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THE ARMENIAN COMMUNITY OF FRANCE AND TURKEY: PROPAGANDA AND LOBBYISM

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Abstract:

Armenian Community in France and its activities will be analysed in this article. After brief description of the community, its role as diaspora and its lobby activities will be dealt with. The number of Armenian originated French citizens has been estimated to be 350000-400000, which means that Armenian diaspora in France is the most powerful one among Armenian diaspora in Europe. This article will try to measure the feelings of the Armenian community in France against Turkey and Turkish citizens in the lights of the regular publications of the Armenians of France.

Keywords:

Armenians, Diaspora, France, Hunchak, Dashnak, Turkey.

INTRODUCTION

While writing this article, I have had some difficulties in naming the community that I have dealt with.¹ The alternatives are as follows:

French Armenians
Armenian French
French Armenian Society
French Armenian Community

The last one will be the term used most frequently. Without doubt this can be criticized, because it is known that constitutionally there has been no societies or communities in France. However, as the aim of this article is to study the mechanism of the process of this community (existence of these

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¹ Another terminological difficulty appears in qualifying the events of 1915. The following article is not written to support or to defend either of two theses. For this reason, it is preferred to use the word "genocide" in inverted commas and to try being neutral as much as possible.

**Does Turkey have a
problem, which can be
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communities cannot be denied if not de jure but de facto) the preference is made. Besides, using the other terms, may give the impression of making differentiation between the concerning individuals to be either French or Armenian. Thus, the fact is not so in this aspect. The most famous of the French Armenians, Charles Aznavour could say 'I feel myself 100 % French and at the same time 100 % Armenian.'² Leaving the discussion of the probability of such a thing to psychologists, we disregarded the emotional part of this phrase in our writings. While reading the following article, these two difficulties should be remembered.

Does Turkey have a problem, which can be named as the 'Armenian problem'? The answer to this question shows differences depending on the point of view, the periods in history or the meaning loaded to the concept of Armenian problem. On the other hand, the presence of a chain of problems related to Turkey for the Armenians living away from Armenia and have become the citizens of other countries (who are called Diaspora) is out of discussion. Of course the above mentioned matters are related to the communities. Among individuals there are many taking this matters calmly, more peacefully and even, more irrelevantly. But yet, in the last analysis, it can be seen that the Armenian Diaspora (when the communities are taken as a base) adopted a hostile attitude against the existence of the Turkish State, its principals, sovereignty of its territory and rarely the citizens of the country, the Turks. It is possible to say that this attitude is a national policy. At first sight it might be seen easy to define this policy: the key point for whole Diaspora is to force Turkey to officially recognise the so-called 'genocide'. All institutions within the Diaspora are spending their energy on this subject. It is inevitable that this great effort will end up with multiple results. This situation has become more complicated since Armenia appeared as an independent state in the international area. The gradual effects of this lobbyism can be listed as follows:

² *Les Nouvelles d'Arménie*, October 2000, p. 35.

The effects on Turkey can be divided into two; the effects on Turkey's state policy; and the effects on Turkish public opinion against Armenians.

The effects on Armenia: Armenia's attitude, especially against Turkey, and its policy are affected by the attitude of the Diaspora. But, with a closer look, we can see that a group in Diaspora, which can be named as 'falcons', find Armenia's Turkish policy very lax.

The effects on western states (Europe and the USA) and western public opinion: The most important results of lobbyism can be seen in this field. The only visible part of this effect is the recognition of the 'genocide' by some western states, but more important than that is the atmosphere created against Turkey and the Turks for many years.

And finally, effects on Diaspora: It is quite difficult to measure the reactions of the Armenians living outside of Armenia to these harsh lobbying activities. But we can easily say that there are two kinds of feelings: the first is by all means 'hatred' (no need to be afraid of the words). Hatred is openly declared against Turkey and everything related to Turkey. But of course it will be unfair to say that this is the only feeling they have. In daily life, you may meet a number of individuals, who are in good relations with the Turks, and declare their own reactions against this anti-propaganda against Turkey. And they even have a peaceful point of view on the subject. Nevertheless, we have to admit that the very same persons may speak differently under different circumstances and with different collocutors, which is extremely natural. For this reason, to approach this subject with a Manichean look will be wrong.

In this article, I plan to scrutinize the viewpoint of the French Armenian community, which is the one of the most important and the most effective of whole Armenian groups against Turkey. After introducing this community, I am going to analyse the lobbyism activities of the notables of this community and will try to measure the feelings against Turkey and the Turkish citizens in the lights of the regular publications of the Armenians of France.

THE ARMENIAN COMMUNITY OF FRANCE

The total population of Armenian origin people living in the World is estimated to be 6.5 millions. As it can be seen, this is a

very small number as the population of a nation, but on the contrary the proportion of the approval of this little nation is very wide, at least in the western World. This shows how successful the propaganda is. Approximately 5 millions of Armenians have been living in the former Soviet Union Republics and about 3.5 millions of them have been Armenian citizens since 1991. The remaining 1.5 millions are forming the Armenian Diaspora. Although the USA is the most important country in which Armenians settled widely (800000 persons), the most important community in Europe live in France.³ Today the number of Armenian originated French citizens has been estimated to be 350,000-400,000. In addition, the emigration from Armenia has been going on since 1991, and France has become one of the most important immigration countries besides the USA. We can also add Cyprus and Lebanon to this picture. Lebanon Armenians, although very small in number, have made their voice heard by means of ASALA.

The majority of French Armenians live in Paris and surroundings. Since 1930's they have mostly been living in Alfortville, Maison-Alfort and Issy-Les-Moulineaux. Some other groups are living in the surroundings of big cities like Marseilles and Lyon. France has got a very special place in the contemporary Armenian national mythology for sure. Before 1914 there were only 4.000 Armenians sheltered in this country.⁴ The emigration movement to France has begun in 1915. For Armenians, France was a shelter country. Between the years 1925 and 1938, 63.000 Armenians migrated to France from Syria, Lebanon, Turkey, Greece, and Soviet Armenia. The choice of France is because of the active presence of an Armenian trade colony in this country since 19th century and that of presence of the french nationals in Syria and Lebanon where Armenians lived.

In the history of the French Armenians, there were interesting and painful events. After 1945, Stalin gave permission to the Armenian Diaspora for going back to Armenia. The aim was to increase the population of Armenia and to prepare an excuse for demanding land from Turkey. From all over the World, 100.000 Armenians willingly immigrated to Armenia to make their utopian dreams come true (this coming back is called NERKATH). Among

³ 'Sur la Route avec les Émigrés Clandestins' in *Les Nouvelles d'Arménie*, May 2001, pp. 12-21.

⁴ Hovanessian Martine, *Les Arméniens et leurs territoires*, Paris : Autrement, 1995, p. 32.

them there are also 1000 French Armenians. This experience ended up with a great disappointment, and most of them went back to France; that is France became a shelter country for the second time. Walking out of Armenia caused a diversion among the Armenians. The Diaspora and the Armenians living in Armenia became fall apart and political differences became more visible. When the ones in Armenia were closer to the parties Hintchak and Ramgavar (pro-Soviet), in Diaspora, especially in France, the sympathizers of Dashnak party were in majority (anti-Soviet). This diversity, made their relations tense, and a long lasting rivalry took place between them. The importance of this rivalry was very big referring to their points of view and their policy against Turkey. During the second half of the 20th century, Diaspora showed a more 'falcon' attitude against Turkey. It was definite that, Soviet Armenians were not being free in their policy and they got a share in this.

The ethnic appearance of the French Armenians has begun to change with this experience. From the beginning of 1950's, the Palestinian and East European Armenians, after 1975 Armenians from Lebanon and after Islamic revolution Armenians from Iran and after the military coup-d'état in 1980 Armenians in Turkey went to France. Armenians, who came to this country with the policy of gathering the French immigrant families together, have become almost a 'fresh blood' for the Armenian community of France. In 1980's, the community, which was given existence by the 1915 immigration has become to change, to widen, and to have a variety of aspects.

With the earthquake in 1988 and the collapse of the Soviet Armenia, the emigration to the west especially to France has gain speed again. As it can be seen, French Armenians do not show one specific culture, one geographic origin and even one religious belief:

'There are lots of differences separating Armenian origin French's from each other...; The Armenian bourgeoisie, assimilated in the French middle class who are Lebanon, Iran, and Istanbul originated, speaking Armenian but at the same time cosmopolitans; Turkish and Kurdish speaking Anatolian Armenians from labour class who are conservative Christians and are not related to their past anymore, and get stuck in the social dwellings of the suburbs like Arnouville, Alfortville, Issy-les-Moulineaux; 'old' Armenians coming from important Armenian cities like Beirut,

Damascus and Algeria have devoted their lives to their identity and their language and they are militants of Armenian claim"⁵

It is necessary to have a careful glance at an important result of this diversion of view toward Turkey. On the contrary of what is seen from outside, we mean from Turkey, French Armenians think that their members are assimilated in the French society more than necessary, lost their identities and are not engaged to the Armenian claim enough. They claim only 5 or 20 thousand of 350 000 Armenians of France are always attached to their identity and by means of the regular publications made by French Armenians, those 5-10 thousand Armenians are able to follow news about Armenia and the Diaspora, and very few of them speak Armenian in their daily life. The number of children attending Armenian schools is not more than 2.000.⁶

The biggest fear of the notables of Armenian community is that the young French Armenians might break off the claim, forget the 'genocide' and their relations with Armenia. The nightmare of all minorities, 'assimilation' naturally exists in this community too. The most important precautions taken against this danger are to establish associations and institutions. It is a fact that French Armenians have got a very good net of association and publication.

From 1920's on, like all immigrant groups, Armenians also carried all their institutions like social clubs, political groups and churches to France. Besides the churches, the most important regularity can be seen in political parties. The first coming ones of these parties are:

Hunchak: Marxist and populist. Takes its place beside the Soviet Armenian Republic and thus it is not very effective in France.

Dashnak: (Armenian Revolutionist Federation) is the most notable party for the Armenian activities before 1914. Between the years of 1918 and 1920 the leaders of Armenian Republic were from this party. After Armenia because the part of the Soviet, they were exiled and they continued their activities in Diaspora. Today the most common political movement is considered to be Dashnak Party.

5 Ter Minassian Anahide, 'Les Arméniens de Paris depuis 1945', in *Les Paris des étrangers*, (Paris: Publications de la Sorbonne, 1994), pp. 205-239.

6 *La lettre de l'UGAB*, July 15th, 1995, p. 2.

Ramgavar: represents the liberal bourgeoisie part of the Armenians. It mostly addresses the elite and the rich class of the society. The institution named 'The general aid Unity of Armenians' is related to this party.

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From 1930's on, all the Armenian organizations in the Ottoman Empire, have been taken to France. The participations of these organizations in preserving the Armenian identity can't be denied.⁷ The most successful among all is accepted to be Dashnak party. The centre of this party in Paris is the centre of many other organizations at the same time. The most important of them are 'Nor Seround'⁸ and 'the Blue Cross of the Armenians of France'.⁹ In this same centre there are some other organizations like 'the Armenian House of Culture', 'The Movement of Young Dashnaks' or 'Armenian scouts'.¹⁰

The rivalry in the political arena can also be seen in the associations. There are lots of institutions around Hunchak party too. The establishments of this pro-Soviet party have been getting closer to other institutions since Armenia was founded. Some of these institutions are: 'The Red Cross',¹¹ 'Movement of Young French Armenians' (Mouvement de la jeunesse Arménienne - JAF) and 'Organization of Scouts pro-JAF'. JAF was founded after the Second World War. In that period, as French Communist Party was so powerful, we can understand the importance of Hunchak party. From 1948 on, it spread through the cities like Décines, Valence, Paris, Alfortville and Sevran. But, as most of its interest was the Soviet Armenia, it hasn't been effective in Diaspora.

⁷ Hovanesian Martine, *le Lien Communautaire, Trois Générations d'Arméniens*, (Paris : Armand Colin, 1992), p. 122.

⁸ The youth branch of the party. A lot of panels and discussions are organized by this branch. The subjects of these weekly discussions, to which a lot of notables are invited, is "reunited" Armenia. The lobbyism activities are quite developed.

⁹ An organ of Dashnak Party and has got about 1 000 members 99% of which are women. It has 18 departments all over France. It organizes lessons of language, dance, theatre and chorus besides a lot of conferences.

¹⁰ This organization attracts the young people by organizing sportive competitions. There are 57 departments settled both in Europe and America. It has got strong relations. All departments are directed by a centre named 'Homenetmen'.

¹¹ The rival of the 'Blue Cross'.

Finally the most important association within the Ramgavar party is the 'General Union of Armenian Aid' established in Cairo in 1906 and active in Marseilles since 1910's. It has got 22 000 members all over the Europe and has got a powerful financial structure. It is said that its capital has reached to 700 million Francs in 1990's. With this great amount of money, it can run lots of schools and cultural centres. Besides it has got two vacation camps, one is in Syria and the other is in the USA. Its relations with Armenia are very strong.

There are some other establishments to be added to this list. The associations, which were established between 1975 and 1985, the period in which Armenian terrorists went on committing murders against Turkey, intending to support these terrorist activities, to form public opinion for them, should also be considered seriously. 'Armenian National Movement', 'Solidarity of Franco-Armenians' and 'Land and Culture Association' are some of them. The very last one has got a vast net. The association, which was established by the Armenian militants to support terrorism, has got 250 members in France. Besides this it also has got some departments in Switzerland, England, Argentina, Armenia and the USA. Since 1991 these organizations have been united in a federation named 'Union internationale des organisation Terre et Culture (UIOTC)'.

The earthquake in Armenia on December 7th 1998 caused the birth of new non-politic initiatives. Whole Diaspora and especially the Armenians of France have made new organizations to help 530000 homeless Armenians. This event is believed to be the 'new awakening' of the Armenians in Diaspora. In France a dozen of associations have started movements to help. Among these, there are some old associations like the 'Blue Cross' as well as the new ones like 'Aznavour for Armenia', 'SOS Armenia', etc. Especially 'Aznavour for Armenia' which was founded in the leadership of Charles Aznavour, has worked very actively since 1989 and has played an important role in Armenia's gaining sympathy in the French public opinion.

In the last 15 years, there have been important developments in the life of the Armenians of France related to Armenia. The 1988 earthquake, the announcement of independent Armenia on September 23, 1991, and the Karabakh problem caused a new friction among the Armenians of France. Some think that Armenia should come closer to its neighbour Turkey for it's survival and

defending a 'real-politic' manner. But the others, never approving any kind of relations with Turkey, with any means, and only accept the approach with the prerequisite of the recognition of the 'genocide'.

To prevent the friction, which is related to Armenia's political future, they have formed a new institution named 'the Forum of Armenian Associations' in Paris in 1991.¹² The aim is to renew the Armenians of France to whom the churches, the political parties and the old associations can't respond anymore. Today, nearly 60 Armenian associations are the members of this forum. The principal aims of this forum are to create an establishment to represent officially the Armenian community of France. It is a fact that, as the political system of France –just like the Turkish political system- is structured, not taking the communities as bases, but only the individuals, there has been no such establishments representing them officially up to day. Nevertheless, from 1990's on, various immigrants groups, in France like the groups coming from Algeria, Tunisia and Turkey, have got the opportunity of coming together in communities. Following the same example, the Armenians of France are also seen in the effort of becoming a congregation within this Forum. And without doubt these efforts strengthen the lobbyism activities. The most important proof of this strengthening is the recognition of the 'Armenian "Genocide" Law' in the French Parliament. It is certain that this Forum will become as powerful as the National Assembly of Armenians in the USA in a short period of time.¹³ In this point of view it can be said that the Forum has strengthened the Armenian 'claim' in the recognition of the 'genocide' and the relations between the Armenians and the Frenchmen.

The second aim of the Forum is to be able to protect Armenian identity.¹⁴ As a matter of fact, on the contrary of what it is seen from Turkey, the greatest fear of Armenians is the assimilation. All the interviews published in a magazine named *Les Nouvelles d'Arménie* are on this subject and ones who hesitate to declare their Armenian identity openly are not looked good. For instance

¹² 'Les Associations Arméniennes ont Décidé d'Évoluer vers une Structure à l'image du Conseil représentatif des institutions juives de France (Crif)', *Libération*, 22.02.2001.

¹³ 'Etats-Unis : un Modèle à Méditer. Lobbying Mode d'Emploi ' in *Les Nouvelles d'Arménie*, May 1996, pp. 8-9.

¹⁴ *La Lettre de l'UGAB*, July 15th 1995, p. 2.

the famous film director Henry Verneuil who doesn't use his real name, is known to shut the film Mayrig telling about the immigration of Armenians from the Ottoman Empire, under the pressure of the community. In this point of view, the duties of the Armenians of France are two: first not to be assimilated, second, to make their claim understood throughout France.

Finally, among the goals of this Forum is to build a bridge between the Armenians of France and Armenia. More important than any others, the main goal is to keep the Armenian community united. But for this, the Forum should prove its credibility. Because of this, the Forum has performed many activities, which take an effective place in the media like in the cases of Bernard Lewis¹⁵ or Gills Veinstein. The important thing is that the considerable newspapers like *Le Monde* or *Libération* have given place to these mentioned cases widely and as a result, they have got the attention of the readers. In this aspect the Forum gained the confidence of the Armenian community and has become the strongest candidate to represent the Armenians officially.¹⁶

As a matter of fact, the propaganda, which has been imposed by the Forum, has played an important role in the recognition of the 'Armenian genocide' by the French Parliament. Too see this propaganda monolithic, ossified, and completely rational will be wrong. Now we are going to examine this.

Lobbyism and Propaganda

First of all we should define these two concepts. The lobbyism, which is accepted to be a positive idea in Anglo-Saxon political culture, is defined just in the opposite way, negatively in Latin political culture (We can put Turkey in this category). In every period of time and society there have been pressure groups or power groups. Professional, religious, ethnic, political or geographical groups are the best examples. Even going further, we can say that, in the Western societies, after the industrialisation, some people coming together for pleasure and for spending their free time have become pressure groups, too. The best example to this is the very powerful hunters lobby in France. But, when we refer to lobbyism, economic and ethnic groups come to mind. The new parameter on this subject is the European Union where the

¹⁵ 'Procès Lewis' in *Les Nouvelles d'Arménie*, December 1994, p. 17.

¹⁶ 'Les trois ans du Forum' in *Les Nouvelles d'Arménie*, June 1996, pp. 30-31.

Civil Society has become a real political actor. Under these conditions, it is inevitable that lobbyism is becoming more powerful in all countries in the EU.¹⁷

Even in countries like France, which has always given the individuals an upper position depending on its political culture, regional or ethnic communities are beginning to be acceptable. Corsica, Alsace and Bretagne for the regions, Moslems and Jewish's for the religious communities are the best examples. Under these circumstances it isn't hard to foresee that the Armenian lobby will eventually get stronger in France just like in the USA. More important than this is that the activities are becoming more acceptable in the French public opinion and are being considered to be normal.¹⁸ The propaganda against Turkey and to make Turkey to recognize 'genocide' allegations is becoming to be known widely.

At this point, we should make clear what we understand from 'propaganda'. We can briefly define it as forming a public opinion. Among various definitions, the more detailed one in the political point of view is:

'The activities which are effective on masses, classes and persons who have a role in winning any claim related to the internal or the external policy of a country are called propaganda.'¹⁹ This definition is fitted to the propaganda type we are talking about. According to Osman Özsoy's definition, the aim of propaganda is as follows:

'It is to direct the individuals, to accept an idea with their own will even though they are not obliged to do so, and to take part in a movement willingly without being forced.'²⁰ I think this definition is incomplete. In the last analysis, if we assume that the individuals do not have to accept any idea principally, with this definition, every idea explained would have to be described as propaganda; and it will be exaggeration. And yet, the aim of Armenian propaganda, is not affecting the individuals but the society by means of which affecting the political power. In this specific propaganda, affecting individuals cannot be taken as the goal but as the means.

¹⁷ Quermonne Jean-Louis, *le Système de l'Union Européenne*, (Paris : Montchrestien, 1994), p. 93.

¹⁸ Cf. Lamarque Gilles, *Le Lobbying*, (Paris : Presses Universitaire de France, 1994).

¹⁹ Ferhat Başdoğan, *Propaganda*, (Ankara : Kara Kuvvetleri Komutanlığı Yayınları, 1960), p. 3.

²⁰ Osman Özsoy, *Propaganda ve Kamuoyu Oluşturma*, (İstanbul : Alfa, 1998), p. 7.

These thoughts took us to the propaganda of the Armenian communist specifically. We can say that there are two goals of this propaganda: The first one is to ensure France's putting pressure on Turkish State for the recognition of the 1915 Armenian 'genocide' in every way possible. This goal requires of a plan to be carried out within few steps. The first step is to convince the French public opinion that the 'genocide' is a real and historical event. The second step is to make the same people put pressure on the French State organs on the very same object. The third step is to make the mentioned organs to recognize the 'genocide' and this was to transform the subject into being a legal historical reality, from being a thesis. As it is known, these three steps have almost completely become true in France. Following steps will be directed to Turkey. The aim is to make France to put political, economic and psychological pressure on Turkey and as a result to get Turkey's approval. For most of the Armenians this will be the final point. But, it is a reality that the people dominating the propaganda have been planning further steps. Simply, after the recognition, they are willing to demand compensations from Turkey and finally to take eastern region of Turkey called Western Armenia in Armenian literature.²¹

The second aim seems to be more abstract. The propaganda works on creating public opinion against Turkey, have been speared out widely. The Armenians are trying to show that Turkey is unfair in every subject. It is not important whether the subject is related to Armenians, or not. The aim is draw a picture of a primitive, antidemocratic, savage Turkish State and worse of all a Turkish nation. In the *Les Nouvelles d'Arménie*²² we see lots of articles about:

Naturally two-way relations in the region, in which Armenia has also been involved, have got an important place in the magazine. But, it is very interesting that Turkey wants to be shown alone and isolated in the region and to be in a bad and hostile manner against all neighbours. It is intended to emphasize that Turkey is

²¹ 'Séparer les Bourreaux et les Victimes' in *Les Nouvelles d'Arménie*, June 1995, pp. 40-41.

²² *Les Nouvelles d'Arménie* has been being published since 1994 and it is said to have severe line. It is a magazine which sent only to subscribers, printed thoroughly in French and contains a lot of advertisements. It addresses the Armenians of France not the French people. The continuous readers of this magazine are generally young generation Armenians. Briefly, the bad Turkey image affects the Armenians of France, not the Frenchmen, and it prevents the young generation Armenians to change their view against Turkey and the Turks.

an irreconcilable, irredentist and an aggressive country.²³ As for Turkey's relations with Greece,²⁴ Cyprus,²⁵ Bulgaria, Georgia, even with Iraq Iran, Syria and a fortiori Armenia, the only side which is right is always the side against Turkey. Among all, the relations, between Turkey and Azerbaijan are the most important one. These two countries are shown to be one²⁶ and they are accused of creating economic and political problems for Armenia.

Turkey-EU relations: On this subject, we have met numerous articles, interviews and researches. In general, the idea aimed to emphasize that, Turkey doesn't deserve to be a member of the EU. The thesis repeatedly claim that Turkey is not democratic enough, it has a poor economy, and there have been infringements of human rights in Turkey.²⁷ But, of course the most important prerequisite for Turkish- EU proximity is shown to be the recognition of the 'genocide'. The impression these articles give is that if the recognition comes true, all the other negative claims will be wiped off immediately. According to the magazine, the basis of all the problems in Turkey is the not-recognition of the 'genocide'. Under these circumstances, all the problems between Turkey and EU are applauded²⁸ and all the proximities are criticized severely.²⁹

Another subject treated frequently in this magazine is the Kurdish problem. The idea, these tens of articles want to give, is that both Armenians and the Kurds are in some kind of a unity of fate, as being 'nations crushed by Turks.'³⁰ Besides the support given to the Kurds, it is very striking to see the place they give to PKK and to Abdullah Öcalan.³¹ The most important conclusion on

²³ 'Turquie et ses voisins ; le torchon brûle' in *Les Nouvelles d'Arménie*, May 1996, p. 27.

²⁴ 'le retour des tensions gréco-turques' in *Les Nouvelles d'Arménie*, December 1994, pp. 34-35, 'Tensions en Mer Egée' in *Les Nouvelles d'Arménie*, March 1996, p. 22.

²⁵ 'Une République bananière au cœur de la Méditerranée' in *Les Nouvelles d'Arménie*, June 2000, p. 20, 'Chypre : Ankara cloué au pilori' in *Les Nouvelles d'Arménie*, June 2001, p. 12.

²⁶ *Les Nouvelles d'Arménie*, November 1994, pp. 16-19.

²⁷ *Les Nouvelles d'Arménie*, February 1995, p. 18.

²⁸ 'Le camouflet des Quinze : l'Europe ferme ses portes à la Turquie' in *Les Nouvelles d'Arménie*, February, 1998, pp. 24-25.

²⁹ 'Turquie : quelle place en Europe? Contradictions entre la Commission européenne et le Parlement de Strasbourg sur les conditions de l'intégration d'Ankara' in *Les Nouvelles d'Arménie*, December 2000, pp. 32-35.

³⁰ 'Arménie-Kurdistan : une alliance naturelle' in *Les Nouvelles d'Arménie*, January 1996, pp. 22-23, 'Tous avec le PKK' in *Les Nouvelles d'Arménie*, April 1999, pp. 8-9.

³¹ 'Abdullah Öcalan va mal' in *Les Nouvelles d'Arménie*, July-August 2000, p. 11.

The most important conclusion on this matter is for the solution of the Kurdish problem, Turkey first of all should recognize the 'genocide'. According to the magazine, the Southeastern policy of Ankara is an extension of 1915.

about the Armenians of Turkey. This may be because they find the Armenian minority of Turkey not concerned of the matter enough, not making any effort for the recognition of the 'genocide', and besides being in an attitude close to Ankara. Very few articles written about them are mostly an religion.³² Although it is known that this minority has got various problems, like belongings of the foundations, there have nearly been no articles on these subjects. According to the Armenians of France, the most passive part of the Diaspora is the Armenians of Turkey.

We can also see articles on Turkey's economic problems very often. The conclusion we have reached in the last analysis, depending on the articles, is that Turkey is a mafia country, it has got the position of a 'banana republic' and the economic problems are 'normal'. But as a contradiction, the very same magazine refers to Turkey as being a great and conspirator regional power. With an ethnocentric view, every attempt made by Turkey in that region, is shown as an attempt against Armenia.³⁴

To the list of news and commentaries about Turkey we should also add the ones about Turkey's internal politics. These articles on Turkey's internal policy are less then ones on Armenia's internal policy but as a paradox they are much more than the ones about French internal policy. There are so many of these articles

this matter is for the solution of the Kurdish problem, Turkey first of all should recognize the 'genocide'. According to the magazine, the Southeastern policy of Ankara is an extension of 1915. The impression we get after reading all the articles and interviews is that Turks' treating the Kurds badly is 'normal'. This Manichean approach can also be seen in the subject of other minorities.³² The interesting point is that the magazine keeps very quiet

³² 'Anatolie où sont tes enfants grecs' in *Les Nouvelles d'Arménie*, May 2000, p. 8.

³³ 'décès de Sa Béatitude Karékine II : la communauté d'Istanbul en deuil' in *Les Nouvelles d'Arménie*, April 1998, pp. 34-35.

³⁴ 'Gaz turkmène et allumettes turques' in *Les Nouvelles d'Arménie*, November 2000, p. 7.

that it can be said the writers are spending their political lives around Turkey and Armenia. The news and commentaries on French internal policy take place only if they are about the 'genocide'. Interviews are made with every politician except for the extreme rightists but the only questions asked are about the 'genocide'.

Two new parameters are added to the propaganda, which Armenians of France have been imposing against Turkey for the last 10 years. The first is the appearance of the EU as a very important political actor. Even though it has been painful and even chaotic, it can't be denied that the relations between Turkey and the EU have become more frequent in the last 10 years. In other words, the integration to EU has become Turkey's state policy. Meanwhile the Armenians of France think that they have gained a new triumph against Turkey. The EU is seen as a new and more powerful way of pressure now.

The second parameter is much complicated. It is the independent Armenia. First of all it should be clear that the Armenians of France are proud of having an independent "motherland". Especially the ones having a cold look towards Soviet Armenia, with the joy of finding the motherland myth again, seem to embrace Armenia. With no doubt there is political rivalry in France as well as in Armenia. The political formations mentioned before, cause a separation in France too, but in the last analysis it seems that there has been nearly no one to feel uncomfortable about the presence of Armenia. The most important point on this is that the Diaspora and the Armenians of France, who consider themselves to be the real and pure Armenians, want to play an important role on the politics of Armenia.³⁵ The limping democracy in Armenia is criticized openly, it is asked the governments to be in close relations with the Diaspora and the mafia type formations are preoccupied. Two points of which the Armenians of France feel sorry are: Armenia's becoming more emptied day by day³⁶ and the government's not defending the 'genocide' enough. On the first point, everyone has got the same opinion on the necessity that this bleeding, getting heavier gradually because of the emigration, should be stopped with any solution possible. The Armenian press is introducing the persons who leave France to go to Armenia and settle there, as

³⁵ 'Arménie-Diaspora' in *Les Nouvelles d'Arménie*, September 2001, p. 74.

³⁶ 'Hémorragie' in *Les Nouvelles d'Arménie*, May 2001, pp. 22-25.

heroes and is encouraging this returning to motherland. But, as it can be seen easily these type reversal emigration are extremely marginal.³⁷ Another thing being encouraging are the aid campaigns to Armenia. There is nearly no month passing without a supporting concert, aid nights, auction or aid demands. But, of course, so many campaigns give the image that Armenia is a very poor country and it is difficult to live there; and this discourage the ones wishing to go back 'home'. We should make this clear that for the Diaspora, which has reached the fourth generation, it is quite difficult to settle down in the motherland again. According to the Armenians of France, the main reason of the emigration is economic; and Turkey together with Azerbaijan who put embargo on Armenia is responsible of this situation. Naturally, the Armenians of France have a look at Armenia with the eyes of Frenchmen, and thus they are neglecting other more structural problems.

Another subject disturbing the Armenian community is that, Armenia seems to be unwilling and more passive on putting pressure on Turkey for the recognition of the 'genocide' when compared with the Diaspora. Diaspora accuses the Armenian State of loosening the 'genocide' politics for their own political and economic profits with the wish of putting the claim in front of anything else. Diaspora tolerates no relations with Turkey unless the recognition becomes true. For instance, 'Turkey-Armenia Peace Council' which has been trying to work properly for the last two years, is never looked at good.³⁸ It is believed that the Turkish members of this council are deceiving Armenia with economic promises and are taking them away from the main topic, 'genocide'. We must accept that the Armenian community of France is in a difficult position in this aspect. Because, as the life of this community has been built up on the 'genocide' and its remembrance for tens of years, the birth of Armenia, neighbour of Turkey, makes everything more difficult than ever.

After scrutinizing the aims of lobbyism and the propaganda briefly, it is necessary to give some information on the means. There are three destinations of the propaganda:

³⁷ 'Portrait de trois femmes qui ont choisi de travailler en Arménie: il faut y aller' in *Les Nouvelles d'Arménie*, February 1996, pp. 14-15.

³⁸ 'Le dialogue Arméno-Turc' in *Les Nouvelles d'Arménie*, January, 2000, pp. 32-35, 'Dialogue de demi-sourds' in *Les Nouvelles d'Arménie*, July-August 2000, pp. 34-35.

The Armenians of France (to prevent assimilation, to preserve Armenianship, to raise new generations against Turkey)

Frenchmen (to form a public opinion against Turkey, to Make Turkey seem unpleasant, to convince them on the presence of the 'genocide')

State of France (Not being in good relations with Turkey, to impose the others to be in an attitude against Turkey in the relations with the EU, to try building up good relations with Armenia, to recognize the 'genocide' and to pressure on Turkey for the same recognition).

We can see that there are three different ways of addressing to these three destinations. The direct addressing to the Armenians of France is made by means of the regular publications. Today there are three monthly magazines (Les Nouvelles d'Arménie, France-Arménie, Azad Magazine), two weekly magazines (Achkar, La Lettre de l'UGAB) and two daily newspapers (Garmk and Haratch) in France, which are read by the Armenians. The magazines are published in French and in Armenian whereas the newspapers are published only in Armenian. All these publications, although they have some ideological differences, claim that they help to preserve the French-Armenianship and are in service of the claim. But, we can say that the oral and family educations are more useful than these publications in preserving the characteristics of the new generation Armenians and raising new soldiers for their struggles.³⁹ In the magazine Les Nouvelles d'Arménie, a well-known Armenian origin French is interviewed every month. After mentioning about the activities of this person, several questions like what he/she does for the 'genocide', how much he/she is engaged, are asked. The ones who declare that they are away from being Armenians, and that they are French first of all, are criticized and given lessons of Armenianship. By introducing the successful Armenians, they want to give a message to the society that a person can be a French, an Armenian, famous and successful at the same time, and it is a shame not serving the claim.

In general, the messages are given to the French public opinion by means of the national publications. In the newspapers like le Monde, Libération, le Figaro and even Le Canard Enchaîné, which

³⁹ Cf. Hovanessian Martine, *Le lien communautaire, trois générations d'Arméniens*, (Paris: Armand Colin, 1992).

are very effective on the public opinion, on national and regional televisions, and on the radios, there have been publications and programmes on the Armenian 'genocide' very often. In addition, tens of Internet sites in France can be followed all over the world. They are either personal or established sites, and the largest place is given to the 'genocide' claim.⁴⁰ As a result of using all these media groups the 'genocide' allegations and the Armenian claim are well known by the French public opinion as shows the results of the inquiry made and published by *Les Nouvelles d'Arménie*. The results of this inquiry, very important for Turkey, are as follows:

Question 1:

Are you aware of the 'genocide', which took place in Turkey in 1915, against the Armenian population? Or have you ever heard it?

69% Yes, 31 % No

Question 2:

Do you know that Turkey has never recognized this "genocide"

49 % Yes, 51 % No

Question 3:

In your opinion, should French authorities recognize the "genocide" officially?

75 % Yes, 14 % No, 11 % No idea

⁴⁰ According to the Armenians there are more than 650 Internet sites who introduce the "genocide", *Les Nouvelles d'Arménie*, January 2000, pp. 11-15. Some of them are:
www.armenews.com (*Les nouvelles d'Arménie*)
www.acam-france.org (Association Culturelle Arménienne de Marne-la-Vallée)
www.agbu.org (Armenian General Benevolent Union)
<http://giia.armenweb.org> (Groupement International Interprofessionnel Arménien)
www.internews.am (Internews Armenia)
www.armenpress.am (Armenian News Agency)
<http://com24.armenweb.org> (Conseil de coordination des organisations arméniennes de France)
www.cdca.asso.fr (Comité de défense de la cause arménienne)
www.guiank.com (Amicale des Arméniens de Toulouse Midi-Pyrénées)
www.ifrance.com/japel (association artistique arménienne)
<http://azadakroutioun.free.fr> (Association d'Aide et de Coopération à l'Arménie)
www.netarmenie.com
<http://mattinp.free.fr/index.htm> (Educational Link and Entertainment For Armenian New Talents)
<http://perso.club-internet.fr/sarafian> (France-Arménie)

Question 4:

As you know, it is a crime to refuse the Jewish genocide according to French law. Should it be the same for 1915 Armenian genocide in your opinion?

79 % Yes, 13 % No, 11 % No idea

As it can be seen clearly from the answers to these questions, French public opinion is convinced about the reality of the 'genocide' allegations.⁴¹ In fact, the France's recognition of the 'genocide' with a law is an indirect proof; this recognition cannot be explained with the concern of the elections or the vote accounts. But the element should always be kept in mind, is that the public opinion concept is never ossified. Public opinion is in a continuous movement, and the tests of public opinion can only take the pictures of a specific moment. In this circumstances, thinking that French people will always be in an attitude against Turkey, is not realistic and is dangerous at the same time.

I'd like to take the attention to the last question in this inquiry. It is reality that, after the 'genocide' was recognized in the French Parliament and the Senate, the propaganda activities of the Armenians of France have become dense on putting pressure on the ones who refuse the 'genocide' and getting them to be punished by the law. As it is known in France, refusing the Jewish genocide openly and even writing articles and books and making scientific studies, which question the genocide, are being punished by the Gayssot law. The purpose of the Armenian Lobby is to widen the extension of this law and to make is possible to be carried out for the Armenian 'genocide' too. If this becomes a rule, the thesis of Turkey claiming that 'history should be left to the hands of historians' will become non valid and consequently the idea of the 'genocide' being transferred from the historical field to the political one, will be able to take its place in the law platform, which is more rigid. What I mean is that Armenian lobbyism hasn't come to an end with the recognition of the 'genocide' by France.

Lastly, the address of the propaganda is the French administration and the state mechanism. Interviews with the

⁴¹ A very popular news speaker Patrick Poiré d'Arvor, whom millions of French people have been watching every evening, says "I think French people accepted the Armenian "genocide" as a reality now" in *Les Nouvelles d'Arménie*, January 2001, pp. 40-41.

politicians taking place in *les Nouvelles d'Arménie* show that the Armenian community is taking the opinions of the people with political power whichever party they belong to, and whatever position they have in the French international policy, and further more, is putting a kind of pressure on them to be engaged to their matter. The Mayors, Deputies, Ministers, candidates to the elections, presidents of the associations, etc. are all asked questions on the 'genocide', on Armenia, and on France-Turkey relations and even if they have never given thought on these, they feel obliged to take a position against Turkey during the interview. If they try to resist the pressure, the questions of the reporter are getting harsher and more than being questions, they become a lesson on ethics and the politician being interviewed finds himself in a defending position. The quantity and the quality of the writings took place in this magazine from 1994 to 2001 shows how importantly considered the French politicians are:

Ségolène Royale,⁴² Lionel Jospin,⁴³ Edouard Balladur,⁴⁴ Michel Barnier,⁴⁵ François Mitterrand,⁴⁶ François Rochebloine,⁴⁷ Patrick Devedjian,⁴⁸ Laurant Fabius,⁴⁹ Robert Hue,⁵⁰ Gilles de Robien,⁵¹ Philippes De Villers,⁵² François Rochebloine,⁵³ André Santini,⁵⁴ Paul Mercieca,⁵⁵ Patrick Devedjian,⁵⁶ Jean-Pierre Foucher,⁵⁷ Jean-Paul Bret,⁵⁸ Jacques Oudin,⁵⁹ Jacques-Richard

⁴² 'Elle porte plainte contre la Turquie' in *Les Nouvelles d'Arménie*, January 1995, pp. 22-23.

⁴³ 'Le candidat de la gauche s'adresse aux Arméniens' in *Les Nouvelles d'Arménie*, April 1995, pp. 32-33.

⁴⁴ 'Edouard Balladur s'adresse à la communauté' in *Les Nouvelles d'Arménie*, May 1995, pp. 34-35.

⁴⁵ 'De retour d'Arménie, le Ministre des Affaires européennes nous livre ses impressions', *Les Nouvelles d'Arménie*, December 1995, p. 30-31.

⁴⁶ 'Mitterrand et les Arméniens' in *Les Nouvelles d'Arménie*, February 1996, pp. 4-5

⁴⁷ 'Le Président du groupe d'amitié France Arménie au Parlement' in *Les Nouvelles d'Arménie*, March 1996, pp. 26-27.

⁴⁸ *Les Nouvelles d'Arménie*, April 1996, p. 10

⁴⁹ *Les Nouvelles d'Arménie*, April 1996, p. 11.

⁵⁰ *Les Nouvelles d'Arménie*, April 1996, p. 12.

⁵¹ *Les Nouvelles d'Arménie*, April 1996, p. 13.

⁵² *Les Nouvelles d'Arménie*, May 1996, p. 5.

⁵³ *Les Nouvelles d'Arménie*, May 1996, p. 5.

⁵⁴ *Les Nouvelles d'Arménie*, May 1996, p. 6.

⁵⁵ *Les Nouvelles d'Arménie*, May 1996, p. 6.

⁵⁶ « Plaidoyer pour une vraie justice » in *Les Nouvelles d'Arménie*, June 1996, p. 28-29.

⁵⁷ 'L'UDF doit reconnaître le génocide' in *Les Nouvelles d'Arménie*, January 1998, pp. 24-25.

⁵⁸ 'Le nouveau Président du groupe d'amitié France-Arménie' in *Les Nouvelles d'Arménie*, February 1998, pp. 30-31

⁵⁹ 'Les pressions turques ne peuvent toucher le Sénat' in *Les Nouvelles d'Arménie*, September-October 1998, pp. 34-35.

Delong,⁶⁰ François Bayrou,⁶¹ Pierre Lelouche,⁶² François Hollande,⁶³ Noël Mamere,⁶⁴ Philippes Douste Blazy,⁶⁵ Alain Krivine,⁶⁶ Jack Lang,⁶⁷ Philippe De Villiers,⁶⁸ Jean Tibéri,⁶⁹ Christian Poncelet,⁷⁰ Jean-Paul Bret,⁷¹ François Rochebloine,⁷² Jean-Claude Gaudin,⁷³ Bertrand Delanoë,⁷⁴ Patrick Devedjian,⁷⁵ Hélène Luc,⁷⁶ Jean-Paul Bret,⁷⁷ Marie Anne Isler Béguin,⁷⁸ André Santini.⁷⁹

As it can be seen, the opinions of all politicians are taken and their interest with the subject is made certain in this way. Except from these politicians, the addresses of the deputies and senators are given in the media to make sure that the Armenians will be able to put pressure on them.⁸⁰ This pressure has become denser especially when the law recognizing the genocide, has been waiting to be discussed in the Senate. Great demonstrations have been organized (on March 11, 2000, 12 000 people marched in

- ⁶⁰ 'Quel est l'intérêt de la France dans cette affaire' in *Les Nouvelles d'Arménie*, November 1998, pp. 34-35.
⁶¹ 'Pour la reconnaissance...' in *Les Nouvelles d'Arménie*, April 1999, p. 24.
⁶² 'Histoire d'un coup fourré' in *Les Nouvelles d'Arménie*, July-August 1999, p. 66.
⁶³ 'Réponse à Pierre Lelouche' in *Les Nouvelles d'Arménie*, September-November 1999, p. 66.
⁶⁴ 'Du génocide arménien à la solution du problème kurde' in *Les Nouvelles d'Arménie*, December 1999, p. 64.
⁶⁵ 'Pour rejoindre l'Union, la Turquie devra reconnaître le génocide arménien' in *Les Nouvelles d'Arménie*, January 2000, p. 66.
⁶⁶ 'La reconnaissance du génocide est un enjeu pour l'avenir de l'Europe' in *Les Nouvelles d'Arménie*, February 2000, p. 66.
⁶⁷ 'La victoire de mémoire sur la realpolitik' in *Les Nouvelles d'Arménie*, March 2000, p. 66.
⁶⁸ 'Le blocage au Sénat est de fait imputable au gouvernement Jospin', in *Les Nouvelles d'Arménie*, April 2000, p. 66.
⁶⁹ 'La reconnaissance du génocide arménien : de l'enjeu français à l'exigence européenne', in *Les Nouvelles d'Arménie*, May 2000, p. 66.
⁷⁰ 'Devoir de mémoire et de réconciliation à l'aube du 21^e siècle' in *Les Nouvelles d'Arménie*, June 2000, p. 65.
⁷¹ 'Puisque la vérité est dite' in *Les Nouvelles d'Arménie*, July-August 2000, p. 66.
⁷² 'Responsabilité partagée' in *Les Nouvelles d'Arménie*, September 2000, p. 66.
⁷³ 'Une nécessaire reconnaissance' in *Les Nouvelles d'Arménie*, October 2000, p. 66.
⁷⁴ 'Au nom de l'avenir' in *Les Nouvelles d'Arménie*, November 2000, p. 66.
⁷⁵ 'Un devoir républicain universel' in *Les Nouvelles d'Arménie*, December 2000, p. 74.
⁷⁶ 'Ensemble nous avons réussi' in *Les Nouvelles d'Arménie*, January 2001, p. 66.
⁷⁷ 'Quel sens donner à l'imprescriptibilité si la réparation n'est pas envisagée' in *Les Nouvelles d'Arménie*, June 2001, p. 66.
⁷⁸ 'Caucase : la solution européenne' in *Les Nouvelles d'Arménie*, July-August 2001, p. 74.
⁷⁹ 'Un nouvel espoir pour l'Arménie' in *Les Nouvelles d'Arménie*, September 2001, p. 66.
⁸⁰ 'Ecrivés à votre sénateur' in *Les Nouvelles d'Arménie*, April 2000, p. 64.

Paris⁸¹) and slogans like "Turkey massacres, the Senates buries" have been used. Of course it was out of discussion to expect any of these politicians to resist this pressure. At last on November 8, 2000 the Senate has recognize the law of 'genocide' with 164 Yes and 40 No votes⁸² and on January 18, 2001 the National Assembly has recognized the law unanimously.⁸³

It will be wrong to say that everyone in France appreciates this event. There have been objections and criticisms,⁸⁴ but yet the French public opinion has accepted the decision without much reaction. After this acceptance, the two purposes of Armenian Lobby is still continuing, first to make France and Europe put pressure on Ankara for the same recognition and as a result of this to be able to demand reparation, and second is to gain the right to make the ones who refuse the 'genocide' punished by the law.⁸⁵ In addition, the recognition process in the other countries and cities have been watched closely,⁸⁶ the pressure and propaganda are being directed to EU.⁸⁷

CONCLUSION

I would like to put an end to this article taking the attention on an important point. It is a reality that there is sympathy for the Armenians in French public opinion. The reasons of this sympathy are both sociological and historical. I think it is not wrong to say that sociologically French people feel sympathy for the armed struggle in general even if it is terrorism. The activities of the organizations like PFO, IRA, ETA and PKK are considered to be activities of independence by a number of French and they don't give reactions to such organizations like other countries (Turkey, Spain, England, etc.). Even the terror of the FLNC organization in Corsica gets approval of a part of them. In this aspect, the

⁸¹ *Le Monde*, 12.03.2000.

⁸² *Le Monde*, 08.11.2000.

⁸³ *Le Monde*, 18.01.2001.

⁸⁴ For example, Pascal Boniface, 'Une diplomatie sous influence ?' in *Le Figaro*, 26.01.2001.

⁸⁵ 'Et maintenant' in *Les Nouvelles d'Arménie*, April 2001, p. 18

⁸⁶ 'Génocide : il n'y a pas le feu au lac' in *Les Nouvelles d'Arménie*, April 2001, p. 7, 'Génocide : le scandale anglais' in *Les Nouvelles d'Arménie*, April 2001, p. 13, 'Le parlement italien reconnaît le génocide arménien' in *Les Nouvelles d'Arménie*, December 2000, p. 6

⁸⁷ 'Le parlement européen prend prétexte de la commission de réconciliation arméno-turque pour zapper le génocide' in *Les Nouvelles d'Arménie*, November 2001, pp. 16-17

murders of ASALA are not reacted enough and even after the Orly event. Armenian terrorists are not completely included to the list of 'the bad ones.' The most famous of these terrorists, Varoujan Garabedian, has been released recently after being kept imprisoned for 18 years, and has settled down in Armenia.⁸⁸ In this way the last ASALA terrorist has left the French prisons without getting any negative reaction from the public opinion.

It is possible to think that under this sympathy there lays very popular Armenian origin Frenchmen. The singer Charles Aznavour, the film directors Henri Verneuil and Robert Guédiguian, the speaker Daniel Bilalian, the footballers Youri Djorkaeff and Alain Boghossian are only a few current examples. But all these notables are not enough to explain the sympathy shown towards everybody with the names of -ian- endings. I think that the historical root is Michel Manoukian subconsciously. All French people over the age of 15, have heard of this name. This Armenian origin communist resistant, who was murdered by Vichy government during the Nazi occupation and whose murder was announced on the "Red billboard", has become identical poster with positive ideas such as freedom, resistance, heroism and martyrdom in the subconscious of the French people. With a careful look we can see that all these persons Manoukian to be at the top, are popular in France not because they are Armenians, but because of their performances and for this reason the individual sympathy is reflected to the society indirectly.

Summarily I conclude that a number of Armenians for variety of reasons still believe in the the 'genocide' claims. I don't think these people have got any materialistic demands from Turkey or hate Turks totally. The main problem is that for the notables in Diaspora, who conduct the activities of lobbyism and propaganda, the 'genocide' allegations have become a political instrument to be used for their particular interests. This event has become so ossified that this group takes even the painful works of proximity between Armenia and Turkey negatively.

⁸⁸ 'Les premiers pas d'un homme libre' in *Les nouvelles d'Arménie*, June 2001, pp. 20-21.