenians of Van were preparing a major uprising, the Ottoman government informed the French Embassy that it would not take any responsibility if a possible problem occurred in the region.

19 Encrypted telegraph sent from the Ottoman Foreign Ministry to the Ottoman Embassy in Paris, BOA. Y. PRK. BŞK. 47/112, 28 September 1896, *Osmanlı Belgelerinde...*, p. 64.

20 BOA. A. MKT. MHM. 673/25, 8 June 1905, *Osmanlı Belgelerinde ...*, pp. 172.

While the activities of Monsieur Rupen were being monitored by the Ottoman government, on June 29, 1905, the Minister of Internal Affairs, Memduh Bey, sent a telegraph to the Prime Ministry that he was very much irritated by the activities of Monsieur Rupen:

“Since a consul whose responsibility is limited to Van is coming to Muş many times on his own, attempting these kind of activities and especially interfering and assaulting governmental issues is a very important situation, [...] returning of the mentioned consul to Van is not enough. He has to be changed. Hence, the honor of the government, which was violated, can be returned. Thus, the activist ideas of the spoiled Armenians have to be suppressed. To ignore the chaotic activities of Armenians in Russia, which aim for nothing but to influence here, would result in bad consequences.”<sup>21</sup>

Besides the French, other Great Powers financially supported Armenians too. The Governor of Bitlis, Ferid Bey, sent a telegraph in 1905, which told of the French Consul's activities in Muş and Van. This telegraph contains information about how Armenians, who were engaging in rebellious activities against the Ottoman government, were supported with money, food, medicine and clothing. At the same time, the telegraph stated that some Armenians came to the region from Russia in order to arrange rebellious activities, and, besides the French Consul, the English and the American Consuls of the region were also supporting the rebellious Armenians with money, food, medicine and clothing. The point to be emphasized here is that the mentioned supports were given to especially Armenians and among them, to the people who were preparing anti-Ottoman activities or declining to be loyal to the Ottoman state.

#### **4. The French Priests' Activities in the Ottoman Empire**

Many Catholic missionaries had come to Istanbul and Anatolia since the period of the Byzantine Empire, and most of the Catholic education associations were established by the French missionaries. The schools were the most convenient places for the missionaries, who had aims such attracting the Ottoman Christians to their sides, supporting them religiously, and catholicizing the Eastern Christians. France started the activities of catholicization of Armenians in Anatolia as early as the 11<sup>th</sup> century. In the 18<sup>th</sup> century, especially during the reign of Louis XIV (1643-1715), French priests systematized the process of converting Eastern Christians to Catholicism. According to Louis XIV, the Turkish Chris-

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21 BOA. A. MKT. MHM. 673/25, 29 June 1905, *Osmanlı Belgelerinde...*, pp. 177.

tians, especially Armenians in Turkey, could be the “people” of France in the East. Therefore, the French missionaries began to introduce the Christians, especially Armenians, in Turkey as the “oppressed nation” to Europe. As an outcome of catholicization propaganda of France, a significant number of Armenians were converted to Catholicism between 1668 and 1702. In 1830, Catholic Armenians were recognized as a separate community by the Ottoman State with the coercion of France. To undertake the protectorate of Armenians, the French established the legal ground for their expansionist foreign policy in Anatolia. Moreover, France gained several benefits from the catholicization of Ottoman Armenians, and, in this context, created a propaganda army with Armenian ecclesiastics. Its religious activities were not limited to Istanbul; they were distributed throughout all of Anatolia, Syria, Lebanon and the other Middle Eastern lands. Consequently, it nearly began to be impossible to separate the power of Catholicism and France in the East.<sup>22</sup>

As it is seen, French missionaries had an important impact on the disorders related to minorities in the Ottoman Empire. In the similar manner, as analyzed via documents in this article, some indications stand out regarding how French ecclesiastics supported disorders at the borders of the Ottoman Empire. For example, in a telegraph, it was implied that guns, weapons and other war materials were being stored in the repositories of the houses and schools, which were built by a group of Armenians with formal permission of French priests in Maraş. The reply coming from the Aleppo province to the aforementioned telegraph designated how the Ottoman government was behaving on the case: “Since carrying out a search in a place owned by foreigners will not be appropriate with a single word of an Armenian spy, it is advised that a careful investigation should be pursued and if sound information is obtained, the situation should be reported in order to obtain necessary orders.”<sup>23</sup>

Again, it was reported in the telegraph sent by Münir Bey to Tevfik Paşa in 1896 that Armenian ecclesiastics were dealing with political activities through a different dimension:

“In the middle of the rite, the Armenian priest managing the rite, delivered a speech and read a couple of sentences aimed at reminding the French that during the Crusades, Armenians saved their fellow soldiers and said that Armenians with

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22 Bige Sülkan Yavuz, “Türk Kurtuluş Savaşı...p. 150.

23 From the Ottoman Embassy in Paris to the Ottoman Foreign Ministry, BOA. HR. SYS. 469/59, 65, *Osmanlı Belgelerinde...*, p. 48.

thousands of martyrs were thrusting out their appealing arms to the French. He was calling on benevolence of all French people in order to save the Armenians. After this speech, financial support was gained for the benefit of Armenians by Father Charmetan.”<sup>24</sup>

Political activities of French ecclesiastics in the region were not limited to only Armenians; at the same time, they followed a policy of direct or indirect catholicization towards other ethnic groups. A letter written on September 19, 1898 by the Ministry of Interior Affairs to Prime Ministry, constituted one of the most concrete examples of missionary activities of French diplomats:

“In the telegraph dated September 12, 1898, coming from the Van province and one copy of which is presented in the attachment, the action to be taken has been asked for the explanation from the French Consul and has gone towards Çölemerik. His aim was to meet a priest coming from Musul in order to benefit the departure to Catholicism of Armenians of the province centre and Çölemerik Nasturis; all of the Nasturis around Iran’s city of Urumiye has chosen Orthodoxy with the impact of Russian priests, and these are in eagerness of drawing Nasturis in our boundaries to their side; and for this respect Catholic priests were less harmful.”<sup>25</sup>

Another example of efforts of French ecclesiastics towards the catholicization of Armenians can be seen in a telegraph dated April 2, 1910. It is understood from the document that firstly a verbal notice was issued on the situation of French priests who were reported to be exhibiting inappropriate behavior in the Adana province; however, the Ottoman government and the French Embassy had come up against each other upon the insistence of Father Emmanuel Grasya in encouraging Armenians to change their sects. Information was also found in the document which revealed that Father Emmanuel Grasya was producing fabricated accounts and magnifying ordinary events into dangerous proportions in order to affect Armenians and convince the public that he had influence over the Ottoman government.<sup>26</sup>

It is also possible to encounter telegraphs which report that on the eve of the First World War ecclesiastics had increased their activities related to political affairs to

24 From Müinir Bey to Tevfik Bey, BOA. HR. SYS. 2747/57, *Osmanlı Belgelerinde...*, p. 73.

25 From the Ottoman Minister of Interior Memduh Bey to the Ottoman Prime Ministry, BOA. A. MKT. MHM. 642/2, 698/16, 19 September 1898, *Osmanlı Belgelerinde...*, pp. 125-126.

26 On behalf of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, sent by Ohannes to the Ministry of Internal Affairs, BOA. DH. MUI. 66-2/22, 2 April 1910, *Osmanlı Belgelerinde...*, pp. 183-184.

the highest level:

“Priest Plisi, Priest Huri (?) and a local priest named İbrahim have toured Cebel-i Duruz villages of the Havran district and after their absurd speeches and harmful suggestions such as ‘the Ottoman state have perished. There will be no Ottoman government after ten days. France has bought Syria as the reward for 3 million francs of debt from the Ottoman Empire. From now on Syria belongs to France. We came to open schools everywhere. Hereafter do not recognize Ottoman officials, do not pay taxes and do not sell land. The French government will not approve these,’ the people became agitated and the municipal police have been informed. One municipal police officer came to check on the complaints from the priests and in the attendance of Muslim and Christian witnesses, it was verified that these improper words have been pronounced.”<sup>27</sup>

In archival documents it is possible to find information that besides French priests, Armenian ecclesiastics were also dealing with political activities by using their status; they had some secret correspondence with the Armenian Patriarchate, and Russian, British and French consuls were acting as intermediaries in such correspondence.<sup>28</sup>

As a result, it is possible to say that, on the basis of catholicization, the efforts of French ecclesiastics towards Armenians supported the political, economic and religious-cultural expansionism of France.

### III. French-Armenian Relations in France

#### 1. Migration of Armenians to France

Two important factors affecting Armenian migration to France during the 1870s were as the missionary activities and the fleeing of Armenian revolutionaries to France via French ships. This indicates that the French government had supported Armenian activities both directly and indirectly. It is known that Tevfik Paşa demanded information from Ottoman diplomats on the fates of the emigrating Armenians; however he was not successful because of the difficult realities of the period:

“Since it was reported by trustful sources that there were two army officers among

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27 On behalf of the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Salih Bey's secret telegram to the Ministry of Internal Affairs, BOA. DH. SYS. 42/8, 11 May 1913, *Osmanlı Belgelerinde...*, pp. 198-199.

28 BOA. Y. PRK. AZJ. 52/60, 29 June 1907, *Osmanlı Belgelerinde...*, p. 181.

the persons who incited tumult by attacking the Ottoman Bank and were put on a ship to be sent to Marseilles, an order was sent to the Embassy by the Ministry of Interior Security that an investigation should be conducted on where these émigrés went and with whom they communicated; and consequently, intelligence and investigation reports to be sent to the Ministry.”<sup>29</sup>

Similarly, it can be detected from archival documents that a group of Armenians, which had caused disorder in the region, had boarded to the French passenger ship *Gironde*; hereupon Tevfik Paşa demanded information from an Ottoman diplomat serving in Marseilles to learn whether or not the Armenians had reached there and with whom they established connection in the city. In another document, the Ottoman representative in Athens, Asım Bey, had reported that the French passenger ship *Gironde* had arrived at Pireus; however, the captain of the ship did not permit the passengers to disembark from the ship and then the ship left for Marseilles. Accordingly, it is possible to say that the Ottoman government was aware of where and how the Armenians went in this period, but could not take serious precautions on behalf of related countries. In fact, Tevfik Paşa had attempted through Ottoman diplomats in Paris, to have the Armenians who previously caused riots in the Ottoman state rejected for entry upon arrival to France. Münir Bey, in a telegraph to Tevfik Paşa, stated his guess that French authorities would not accept Armenian criminals to France after his initiatives:

“Before receiving telegraph numbered 226 from your Excellency, I forwarded a note to the Minister of Foreign Affairs stating that exceptional cases were clearly related to the punishment of the criminals in order to focus his attention on the crimes committed by the anarchists. I strongly hope that the Government of the Republic will not permit these dangerous people to enter into France.”<sup>30</sup>

In addition to the detailed list prepared by Mavroyeni Bey on the Armenians who departed from Marseilles for New York, his sending off daily telegraphs informing Tevfik Paşa of the situation indicates his efforts on the issue. As a matter of fact, these efforts of Mavroyeni Bey had been appreciated by Münir Bey as indicated above. It is also understood from these documents that, besides the Armenians who were deported as a result of their political activities, there were many Armenians left in the country of their own will without being part of any political affair.<sup>31</sup>

29 From Tevfik Paşa to Mavroyeni Bey, BOA. HR. SYS. 2802-4, 2749/25, 30 August 1896, *Osmanlı Belgelerinde...*, p. 95.

30 From Münir Bey to Tevfik Paşa, BOA. HR. SYS. 2802-4, 2749/25, 2 September 1896, *Osmanlı Belgelerinde...*, pp. 96-97.

31 From Münir Bey to Tevfik Paşa, BOA. HR. SYS. 2802-4, 2749/25, 11 September 1896, *Osmanlı Belgelerinde...*, p. 105.

## 2. Efforts to Acquire French Nationality

Meanwhile some Armenian citizens, who were active in several political activities inside the boundaries of the Ottoman Empire, had migrated to France illegally and continuously applied to the French authorities to acquire French nationality. A telegraph dated 1888 about the acquisition of French citizenship by an Armenian named Jean Broussali is important in revealing the attitude of French authorities towards applications for citizenship. It has implied a disingenuous attitude of French authorities on the issue and stated that while the French government was raising many difficulties for Ottoman citizens in acquiring French citizenship in general, they expedited the regarding the Armenian-Ottoman citizens' French citizenship requests. The Ottoman Ambassador to Paris, Esad Paşa, noting that they could not adopt such an attitude and even was surprised about it, said:

“The Minister, who has been in an embarrassing situation because of this unlawful act related to Mr Broussali, expressed to me that this issue was on the agenda of the Ministry of Justice and that he was following the case; however, surprisingly, he added that it was impossible to recant from this. Thereby, while he was stating that Broussali has been awarded to the citizenship unlawfully, he also added in the case of return to Turkey of this person, the Sublime Porte had all rights to deal with him as an Ottoman citizen.”<sup>32</sup>

While in a telegraph from 1888, it was pointed out that the French administration was easing the process of acquiring citizenship; in another telegraph from the Paris Embassy on March 6, 1907, it was argued that Armenian immigrants had certain problems in acquiring French citizenship, and that, in order to avoid such difficulties, changes should be made in the Naturalization of Immigrants Regulations of 1869.<sup>33</sup> This indicated that the French administration had changed its attitude towards naturalization of immigrants.

## 3. Reform Demand of the French Government on the Lands Inhabited by Armenians

After the Berlin Treaty, the Great Powers demanded several reforms from the Ottoman Empire on the territories mainly inhabited by Armenians in accordance with Article 61 of the Agreement. Besides France, Russia also attempted certain initiatives for some reforms towards Armenians in the six provinces (*vilayet-i sitte*).

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32 From Esad Paşa to Said Paşa, BOA. HR. SYS. 2781-1/12, 13, 3 June 1888, *Osmanlı Belgelerinde...*, p.14

33 BOA. HR. SYS. 2866/32, 9 March 1907, *Osmanlı Belgelerinde...*, p. 180.



Reform demands, which might be interpreted as intervention by the Great Powers into the internal affairs of the Ottoman state, began with the Sason Incidents according to Münir Süreyya Bey. He emphasized that envoys of Great Britain, France and Russia attempted to take part in the Commission of Inquiry established to investigate the Sason Incidents. The first meeting of the Commission that arrived in Muş on January 21, 1895 was convened on January 24, 1895 and adopted some decisions:

“In these circumstances, Monsieur Cambon sent a letter to the French Minister of Foreign Affairs stating that murders occurred in Istanbul over the last few days. Besides the deleterious police organization, sermons and advice of imams proposing that murdering Christians was a good behavior were not contributing to the safety of the capital. He added that in other cities the situation was even worse. Envoys of the three states were of the belief that some measures had to be taken to ensure the safety of priests and all Christians awaiting protection from Embassies all along; they decided to demand from the Sublime Porte that the police organization should be established, and precautions to sustain safety of the people should be taken.”<sup>34</sup>

In another document dated in 1913 regarding reforms towards Armenians, the information of conferences on the Armenian question by authors Monsieur Victor Berar and Bogos Nubar Paşa was noted. In the conference, it was proposed that reforms should be made in the Armenian lands. In the same conference, Bogos Nubar Paşa also delivered a speech supporting Monsieur Victor Berar, and proclaimed that Armenians would, in fact, prefer to remain as Ottomans, not looking after “impossible dreams to be realized such as independence and autonomy.” Armenians had no other target besides the reforms recommended by Monsieur Victor Berar, and it was necessary and important to carry out these reforms under the supervision of Europe in order to sustain general peace and for the sake of Armenian and Ottoman interests.<sup>35</sup>

Again, in a 1913 telegraph from Rıfat Paşa to Said Halim Paşa, how the Armenian lobby led by Bogos Nubar Paşa was preventing aid to the Ottomans was addressed:

“The French Asia Committee was convened under the presidency of General

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<sup>34</sup> Münir Süreyya Bey, *Ermeni Mesalesinin Siyasi...*, p. 27.

<sup>35</sup> From Ottoman Foreign Minister Rıfat Paşa to Ottoman Prime Minister Said Halim Paşa, BOA. HR. SYS. 2817-1/110, 118, 7 June 1913, *Osmanlı Belgelerinde...*, pp. 195-197.

Lacroix, Buxton, Lepsius and Milliukof in a secret meeting and approximately twenty delegates had listened Bogos Paşa on the reforms to be implemented in the lands where Armenians were living. After the debate, it was decided that a control mechanism was necessary, and, as a result, a decision was adopted by Bogos Paşa to call on the Great Powers not to extend financial aid to the Ottoman Empire unless reforms have been implemented”.<sup>36</sup>

According to Münir Süreyya Bey, these states were so persistent about reforms, firstly, because of their anti-Ottoman foreign policy; secondly, as a result of the deep impact of the dense and effective propaganda through newspapers, books and conferences especially in France, Russia and North America that had been continuing for a long time; and thirdly, because of harsh expressions and awful aspersions that came up in the Yellow Book and was presented by the French, British and Russian delegates of the Muş Investigation Commission to their governments.<sup>37</sup>

#### **4. Statements of the French Administration on the Armenian Population**

In the analyzed archival documents, information on the Armenian population in the period under study was also found. A telegraph containing information on the population implied that 600,000 Armenians were living in the Ottoman Empire, while the Muslim population was approximately 10 million. The document claimed that the attempts of Armenians for achieving an independent state, which did not constitute even ten percent of the Muslim population, would never be accepted, and also the signatory states of the Berlin Agreement would by no means permit such a situation. Moreover, on the grounds that Armenians had made Europe the center for their separatist activities, Ottoman state demanded from European states the expulsion of the Armenians who were living within those states' boundaries, and previously interfered in political activities.

Some information on the Armenian population has been come upon in the statements of the Foreign Ministry of France. Then the French Foreign Minister, Monsieur Hanotaux, had contended that the Armenian population was approximately 3 million. However, the Ottoman government responded to the remarks by demonstrating that the Armenian population as 3 million was an inaccurate accounting, while the Armenian population was determined to be 900,000 in that era by the Ottoman authorities.<sup>38</sup>

<sup>36</sup> From Rifat Paşa to Said Halim Paşa, BOA. HR. SYS. 2817-11/178, 1 December 1913, *Osmanlı Belgelerinde...*, p. 205.

<sup>37</sup> Münir Süreyya Bey, *Ermeni Meselesinin Siyasi...*, p. 49.

<sup>38</sup> Telegraph sent to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs by the Ottoman Embassy in Paris on 6 November 1896, BOA.Y. A. HUS.

### 5. The Armenian Activities in France

The majority of the Armenians living in France was composed of people who arrived illegally, and previously engaged in anti-Ottoman political activities. For this reason, it is understood from the exchange of letters that the Ottoman Foreign Minister Arif Paşa had often demanded reports from the Ottoman Embassy in Paris on the population of Armenians and their activities. However, in an answer given by Esad Paşa to the Foreign Minister about the issue, it was argued that the Armenians were not conducting secret activities and they were watched over carefully. Such an answer showed that the Ottoman diplomats were not aware of developments related to Armenian activities in that period yet. As a matter of fact, the telegraphs, sent to the Paris Embassy which was denoted discrepancies between Esad Paşa's accounts and the information given by the ambassador in St. Petersburg, Şakir Paşa, verify that the Ottoman diplomat in Paris had not followed the Armenian activities carefully.<sup>39</sup>

A significant activity of the Armenians in France was to meet with important personalities of the French government and to forward their demands to these officials. It is understood from the correspondence that, while the information that the French foreign ministers had accepted from the Armenian delegations was provided, there was no other information on which issues these delegations had spoken about and no research or detailed information had been provided about the visiting delegation. On the other hand, from the latter correspondence, it is understood that the Armenians had attempted to ensure that the French government would undertake the issue of implementation of Article 61 of the Berlin Agreement.<sup>40</sup>

In the archival documents, there is important correspondence on the issue of anti-Ottoman meetings organized by the Armenians. As an example, agenda items in a meeting organized in Paris included: "(1) Presenting the Armenian complaints regarding the recent Adana massacres, (2) protesting the biased attitude of the Ottoman government in its cautions against people who committed the massacres."<sup>41</sup> This shows that in addition to its political content, the meeting also was a propaganda activity against the Ottomans.

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362/8, 8 November 1896, *Osmanlı Belgelerinde...*, pp. 75-84.

39 From Asım Paşa to Esad Paşa, BOA. HR. SYS. 2748/2, 29 May 1884, *Osmanlı Belgelerinde...*, pp. 6-7.

40 From Esad Paşa to the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Said Paşa, BOA. HR. SYS. 2748/3,4, 8 November 1885, *Osmanlı Belgelerinde...*, pp. 8-9.

41 From Naoum Paşa to the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Rifat Paşa, BOA. HR. SYS. 2750/76, 4 October 1909, *Osmanlı Belgelerinde...*, pp. 182-183.

There are also important documents proving that the Armenians were using a variety of means in order to draw the attention of top level French government officials to the Armenian issue. For example, a letter written by an Armenian in Paris to the French President, demanded that the signatory states of the Berlin Agreement should also discuss the Armenian question in the convention where they would talk about the problems which arose after the Balkan Wars. Accordingly, some Armenian authors living in Europe and Egypt had established a committee and made attempts to invite the Great Powers to pressure the Ottoman state to make rapid and serious reforms in the areas inhabited by the Armenians regions.<sup>42</sup>

There were also people among the Armenians participating in committee activities in France, who had previously been in public service in the Ottoman Empire. Nouridjan Efendi was one of these people. It was stipulated in a telegraph sent by the Ottoman Consul in Paris, Galip Şevki, to the Foreign Ministry in 1914 that Nouridjan Efendi established an Armenian Voluntary Association in Paris in order to “deceive Armenian youngsters who were about to return their country because of military mobilization, and made them volunteers to the French army even by threatening and intimidating.”<sup>43</sup>

## 6. The Armenian Issue in the French Parliament

Although the Armenians succeeded in obtaining whatever they wanted most of the time, as it can be gleaned from the archival sources, some reverse results also occurred. For example, the information given by Ziya Paşa about the conference given by George Buisson in the French Parliament on the disorders in Anatolia could be assessed within this category.

In a report sent to Said Paşa, Ziya Paşa noted that Buisson had asserted at the conference that Armenian massacres were a fiction fabricated by the British, which was making use of force and violence in order to reach their aims. However, when they could not succeed in that, they applied aspersions. The expression used by George Buisson that the Armenian disorders appeared for the first time in Europe and that the British were benefiting from this situation was remarkable in exposing the nature of Franco-British relations of the era.

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42 From Ottoman Ambassador to Vienna Hüseyin Hilmi, to the Ottoman Foreign Ministry, BOA. HR. SYS. 2817-1/44, 8 February 1913, *Osmanlı Belgelerinde...*, pp. 192-193.

43 From Ottoman Consul in Paris, Galip Şevki Bey to the Ottoman Foreign Ministry, HR. SYS. 2141/3, 19 September 1914, *Osmanlı Belgelerinde...*, pp. 205-206.

Buisson had also recalled that in 1862, Chinese newspapers were reporting in the same manner based on delusion and fiction that French and British soldiers were raping women, burning alive men, slicing children in small pieces and eating them, adding that Armenian committees had passed beyond even the Chinese in their campaign.<sup>44</sup> Buisson further claimed that the main problem in Anatolia was actually a struggle between Armenians and other people of East Anatolia because of the usurpation of some cattle herds. As a result of this, local officials had to demand help from soldiers, which resulted in clashes, people were died and wounded.

The particular point in Buisson's statement is that British provocation set the foundation for the clashes in Anatolia. Buisson stated that the British achieved the eruption of riots through grants of aids to some Armenians and illuminated the reason why Armenians could not establish a state of their own:

“Armenians have displayed since ancient times that they are untalented to shape themselves as a government. Armenians are not a nation to carry the adjective “nation” in the history books. When phases of history are reviewed, it is seen that this nation has been taxed by Persians, Spartans, Romans, Abbasids, Mongols and Kurds”<sup>45</sup>

Moreover, Boussion specified that the idea of establishing an Armenian state is a British fairy tale since the Armenian population did not constitute majority in any region of the empire.

Another person delivering a speech on Ottoman Armenians in French Parliament was Monsieur Chiseren, a member of the French Parliament. A letter sent by Chiseren to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs was important in terms of showing the Ottoman diplomats' successes. These points were raised in the letter of Monsieur Chiseren in which his thoughts on Ottoman societies were explained:

“If there is a community worthy of esteem among Ottoman societies, it is the Muslims. Other communities are in a miserable situation. The worst is the Armenians without doubt. This nation, which is the most atrocious of human history, is dreaming of the reestablishment of the ‘Lucinian Kingdom.’ The British are helping the Armenians in order to use them as their own tool.”<sup>46</sup>

44 From the Ottoman Embassy in Paris to the Ottoman Foreign Ministry, BOA. HR. SYS. 2748/73, 2838/7, 16 May 1895, *Osmanlı Belgelerinde...*, pp. 38-40.

45 From the Ottoman Embassy in Paris to the Ottoman Foreign Ministry, BOA. HR. SYS. 2748/73, 2838/7, 16 May 1895, *Osmanlı Belgelerinde*, pp. 40-41.

46 From Monsieur Chiseren to the Ottoman Foreign Ministry, BOA. HR. SYS. 1922/106, 18 November 1895, *Osmanlı Belge-*

In another archival document, interesting information was given in some speeches to ensure that the Armenian issue was on the agenda of the French Parliament. Raising objection to the speeches at the French Parliament given by Ottoman diplomats was important in showing that Ottoman diplomats met some French representatives and tried to persuade them via their personal contacts. Thus, the activities of the Ottoman diplomats in this period can be labeled as a lobbying activity in today's terminology. As a matter of fact, it was found in the documents that concrete results were obtained by an unnamed official from the Ottoman Embassy in Paris:

“On the other hand, I presented a detailed brief of the event to three influential deputies with whom I have friendly relations. For this purpose, I made quotations from a detailed telegraph from the Palace and repeated correspondence with the Ministry. Since these deputies have promised me precisely that they would read this record to most of their friends to clarify the real situation, I heartily supposed that efforts of Monsieur De Presenne and some of his friends would not bear any result. Except this, by courtesy of their influence on the party groups, these deputies succeeded in lengthening of the speeches on the day of the debate and prevented the other five speakers from speaking on the Sason Events.”<sup>47</sup>

Monsieur Hanotaux's statement in the French Parliament, declaring that despite their independence demands, the Armenians were not the majority in any place in the Ottoman Empire was a confession of the French politician which implied that Armenian demands were unrealistic:

“It is a reality that the Armenian people under the administration of the Ottoman state and living in the provinces which are the sole subject of this debate are not more than thirteen percent in all the Ottoman population. Naturally, the total population of the Armenians in the Anatolian provinces is not three million. Anyhow, Armenians are situated densely in some areas and sparsely in other places, not in an equal manner. In short, there is no point to argue in any province that these poor people were the majority and had no center around which an autonomous administration could be formed.”<sup>48</sup>

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*levinde...*, pp. 51-52.

47 From the Ottoman Embassy in Paris to the Ottoman Foreign Ministry, BOA. HR. SYS. 2865/11, 19 July 1904, *Osmanlı Belgelerinde...*, pp.1 49-153.

48 From the Ottoman Embassy in Paris to the Ottoman Foreign Ministry, BOA. Y. A. HUS. 362/8, 8 November 1896, *Osmanlı Belgelerinde...*, pp. 75-76.

## 7. Armenian Committees in France

It was previously stated that Armenians who participated in committee activities within the Ottoman Empire had been exiled. Some Armenians, who had fled legally or illegally, particularly to Paris as a result of exile or missionary work, had established some committees. A telegraph, dated 1890, on the hostile and agitating activities of these committees against the Ottomans, showed that certain committee members visited various French newspapers and offices.

A significant number of Armenian committees established in France aimed to provoke the Armenians living inside the empire. A letter sent to the Armenian Archbishop of Adana by the Common Secretariat of London and Marseilles Armenian Committees on August 9, 1892, and subsequent distribution of these letters to other eminent Armenian committees by Armenian ecclesiastics indicates that committees and ecclesiastics were conducting common activities.

Since several Armenian incidents had begun in Istanbul, it was seen that some Armenian committee members were returning from Marseilles, America and Europe to the Ottoman Empire after receiving instructions, and some precautions were taken on this issue.

Besides their committee activities in France, Armenians were also assessed as potential voters in the political arena, and some French socialist deputies attempted to indoctrinate Armenians with their revolutionary ideas through this way:

“...Speakers, after stating that Armenians living in the aforementioned region were in anxiety, congratulated the Russians because of their cooperation with Polish, Armenian and Finnish people in their struggle to obtain rights and freedom through revolution, and proposed to issue a decree that the decisions made in the Berlin Agreement should be fully implemented. Similar to the previous meetings on Ottoman and Russian affairs, this meeting had also no impact, and if marginal newspapers like *Aurone*, *Le Matin*, *Vantransiran* were left out, even the newspapers related to the government and the Conservative Party have not published any news on the issue. So it is clear that socialist deputies had no other aim than making their revolutionary ideas public on the eve of the coming elections.”<sup>49</sup>

## 8. Groundless News against Ottomans in the French Press

Armenians attempted to use many tools including religion, the press, ethnic iden-

<sup>49</sup> Statement sent by to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs by the Ottoman Embassy in Paris, BOA. HR. SYS. 2865/63, 9 December 1905, *Osmanlı Belgelerinde...*, pp. 179-180.

tity, and the like in order to affect French public opinion in places having a significant Armenian population like Paris and Marseilles. Publication of some articles commenting on Istanbul in a hostile manner in the French newspaper *Le Temps* was realized through the efforts of Armenians. The information in the telegraph sent by Esad Paşa to Said Paşa on October 11, 1890, was remarkable in terms of the Armenian activities aiming to influence the French press. According to this, *Le Matin* attempted to affect the French public opinion by publishing news based on a telegraph claiming that the Zeytun Armenians revolted against the government and killed the governor and a few soldiers. Despite these claims which were discredited by the Sublime Porte, it is important to point out how active the Armenian organizations were with respect to the conditions of that period, since Armenians living in France were closely monitoring the developments within the Ottoman Empire and presenting it to the French press with distortion.

These incidents became so serious that Ottoman Foreign Minister Said Paşa expressed his own concern about the articles in the European press and sent a circular to the Ottoman foreign representatives in order to prevent such publications.

It can be clearly seen from the documents that delusive news was presented to the press by Armenians working at the British and the French Embassies from time to time. As an example, an Armenian named Kasabyan, working as translator in the French Embassy, had fabricated news claiming that there would be events in Diyarbakır in order to prompt France and Britain to place pressure the Ottoman state.<sup>50</sup>

While the Armenian activities intensified, some of the Armenians were being followed closely by the Ottoman diplomats, for some Armenian students were engaging in propaganda activities against Turks and Kurds. In this context, it can be seen those students demanded that the French press publish news which depicted the Turks and the Kurds oppressing the Armenians.

Since the amount of news hostile to the Ottomans increased, the Ottoman Embassy in Paris began to send the summaries of antagonistic articles on the Ottoman Empire to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. In the documents consisting of the assessments on these articles, it can be seen that the Paris press was making use of news coming from different countries in its publications on the Ottoman state.

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50 From the Minister of Foreign Affairs to the Prime Ministry, BOA. Y. A. HUS 424/10, 11 January 1902, *Osmanlı Belgelerinde...*, pp. 144-146.



One of the important documents proving that the French administration was supporting the Armenian activities directly is the telegraph dated 1918:

“One of the Swedish newspapers in the German language gave negative opinion on the Ottoman government through publication of an article titled ‘Armenian Riot.’ In the so-called article, while it was stated that there was a movement inimical to Turkey which was a result of the Allies’ provocation, it was also pointed out that the center of the revolution was in Switzerland. Moreover, the French ambassador in Bern has been charged with managing this movement under the pretense of organizing a conference. Clemenceau sent a member of the French Institute, Berar, early this year to Geneva to establish communication with Armenian revolutionaries and to meet Armenian doctor Şericyan. A meeting was realized there. Berar, talking on the Armenian case, insisted that the French government had the hope that the Armenians would struggle with Turkey in every means possible and the government would not hesitate to fund this struggle.”<sup>51</sup>

Again, in another telegraph, dated in 1918, it was stated that one of the journalists, Charles Carroll, writing against the Ottomans at Swiss newspapers, was in fact an Armenian from Istanbul named Carabet Carolian. After the outbreak of the First World War, he emigrated to France and became a volunteer in the French army. Following discharge from the army, he was sent to Switzerland to conduct anti-Turkish propaganda.<sup>52</sup>

Some false news was also seen in the French press about the Armenians migrating from the Ottoman Empire. The Ottoman representative in Marseilles, Mavroyeni Bey, submitted the information on the delusiveness of the news to Tevfik Paşa in this way:

“Local press informs that sixteen anarchists have been released; but this news was falsified. According to my secret investigation, two of them requested permission from the security forces to stay in France. However, the local administration recommended to the French government that the two be expelled from France.”<sup>53</sup>

51 From the Ottoman Foreign Minister, Nesimi Bey, to the Ottoman Ambassador in Bern, Fuad Selim Bey, BOA. HR. SYS. 2885/41, 19 April 1918, *Osmanlı Belgelerinde...*, pp. 219-220.

52 From the Ottoman Embassy in Geneva to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, BOA. HR. SYS. 2885/56, 13 June 1918, *Osmanlı Belgelerinde...*, pp. 220-221.

53 From Mavroyeni Bey to Tevfik Paşa, BOA. HR. SYS. 2802-4, 27/49/25, 12 September 1896, *Osmanlı Belgelerinde...*, p. 106.

### **9. Activities of Armenian Ecclesiastics**

It can be seen in the archival documents that Armenian ecclesiastics were also taking part in some political formations similar to French ecclesiastics by using their status. Münir Bey informed the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Tevfik Paşa, on the issue on August 4, 1904 that a group of Armenian ecclesiastics had visited the French President and Minister of Foreign Affairs, and expressed complaints in the name of the Cathogigos of Etchmiadzin. When Münir Bey forwarded the Ottoman discomfort on the visits and complaints of the aforementioned ecclesiastics to the French Minister of Foreign Affairs, the reply was very provoking because the French Minister of Foreign Affairs stated that his meeting with these ecclesiastics had materialized with the pressure of some deputies who were greatly interested in the Armenian issue. In addition to this, the deputies declared that they would take the causes of the disturbance in the press into consideration if he did not meet them. This situation was also important in showing that the Armenians were continuing lobbying activities very effectively, even during those years.

### **10. The Attitude of the French Government towards the Armenian Detainees**

In 1897, it was seen that there was an increase in Armenian activities in France. In the telegraphs sent by Ottoman diplomats, it was stated that some Armenians, who were exiled to Marseilles because they had caused anarchy in the Ottoman Empire, returned to Cyprus with French ships, and from Cyprus they passed to Alexandria in mariner clothes, and, by French ships, they would cause riots there.<sup>54</sup>

In another telegraph sent by the Ottoman diplomat in Marseilles, Mavroyeni Bey, to Tevfik Paşa, it was emphasized that Armenians were sent to Switzerland and Britain through some aid organizations. For this reason, nearly no Armenian migrant remained in Marseilles. Moreover, officials were sensitive in legal documents of incoming Armenians to Marseilles. Mavroyeni Bey reported that Armenians without legal documents had been arrested in accordance with the measures of the French government. Mavroyeni Bey had also prepared a detailed report for Münir Bey on the Armenians coming to Marseilles. It contained information on identification, transportation and their aim to migrate. In addition to this, he added that Armenian migration to Marseilles was about to end, and if the continuation of an investigation on these subjects was desired, allowance for an official working should be increased.

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54 BOA. Y. PRK. ASK. 119/45, 13 March 1897, *Osmanlı Belgelerinde...*, p. 93.

### **Conclusion**

It is possible to say that the documents used in this article on the Ottoman-Armenian-French relations are mostly related to activities of Armenians in France and activities of French missionaries in the Ottoman Empire. Thereby, it is understood that during the three decades between 1879 and 1918, Armenians in France displayed effective activities such as misinforming the public opinion and especially the French press, forming revolutionary committees, using French and Armenian ecclesiastics for political purposes, and ensuring the interference of the French government to interior affairs of the Ottoman Empire.

It can also be argued that Armenian-French relations in this period were relatively more informal and indirect. Accordingly, it is observed that bilateral relations were based on supporting the Armenian committees in France and protecting the Armenians inside the Ottoman Empire. However, with the outbreak of the First World War, it is understood that Armenian-French relations became more direct and formal especially after the War declaration of the Ottoman Empire on the Allies. Furthermore, these relations were transformed into complete cooperation as a result of the inclusion of Armenian militias into the French Army under the framework of the Eastern Legion.<sup>55</sup> For example, it can be seen that, while in the first period the French government was hosting several Armenian political offenders in their country besides often overlooking illegal activities, the French government made it easier to acquire French citizenship for Armenian political offenders and permitted some publications in the French press by Armenians who were hostile to the Ottomans.

Besides Armenian activities in France, there are various documents on the activities of the French government within the boundaries of the Ottoman Empire. Among them, there are documents showing that French diplomats and missionaries were supporting the Armenians and other ethnic minority groups, including Nestorians, in order to encourage them to engage in anti-Ottoman activities. Especially the financial support of French diplomats to Armenian rebels constituted the most concrete example of the aforementioned support.

As a result, Armenian-French relations began to flourish from the second half of the 17<sup>th</sup> century, evolving in a very active manner in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. It can be argued that the bilateral relations served for their mutual interests in the period between 1879 and 1918. In sum, it is possible to say that from the Ottoman

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55 M. Serdar Palabıyık, "Fransız Arşiv Belgeleri...", p. 84.

archival documents that the French government had an active role both in the emergence of Armenian nationalism and the appearance of Armenian political activities in the Ottoman Empire. This role was conceptualized sometimes through notes sent by the French government or one of its diplomats. Also, it is possible to see this impact in the French support of the meetings of Armenian committees through the medium of missionaries in Anatolia or in their intervention of the judicial process of political detainees.



# US-TURKISH RELATIONS AND THE EFFECTS OF AMERICAN MISSIONARY ACTIVITIES ON US FOREIGN POLICY TOWARDS TURKEY

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**Abstract:** *The US foreign policy immediately before and after World War I was a direct result of the missionary activities in the Near East and their reflections to the US. The missionaries were highly supported by the very powerful American religious and governmental organizations. They used the public opinion for getting more financial support from the government and the people. Apart from obtaining high amount of donation due to the news that they created about the Armenians, they also shaped the American foreign policy of the Near East. This study will attempt to analyze the US policy towards Turkey around three basic issues, namely missionary activities, the Armenian Question and the Near East Relief Society (NERS), which, for the most part were highly effective in shaping American foreign policy. Therefore, the focus of the study will be on the interaction of the politics and the religion in the US case. The influence of this interaction on the American Near East policy during the first quarter of the 20<sup>th</sup> century will also be emphasized.*

**Key Words:** *US, Armenians, Near East Relief Society, Protestant Missionaries, World War I.*

**Öz:** *Birinci Dünya Savaşı'nın hemen öncesinde ve savaş sırasında Amerikan dış politikası, ABD'nin Yakın Doğu'daki misyonerlik faaliyetleri ve bu faaliyetlerin etkilerinin doğrudan bir sonucudur. Misyonerler güçlü Amerikan dini ve siyasi örgütler tarafından desteklenmişler ve halkın ve hükümetin desteğini alabilmek için kamuoyunu kullanmışlardır. Ermeniler hakkında üretilen haberler sayesinde aldıkları yüksek miktardaki bağışın yanı sıra Yakın Doğu'da Amerikan dış politikasını şekillendirmeyi de başarmışlardır. Bu çalışma üç temel konuda ABD'nin Türkiye'ye yönelik politikalarını incelemeyi amaçlamaktadır. Bunlar misyoner faaliyetleri, Ermeni sorunu ve Yakın Doğu Yardım Topluluğu'dur (NERS). Bu nedenle bu çalışmanın odak noktasını Amerika örneğinde din ve siyasetin etkileşimi ve bu etkileşimin 20. yüzyılın ilk çeyreğinde ABD'nin Yakın Doğu politikası üzerindeki etkileri oluşturacaktır.*

**Anahtar Kelimeler:** *ABD, Ermeniler, Yakın Doğu Yardım Topluluğu, Protestan Misyonerler, Birinci Dünya Savaşı.*

## Introduction

After gaining independence from Great Britain in 1783, the newly established United States of America needed to create its own nation, a political organization and the elements of nationalism in order to control the people and unite them under one flag. The American Constitution was the political component of the unification plan. Freedom of movement of goods, capital and labor emerged as the economic factors of the unification. Religion, most notably the spread of Protestantism, was the major backbone of the social unity in the US.

American religious leaders believed that the US territories were divinely chosen for the dissemination of Protestantism, which was to be spread within the US borders during the “First Awakening” Period.<sup>1</sup> After the “Second Awakening,”<sup>2</sup> the non-Christian peoples all around the world became the major target of Protestantism and American influence through religion.

Mediterranean trade was vitally important for US policy because Middle East trade was quite profitable for US merchants who were the main contacts of the US in the region. Therefore, Americans turned their eyes to the Near East as the Ottoman lands became a priority for them. At the very beginning of the relations between two states, commercial activities were of primary importance. With the integration of US missionaries into the context, the entire scenario changed. Although commercial activities were at the core of bilateral relations, there were some political contacts between the two countries regulated by treaties and agreements, some diplomatic problems occurred due to the commercial activities. However, when the US missionaries started to arrive in the Ottoman Empire, commerce was relegated to having secondary importance. The spread of “Protestantism, education, American culture, welfare and philanthropic activities”<sup>3</sup> became the most important fields of bilateral relations. The problematic aspect of the issue appeared at this point. The missionaries were not only trying to spread their beliefs, but they were also bringing the American way of life to the Ottoman

- 1 “The prosperity of the towns, which prompted fears that the devil was luring society into pursuit of worldly gain, produced a religious reaction in the 1730s that came to be known as the Great Awakening. Its inspiration came from two sources: George Whitefield, a Wesleyan revivalist who arrived from England in 1739, and Jonathan Edwards, who originally served in the Congregational Church in Northampton, Massachusetts. The target of the First Great Awakening’s missionary activities was the Native Americans.” (“An Outline of American History,” Chapter 2, 1994. [http://ftp.let.rug.nl/~usa/H/1994/Ch2\\_p5.htm](http://ftp.let.rug.nl/~usa/H/1994/Ch2_p5.htm) (last access: 22 July 2008).
- 2 “A second Great Awakening swept through New England in the early 19th century.” The target group of the second movement was the non-Christian population all around the world. (“Separating Church and State: Freedom of Religion,” Chapter 8. <http://www.4uth.gov.ua/usa/english/facts/factover/ch8.htm> (last access: 22 July 2008).
- 3 Himmet Umunc, “On the Edge of the Civilized World: Cyrus Hamlin and the American Missionary Work in Turkey,” *Bellesten*, Vol. 68, December 2004, p. 675.

territories with the institutions they established. Moreover, they did not restrict themselves only to religious activities; they were also involved in commercial activities at the very beginning. Most importantly, they took their places in the political and diplomatic arena.

The following essay is a three-part examination of the missionary activities in the Near East and their reflections to the US. The first part of this study will cover Turkish-US relations in the pre-war period and the initial phase of the American missionary activities. In the second part, Ottoman-Armenian relations and the 1915 relocation will be analyzed. The third part will particularly deal with the emergence of the Near East Relief Society and the dual structure of its activities (aid oriented and policy shaping). Finally, the effects of the Near East Relief Society on the American policy in the post war period will be evaluated.

## **I. Ottoman-American Relations before World War I**

### **1. Political, Economic, Legal Relations**

The relations between the US and the Ottoman Empire were commercial in the initial phase, namely at the beginning of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. The US, after gaining its independence, began commercial activities in various regions around the world. The Mediterranean trade was vitally important for the US. In order to be a part of this trade network, the US established contacts in the Near East. The Ottoman Empire became one of the most important trade partners of the US in this period due to the conditions that the Ottoman officials provided in terms of taxation, exportation and importation.

Regular commercial activities between the two states started with the export of İzmir's grapes to Boston. This trade route was also in use during the American War of Independence, and was vitally important in terms of acquiring the money needed for the continuation of the war and for the provision of necessary goods that the Americans could not get due to the embargo exercised by Great Britain. However, the Americans were mainly establishing commercial partnerships with the southeast Mediterranean. Although, this region was administratively a part of the Ottoman Empire, it was actually governed by the *Dayıs*.<sup>4</sup> Between 1786 and 1797, the US government signed four commercial treaties with Morocco, Algeria, Trablusgarb and Tunisia. Due to pirate attacks<sup>5</sup> on American trade ships,

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4 *Dayı* was the term used for the local governors mainly in Algeria.

5 In order to establish secure trade relations with those countries, every European power paid tribute to them. Great Britain and France were the strongest naval powers of the era but they were also making an annual payment to them. However, the



the US had not benefited from the treaties it signed as expected. As the US government was against giving an annual tribute to the pirates, it finally decided to use military force against them, sending the US navy to the region. As a result, the Berberi Wars started between the *Dayıs* and the Americans.<sup>6</sup> In the final year of the war, US signed a treaty with the *Dayıs* in order to protect US national interests.<sup>7</sup> This US success in the Berberi Wars was very important for the country economically and militarily. Apart from gaining capitulatory rights, the US was also able to demonstrate the high performance of its navy. Moreover, fighting a series of war beyond the US borders displayed that the US had the necessary features for becoming one of the Great Powers in the world.

In its initial phase, British ambassadors had a determinative role in Ottoman-American relations but as American interests developed, the US government decided to establish direct relations with the Ottoman Empire in order to protect its interests in the Ottoman territories. The US launched its first initiative in 1802 by sending William Steward to Izmir as ambassador. However, Steward was not recognized by the Ottoman Empire, and he returned to the US. In 1811, the US government sent David Offley with the same mission, but the result was the same. Different from Steward, Offley stayed for a while in the Ottoman territories and succeeded in establishing the first American Chamber of Commerce in Izmir in 1811. However, this institution acted like an embassy. The most important problem solved by this chamber in 1811 was related to the custom levies that the American trade ships were to pay. When Great Britain decided to remove its protection from the American trade ships, the British Ambassador of Istanbul convinced the Sultan to take 6% of the custom levies from the Americans. This amount was very high in comparison with the former rates. Offley went to Istanbul and was able to persuade the Ottoman government for a very low tax rate, even lower than the former one. The crisis was solved by the ambassadors. That is why, one may argue, this chamber could be regarded as an embassy.

Although the Ottoman Empire was not willing to establish direct relationships with the US at the beginning, this policy changed towards the 1820s. The Greek uprising and the burning of the Ottoman fleet by an alliance of British, French

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aim of the stronger power when making payments was to establish good relationships with these countries and use them against their rivals in necessary cases. The rise in the number of pirates' attacks on US trade ships was the reaction of Great Britain to the US by using the pirates. Çağrı Erhan, *Türk-Amerikan İlişkilerinin Tarihsel Kökenleri*, Ankara: Imge Kitabevi, 2001, pp. 37-44.

6 The Berberi Wars took place between 1801 and 1824. Çağrı Erhan, *Türk-Amerikan...*, p. 55.

7 The American fleet that was established during this war, gained a permanent statute and invoked it when it was necessary in order to protect the US national benefits. Çağrı Erhan, *Türk-Amerikan...*, p. 68

and Russian fleets at Navarino in 1827<sup>8</sup> convinced the Sublime Porte to find a new ally against the European powers. The Ottoman Palace considered the US the best choice, and decided to establish diplomatic relationships with them. The US merchants were also demanding the establishment of official relations between the two countries since 1811 in order to guarantee their positions. The US government was willing to establish official relations for both preserving the national interests of the US and protecting the rights of its citizens located in the Ottoman territories. However, during the preparation phase for the treaty, a crisis regarding the sale of warships between the two states emerged. The Ottoman government insisted on its demands to buy warships from the US. It claimed that if the US did not agree to sell warships to the Ottoman Empire, the commercial treaty would not provide any benefits for the Empire. Because, the Ottomans had not traded in the US territories, the tax rate did not provide any benefits to them. The US Senate was against the Ottoman demands because the Senators believed that such a sale could cause problems with Great Britain and the idea was against the Monroe Doctrine. The problem was solved by a US merchant named Eckford, who agreed to sell one of his warships to the Ottoman Empire. Later, Eckford went to the Ottoman lands in order to continue to build warships. Meanwhile, the Ottomans had the warships they wanted and the US government was not really interfering in the sales process. As a result, in 1830, a commercial treaty was signed between the US and the Ottoman Empire. The US gained the status of “the most preferred state.”<sup>9</sup> David Porter became the first “chargé d’affaires”<sup>10</sup> of the US in the Ottoman Empire. Within a year, he established various embassy offices in different cities of the empire. The Ottomans also sent their ambassador to the US and mutual diplomatic relations started between the two states.<sup>11</sup>

In 1897, the US government wanted to raise the status of its embassy. Although

8 When the Ottoman fleet was destroyed by the Anglo-French-Russian fleet at Navarino, the Ottoman Empire had to find a new ally in order to reconstruct its navy. The aim of the empire was to construct a more modernized and powerful navy. The strongest naval forces of the era were Great Britain and France but as they were the ones which destroyed the Ottoman fleet, they were not suitable for demanding aid. In this condition, the Ottoman Empire switched to the US side because the US had proven its naval capability during the Berberi Wars. Çağrı Erhan, *Türk-Amerikan...*, p. 113

9 The state that gets this status in the Ottoman lands had all the privileges that all the other countries had already gained from the Ottoman government. They continued their commercial activities with the lowest rate of custom levies. Moreover, both the citizens and the workers of the US had the right for traveling, as they had wanted within the Ottoman borders. Çağrı Erhan, *Türk-Amerikan...*, p. 124.

10 Uygur Kocabaşoğlu, *Anadolı'daki Amerika Kendi Belgeleriyle 19. Yüzyılda Osmanlı İmparatorluğu'ndaki Amerikan Misyoner Okulları*, Ankara: İmge Kitabevi, 2000, p. 41.

11 The first Ottoman envoy was the French origin Edward Edme Blacque (later Bulak Bey) who was sent to the US in 1867. Çağrı Erhan, *Türk-Amerikan...*, p. 158.

this proposal was rejected by Sultan Abdülhamid II, the US proposed the same demand in 1906. The second effort was responded to positively and both Istanbul and Washington embassies were promoted. The US ambassadors, apart from dealing with the diplomatic activities, were also dealing with the Christian minorities who lived in the Ottoman lands. They prepared reports explaining the living conditions of the minorities and the economic and political events regarding the Christian minorities in the Ottoman Empire. The reports were first sent to the US embassy in Istanbul and then they were classified according to their importance. The ones which had value for US policies, were sent to Washington.

Another treaty signed between the US and the Ottoman Empire in 1862 concerned marine trafficking and trade. The preferred status of the US was preserved; however, the tax rates increased. The articles of the 1862 Treaty, in comparison to the Treaty of 1830, were clearer and were applied from the beginning. The Treaty of 1830 did not apply in practice as it was written in the document itself. Moreover, with the new treaty, the US interests were highly considered, and American merchants gained additional rights. At the same time, the Ottoman Empire gained some additional rights for itself. According to the treaty, the Ottoman merchants, if they established commercial relations with the US, would have gained the same rights that the US merchants had in the Ottoman territories.

Two additional treaties were signed in 1874. One was related to the exchange of criminals and the other was the “citizenship” treaty. These were actually signed because of the criminal law problem, as the 1830 and 1862 treaties were not clear enough about criminal issues. Another significant problem emerged from the question regarding which countries’ law would be applied to the US citizens in the Ottoman Empire in criminal cases. Moreover, the most complicated issue was about the people who changed their nationality: former Ottoman but new American citizens. Many of those new American citizens used their status in order to obtain commercial privileges from the Ottoman Empire. Problems regarding both criminal and the commercial privileges led the US and the Ottoman Empire to make an agreement. However, the preparation process for both problems took many years and even the “citizenship” treaty was never applied due to the diverse ideas of the two states about the articles placed in these treaties.

The attitude of the US towards the Ottoman Empire changed after the American

Civil War. The US foreign policy was actually shaped by the Monroe Doctrine declared in 1823.<sup>12</sup> According to the doctrine, “the United States would refrain from intervening in European affairs at the same time it insisted that Europe should refrain from intervening from American affairs.”<sup>13</sup> Moreover, the US could continue its relations and protect its economic interests with each country as it wanted. As this policy shaped the American policy towards the Ottoman Empire, the US did not really become concerned with the Eastern Question until the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. It can be presumed that the first diplomatic relations between the two countries started with the arrival of the missionaries into the Ottoman territories, and the US only involved itself in the Eastern Question as the issue concerned its missionaries.<sup>14</sup> However, after the Civil War, when the integrity of the states was consolidated, US foreign policy started to aim at expanding the American influence as did the European powers. The US political leaders believed that in order to achieve a good level of economic growth, expansion was the most important pre-requisite. As a result, the US started to take a role within the Eastern Question, although this new policy was not visible in the pre-war period.

From 1900 to 1913, the trade level between the US and the Ottoman Empire increased forty-fold. In 1922, the second American Chamber of Commerce was established in Istanbul. When President Wilson started his term, one of Wilson’s close friends, Henry Morgenthau,<sup>15</sup> was appointed as ambassador to Istanbul. Rüstem Bey, on the other hand, was sent to the US as the first Ottoman ambassador.<sup>16</sup>

12 In the pre-war period, only the Chester Project remained out of the boundaries of the Monroe Doctrine. The project was about the establishment of a railway system in Ottoman territories, which would take place between Sivas and Van. Moreover, the system would reach Musul and Kerkük to the Yumurtalık Port. The Ottoman Parliament, however, rejected the project. The second attempt of the US was first accepted by the Ottoman Empire, but the project never materialized due to the alterations at borders that emerged after the Lausanne Treaty. With the death of the project, the US turned to its former policy shaped by the Monroe Doctrine and concentrated on missionary activities. Baskan Oran, “Chester Projesi” *Türk Dış Politikası Kurtuluş Savaşından Bugüne Olgular, Belgeler, Yorumlar 1919-1980*, Volume 1, Istanbul: İletişim Yayınları, 2004, p. 109.

13 Arthur S. Link, Stanley Coben, *The American Heritage, A History of the United States*, Massachusetts: Ginn and Company, 1971, p. 170.

14 The then US Secretary of State, John Foster, in one of his reports, said that the most important issue concerning US-Ottoman relationship was the situation of the American missionaries for the US. Nurdan Şafak, *Osmanlı Amerikan İlişkileri*, Istanbul: OSAY, 2003, p. 19

15 US Ambassador to the Ottoman Empire, between 1913 and 1916. Heath W. Lowry, *Les Dessous des Mémoires de L'Ambassadeur Morgenthau*, Istanbul : Isis, 2001, p. 13

16 Bulak Bey was the first person appointed to US with a diplomatic mission. However, the status of Bulak Bey was at intermediate level, so Rüstem Bey was appointed as the highest Ottoman authority. Çağrı Erhan, *Türk-Amerikan...*, p. 159.

## 2. American Missionary Activities in the Ottoman Empire

The Catholic missionaries, the Jesuits and the Franciscans, were active in the Ottoman Empire starting from the 16<sup>th</sup> century. Especially in the Levant, until 1773, when the Jesuit order dissolved into other missionary organizations, Catholic missionaries found more space for their activities<sup>17</sup>. Although the American missionary activities started in the final years of the 18<sup>th</sup> century, they became more powerful and the missionaries expanded their activities in the region after 1810. In 1810, the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Mission (ABCFM) was established. The Board, funded by the US government's "Civilization Fund", worked not only to evangelize Native Americans but also to organize missions to India, China, Ceylon, and the Middle East to expand Protestantism as well as American commercial activities.<sup>18</sup> The first organized American mission attached to the ABCFM was established in Beirut since the main target groups of the Protestant missionaries were the Muslims and the Jews at the beginning. However, according to their investigations, the Protestants understood that it was very difficult to convert the Muslim population to Christianity. The death penalty against conversion was very effective over the Muslims, and they had no orientation for such an act. Moreover, the Jews were not inclined to alter their religions. The missionaries, then, turned their attention towards the Armenian population in the Ottoman Empire. The change of their target group forced them to change their mission center. Istanbul was chosen as the second center of the ABCFM in 1831. This center was the first Protestant center established in Anatolia, by an American missionary William Godell.<sup>19</sup> The translation of the "Holy Bible" into Turkish in Armenian alphabet was one of the first activities done by this Center. There was no doubt that Armenians were important for the missionaries. Moreover, with the influence of the missionaries on the US government, the American embassy offices opened in the Ottoman territories were firstly located in areas where significant Armenian populations were living such as Sivas, Erzurum and Harput. From the very beginning, the effects of the American missionaries on the US foreign policy were very clear.

To bring the secular way of life into the Near East was the hidden goal of the missionaries. The missionaries firstly concentrated on educational activities. Secondly, they improved the health facilities in the areas in which they established their network. Their final way of attraction was the economic opportunities that

17 Recep Boztemur, "Religion and Politics in the Making of American Near East Policy, 1918-1922," *JSRI*, No.11, Summer 2005, p. 46.

18 Recep Boztemur, "Religion and Politics...", p. 45.

19 Bilal Şimşir, *Ermeni Meselesi 1774-2005*, Ankara: Bilgi Yayınevi, 2005, p. 17.

they provided the minorities in the Ottoman lands, mostly for the Armenians. Due to educational activities, the literacy rate among the minorities increased. They became able to read the publications which were prepared by the missionaries, and this led them to achieve national consciousness. The printing press in this aspect was one of the most important instruments used by the missionaries. The first missionary printing office was established in Malta. After the Treaty of 1830, the printing office moved to Izmir, and after the declaration of the Edict of Reordering (*Tanzimat Fermanı*), the missionaries aimed to relocate it in Istanbul. This relocation materialized in 1853, and, from then on, the office remained in Istanbul. The second printing office was established in Ayıntab, in Southeastern Anatolia, in 1880 due to the pressures stemming from the Ottoman government. Although, this second office did not become as important as the first one, it published nearly 500,000 pages in the first year of operation and nearly one million pages in its second year.<sup>20</sup> The establishment of the missionary schools had a significant impact on increasing literacy rates among the minorities. The first missionary school opened in the Ottoman Territories was opened in Beirut in 1824.

The improvement in health facilities of the American missionaries was another popular way of attracting the local population. As the institutions such as hospitals and dispensaries were not quite developed, if not non-existent, in the Ottoman Empire, the Ottoman government prompted the missionaries to open such institutions. These institutions were very beneficial investments in terms of attracting both Muslim and non-Muslim populations without making any significant material and financial effort.

The economic support of the missionaries and the US merchants made the Christian minorities more powerful and, thus, the balance between the Muslim and non-Muslim populations of the Ottoman Empire was distorted. To benefit from the minorities as intermediaries in commercial activities was the major reason behind this distortion. These developments proved that the missionary field of operation was not only religious but also political, economic, and even diplomatic.

Although American missionary activities were much appreciated at the beginning by the Ottoman State, the political works of the missionaries prompted the Ottoman government take some precautions against them. The first measure was the “publication law.” With this law, the Ottoman government aimed to control

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<sup>20</sup> Uygur Kocabaşoğlu, *Anadolu'daki Amerika...*, pp. 111-115.

the materials published by the missionaries and even to forbid them. However, the missionaries did not really obey this law, and, by taking the support of the US government, they continued to publish new works as if this law did not exist. Particularly, the *Tanzimat* period was the most relaxed period for all kind of publications due to the abolishment of censorship implemented by the Ottoman government.

The next precautionary step was the “General Educational Regulation,” prepared in 1869. According to this regulation, professors and doctors working in the missionary institutions would be approved by the Ottoman officials. The third precaution was the establishment of the Directorate of Inspection of Foreign Schools and Non-Muslims in order to investigate the missionary institutions. However, these precautions could not stop the negative effects of the missionary activities because the missionaries found the support of the Western States available in every problematic case.

According to the calculations made by the American Board, the Protestant population at the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century in the Ottoman Empire numbered approximately 50,000 people. Moreover, in 1850, the Ottoman government accepted the Protestant population as a community.<sup>21</sup> Just before World War I, there were 151 American missionaries and their 1,200 local assistants working in the Ottoman territories for the American Board.<sup>22</sup>

## II. Ottoman-American Relations during World War I and Its Aftermath

### 1. Armenian Relocation of 1915

The problems between the Ottoman government and the Armenians emerged after the Berlin Treaty of 1878. The policy of Sultan Abdülhamid II was the primary reason for this issue. The Ottoman Sultan resisted the European forces, and did not implement the reform program that had been planned for the regions populated by the Armenian community. Moreover, he fortified his relationship with the Kurdish tribal chiefs and provided the base for the establishment of the

21 The *millet* system in the Ottoman Empire was based on the religion rather than the nationality. In 1914, apart from the Muslim community there were 13 different communities in the empire. According to this system, the communities were autonomous for their internal affairs but they were to pay their taxes to the Ottoman Empire. In religious and economic fields, they were not restricted by the Ottoman law, and the religious leaders of the communities were held responsible. Mim Kemal Öke, *Yüzyılın Kan Davası Ermeni Sorunu*, İstanbul: İrfan Yayıncılık, pp. 71-79.

22 Uygur Kocabaşoğlu, *Anadoludaki Amerika...*, p. 115.

Hamidian Regiments. These regiments were used both for suppressing the Armenian revolts and to prevent the emergence of new uprisings. The Young Turks and, in later years, the members of the Committee of Union and Progress (CUP) did not share the same opinion with Abdülhamid II. As they supported the idea of “Ottomanism,” they mostly tended to establish good relationships with minorities. The CUP had even established good relationships with the members of the Dashnaks.

When World War I started, the Armenian community in the Ottoman Empire had two diverse ideas about how to act during the war. The supporters of the first idea, in the United National Armenian Congress of 1914, asserted that the Armenians should be loyal to the Ottoman Empire during the wartime, and should perform their military service in the Ottoman army. However, the second group, the members of the 8<sup>th</sup> Congress of Dashnak party tried to persuade the Armenians to fight against the CUP. The Armenians who lived in Eastern Anatolia mostly supported the second idea. They started to join the Russian army, and to fight against the Ottoman Empire. The major aim of the second group was to see the establishment of an independent Armenian state within the borders of the Ottoman Empire.

Apart from joining the Russian military forces, Armenians of the second group started to bear arms. In order to weaken the Ottoman State, the Armenian uprisings took place in various areas of Anatolia mostly in the eastern regions. These revolts, which occurred in wartime conditions, caused great problems for the Ottoman Empire. When the Ottoman military forces were dealing with these uprisings, the Russian army invaded a significant part of Eastern Anatolia reaching Erzurum and engaged in mass killings. The Armenians, who became the willing guides of the Russians in Eastern Anatolia, also participated in the killings of Muslims.

Russia was not the only power from which the Armenians wanted help. Even before World War I, Armenians tried to establish contacts with British authorities, and they proposed to help the British army by fighting against the Ottoman Empire. However, the British government rejected the Armenian demands because such a support could cause problems between Britain and France. Moreover, the British diplomacy was not sure about what they wanted for the future of the Armenian community.<sup>23</sup>

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23 Mim Kemal Öke, *Yüzyılın Kan...*, pp. 166-167.



The US, during these events, tended to be closer to the Armenian side. The reason behind this was the US national interests and the US's new policy of expansion that emerged after the American Civil War. Moreover, sharing the same religion with the Armenian community and the newly emerging Armenian lobby's influence in the US after the migrations<sup>24</sup> of Near Eastern Armenians were other effective factors. The problems between the Ottoman Empire and the US mostly surfaced due to the activities of the missionaries. During the Armenian incidents in Anatolia, some of the missionary buildings were damaged. The Ottoman government did not accept the demand of US diplomats for compensating these losses. The belief of the Ottoman officials about the occupational deformation<sup>25</sup> of the American missionaries led the Ottoman Empire to reject the American demands, because the missionaries acted as the enemies of the Ottoman State, through provoking the Armenians and providing them military equipment.

The situation was represented quite differently in the American press. In order to affect the public opinion and the US government, both the US envoys and the missionaries in the Ottoman territories were accusing the Ottoman government of bad treatment against the Armenians and of the damages sustained by American citizens and buildings. Due to the tension raised between the two states, the Ottoman government started to change its approach and agreed to pay some part of the compensation demanded by the Americans. This act had a positive effect on the relations; but the Armenian merchants who obtained American citizenship and their legal criminal immunity created new problems. However, the American idea of military intervention forced the Ottoman government to release all the Armenians accused of conducting illegal commercial activities within the Ottoman borders. Then the relations between the two states again calmed down. The compensation and other legal issues caused high tension mostly between 1890 and 1904.<sup>26</sup>

The attitudes of the Armenians after the Ottoman participation in World War I forced the CUP to change its former policy towards the minorities. The alterations became obvious after the fall of Van because the Ottoman government

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24 There were three waves of Armenian migrations to the US. The first one took place during 1830s. Migration was limited to students and religious men. The second wave took place just after the first one and the immigrants were mostly merchants. The third one happened at the end of the 1870s; it was the migration of the ordinary people from the Eastern Anatolian villages. Çağrı Erhan, *Türk-Amerikan...*, p. 305.

25 Çağrı Erhan, *Türk-Amerikan...*, p. 307.

26 The main obvious sign of the high tension was the US decision of sending military forces to Ottoman ports in order to frighten the Ottoman Empire and made them accept the US demands. The American naval forces visited the Ottoman Ports several times between these years. Çağrı Erhan, *Türk-Amerikan...*, p. 336.

understood that if it did not take any precautions against the Armenians, the uprisings led by the minorities could result in the fall of other cities.<sup>27</sup> The first act of the CUP was the order given for the closure of the Armenian committee centers. As a next step, the Ottoman authorities ordered the arrest of the Armenians who created problems and caused disorder. However, the precautions taken against the Armenian committee leaders were not enough because their network spread in areas in which a considerable number of Armenians had been living. In May 1915, the Ottoman Army submitted an application to the Ministry of Interior which demanded the relocation of the rebellious Armenians from the Russian border to various places within the empire.<sup>28</sup> After the second application of the army for relocation, Talat Bey, on May 27, 1915, issued a decree, which authorized the relocation of the Armenians. In three days, the Ottoman cabinet gave its approval for the relocation law and in mid-September 1915, the law was approved by the Ottoman Parliament. There was also a charter prepared at that time in order to determine how the relocation would be realized.<sup>29</sup> In wartime conditions, the precautions taken by the government could not prevent the emergence of Armenian deaths. Many people died due to adverse climate conditions, lack of food, epidemics and attacks of bandits.

The Armenian relocation was viewed differently in the European countries. The reaction coming from the British politician and historian James Bryce accused the Ottoman government of organizing systematic massacres against the Armenian community. Apart from Great Britain, France and the US showed their reactions by calling the event as massacre. However, they also claimed that, the Ottoman Empire could not organize such a systematic massacre by itself and Germany had masterminded the operation. Moreover, they argued that even if Germany did not take place in organization process, it could easily prevent the application of the plan but it did not do so.<sup>30</sup>

Both the missionaries and the ambassadors of the European states in the Ottoman territories tried to create a public opinion in their countries which would serve to protect and help the Armenians. Hence, the interest of those countries in the eastern regions of the empire had a crucial role in this regard. In the US case,

27 Mim Kemal Öke, *Yüzyılım Kan...*, p. 174.

28 Mim Kemal Öke, *Yüzyılım Kan...*, pp. 177-178

29 The articles of the charter: the Armenian population will not be higher than 10% of the population in the areas from which they were deported; the new villages which will be established by the deported Armenians will at maximum have 50 houses; the Armenians will not be deported to the areas close to their former localities. Mim Kemal Öke, *Yüzyılım Kan...*, pp. 178-179.

30 Taner Timur, *1915 ve Sonrası Türkler ve Ermeniler*, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition, Ankara: Imge Kitabevi, 2001, pp. 50-57.

apart from the missionaries, Ambassador Henry Morgenthau asked for the establishment of a committee which would work to help the Armenians. Morgenthau was on the Armenian side from the beginning of the Armenian problem. In his memoirs published after his return to the US, he made these comments on the Van Revolt:

“After massacring hundreds of thousands of Armenians in thirty years, outraging their women and girls and robbing and maltreating them in every conceivable way, the Turks still apparently believed that they had the right to expect from them the most enthusiastic ‘loyalty’”.<sup>31</sup>

His opinions about the 1915 incidents were also obvious in his memoirs:

“As a matter of fact, the Turks never had the slightest idea of reestablishing the Armenians in this new country. They knew that the great majority would never reach their destination and those who either did die of thirst and starvation, or be murdered by the wild Mohammedan desert tribes. The real purpose of the relocation was robbery and destruction; it really represented a new method of massacre. When the Turkish authorities gave the orders for these relocations, they were merely giving the death warrant to a whole race; they understood this well, and, in their conversations with me, they made no particular attempt to conceal the fact.”<sup>32</sup>

As a close friend of President Wilson, Morgenthau’s demand was taken into consideration and the Armenian Relief Committee was established. James Levi Barton<sup>33</sup> was the first president of this committee. In 1915, Committees of Palestinian-Syrian Relief and Persian Relief were also established. These three committees, in order to become more powerful, organized the American Committee for Armenian and Syrian Relief together at the end of the year. The name changed again in 1918 and became the American Committee for Relief in the Near East. In 1919, finally, it took the name of the Near East Relief Society and James Levi Barton remained as its president.

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31 Henry Morgenthau, *Ambassador Morgenthau’s Story*, Michigan: Wayne State University Press, 2003, p. 203.

32 Henry Morgenthau, *Ambassador Morgenthau’s Story*, pp. 212-213.

33 He was working at the Harput station of American Board. At the age of 38, he became the head of the Fırat College. After becoming the secretary of foreign affairs of ABCFM, he started to deal with the educational activities that took place in the Ottoman Empire. He always tried to protect the American missionary organizations and institutions in the Near East. Fatih Gencer, *Ermeni Soykırım Tezinin Oluşum Sürecinde Amerikan Yakın Doğu Yardım Komitesi*, İstanbul: Alternatif Yayınevi, 2006, excerpted from p. 47, J. Grabill, “Missionary Influence on American Relations with the Near East, 1914-1923,” *The Muslim World*, Vol. 58, No:1, January 1968, p. 48.

## 2. The Near East Relief Society (NERS)

With the establishment of the NERS, various American religious and political institutions started to provide significant amounts of financial aid to the Armenians.<sup>34</sup> The headquarters of the NERS was in New York. One year after its establishment, the NERS had 38 offices in 16 different states.<sup>35</sup> The members of the NERS were mostly the missionaries working in the Near East or the persons who had close contacts with these missionaries. After its establishment, the NERS controlled the administration of all the missionary organizations of Near East, even during World War I.

The strategy of the NERS for taking financial aid from the American citizens was to use the American press. By using the press, the NERS could easily direct public opinion on the issue through agitation. After affecting the people, the NERS demanded help from the political organizations. It even cooperated with President Wilson and persuaded him to declare two days of relief for the Armenians.<sup>36</sup>

The real aim of the NERS was to help the Armenian people after the relocation. Missionaries believed that in order to help the Armenians, they should first provide the basic needs for them. In accordance with this idea, the money granted was to be sent to the American missionaries and ambassadors who had been operating in the Near East. The first financial aid of \$ 100,000 was sent to Ambassador Morgenthau in 1915. An organization committee was established in order to organize the aid traffic, and an American ambassador, Lewis Heck, was appointed to administer it.

The buildings, which belonged to the American missionaries, especially in the Eastern parts of the Ottoman Empire, were redesigned as help stations for the Armenians. Although some of these stations were closed during the war, most of them continued their activities even in the post-war period.

After the beginning of the relocation, a group of missionaries guided by Ambassador Morgenthau tried to obtain approval from the CUP for the official permis-

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34 The Baptist churches, the Lutheran churches, the Methodist Episcopal churches, the Presbyterian churches, the Reformed churches, the Congregational churches, the Society of Friends, the Armenian churches and Young Men Christian Associations were some of them. Fatih Gencer, *Amerikan Yakın...*, p. 46.

35 James L. Barton, *Story of Near East Relief (1915-1930) An Interpretation*, New York: The Macmillan Company, 1930, p. 4.

36 The first grant coming to the Near Eastern Society was the 40,000 dollars coming from the Rockefeller Foundation. James L. Barton, *Story of Near...*, p. 83.

sion of helping the minorities, mainly the Armenians. However, the Ottoman government rejected this offer. For this reason, at the beginning of World War I, the helping activities were done in a secret way. The American missionaries even sometimes collaborated with the German missionaries in order to pursue their activities, and sometimes to get intelligence. As the Ottoman State had an alliance with Germany, the conditions of the German missionaries were better than the others. The policy of collaboration with American missionaries was also supported by Germany because in such conditions Germany could stop giving aid to the Armenians and divert its resources to other activities.

The secret activities of the American missionary institutions were discovered by the Ottoman State in 1916. As it was very difficult to stop these activities, the Ottoman government changed its former policy and decided to give official permission to the NERS. The aim of this permission was to control the amount of money given to the Armenians by using the Ottoman officials as the control mechanisms. Talat Paşa also aimed to make an equal sharing of the money funneled through the NERS. In other words, not only Armenians, but anyone who needed this aid would benefit from it. However, this act did not bring the equal distribution of the aid. The Muslim population in the Ottoman Empire received almost nothing from the aid coming from the missionaries.<sup>37</sup>

The was mostly directed to the Armenians. The amount of aid and its destination were mainly determined by the missionary reports and by the lists given by the Armenians. The ambassadors were not active in determining who had really needed the aid. Rather, they actively worked with the missionaries during the relocation in order to find settlements for the Armenians.

The network of missionaries for helping the Armenians was firstly established in the eastern parts of the empire, as a significant number of Armenians were living in this region, although the Muslims still had an overwhelming majority. In order to provide the basic needs for the refugees, the missionaries firstly dealt with the issue of clothing, settlement and food. Due to adverse climate conditions, the next issue was to provide shelter and fuel for the Armenians. Although, there were wartime conditions, the missionaries achieved to meet the needs of the relocated Armenians in the regions where they worked.

The missionaries not only distributed food and other goods for the needs of the

37 The Muslim population only benefited from 2% of the NERS's total aid amount. Fatih Gencer, *Amerikan Yakın...*, p. 128.

people, but also engaged in production of some of these needs. For instance, they rented the vineyards and gardens, which were left after the mass exodus of the Muslim and Armenian population of Van region. On the one hand, they acquired financial benefits from these kinds of areas for supporting the assistance activities; on the other hand, they provided the opportunity of employment for the unemployed male and female population of the region. These activities of the American missionaries were also supported by Russia, with Russia even providing large amounts of financial assistance.

Aid was only one aspect of the missionaries' work. Apart from providing the basic needs of Christian minority groups, mainly of the Armenians, they also helped them to emigrate to the US. Their aim was to enlarge the Armenian lobby in order to gain the support of a wider range of people, and to obtain more financial assistance and more political and diplomatic support from the US government.

The support of the US government for the NERS was inevitable. There were two major reasons behind this: (1) the members of the NERS had close contacts with the people in the government and (2) the missionaries succeeded in creating a significant public pressure over the government on helping the Ottoman minorities. The support of the government was not only diplomatic. The US also helped the NERS in terms of finance, transportation, food and all other necessary means.<sup>38</sup>

Although the American missionaries declined to return the US when World War I started, and although the officials of the American schools, which were closed by the Ottoman government, chose to join to the missionary organizations, the number of missionaries sharply decreased in the Ottoman territories in 1915. The wartime conditions and the epidemics resulted in a high number of losses for the American Board. However, activities continued. The NERS was helping 485,000 people in the Near Eastern regions in 1916 according to a report prepared by Dr. J. K. Marden.<sup>39</sup> Yet, the number of refugees assisted by the NERS sharply decreased in 1917 and became 113,600.<sup>40</sup>

38 "It proposes to dispatch a ship with a cargo of foodstuff, clothing, agricultural machinery, seed, medical supplies and the like, together with some 300 doctors, relief workers, mechanics, agriculturalists and so forth." The Department of State, "the Secretary of State to the Chargé in Great Britain" *Papers Relating to the Foreign Relations of the United States (FRUS)*, 1919 Volume 2, Washington: United States Government Printing Office, 1934, p. 817. This source will be cited as FRUS in the coming pages.

39 Fatih Gencer, *Amerikan Yakın...*, p. 85.

40 Fatih Gencer, *Amerikan Yakın...*, excerpted from p. 85 Hikmet Özdemir [et.al.], *Ermeniler Sürgün ve Göç*, Ankara: TTK Yayınları, p. 75.

The American declaration of war on Germany forced the Ottoman Empire to put an end to the diplomatic relations with the US. The transfer of money for relief activities and the interference of the US government to the problematic issues between the missionaries and the Ottoman government were also affected by this new situation. Although Sweden and some other impartial countries intervened in the transfer of money, this process became more problematic compared to the earlier stages. The American missionaries also left their places to German missionaries, as the Ottoman Empire was an ally of Germany during World War I.

The members of the NERS did not appreciate the American declaration of war on Germany because of the possibility of an American-Ottoman war. The war between the two states could be the worst thing for the missionaries in terms of activities, buildings and citizens. However still, there was a small group of missionaries, which had been supporting the idea of war, for they were mainly affected by the Turkish image created in the US territories or affected by the Armenian lobby in the US.

In the last year of the war, the number of the American missionaries was 36 and the number of their local assistants was 200. However, this number sharply increased after the Mudros Armistice; because the problems that occurred in terms of transfer and transportation disappeared due to the armistice. In one year, the number of American missionaries in the Ottoman Territories increased to 85.

### **III. Armenian Question in Ottoman-American Relations in the Post-War Period**

#### **1. The Paris Peace Conference**

The NERS, after the adoption of the Mudros Armistice, started to reestablish itself in the Near East. Its first activity was to send a committee to the region in order to conduct investigations about the post-war situation. The members of the committee were chosen from the missionaries who had already worked in this area. However, the committee members first visited London, Paris and Rome in order to communicate with the Allied powers. One of these committee members, Arthur Curtiss James, stayed in Paris to joining the Peace Conference. Other members went to different regions of the Near East, and, apart from conducting investigations, they reorganized the NERS network. In order to reorganize the missionary network, the American missionaries came back to the Near East, and the NERS started to use the volunteers that they chose among the American citizens.

At the end of World War I, the German missionaries were sent back to their country. This allowed the NERS to be the only missionary power in the region. As the properties that belonged to the German missionaries were given to the American missionaries, they became increasingly powerful.

According to the NERS activity report of 1919, the society had an expenditure of \$ 4,802,000 with this money being used to help 561,970 refugees. The amount of money used according to the 1920 report was \$ 13,129,117. The total amount of funds that the NERS expended until 1921 was 60 million US dollars. This sum reached 70 million by the following year, and 90 million by 1924. Twenty-four million of the total expenditures were used for the Armenians, and 20 million dollars of the total amount was used in the Anatolian region.

The lobbying activity organized by the missionaries was the major reason behind US President Wilson's attitudes towards the minorities and the declaration of 14 principles. The 12<sup>th</sup> of Wilson's principles was the one mainly related to the Ottoman Empire. However, the application of the principles displayed differences within the empire. The negative attitude which emerged against the Ottoman Empire resulted in an unequal treatment in the case of applications. The main aim of the missionaries in the armistice period was to prompt the US government to accept a mandate for an Armenian state, which would be established in the region. If another power was able to achieve the mandate of the region, the investments made by the missionaries would be in danger and their field of action would be limited.<sup>41</sup>

In the initial phase of the Paris Peace Conference, both the major European powers and the US supported the establishment of an independent Armenian state. They concurred that if such a state was to be established, there would be the need for a high degree of political, economic and military assistance. Although all the Great Powers agreed on the idea of the establishment of an independent Armenian state, they did not tend to take part in the establishment and assistance process. The reason behind this was that none of these states wanted to create problems with the Muslim population of the Middle East and such a support would certainly cause a significant disturbance among the Muslim countries. An-

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41 "That the department recommend to the US Congress the immediate passage, on humanitarian grounds, without commitment to any political or international programme, such bill or resolution as will most effectively protect the Armenians from further unnecessary suffering or decimation, and that Congress by such bill or resolution make available sufficient funds to buy food, foodstuffs, clothing and other provisions, which, under the administration of Colonel Haskell, may help keep these people alive until their political status is determined by the Peace Conference." FRUS, "The Executive Committee of Near East Relief to the Secretary of State", pp. 822-323.



other reason for not moving forward with an independent Armenia was that the amount of financial sources needed for the establishment of this new state was very high and none of the Great Powers wanted to make such an expenditure.

Neither Great Britain nor France wanted Russian hegemony over these territories, nor did they want to have the region as a mandate. The aim of Great Britain was to convince the US to take on an Armenian mandate. Although the US did not want to become a part of such issue at the beginning, the attitude of President Wilson on the issue became very encouraging in time. However, he argued that the mandates were to be under the control of the League of Nations.

The tendency of President Wilson to take the responsibility for the Armenian mandate led him to send a commission to the area in order to investigate the issue. The report prepared by the commission, headed by General Harbord, informed the President that in any region of the Near East, the Armenians could not constitute the majority of the population. Moreover, he argued, if the US took the mandate of the region, it should include Anatolia, Armenian lands and the lands belonging to Azerbaijan as a whole. The report also pointed out the economic burden that such a mandate would cause.<sup>42</sup>

The King-Crane Commission was another delegation sent to the region with the same mission. Although its duty was to conduct a general investigation on the minorities in the Near East, the Commission mainly dealt with the problems in Syria and Palestine. The Commission's report had no effect on the Paris Peace Conference because just after the Commission members return, the US decided to withdraw from the Conference and the report itself was not declared to the public until 1922. Furthermore, the impartiality of the report was open to discussion because four of the Commission members were also the members of the NERS.

The US participated in Paris Peace Conference with the guarantee of the acceptance of President Wilson's principles. The twelfth principle was the most well-known because it was the article related to the concept of self-determination. Wilson argued that if a nation was the majority in the areas where that nation lived, it would have the right to have its own state if that is what that nation wanted. The minorities, including the Armenians, in the Near East were mostly referring to these principles as the basis of their demands.

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42 FRUS, "The Chief of the Military Mission to Armenia (Harbord) to the Secretary of State," pp. 841-873.

At the beginning of the Conference, there were two Armenian delegations. The first one was the Armenian National Delegation headed by Boghos Nubar Pasha. This one represented both the Armenians in the Ottoman territories and the various Armenian colonies all around the world. The second delegation, headed by Avetis Aharonyan, was representative of the Armenian Republic established after the collapse of the Russian Empire. These two delegations were totally against each other. However, the intermediary role of the Armenian Church between the two resulted in a tacit cooperation. After combining their powers, the Armenians demanded the establishment of an independent Armenian state. They were also closer to the idea of the US mandate. The borders of the state were to expand from the Black Sea to the Mediterranean. Van, Bitlis, Diyarbakır, Sivas, Erzurum and Harput were to be included in the new state. Moreover, the entire Cilicia region would be integrated into Armenia. The Armenians conceded that they did not constitute the majority in any of the areas that they had claims on. The maximum percentage that they could reach was 30 or 35% of the whole population in the region.<sup>43</sup> However, they argued that Armenian casualties resulted in such a minority status and with the prospective migrations from the Armenian settlements throughout the world to this new state would increase the number of Armenians living in the region.<sup>44</sup>

The uncertainty of the US regarding the Armenian issue and the Straits question led the European Powers to take a break from the debates on the Ottoman Empire. The emergence of the Turkish national movement was another factor for the adjournment. The American public did not support the idea of taking the Armenian mandate because this act seemed very unbeneficial to them. Moreover, the size of the Armenian state demanded by the Armenians did not seem logical to them. As a result, the US Senate rejected acceptance of an Armenian mandate. The US foreign policy was confronted with a change just after the start of Harding's presidential term. The new president declared that the major issue for the US was to protect the commercial interests of the country beyond its border. He also stated that the only thing that the US could continue to do for the Armenians was to provide financial aid and humanitarian support.<sup>45</sup>

43 Servet Mutlu, "Osmanlı Nüfusu," Hikmet Özdemir (ed.), *Türk Ermeni İhtilafı Makaleleri*, Ankara: TBMM Basımevi Müdürlüğü, 2007, pp. 388-394.

44 Paul C. Helmreich, *Sev Entrikaları: Büyük Güçler, Mağalar ve Türkiye'nin Taksimi*, İstanbul: Sabah Kitapları, 1996, pp. 35-36.

45 Great Britain and France were also against the establishment of such an expansive Armenian State. They believed that the integration of a small quantity of land to the Armenian Republic would be sufficient. However, even in a very small area, to provide the security for the Armenians would be very difficult as they could not be the majority in any area. They were also not trusted by the Armenians. France and England saw the Armenians as a potential massacre applicator. For this reason,

## 2. The Treaty of Lausanne

The first peace treaty after World War I was the Versailles Treaty signed between the Allied Powers and Germany. The last one was the Sevres Treaty signed between the Ottoman Empire and the Allied Powers. The major reason behind this delay was the uncertainty of President Wilson about the Armenian mandate issue and the Straits question. Although the Ottoman government refused to sign the Sevres Treaty, foreign pressure forced them to accept it. The Treaty of Sevres mainly aimed to partition the Ottoman Empire and gave no rights to the Ottomans over their territories. The unacceptable articles of the treaty hastened the activities and the organization process of the Turkish National Movement.

The Turkish National Movement finally took control of the former Ottoman territories in 1922 after its final war with the Greeks. The Lausanne Conference solved the last unsettled issues of World War I. Although the US did not declare war against the Ottoman Empire in World War I, it decided to send some observers to the Conference in order to protect its national interests and declare the American opinion about the issues. James Levi Barton and W. W. Peet were the members of the US delegation in Lausanne. The aim of the missionaries, apart from providing an area for an Armenian homeland, was to protect the missionary institutions, which were in the new Turkish territories.

The Turkish delegation consisted of İsmet İnönü as the head of the delegation, Dr. Ali Rıza Nur, the then Minister of Health, and Hasan Bey, former Minister of Finance. İnönü informed the participants about the ideas of Mustafa Kemal. Mustafa Kemal's approach to the Conference was very clear. He declared that the new Turkish government would not accept any partition plans over Anatolia; it would reject any plans proposing to give any lands for the Armenians or any other nations. The second issue, which the Turkish delegation had to deal with during the Conference, was the capitulatory rights. Mustafa Kemal was very adamant about the abandonment of all the capitulations given to the European powers and the US.

Although, Mustafa Kemal's determined position was clearly expressed at the Conference by İnönü, both Great Britain and the US argued for a homeland for the Armenians. The insistence of the Great Powers on this issue sometimes resulted in the abandonment of the conference by the Turkish delegation. However, the Armenian issue did not take place in the final version of the Treaty.

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they usually rejected the Armenian demands of weapons. In the end, Clemenceau proposed the assistance of the League of Nations to the Armenians in terms of employment and finance. Paul C. Helmreich, *Sevr Entrikaları...*, pp. 153-154.

At the end of the Conference, the new Turkish State signed treaties with nearly 40 states around the world. The aim was to establish good diplomatic and economic relations. However, the treaty signed at the end of the Lausanne Conference was not applied until 1927. When the articles of the Lausanne Treaty were prepared, the entire text was sent to the US for the approval of the Senate. According to the treaty, the diplomatic relations between the two countries would be established, all the capitulatory rights would be abandoned, the status of the most preferred state would be preserved, the missionaries would stay in the country if they accepted the Turkish law system, their belongings would be preserved and the commercial relations between the two countries would continue.

The Armenian and the Greek lobbies in the US strongly opposed the establishment of such close relations between the two countries. These people and institutions chose to establish various organizations and they organized several protest movements in order to influence the US decision-making. The most known of them was the new version of the American Committee for the Independence of Armenia, which opposed the adoption of the Lausanne Treaty. It would not be wrong to presume that their influence on the US policy-makers was significant.

The attitude of the missionaries was very significant in comparison to their earlier activities. The main aim of the American missionaries had been to organize public opinion against the Turks and provide the basis for the establishment of an Armenian state. However, after the Lausanne Treaty, they became aware of the impossibility of the emergence of such a state, and hence concentrated on protecting their citizens and belongings in the Turkish territories. The official relations between the US and the new Turkish Republic were reestablished in 1927, after ten years of broken-off relations.<sup>46</sup>

## Conclusion

The first quarter of the 20<sup>th</sup> century clearly demonstrated the importance of the missionaries and, to an extent, religion in the US-Ottoman diplomatic relations. Especially the contacts of the missionary institutions with the Christian minorities in the Ottoman Empire and the reflections of these relations upon the US were determining factors for the American political decision-making mechanisms. The effect of the missionaries in the policy-making process was the result of their capability to influence the public opinion. The ability to obtain public support contributed to gaining support from the legislative and executive branches of the

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<sup>46</sup> Bilal Şimşir, *Ermeni Meselesi...*, pp. 146-147.

US government. The close relations between the missionary and governmental institutions facilitated the creation of common interests.

To conclude, from the late 19<sup>th</sup> century until the inter-war period, the Armenian question had been a significant factor in Turkish-American relations. Particularly during the volatile years of relocation, either through missionaries or through international relief committees such as the NERS, the US had intervened in regional politics. In fact, using religion for political purposes is not new. Christian Armenians, in this context, were the ideal pawns in the Near East. However, this trapped the Armenians into the dilemma of being loyal to the Ottoman Empire or establishing their own independent state, which could be materialized with the support of a Great Power, namely the US.

# ARMENIANS IN THE OTTOMAN MILLET SYSTEM AND THE REASONS FOR THE EMERGENCE OF ARMENIAN NATIONALISM

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**Abstract:** *History of the Ottoman-Armenian relations started with the conquest of Bursa by Osman Bey who transferred Armenians and their religious center from Kütahya to Bursa. After this period Armenians lived under the rule of the Ottoman sultans, having the advantages of the millet system, like the other millets living in the Ottoman Empire. The interactions of the Tanzimat and Islahat Reforms, the roles of Armenian religious leaders and the foreign missionary activities triggered the desire for independence within the Armenian society. Furthermore, Serbian and Greek independence movements constituted attractive examples for the Armenians. Some foreign encouragements led most of the Armenian nationalists hope for political attempts and achievements. Demanding for autonomy and independence, they started the nationalist activities.*

**Key Words:** *Ottoman Empire, Armenians, Millet System, Nationalism, Autonomy demands.*

**Öz:** *Osmanlı-Ermeni ilişkilerinin tarihi Osman Bey'in Bursa'yı fethi ve Ermenilerin dini merkezini Kütahya'dan Bursa'ya taşıması ile başlar. Ermeniler de Osmanlı bünyesinde yaşayan diğer milletler gibi, millet sisteminin kendilerine getirdiği avantajlardan yararlanarak imparatorluk içinde yaşarlar. Ancak, Tanzimat ve Islahat reformlarının etkileri, Ermeni dini liderlerinin ve yabancı misyonerlerin faaliyetleri sonucu bu yapı bozulur ve Ermeni toplumu içinde bağımsızlık arzusu yayılmaya başlar. Sırp ve Yunan bağımsızlığı Ermeniler için önemli bir örnek teşkil etmiştir. Bunun yanında Ermeni milliyetçilerini cesaretlendiren başka faktörler de olmuştur. Bu destek ve cesaretle Ermeniler milliyetçilik faaliyetlerine başlamışlardır.*

**Anahtar Kelimeler:** *Osmanlı İmparatorluğu, Ermeniler, Millet Sistemi, Milliyetçilik, Bağımsızlık talepleri.*

## Introduction

The Ottoman Empire was comprised of diverse peoples and cultures since its establishment. According to İlber Ortaylı, “Turks, Albanians, Bulgarian and Greek speaking Muslims who were being called as Pomak, Bosnians, Arabs after the 16<sup>th</sup> century and other Muslim groups in Eastern Anatolia and Caucasus were included in the Muslim community, which was the substantive component of the Ottoman Empire.”<sup>1</sup> Furthermore, there were also non-Muslim communities with different languages and from various ethnicities. Yavuz Ercan mentions the Ottoman Empire as a powerful state “which ruled members of four different religions from 20 different ethnic communities on its vast territory throughout its history of six hundred years...”<sup>2</sup> Armenians, Jews, Bulgarians, Hungarians, Serbians, Chaldeans, Assyrians, Greeks, Croatians, Montenegrins, Bosnians, Albanians, Romanians, Georgians, Copts, Abyssinians, Gypsies, Poles, Moldavian Turks (*Gagavuz*) and Arabs constituted the ethnic composition of the Empire.<sup>3</sup> This diverse ethnic composition continued to exist for centuries in the same territory within the *millet* system which had a unique character.

It is this *millet* system, which enabled the Ottoman Empire to manage different religions and cultures it comprised within a particular order. The meaning of the concept of *millet* in Arabic is that of a religious community. However this usage of the word is not equivalent to the concept of the “nation” in today’s understanding.<sup>4</sup> While the *millet* system is a system that serves to rule the non-Muslims in the Ottoman state, some scholars argue that the *millet* system was regularly put into practice only in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. According to this view, non-Muslims lived in the Ottoman territory in an order provided by the provisions of Islamic law with regard to non-Muslims and the customary provisions issued from time to time. This order began to deteriorate in the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century because of changing circumstances. For this reason, beginning from the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the state introduced new regulations with the purpose of establishing an improved order for non-Muslim communities. Rights and freedoms that were granted within the framework of this *millet* system ordering still could not solve the problem.<sup>5</sup> As it can be understood from here, on the one hand, the *millet* system is generally perceived as the Ottoman state policy with

1 İlber Ortaylı, “Osmanlı İmparatorluğunda Millet,” *Tanzimat’tan Cumhuriyet’e Türkiye Ansiklopedisi*, Volume 4, 1985, p. 997.

2 Yavuz Ercan, “Osmanlı Devletinde Müslüman Olmayan Topluluklar,” *Türkler Ansiklopedisi*, Volume 10, 2002, p. 197

3 Yavuz Ercan, *Osmanlı Yönetiminde Gayrimüslimler*, Ankara: Türhan Kitabevi, 2001, p. 53.

4 Bilal Eryılmaz, “Osmanlı Devleti’nde Farklılıklara ve Hoşgörüye Kavramsal bir Yaklaşım,” *Türkler*, Volume 10, 2002, p. 236.

5 Yavuz Ercan, “Osmanlı Devletinde Müslüman... ,p. 197.

regard to the non-Muslims; on the other hand it is interpreted as measure taken by the Ottoman Empire, which intended to save the deteriorated state order. At the same time, there were also views that the system in the Ottoman state that ensures the administration of the non-Muslims could not be labeled as the *millet* system. For example, M. Macit Kenanoğlu asserts that existence of this system is not supported by adequate evidences and argues that there is no such system.<sup>6</sup> According to him, *millet* system is a narrative and the Ottoman Empire did not rule the non-Muslims through the *millet* system but by a tax farming (*iltizam*) system.<sup>7</sup>

The term non-Muslim is used in Islamic law when referring to those who do not accept Islam as their religion. In Islamic law, human beings are distinguished as being either Muslims or non-Muslims. However, those who were permanently residing in the realm of Islam, no matter if they were Muslims or not, had certain rights. Non-Muslims lived in the Ottoman state according to the regulations of their own religions and they established their relations with the ruling class through their own *millet* leaders. As Halaçoğlu states:

“Ottoman administrative system allowed the Armenians to appoint their own ecclesiasts. For instance, the priests belonging to Armenian monasteries such as Antakya, Diyarbakir, Antep, Erzurum, Çıldır, Kars, Maraş, Talas, Karahisar-ı Sahib, Ergani, İzmir, Tarsus, Harput, Cyprus, Divriği preserved the privilege of being appointed by the *marbasalık* to which they belong until the latest times.”<sup>8</sup>

The autonomous status of the non-Muslims within the state structure was provided by the rights granted by Fatih Sultan Mehmet in 1461 and minorities from then on lived in the Ottoman Empire within the *millet* system.

### I. Armenians within the Ottoman *Millet* System

The Patriarchate in Istanbul, created by Fatih Sultan Mehmet for the Armenians within the empire, looked after the local administrative, legal and cultural affairs of the Armenian community.<sup>9</sup> It coordinated the relations between Armenians and the state. The importance of the Patriarchate for Armenians can be under-

6 M. Macit Kenanoğlu, *Osmanlı Millet Sistemi-Mit ve Gerçek*, İstanbul: Klasik Yayınları, 2007, p. 27.

7 M. Macit Kenanoğlu, *Osmanlı Millet Sistemi...*, pp. 395-7.

8 BA; Maliyeden Müdevver Defterler, (MAD), nr. 16209, from Yusuf Halaçoğlu, “Osmanlı Millet Sistemi İçinde Ermeniler,” *Uluslararası Askeri Tarih Dergisi*, Ankara: Genelkurmay Askeri Tarih ve Stratejik Etüt Başkanlığı Yayınları, Volume 87, 2007, p. 107.

9 İlber Ortaylı, “Osmanlı Ermenileri,” *Ermeni Sorunu Özel Sayı II*, Yeni Türkiye Yayınları, No. 38, March-April 2001, p. 631.



stood from the words of Ercan:

“By establishing the Istanbul Armenian Patriarchate, Fatih saved the Armenians who were scattered all over Anatolia, remained unorganized and without a leadership in religious respect, destined to dissolve and disappear in other churches and societies. Today Armenians are indebted to Fatih to a significant extent in continuing to preserve their material and spiritual existence.”<sup>10</sup>

Related to this issue, Vartan Artinian notes the importance of the Patriarchate by emphasizing that the Istanbul Armenian Patriarchate is equipped with spiritual and mundane powers.<sup>11</sup>

In the 17<sup>th</sup> century, the powerful Armenians, who were titled as *amira*, began to be influential in the administration of the Armenian Patriarchate. *Amiras*, who were engaged in money lending (*sarraflık*) and trade, strove to be friendly to those ecclesiastics, who would serve to ensure that the *amiras* gained favor with the Patriarch. At the same time, the *amiras* were realizing various duties such as repairing churches, building schools, etc. in order to be appreciated by the community. In the 19<sup>th</sup> century, with the administrative reforms - the Imperial Edicts of Reordering (*Tanzimat*) and Reform (*Islahat*) - the influence of *amiras* in the administration of the Armenian people diminished and this field became open to those who belonged to different social segments. In this situation, the educated younger generation wanted to formulate a document which would organize the relations between the Patriarchate and the Armenian community on a legal basis to institute definite rules. This text was denoted as *sahmanatrutyun*, which was derived from the word “border” (*sahman*) in Armenian and was equivalent of the word “constitution” in Turkish in its contemporary meaning. Although it was not a constitution as understood today, this text, prepared in 1860, emerged as a result of the Armenian efforts in this regard.<sup>12</sup> The substructure of Armenian efforts was facilitated not only by the *Tanzimat* Edict, proclaimed within the framework of the Ottoman modernization movements, and *Islahat* Edict promulgated in the following years.

By the principle of equality in Islam for all, including non-Muslim subjects, *Tanzimat* Edict introduced the idea of Ottomanness instead of the *millet* notion whose guiding principle was religion. All the state posts and ranks were opened

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10 Yavuz Ercan, *Toplu Eserler: I, Ermenilerle İlgili Araştırmalar*. Ankara: Turhan Kitabevi, 2006, p. 180.

11 Vartan Artinian, *Osmanlı Devleti'nde Ermeni Anayasası'nın Doğuşu*, İstanbul: Aras Yayınevi, 2004, p. 33.

12 Vartan Artinian, *Osmanlı Devleti'nde ...*, pp. 12-13.

to non-Muslims; it became legal for non-Muslims to bear testimony in Muslim courts; they were given the chance to enjoy all the rights that had hitherto been granted to Muslims. Furthermore, since non-Muslims were exempted from military conscription, they had the opportunity to train themselves in education and trade.

As can be understood, the *Tanzimat* Edict served the non-Muslims living in the Ottoman Empire to a great extent with the principles it had introduced. Non-Muslims living in the empire interpreted these rights as grounds for creating their national identities and carrying out nationalist activities. As stated by Anahide Ter Minassian, Armenian cultural associations that were under the control of the clergy and activated by civilians had risen up starting from the 1840s.<sup>13</sup> A great majority of the founders of these associations were ecclesiastics and Russian Armenians from Caucasus.<sup>14</sup> Those who came to the fore within the Ottoman Empire were two of these groups. The first one was the European-educated young men of *amira* families such as the Balian, Dadian and Duzian families, who served the palace in fields such as architecture, jewelry-making, and gunpowder production. The second group was intellectuals such as Dr. Nahabet Rusinian, Krikor Odian and Dr. Servichen, who were mostly educated in France. The progression and enlightenment of Armenians were their primary aims. Hence they established Ararat Society in Paris in 1849.<sup>15</sup> These associations were having the appearance of charitable institutions when they were first established, but after they were organized within the empire and commenced with their activities, they went far from the aims of being solely charitable institutions.<sup>16</sup> An Armenian columnist stated about the proclamation of *Tanzimat* that "... [*Tanzimat* Edict], which had proclaimed equality, justice and the savior principles of order for the first time, shake [sic.] Turkey completely and highly accelerated the Armenian nation's administrative and social reforms."<sup>17</sup> It ought to be understood that the *Tanzimat* Edict, promulgated with an effort to improve and develop the state administration of the Ottoman Empire based on rule of law, was internalized more quickly by the non-Muslims.

13 Anahide Ter Minassian, *Ermeni Kültürü ve Modernleşme*, İstanbul: Aras, 2006, p. 124.

14 Osman Şen, "Dünden Bugüne Ermeniler, Ermeni Meselesi ve Türk Ermeni İlişkileri," Graduation Dissertation from the Department of International Relations, KTÜ İİBF, 2000, from p.85 Aybike Serttaş, "Türkler ve Ermeniler: Bulanık Suların Ardında İki Toplum, Yüzyıllık Himayenin Meyvesi; Zehirli Elma...", <http://www.turksam.org/tr/yazilar.asp?kat=45> (last access: 22 July 2008).

15 Arus Yumul ve Rifat N. Bali, "Ermeni ve Yahudi Cemaatlerinde Siyasal Düşünceler," in Tanıl Bora (ed.), *Modern Türkiye'de Siyasal Düşünce: Tanzimat ve Meşrutiyet'in Birikimi*, Volume 1, 2001, p. 364.

16 Mîm Kemal Öke, *Yüzyılın Kan Davası Ermeni Sorunu 1914-1923*, İstanbul: Aksoy Yayıncılık, 2001, p. 98.

17 Püztant Keçyan, *Badmutyun Surp Pirgiç Hivantanotsin Hayots* (Surp Pirgiç Ermeni Hastanesi'nin Tarihi), İstanbul, 1888, from Anahide Ter Minassian, *Ermeni Kültürü ve ...*, p. 124.

Similar to the *Tanzimat* Edict, which organized the law of all the Ottoman Sultan's subjects, the *Islahat* Edict pertained to the regulations concerning the rights of the non-Muslims.<sup>18</sup> The non-Muslim communities, which enjoyed the rights granted by *Islahat* Edict, prepared a regulatory code (*nizamname*) for administrating their internal affairs. The 1862 Regulations of Greek Patriarchate, the 1863 Regulations of the Armenian Patriarchate, and the 1865 Regulations of Jewish Rabbinate of came into force by the approval of Sublime Porte. Thus, the notions of assembly (*meclis*) and constitution entered into the political practice within the Ottoman State.<sup>19</sup> The regulatory code (*nizamname*) is a text that restricts the authority of ecclesiastics and the urban dweller, the rich *amira* class, in the administration of the *millet*; and it also laicize and democratize the administration of Armenian community.<sup>20</sup> The constitution, however, determined the content of state authority and how and by whom it will be used. The constitution also undertook the responsibility of preventing the arbitrary usage of state authority and granting individuals certain rights.<sup>21</sup> The Ottoman State proclaimed the *Kanun-i Esasi* (Constitution) in 1876, which is the first written document that can be considered as a constitution (in the modern sense) in the Ottoman context.

## II. Dissolution of Millet System

While the Ottoman Empire was one of the great powers shaping world politics in the 16<sup>th</sup> century, this changed with the rapid decline beginning with the end of Ottoman advance in the West by the late 17<sup>th</sup> century. Measures taken against this gradual failure in further conquests commenced with the era of Sultan Abdulhamid I (1774-1789), firstly in the military sphere. However, until the proclamation of *Tanzimat* Edict, it was not understood that the efforts to prevent the collapse of the Empire needed to expand beyond the military sphere. The proclamation of the *Tanzimat* Edict (3 November 1839), prepared by Mustafa Reşit Paşa who decided that the most important solution for the salvation of the empire was a legal approach, ensured beginning of a new period in Ottoman history.

When examining the Turkish constitutional initiatives, the document of *Sened-i İttifak* (The Act of Alliance), which was the text of negotiation between the representatives of the central government and the representatives of local notables (*ayan*) in 1808, is the first sign of constitutional development. With this docu-

18 Bilal Eryılmaz, *Osmanlı Devletinde ...*, p. 114.

19 Bülent Tanör, *Osmanlı Türk Anayasal Gelişmeleri*, İstanbul: Yapı Kredi Yayınları, 2005, p. 131.

20 Arus Yumul ve Rifat N. Bali, "Ermeni ve Yahudi ...", p.364.

21 Rona Aybay, "Anayasal Metinlerde Egemenlik," *Tanzimat'tan Cumhuriyet'e Türkiye Ansiklopedisi*, Volume 1, 1985, p. 40.

ment, while the Sultan promised a fair government, local notables promised that they would obey the Sultan and help him, if needed. With this document, although, ostensibly, the authority of Sultan was limited for the first time in Ottoman history, it did not have any regulation, which would ensure that its provisions would be enforced.

The second step of Turkish constitutional development in the Ottoman period was the *Tanzimat* Edict, in which an individual's property, life and honor (whereby every one was considered equal before the law) became the signposts of legal development in the empire. However, the fact that the state structure continued to be based on religious grounds and that the religious order and modern laws were in contradiction with each other constituted a difficulty for the maintenance of legal development. Moreover, the effects of French Revolution within the Ottoman Empire and the claims of Ottoman Christians for independence, supported by the West, negatively influenced the enforcement of *Tanzimat* principles within the Ottoman Empire.<sup>22</sup>

Moreover, another situation that negatively effected the relations between the Ottoman State and Ottoman non-Muslims were the changes in the Greek and Armenian communities in the middle of 18<sup>th</sup> century. In a period when the economic relations of Ottoman Empire with Europe increased, the Greek and Armenian tradesmen who began trading with Europe, both became acquainted with the idea of "European Enlightenment" and also "became independent of the interest network" which was one within the other. Consequently, Armenian community appeared to be independent of the church, having secular and rationalist values.<sup>23</sup>

### III. Notion of Nationalism

Employing the most basic expression, the term nationalism can be defined as patriotism and fusion of the consciousness of the nation. Nationalism was a driving force all over the world in the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries and became one of the political ideologies that preserve its importance even today. Although there is a plethora of literature on the subject of nationalism, like many sociological concepts, is a hard-to-define term. Briefly, an understanding of nationalism includes different meanings and values for every human being. This diversity, which is not intentional, brings about positive and negative attributes. We can accept the vari-

22 Ahmet Mumcu, *Tarih Açısından Türk Devriminin Temelleri ve Gelişimi*, İstanbul: İnkılâp Kitabevi, 1988, p. 14.

23 Selçuk Akşin Somel, "Osmanlı Reform Çağında Osmanlılık Düşüncesi (1839-1913)," Tanıl Bora (ed.) *Modern Türkiye'de...*, p. 90.

able definition of nationalism as harmoniousness from ideological point of view. Albeit this situation seems to be an important attribute, the difficulty of defining nationalism universally on a scientific basis eradicates this seemingly positive qualification by containing it as a great negation.

When studying the line of development of nationalism in Europe, it can be discerned that nationalism begins to advance with the increase in political participation of the people in 17<sup>th</sup> century England, in 18<sup>th</sup> century France and in 19<sup>th</sup> century Germany.<sup>24</sup> Nationalism emerged in the modern sense for the first time in England. England, in the 17<sup>th</sup> century advanced considerably in science, politics, trade and thought, entering into a new order based on humanist and Calvinist morality, which gave rise to the birth of liberal nationalism in England and an English middle trade class.<sup>25</sup> This nationalism movement in England, with significant contributions made by thinkers such as John Locke, disseminated notions such as personal rights and liberty to the population as the nationalism movement progressed in the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries, which also influenced the American and French Revolutions.<sup>26</sup>

French nationalism was influenced by and emerged in unique conditions which spread during the Napoleonic Wars. The French Revolution abolished feudal relations in Europe and replaced them with national sovereignty. This infused into nationalism a new dimension and prompted many nations which were not independent to rebel. “In the 19<sup>th</sup> century, nationalism, like a magic wand, engendered huge energy wherever it travels; there occurred metamorphosis wherever it touches.”<sup>27</sup> In this sense, French nationalism encouraged Greeks, Hungarians, and Polish people to achieve their independence. In this way, the notions of nation, homeland, equality and human rights began to be influential all over the world. German nationalism, which appeared as a reaction to the French Revolution, was mostly influenced by German romanticism and opposing ideas such as equality and liberty celebrated French Nationalism. The difficult-to-define notion of nationalism asserted itself in this regard in Europe and it secured a place in every country with different perceptions and varying results.

The emergence of Turkish nationalism in the Ottoman Empire occurred in the

24 Gil Delannoi, “Milliyetçilik ve İdeolojik Kataliz,” in Jean Leca (ed.), *Uluslar ve Milliyetçilikler*, İstanbul: Metis Yayınları, 1996, p. 34.

25 Carlton J. H. Hayes, *The Historical Evolution of Modern Nationalism*, New York: New York Publishing, 1950, from Ali Engin Oba, *Türk Milliyetçiliğinin Doğuşu*, Ankara: İmge Yayınları, 1995, p. 26.

26 Jean Touchard, *Histoire des Idées Politiques*, Volume I, Paris, 1967, from Ali Engin Oba, *Türk Milliyetçiliğinin ...*, p. 26.

27 Abdullah Gündoğdu, *Ders Notları*, Ankara: AÜ. DTCE, October 2006.

latest phase of the nationalism movement because of the political responsibility of the main element, namely the Turk, of the empire. The notion of homeland (*vatan*) in those days was more an Ottoman-Islamic homeland than the meaning it implies today. The notion of nation (*millet*) also had a very different attribution than is perceived today.<sup>28</sup> The transition of diverse ethnic structure to a Turkish identity was shaped by the active agency and liberation attempts of the elements sheltered by the Empire. It was not wrong to consider the rejuvenation of the Turkish nationalism within Ottoman Empire as a belated nationalism since it occurred as a result of the activities of other components of the empire.

The idea of nationalism and the course of nationalist activities among the Turks emerged firstly as Turkism, in two different geographies and communities. Towards the end of 19<sup>th</sup> century, Turks living both in Central Asia and in the Ottoman Empire were influenced by the nationalist currents and they began to develop understandings having nationalist characteristics, yet, the nationalist perceptions of both groups were different. While the Central Asian Turks evaluated these ideas in the direction of identity formation and demonstration of their existence, Ottoman Turks regarded this as a new policy-making tool since they had lost their dominance in inter-society relations.<sup>29</sup> Nationalist ideas that developed in these two geographies were initially perceived as a progression through different lines, developing in essence as a group of ideas through which language, religion, history and culture were sustained. The Turkish nationalism was not based on ethnicity and blood relation in any period.

On the issue of Turkish nationalism, David Kushner maintains that a nation is composed of people who speak the same language, share the same culture and live within the same country. He continues with the individual, emphasizing that for a person to be creative in a cultural respect he/she should first identify his/her place within his/her national existence.<sup>30</sup> From the point of view of Feroz Ahmad, many religious/nationalist communities within the Ottoman Empire embarked upon a struggle of independence and autonomy, and, in the end, Muslims/Turks gave a start to their national struggles in 1919.<sup>31</sup>

When considering the personalities who contributed to the development of Turk-

28 İlber Ortaylı, "Osmanlı İmparatorluğu'nda Milliyetçilik," *XIII. Türk Tarih Kongresi*, II. Volume, 4-8 October 1999, p. 52.

29 Mehmet Karakaş, "Türkçülük ve Türk Milliyetçiliği," *Doğu-Batı*, Volume I, No. 38, August, September, October 2006, p. 62.

30 David Kushner, *Türk Milliyetçiliğinin Doğuşu*, İstanbul: Ay Köprüsü Yayınları, 2004, p. 23.

31 Feroz Ahmad, "İkinci Meşrutiyet Döneminde Jön Türk- Ermeni İlişkileri," *Hoşgörü Toplumunda Ermeniler*, Volume II, January, 2007, p. 163.

ish nationalism, İsmail Gaspiralı and Yusuf Akçura are the first to be remembered among the Turks who were living outside the Ottoman Empire. Ziya Gökalp and Ahmed Ağaoğlu were also key contributors to the formation of Turkish nationalism.

#### **IV. The Influence of the Notion of Nationalism on the Non-Muslims in the Ottoman Empire and the Reasons for the Emergence of the Idea of Nationalism among Armenians**

Ottoman Empire was one of the most influenced empires of Europe by the ideas which emerged after the French Revolution. Those who were affected by these ideas the most were certainly the literate elite of the Christian communities of the empire. The Greeks, with their trade connections in European ports, and the Serbs, who were in a constant contact with Central Europe through the trade route to Austria, would be significantly influenced by the slogans of “Liberty, Equality, Fraternity” of the French Revolution. As a result of this, the 1808 Serbian uprising would be the first independence movement within the borders of the Ottoman Empire. The process of development of the subsequent Greek nationalism and the development of nationalism in the Balkans throughout the 19<sup>th</sup> century appear as the factors that precipitated the fall of the Ottoman Empire.<sup>32</sup> Apart from these, the 1839 *Tanzimat* Edict and the 1856 *Islahat* Edict, which granted economic, social, legal and cultural rights to the subjects of the Sultan were significant in the formation of a suitable environment for the emergence of nationalist ideas.

In the late nineteenth century, Ottoman Empire was dealing with both the nationalist ideas spread among the religious communities (*cemaat*) and the pressure from Great Powers, which were supporting the conflicts among these communities and were closely following all the developments. In that period, one of the most inextricable conflicts within the empire involved Macedonia. Macedonia was unified with a newly independent Bulgaria as a result of the Treaty of San Stefano, but after the Berlin Conference this region was left within the borders of the Empire. The development of nationalist ideas among Serbs, Bulgarians, Greeks and Wallachians, who constituted the Macedonian population, and their rival nationalist aspirations caused a severe strain.<sup>33</sup> Another great problem of religious communities waiting for a solution was the Armenian issue. Apart from

32 Erik Jan Zürcher, *Modernleşen Türkiye'nin Tarihi*, İstanbul: İletişim Yayınları, 1995, pp. 46-47.

33 Erik Jan Zürcher, *Modernleşen Türkiye'nin...*, p. 123-125.

this, the Cretan situation was one of the problems also awaiting a solution in a short term.

In addition to the Ottoman Empire, Russian and Austro-Hungarian Empires were the empires which dissolved with the impact of nationalist currents. However, the developments in the latter two empires were not as comprehensive as in the Ottoman Empire and were not transformed into armed struggle to such a significant degree. The Serbian uprising and its resulting autonomy within the Ottoman Empire in 1804, followed by the 1821-29 Greek uprising and independence, constituted important examples for the Armenians, who had hitherto adopted the stance of cultural nationalism, to begin to engage in action. Moreover, Zionism, which is the effort of Jews to build a homeland, along with Kurdish, Arabic and Albanian nationalisms were the nationalisms whose foundations were established in those times.<sup>34</sup> Although this cultural nationalism within the empire served Turkish nationalism, in general, the provocative results were drawing significant attention

The greatest factor influencing the emergence of nationalist ideas among the Armenians was the uprisings that the Balkan nations instituted towards realizing their own nationalist ideas. The Balkan uprisings prompted the Armenians to set out for action in creating their own national unity. Other contributing factors serving the Armenians in achieving an “Armenian Renaissance” whereby nationalist ideas intensified were the support of Great Powers, the activities of Armenian Church and the Armenian priests, and the missionary activities organized by America, England, France and Russia in the Ottoman Empire.<sup>35</sup>

Describing the problems that the Ottoman Empire faced in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, Roderic Davison summarizes the turbulent situation as such:

“After 1800, the attention of the Ottoman administration directed necessarily towards the problem of equality in several respects. Firstly, the Christian groups in the Empire. As they adopted the Western idea of freedom and equality and the level of literacy and education increased among themselves, they began to complain more loudly and frequently about lack of equality. Secondly, their finding good audiences in many big states who behave as the protector of Christians in the Near East ensured these complaints to reverberate in the ears of the Sublime Port because of various human rights and power politics. Thirdly, the Ottoman

34 İlber Ortaylı, “Osmanlı İmparatorluğu’nda...”, p. 55.

35 [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Armenian\\_national\\_movement](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Armenian_national_movement) (last access: 22 July 2008)



statesmen's drive of a re-organization and Westernization drive with a concern to control the territorial losses of the Empire and the internal decay."<sup>36</sup>

As stated by Davison, the uprisings of the groups for independence and foreign support provided to them in this matter as well as the continuing decay of the internal structure of the Ottoman Empire led the Armenians living in the empire to organize easily for their own independence. The process of the emergence of Greek nationalism in 1821-1829 led to the feeling for the first time in the Ottoman Empire that a new period was coming about. The formation of a Greek identity was a political threat in the empire and other communities in the empire might follow the suit.<sup>37</sup>

An example which illustrates the Great Powers appearing as a support base for divisive nationalist activities within the Ottoman Empire in the case of the Greeks who revolted in 1821 with foreign assistance. Greeks gained their independence in 1829 with the help of British-Russian support and intervention. Such examples encouraged the Armenians giving them the idea that they could get concessions from the Sublime Porte and when the Great Powers supported them, they began to demand reform and autonomy at the Berlin Conference. This situation forced the Ottoman authorities accepting Article 61 of the Berlin Treaty which stipulated reform in the Eastern Anatolia.<sup>38</sup> The Berlin Conference is also accepted as the beginning of the rise of Armenian revolutionary movement. In addition, with this conference, in 1878, Armenian question gained an international dimension. In the subsequent process, a political party, *Armenakan*, was established in Van followed by new political formations abroad.<sup>39</sup> A secret organization, "Armenian Compatriots Union," was established in the mid-1880 by an Armenian called Portakalian in Van, constituted the base of *Armenakan*.<sup>40</sup> This organization worked for the education and armament of Armenian youth and opened a school in Van with the support of Russia in order to support these activities and to ensure the spread of nationalism.<sup>41</sup> Moreover, Armenian activities and operations before Berlin Treaty also witnessed this process. Those who

36 Roderic H. Davison, *Osmanlı-Türk Tarihi, Osmanlı İmparatorluğu'nda Reform*, Ankara: Papirüs, 1997, p. 167.

37 Herkül Millas, "Millî Türk Kimliği ve Öteki," Tanıl Bora (ed.), *Modern Türkiye'de Siyasî Düşünce: Milliyetçilik*, Volume 4, 2001, pp. 195-196.

38 Feroz Ahmad, "İkinci Meşrutiyet...", pp. 163-164.

39 Anahide Ter Minassian, "1876-1923 Döneminde Osmanlı İmparatorluğu'nda Sosyalist Hareketin Doğuşunda ve Gelişmesinde Ermeni Topluluğunun Rolü," Erik Jan Zürcher, *Osmanlı İmparatorluğu'nda Sosyalizm ve Milliyetçilik*, İstanbul: İletişim Yayınları, 1995, pp. 163-168.

40 John Giragosyan, *Burjuva Diplomasisi ve Ermenistan*, trans. by Mariam Arpi-Nairi Arek, Peri Yayınları, İstanbul, 2003, p. 43.

41 Esat Uras, "Ermeni Cemiyetleri," *Yıldız Osmanlı Arşivi Koleksiyonu - Ermeni Sorunu III*, İstanbul, 1989, p. 19.

provoked the incidents were the Armenians with Ottoman citizenship who were trained in Western Europe or Tsarist Russia.<sup>42</sup> These states always supported the Armenians both in the field of education and in the nationalistic actions carried out by the Armenians.

Another example concerning the utilization of the Great Powers' assistance is that of Israel Ori, the first ideologist of the Armenian nationalism and the promoter of idea of an autonomous Armenia. Ori attributed Armenian independence to effective diplomatic activity and the Armenians benefiting from the strength of Christian states. Ori, in order to save Armenians from the dominion of non-believers, demanded armed force first from Western Europe and then from Tsar Peter I.<sup>43</sup> He wrote "[a]ccording to Borian's statement, this policy, which relied upon the outside forces, will mark the development of Armenian nationalism."<sup>44</sup> A. B. Karinian also summarized the history of Armenian nationalism as "history of collaboration with imperialism."<sup>45</sup> Another advocate of Armenian nationalism was Grigori Artsruni, who carried out effective action during 1870-1880. In the editorials of the newspaper *Mşak*, which he published in Tbilisi, Artsruni called upon Armenians to rebel against the Ottoman Empire for independence but he could not accomplish any result. This call did not reverberate among Armenians. Concerning this issue, Astruni, by stating in the 24<sup>th</sup> issue of the same newspaper that "Armenians, beyond being a nation, do not deserve to carry the title of human being," chose to give voice to his anger.<sup>46</sup> Besides Astruni, other writers who advocated for Armenian uprisings and praised such activities included Raffi, Vrtanes Papazian and Patkanian. Among these figures Raffi was known as a consistent theoretician and propagandist of Armenian nationalism. In all his works - in his novels, tales and newspaper articles - Raffi emphasized that Armenians were being oppressed politically; he also criticized the Ottoman Sultan's tax policies, the sanctions of the Ottoman administration, and the depredations of the nomadic Kurds. With the aim of establishing an independent Armenia, he demanded all Armenians to organize and to prepare for revolt.<sup>47</sup>

In the 19<sup>th</sup> century, Armenians educated in Italy and France were returning to Is-

42 Nejat Göyünç, *Türkler ve Ermeniler*, Ankara: Yeni Türkiye Yayınları, 2005, p. 94.

43 Mehmet Perinçek, *Ermeni Devlet Adamı B. A. Boryan'ın Gözüyle Türk-Ermeni Çatışması*, İstanbul: Kaynak Yayınları, 2006, p. 31.

44 B. A. Boryan, *Armeniya, Mejdunarodnaya Diplomatiya i SSSR*, C.1-2, Gosudarstvennoe İzdatelstvo, Moskva-Leningrad, 1928, from Perinçek, *Ermeni Devlet Adamı...*, p. 31.

45 A. B. Karinyan, *Ermeni Milliyetçi Akımları*, trans. by Arif Acaloğlu, İstanbul: Kaynak Yayınları, 2006, p.36.

46 Mehmet Perinçek, *Ermeni Devlet Adamı...*, pp. 32-33.

47 A. B. Karinyan, *Ermeni Milliyetçi Akımları...*, pp. 36-37.

tanbul as equipped with new ideas. These intellectuals, who assumed to enlighten the Armenian nation, opened schools with modern education for the first time both in Istanbul and in Anatolia. They provided a transition from classical written Armenian (*grapav*) to the vulgar language (*asharapar*). In this period, Fenelon's *Telemaque* and Vartan Pasha's *Tale of Akabi* were translated into Armenian for the purpose of contributing to the Armenian enlightenment.

Armenian nationalism, whose foundations were established in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, consolidated itself with the establishment of three separate political parties based on nationalist ideology created by the Armenian intellectuals at the end of the Berlin Conference. The first one of these three parties was Liberal Democratic *Ramgavar* Party which advocated liberalism in the economic sphere and adopted a conservative and pragmatist stance in other spheres. Another one was Social Democrat *Hunchakian* Party which aimed to create a class consciousness among the Armenian people and to reconcile socialism with nationalism. Finally, the third one was *Tashnak* Party (Armenian Revolutionary Federation) which attached more importance to national unity than to socialism although being socialist. While the Hunchaks supported the establishment of an independent Armenian state, the Tashnaks advocated for the preservation of the rights of Ottoman Armenians and making arrangements for the relevant issues. The principle of independence would enter into the program of Tashnaks Party in 1919.<sup>48</sup> Armenian nationalism was supported by these kind of political formations on the one hand; and on the other hand there were activities concerning the enlightenment of the Armenian nation in an ideational sense.

Moreover, the activities of Armenian Church and Armenian ecclesiastics were the other catalysts contributing to the emergence of the Armenian nationalism. According to B. A. Borian, the Armenian Church dealt more with political matters than religious ones in Armenian social life.<sup>49</sup> The powers that supported the ecclesiastics were America, France, Russia and Great Britain. The French supported the nationalist endeavor of the Armenians by helping Armenians to establish a Catholic College in Paris in 1846.<sup>50</sup> Armenian youth and intellectuals, who were educated in these schools abroad, engaged in activities regarding the independence of the Armenian nation when they returned. These activities appeared as

48 Rıfat N. Bali, Arus Yumul, Foti Benlisoy, "Yahudi, Ermeni ve Rum Toplularında Milliyetçilik," Tanıl Bora, (ed.), *Modern Türkiye'de Siyasi Düşünce: Milliyetçilik*, Volume 4, 2001, p. 920.

49 B. A. Borian, *Armeniya, Mejdunarodnaya Diplomatiya i SSSR*, C.1-2, Gosudarstvennoe İzdatelstvo, Moskva-Leningrad, 1928, from Perinçek, *Ermeni Devlet Adamı...*, p.37.

50 Ercüment Kuran, "Tarihte Türkler ve Ermeniler," *Osmanlı'dan Günümüze Ermeni Sorunu*, Yeni Türkiye Yayınları, 2001, pp. 32-40.

media activities, the establishment of separatist organizations and being organized for the purpose of establishment of an independent Armenia. Although there was an attempt to emphasize that these organizations were established by the Armenians with social and cultural purposes, it would later come to light that the common purpose of all these organizations was to establish an independent Armenia. New ones were added to these societies (*cemiyet*) day by day. This process that had begun with the opening of the first society in 1860 and continued to progress through the 1880s systematically. Names of these organizations included “Young Armenia Society” and “Towards Armenia Society”.

Another reason leading to the emergence of Armenian nationalism was the missionary activities which were carried out within Ottoman Empire by America, Great Britain, France and Russia within the Ottoman Empire. After these missionaries had acquired extensive information about Anatolia through exploration trips and correspondences, the subsequent process was the opening of missionary schools.

### **Conclusion**

While nationalism was a global phenomenon, it began to influence the multi-national empires more in the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. The Ottoman Empire was influenced by these nationalistic developments because of the several ethnic groups that it sheltered. However, Ottoman Empire experienced this process longer and more painfully when compared to other multi-national empires. The communities living in the Ottoman *millet* system subsisted by constituting an internal administrative organization. Within this system it took a great deal of time for Armenians, who were not initially thinking of independence and autonomy, to meet with nationalism and to be influenced by nationalist ideas. At the same time, that the Armenians living in the empire were living dispersedly, which was constituted one of the factors that delayed them in organizing and to join this process.

The ethnic communities living in the Ottoman Empire began activities for the purpose of establishing their own states and achieving their independence since the first half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. However, Armenians could not seize this chance easily on their own. For them, this process began to function to an extent in the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Despite this long period of development, Armenian nationalism remains unrooted. Today, people living within the Armenian borders and the Armenian groups living in countries other than Armenia (the Diaspora Armenians) continue their activities with the effort to establish their na-

tionalisms based on animosity against Turk. The Armenian policies implemented by irregular gangs and establishing organizations to carry out armed operations throughout the 19<sup>th</sup> century were today transformed into propaganda activities that are realized by media and cinema. The one factor that has not changed is the continuing support of Western countries to Armenian cause. All in all, Armenian nationalism has been an outcome not only of internal developments but also of external pressures emerged out of 19<sup>th</sup> century imperialism.

# BOOK REVIEW 1

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## SORULARLA ERMENİ SORUNU (ARMENIAN PROBLEM IN QUESTIONS)

Edited by: Ahmed Akgündüz, Said Öztürk, Recep Kara  
İstanbul, Osmanlı Araştırmaları Vakfı, 2008, 471 pages.

**T**his book entitled *Sorularla Ermeni Sorunu* (Armenian Problem in Questions) prepared by Prof. Dr. Ahmed Akgündüz, Assoc. Prof. Dr. Said Öztürk and Dr. Recep Kara is composed of almost two hundred questions and answers in seventeen chapters on the Armenian history, inter-communal relations between Muslims and Armenians as well as Armenian political, cultural and economic life within the framework of the Ottoman Empire.

In the first chapter of the book the discussions regarding the homeland, history and identity of Armenians are examined. Particularly the answers given by Armenian historians on the question of where the Armenia is are analyzed in reference to the voluminous literature on this issue. Within this framework, Persian-Armenian and Byzantien-Armenian relations are covered and pre-Christian and post-Christian status of the Armenians is compared.

What is more, Armenian religion is also examined in the book. The independence of Armenian Gregorian Church, the emergence of Gregorian sect and the status of Cathogigos and the Patriarch are analyzed accordingly. Particularly the evolution and administrative transformation of the Armenian Patriarchate in Istanbul is analyzed.

Another chapter is devoted to Armenian-Muslim relations. In this chapter first encounters between Armenians and Muslims, Armenian-Turkish relations, the situation that the Armenians lived when the Seljukids arrived the region are covered. Then, the Armenian community under Ottoman rule is examined with particular reference to the Armenian policy of Mehmed II the Conqueror. Within

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this framework, the concessions granted to the Armenians during the Ottoman rule in line with administrative and religious rights given to the non-Muslim communities under Islamic law are examined with reference to archival documents.

Another chapter dwells upon the Armenians serving in Ottoman state service and examines the role of Armenians in Ottoman state administration, bureaucracy as well as Ottoman economy, architecture, arts and the evolution of Armenian press in the Ottoman Empire.

The emergence and evolution of Armenian question is the subject of another chapter. Accordingly, the establishment of Armenian Catholic Church, impact of Catholic missionaries on the Armenian community, and the Mkhitarist Armenian community are covered. What is more, the role of Great Power intervention in the emergence of Armenian question and bilateral relations between the Armenian community and European states are examined. Finally the Ottoman-Russian War of 1877-1878 and subsequent establishment of Armenian revolutionary organizations are discussed in detail as a turning point in the deterioration of the relations between the Armenians and the Ottoman administration.

The relatively short but peaceful period between Ottomans and Armenian revolutionary organizations in the post-Hamidian era is also covered. Within this framework, Armenian demands for further reform and Russian support for these demands are discussed.

A long and detailed chapter is devoted to the Ottoman-Armenian relations during World War I, Armenian revolts in Zeytun and Van and the subsequent decision of relocation taken by the Ottoman government in 1915. In doing that, legal definitions of the concepts of "genocide" and "relocation" are provided. The reasons of why the 1915 relocation could not be considered as "genocide" are also covered in the book, particularly through a detailed account of the administration of the relocation. This was followed by the discussions on Armenian population and the other developments in the post-relocation era. Trials of Ottoman authorities and soldiers in Ottoman martial courts are also examined.

The resolution of the Armenian question in Lausanne Conference, Armenian activities from Lausanne Treaty until the end of World War II, subsequent revitalization of Armenian nationalism between 1946 and 1973 are covered.

Finally, in the last chapters, international relations dimension of the Armenian question is examined with particular reference to the role of Armenian allegations in Turkish-EU relations, parliamentary resolutions regarding these allegations, Armenian terror and propaganda activities.

In sum this book is a good compilation of almost all aspects of the Armenian question. The archival documents presented in the book contributed to its scientificity as well as impartiality to a great extent. Structured in question-answer format, it is also easily readable; therefore for a fresh start in Armenian question this book is quite illuminating as a reference book or a guide.





## BOOK REVIEW 2

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### OSMANLI DEVLETİ'NDE KATOLİK ERMENİLER: SİVASLI MİHİTAR VE MİHİTARİSTLER (1676-1749)

#### (CATHOLIC ARMENIANS IN THE OTTOMAN STATE: MKHITAR OF SEBASTIA AND MKHITARISTS (1676-1749))

Author: Asist. Prof. Dr. Gürsoy ŞAHİN  
İstanbul, IQ Kültür Sanat Yayıncılık, 2008, 272 Pages.

**T**his book entitled *Catholic Armenians in the Ottoman State: Mkhitar of Sebastia and Mkhitarists (1676-1749)* penned by Assist Prof. Dr. Gürsoy Şahin is composed of six chapters. In the first chapter first encounters between the Turks and Armenians are analyzed with reference to the Seljukid and later Ottoman rule in Eastern Anatolia. In this chapter it is argued that under Byzantine Empire, the Armenians were suppressed in terms of political and religious liberties; thus they welcomed Turkish rule instead of Byzantine due to the Turkish tolerance which they had been seeking for so long. That is why they perceived the Turks as saviors and lived under Seljukid and Ottoman administration in peace and prosperity.

The author also argues that during the Middle Ages Roman and Byzantine administrations tried to convert Armenians, Nestorians, Assyrians and Chaldeans into Byzantine Orthodoxy rather than their monophysit sects and that in case of their inability to conversion the missionaries sent for conversion used force against these ethnic groups.

According to the book, during the Ottoman legacy, starting from Sultan Mehmed II, Armenians were granted with administrative and religious concessions; they were accepted as a separate religious community and other monophysit churches, such as Assyrian, Abyssinian and Coptic, had been put under Armenian administration. Such an Armenian control over other minor ethnic communities proves, for the author, that the Armenian Patriarchate had a very privileged status under the Ottoman Empire.

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Regarding the Catholicization of the Armenians in the Ottoman Empire, the author focuses on the activities of Catholic missionaries, particularly of Franciscans. He argues that these missionaries aimed to Catholicize Orthodox Christians, particularly the Armenians as well as interfered in the education of the minorities. Other than French missionaries, English, Swedish, Italian and German missionaries also served in the Ottoman Empire for the same purpose. However, particularly the Ottoman capitulations granted to France by Sultan Suleiman the Magnificent in the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century, served for intensification of Catholic missionary activities in the Empire under the auspices of French diplomats.

The author argues that the Ottoman administration recognized Catholic Armenians in 1758 as a separate religious community and afterwards Catholic Armenians were administered by their own religious leaders. However towards the end of 18<sup>th</sup> century Catholic Armenians were under the pressure of the Orthodox Gregorian Patriarchate. This period was also the period where mass conversions to Catholicism had been experienced not purely because of religious reasons but mainly for economic purposes.

Another interesting point in the book is the assertion that compared to other ethnic communities, it was the Armenians that had been Catholicized the most; and this was resulted in fierce sectarian clashes among the Armenians, which had produced a significant hatred between two sects.

Following this general introduction the rest of the book focuses on the conversion of Mkhitar of Sebastia into Catholicism as a result of the Catholic missionary activities. The author mainly analyses how Mkhitarists contributed to the emergence of Armenian nationalism in the Ottoman Empire and how the followers of Mkhitar had involved in separatist activities in the Ottoman Empire.

The author states that as a result of the pressures of Gregorian Armenians, Mkhitar had fled to Modon and later to St. Lazarus Island in Venice and established a monastery in which the Armenians were educated on Armenian history, geography, social structure, etc. After the closure of the Mkhitarist academy in 1991, the Mkhitarist community established an organization called the “Mkhitarist Union” and continued their educational activities.

The author argues that by translating the Western classics and novel studies in Europe in Armenian, Mkhitarists contributed much to the national awakening

of the Armenians and their encounter with the Western civilization. Later these studies had contributed much to the politicization of the Armenian community in the Ottoman Empire.

A very interesting argument in the book is that despite politicization of the Catholic Armenians, particularly due to the enmity towards Orthodox Armenians and their intimate relations with Russia, Catholic Armenians had not cooperated with Armenian revolutionary organizations and did not initially engaged in terrorist activities of the Armenian bands in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century. That is why, in the initial years of relocation they had been exempted from this process.

To conclude, this book provides an illuminating overlook to the Catholicization of the Armenians, the sectarian conflicts among Armenians and political and cultural works of a significant Armenian Catholic community, namely the Mkhitarists. Hence, it contributed to the fulfillment of a significant gap in the Turkish literature on Armenians.



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