

THE ESTABLISHMENT AND ACTIVITIES OF THE FRENCH LEGION D'ORIENT (EASTERN LEGION) (NOVEMBER 1916 – MAY 1917)

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Abstract:

This article is written in order to examine the developments regarding the Eastern Legion from November 1916 to May 1917. This period is significant because of the transformation of the Eastern Legion from a small fugitive community to a full scale military batallion which had become ready for attacking the Ottoman Empire. This article aims to analyze this transformation and to illuminate the details about that. Within this framework, the substance of this article is the French attempts to provide volunteers for the Eastern Legion. Main themes of the article are the activities of the delegates sent by France to North and South Americas, the propaganda facilities that were organized by these delegates to attract volunteers, the discussions between the French Foreign Ministry and the Ministry of War on the legal status of the Eastern Legion and the details about the Monarga camp established for the Legion in Cyprus.

Key Words: Eastern Legion, France, Armenian Question, Monarga Camp, United States of America

INTRODUCTION

This article is the follow-up to the essay entitled 'Establishment and Activities of the French Legion d'Orient (Eastern Legion) in the Light of French Archival Documents' that was published in the 10th volume of Review of Armenian Studies. The previous article offered a general evaluation of the Armenian-French relations within a time span that began in the last quarter of the 19th century and ended with the last months of the year of 1916. Accordingly, the activities of Armenian committees organized in French cities since 1880s were investigated and on the basis of official documents, it was revealed that French authorities not only

overlooked these activities, but also supported them. The role of these committees in the Armenian rebellions within the Ottoman Empire was also analyzed. Moreover, the article also addressed several other issues: the replacement of the Armenians who were abducted from Cebel Musa to a camp in Port Said of Egypt by French vessels, the emergence of the idea that a military battalion could be created out of these Armenians to be used against the Ottoman Empire, the process through which Eastern Legion was established. In other words, that essay, which constituted the first part of a series of articles, covered the period up until the official establishment of the Eastern Legion in November 1916.

This article, in turn, departs from where its precedent left in the sense that it deals with the developments, concerning the Eastern Legion, which occurred during the period between November 1916 and July 1917. This period is remarkable since it accounts for the transformation of the Eastern Legion from a small fugitive community to a full scale military batallion which was enabled to attack the Ottoman Empire. Henceforth, this article aims to analyse this transformation and to point out its details. . Within this framework, the substance of this article is the French attempts to provide volunteers for the Eastern Legion. Main themes of the article are the activities of the delegates sent by France to North and South Americas, the propaganda facilities that were organized by these delegates to attract volunteers, the discussions between the French Foreign Ministry and the Ministry of War on the legal status of the Eastern Legion and the details about the Monarga camp established for the Legion in Cyprus.

All the documents related to the issues brought up in this article have been gathered up from the archives of the French Foreign Ministry. Special emphasis is paid to the material acquired from the files numbered 891 and 892 that address the issue of Eastern Legion. The essay proceeds chronologically since these documents were themselves organized as such. Approximately 400 documents from two volumes have been critically scrutinized, which produced the interpretive data that led to the formation of this article. In short, the issues addressed in

this work do not rely on secondary sources based on arbitrary discernment that is formed through a common process of brainstorming, but on the contrary it makes use of primary sources which are analytically lined up via a strict and detailed documentation for as much as the author believes in the necessity to employ such a methodology if one attempts to shed light upon the dark pages of history.

1. Colonel Romieu's Report Dated to 4 December 1916: The Composition and Problems of the Eastern Legion

Colonel Romieu, who was, in the last days of 1916, tasked to establish the Eastern Legion sent a comprehensive report to the French Foreign Ministry where he supplied mainstream information about the location of Eastern Legion in Cyprus, how much soldiers it comprised of in the first stage, how the camp was maintained and how its various military needs were met. The report states that the camp of the Eastern Legion was in Monarga which is 24 kms to Famagusta and 2 kms to Trikomo. It held 54 Armenians who used to work as masons or carpenters. The residents' clothes and other needs were supplied from Port Said and English shops in Alexandria. Romieu mentions 600 rifles being brought to the island for the Legion's use. According to the report, Armenians volunteers had not still taken up military training because they were waiting for the French officers¹.

The second main point is the fact that Armenians of Cebel Musa, who constituted the core of the Eastern Legion, were not regarded sufficient for the efficient operation of the Legion. This paved the way for the dispatch of some representatives of Armenian committees in Egypt to the United States for the task of signing up volunteers among the Armenian and Syrian originated citizens. Since Romieu was aware of the impact of political fractions among the Armenians, in his report

¹ The letter addressed by DeFrance, the French plenipotentiary minister to Egypt, to French Minister of Foreign Affairs, Aristide Briand, (involving Colonel Romieu's report dated to 4 December 1916), 18 December 1916, Archives of French Foreign Ministry, File No: 891, *Turquie: Legion D'Orient II (Décembre 1916 – Mai 1917)*, p.20

to the French Foreign Ministry where he listed the names of those who would be sent to the United States, he stressed that it would be beneficial to their cause to incorporate representatives from different Armenian political groups in order for them to appeal to the variety of the political views of the Armenians living in the US and to enjoy the advantage of mitigating these divisions through a reference to anti-Ottomanism. In accordance with that, he recommended the following names: M.M. Tekyan from Ramgavar (Armenian Democrat Party), and M.M. Anslanian and Sapaghulian, heads of two fractions of the Hinchak party.

Probably, the most interesting point made in the report is where Romieu clearly states that the representatives of the Hinchak party took part in Armenian terrorist activities of 1895 and that they played a role in the Zeytun uprising². The fact that a serious accusation such as that of terrorism was made by the very French Commander of the Eastern Legion stands very striking.

Another crucial issue was the participation of not only Armenians, but also the Syrians as volunteers to the Eastern Legion³. In line with Romieu's report, a note prepared by French Foreign Minister Briand indicated that the Legion would consist of Armenians alongside Syrians. Moreover, it was also pointed that a Syrian by the name of Dr. Lakkat was charged with the task of conscripting Syrians into the Legion, and that the number of troops could be augmented by hiring more soldiers from especially the Syrian populated South American communities⁴.

In sum, one of the most important features of this report is that it underlines

2 The letter addressed by DeFrance, the French plenipotentiary minister to Egypt, to French Minister of Foreign Affairs, Aristide Briand, (involving Colonel Romieu's report dated to 4 December 1916), 18 December 1916, Archives of French Foreign Ministry, File No: 891, *Turquie: Legion D'Orient II (Décembre 1916 – Mai 1917)*p. 25

3 The letter addressed by DeFrance, the French plenipotentiary minister to Egypt, to French Minister of Foreign Affairs, Aristide Briand, (involving Colonel Romieu's report dated to 4 December 1916), 18 December 1916, Archives of French Foreign Ministry, File No: 891, *Turquie: Legion D'Orient II (Décembre 1916 – Mai 1917)*p. 26

4 French Foreign Ministry, Cabinet Note, 7 December 1916, Archives of French Foreign Ministry, File No: 891, *Turquie: Legion d'Orient II (Décembre 1916- Mai 1917)*, p. 3

the presence of Arab-originated Ottoman citizens along with Armenians. The Legion conscripted both Muslim or Christian Arabs. However, one other striking element is the absence of the name “Arab” in the archival documents, while it was replaced with geographical or tribal labels such as Syrian (*syrien*), Lebanese (*libanais*), Maronite (*maronite*) and Ensari (*ansari*). The background of the French lead in the foundation of the Syrian and Lebanese states in the aftermath of the World War I could be traced back to this detailed classification. Put in differently, the latter can be interpreted in a way that France can be thought to have designed plans about the future of the Ottoman Empire as early as in 1916. Another interesting finding is that France did not distinguish between Muslim and Christian Arabs. As a matter of fact, many Muslim Arab-originated Ottoman citizens fought against their Empire by joining the Eastern Legion. In short, all these volunteers who came from different religious and ethnic roots were united under one banner: anti-Ottomanism

In the conclusion of Romieu's report, he stated that the Legion would be constituted by four squads: two of which would be formed by Cebel Musa Armenians, one by Armenian volunteers in Egypt, Armenian originated military fugitives who were Ottoman subjects and Armenian war prisoners in India; while the last one was to be organized out of Lebanese volunteers in Egypt⁵. Thus, though not finalized, the composition of the Eastern Legion was beginning to take its shape by early 1916.

2. Efforts of Incorporating Volunteers from America

The first and foremost problem encountered by the Eastern Legion was the small number of volunteer turnout. Realizing the necessity of new initiatives in order to solve this problem, French authorities decided to dispatch an Armenian committee to the American continent in line with Colonel Romieu's report⁶. This com-

5 The letter addressed by DeFrance, the French plenipotentiary minister to Egypt, to French Minister of Foreign Affairs, Aristide Briand, (involving Colonel Romieu's report dated to 4 December 1916), 18 December 1916, Archives of French Foreign Ministry, File No: 891, *Turquie: Legion D'Orient II (Décembre 1916 – Mai 1917)*, p. 30

6 Letter addressed to French plenipotentiary minister to Egypt, DeFrance, by French Foreign Ministry, 7

mittee would consist of M.M Tekyan from Ramgavar Party, Sapahgulinan from Hinchak Party and Ardabast Khatchig Hanemyan from Tashnak Party⁷. Later on, Tekyan was replaced with Mihran Damadyan as the delegate of the Ramgavar Party. Daha sonra Ramgavar Partisi'nden Tekyan yerine Mihran Damadyan delege olarak seçilmiştir⁸. As it was mentioned above, all these delegates were known for their anti-Ottoman views and that they had taken part in rebellions against the Ottoman Empire as instigators.

Immediate to this decision, France informed her embassies in Washington, Buenos Aires, Rio de Janeiro, Montevideo and Caracas about the Armenian committees' mandate and demanded them to do whatever was at their disposal to facilitate the work of the delegations⁹. A similar briefing about the Eastern Legion was in order for the French ambassador to St.Petersburg¹⁰. However, the correspondence about these delegates has been confidential. Specifically, French authorities tried to prevent their American fellows from getting the information about a committee being sent to gather volunteers. Upon the completion of these correspondences, Hanemyan and Sapahgulinan left for Marseilles from Port Said on 2 January 1917 as the first stage of their journey to America¹¹.

Next, on 11 January, French Foreign Minister Aristide Briand¹² sent a telegramme

December 1916, Archives of French Foreign Ministry, File No: 891, *Turquie: Legion d'Orient II (Décembre 1916- Mai 1917)*, p. 1

7 Encrypted telegramme from DeFrance, French plenipotentiary minister to Egypt, to French Foreign Ministry, 10 December 1916, Archives of French Foreign Ministry, File No: 891, *Turquie: Legion d'Orient II (Décembre 1916- Mai 1917)*, p. 6

8 Telegramme from French Foreign Ministry to French ambassador to Washington, Jusserand, 2 February 1917, Archives of French Foreign Ministry, File No: 891, *Turquie: Legion d'Orient II (Décembre 1916- Mai 1917)*, p. 99

9 Confidential telegramme addressed to French embassies in Washington, Rio de Janeiro, Montevideo, Buenos Aires ve Caracas from French Foreign Ministry, 13 December 1916, Archives of French Foreign Ministry, File No: 891, *Turquie: Legion d'Orient II (Décembre 1916- Mai 1917)*, p. 16

10 Confidential telegramme addressed to French ambassador to St. Petersburg from French Foreign Ministry, 17 December 1916, Archives of French Foreign Ministry, File No: 891, *Turquie: Legion d'Orient II (Décembre 1916- Mai 1917)*, p. 17

11 Encrypted telegramme from DeFrance, French plenipotentiary minister to Egypt, to French Foreign Ministry, 8 February 1917, Archives of French Foreign Ministry, File No: 891, *Turquie: Legion d'Orient II (Décembre 1916- Mai 1917)*, p. 45

12 Aristide Briand (1862-1932): Nobel-Prize winner French statesman. Having been educated in law, Briand

to French ambassador to Washington, Jules Jean Jusserand¹³, in order to introduce him Hinchak Party representative Sapahgulian and Tashnak Party delegate Hanemyan and inform that they were leaving France for United States. In this document, Briand refers to Sapahgulian as a “valuable orator” and someone who “defends the interest of Armenians living in Turkey”¹⁴. In another telegram sent to Jusserand, it was stated that Mihran Damadian and Hanemyan were Ottoman citizens while Sapahgulian as of Iranian nationality¹⁵. In other words, Damadian and Hanemyan set sail to the New World with the task of signing up troops who would fight against their own state.

In Colonel Romieu's report dated to 19 January 1917, more details have been revealed about Mihran Damadian in the sense that he was told to be a hardworking, moderate and energetic person. He used to be the director of one of the Armenian schools in Van region and that he was referred as playing an active role in Sason uprisings¹⁶. The fact that almost all Armenian delegates picked by France were revolutionary komita members should be regarded as a significant policy choice.

The French opt for sending delegates to recruit volunteers from America is very interesting for it displays the military hardship she was going through. Especially the bloody Somme War which ended in November 1918 had consumed up a large extent of French military reserves. The scarcity was so problematic that

served ten times as the Prime Minister between 1909-1929. He also held the position of Foreign Minister between 29 October 1915 – 20 March 1917 during World War I.

- 13 Jules Jean Jusserand (1855-1932): French writer and diplomat. Having joined the foreign service in 1876, Jusserand was then appointed to London as consul general in 1878. He proceeded his career as a top diplomat when he was appointed as the French ambassador to Copenhagen in 1890 and to Washington in 1902 where he stayed in office for 23 years until 1925.
- 14 Telegramme addressed to French ambassador to Washington, M. Jusserand, by French Foreign Minister, Aristide Briand, 11 January 1917, Archives of French Foreign Ministry, File No: 891, *Turquie: Legion d'Orient II (Décembre 1916- Mai 1917)*, p. 65
- 15 Telegram addressed to French ambassador to Washington, Jusserand, by French Foreign Ministry, 2 February 1917, Archives of French Foreign Ministry, File No: 891, *Turquie: Legion d'Orient II (Décembre 1916- Mai 1917)*, p. 99
- 16 Telegramme sent to French Foreign Minister, Aristide Briand, by French Minister of War (involving Colonel Romieu's report dated to 19 January 1917), 6 February 1917, Archives of French Foreign Ministry, File No: 891, *Turquie: Legion d'Orient II (Décembre 1916- Mai 1917)*, pp. 108-109

France was interested not only with Armenians or Syrians in America, but also with Syrian-originated Ottoman citizens who had been taken as war captives by the British. In a letter sent to the French ambassador to London, Paul Cambon¹⁷, by the French Foreign Ministry; Briand, after giving information about the Eastern Legion, asks Cambon to launch initiatives to give away captured Syrians who were willing to fight against the Ottomans to the French command¹⁸. To put it simply, since she had used her own troops against Germany, France now wished to send regional volunteers to the Middle East instead of French troops in order to attack the Ottoman Empire.

3. Structural Problems of the Eastern Legion: Debates of Legal Status

Because of World War I's burdensome economic legacy, France could not spare a decent budget for the Eastern Legion. In an encrypted telegramme he sent to his Foreign Ministry, French plenipotentiary minister to Cairo, Albert Defrance¹⁹, argued that Colonel Romieu had received a project and some directives related to the organizational aspects of the Eastern Legion from the Ministry of War. According to him, a daily allowance of 2 francs would be paid to the soldiers in order to compensate for their food expenses and their salary, yet this was by no means sufficient²⁰. What is more, in case of injuries, sickness or inability to work any longer because of an accident, there was no provision of pensions or any kind of payment for neither the soldiers, nor for their families²¹. Defrance complained

17 Paul Cambon (1843-1924): Diplomat and member of French Academie of Sciences. He was appointed as the French plenipotentiary minister to Tunisia in 1882, as ambassador to Madrid in 1886, to Istanbul in 1890 and to London in 1898. He continued to serve in his last post throughout World War I.

18 Telegram addressed to the French ambassador to London, Paul Cambon, by French Foreign Ministry, 13 December 1916, Archives of French Foreign Ministry, File No: 891, *Turquie: Legion d'Orient II (Décembre 1916- Mai 1917)*, p. 14

19 Albert Defrance served as the French High Commissioner for Alliance between 30 January 1919 and December 1920 after he replaced Franchet D'Esperey, who was appointed to this post to Istanbul in November 1918. The occupation of Istanbul on 16 March 1920 was carried out during Defrance's office.

20 Encrypted telegram addressed to French Foreign Ministry, by Defrance, the French plenipotentiary minister to Cairo, 10 December 1916, Archives of French Foreign Ministry, File No: 891, *Turquie: Legion d'Orient II (Décembre 1916- Mai 1917)*, p. 7

21 Encrypted telegram addressed to French Foreign Ministry, by Defrance, the French plenipotentiary minister to Cairo, 10 December 1916, Archives of French Foreign Ministry, File No: 891, *Turquie: Legion d'Orient II (Décembre 1916- Mai 1917)*, p. 7

that these conditions discouraged volunteers from joining the Legion and that, especially when compared to the standards of the British voluntary military system, they seemed as minimal provisions²².

The Foreign Ministry forwarded DeFrance's telegramme to the Ministry of War, where it received many critics. General Hubert Lyautey²³, a veteran soldier, who was the Minister of War on 12 December 1916 and who had served in many French dominions such as Algeria, Indonesia, Madagascar and Morocco, submitted a letter to the Foreign Minister Briand, where he wanted to point out DeFrance's errors. The letter argued that DeFrance was suffering from a misconception in the sense that, based on the French Recruitment Law issued on 16 August 1915, France could not, in her army, employ citizens of countries with which she was in war. Thus it was stated that the Eastern Legion could not be treated as a direct component of the French Army, but it could rather be labelled as a complementary or an auxiliary force. In other words, it was not legally possible to recruit Armenians or Syrians who were Ottoman citizens, in the French Army since France was waging war against Ottoman Empire. That was why the soldiers serving in the Legion were paid 2 francs a day, as was the case with all other complementary forces. Furthermore, the same situation applied to the case of no pension or payment provision in case of injuries, sickness or inability to work any longer. Same rules were valid across all auxiliary forces, which meant the Armenians were not subjected to any kind of discrimination²⁴.

22 Encrypted telegram addressed to French Foreign Ministry, by DeFrance, the French plenipotentiary minister to Cairo, 10 December 1916, Archives of French Foreign Ministry, File No: 891, *Turquie: Legion d'Orient II (Décembre 1916- Mai 1917)*, p. 7

23 Louis Hubert Gonzalve Lyautey (1854-1934): Having graduated from the famous French academy of Saint-Cyr in 1873, Lyautey served in Algeria, Indochine and Madagascar since then until 1907. Holding the post of the French governor of Morocco between 1907-1912, he was then appointed as the military governor of the French mandate of Morocco where he served between 1912-1925. In the meantime, he was recalled to the Motherland in 1917 for three months (12 December 1916 – 14 March 1917) when he was entrusted with the office of Minister of War.

24 Letter sent to French Foreign Minister, Aristide Briand, by French Minister of War, Hubert Lyautey, 24 December 1916, Archives of French Foreign Ministry, File No: 891, *Turquie: Legion d'Orient II (Décembre 1916- Mai 1917)*, pp. 39-40

To put it short, the Ministry of War wanted to respond to the Foreign Ministry's critics by highlighting the legal code of conduct of the French army. In response, French Foreign Minister Briand submitted a letter to the Minister of War where he stated that this problem was perceived as discriminatory by the Armenians, and indeed the current conditions allowed French army officials to enjoy compensations and bonuses while the Armenians, who were of the same religion, were denied to such rights. He argued: "Our ability to create the Eastern Legion is dependent on the sacrifices we might make for the sake of reaching a consensus of the improvement of recruitment conditions"²⁵. Briand also underlined the importance of the timing of a possible enhancement of these arrangements considering that France had been dispatched delegations to America in order to come up with volunteers²⁶.

While this debate continued between these two political institutions, on the first day of 1917, Colonel Romieu, via Defrance, sent another report from Cairo to the Foreign Ministry, where he reflected on the conditions of the Eastern Legion. He reported that there were 300 armed and equipped Armenian, led by Lieutenant Bouffe in Monarga camp, Cyprus. They were organized under troops consisting of 100 soldiers and that they were going to reach a number of 450 in three weeks. Romieu pointed out that out of 150 volunteers that were gathered up by the Armenian committees in Cairo, he qualified 42 of them who were from Cebel Musa to be eligible to join the Legion, whereas he also contacted the British authorities for the placement of war-captive Armenians²⁷ in El-Ariş and Magdaba camps under the Legion's command²⁸. Armenian-originated captives must have

25 Letter addressed to the Ministry of War by French Foreign Minister, Aristide Briand, 2 February 1917, Archives of French Foreign Ministry, File No: 891, *Turquie: Legion d'Orient II (D cembre 1916- Mai 1917)*, Sayfa p. 98

26 Letter addressed to the Ministry of War by French Foreign Minister, Aristide Briand, 2 February 1917, Archives of French Foreign Ministry, File No: 891, *Turquie: Legion d'Orient II (D cembre 1916- Mai 1917)*, Sayfa p. 98

27 These Armenians are those who were captured by the British while they were fighting for the Ottoman Empire against Britain.

28 Letter sent to French Foreign Minister, Aristide Briand, by the French plenipotentiary minister to Egypt, Defrance, (involving Colonel Romieu's report dated to 1 January 1917), 9 January 1917, Archives of French Foreign Ministry, File No: 891, *Turquie: Legion d'Orient II (D cembre 1916- Mai 1917)*, p. 50

been of such great interest to France that in a telegramme addressed to Foreign Minister Briand by DeFrance on 23 January, he asserted that the number of Armenians who were kept in camps located in Mesopotamia and India exceeded 200. He also noted that Thogrom, who was an Egyptian Armenian, had visited these captives in India and that they were reported to be willing to join the Legion²⁹. In other words, DeFrance personally sent an Armenian to India in order to connect a direct bound with war captive Armenians and to re-incorporate them to the war through propaganda. He also stated that since not all of these Armenians were in good health so to enable them to join the military service, only those who were suitable and fit should be let to register for the Eastern Legion³⁰.

Colonel Romieu submitted another report to the French Foreign Ministry on 19 January 1917, in which he supplied information about the Syrians that were going to join the Legion. His tone is a very critical one because he argues that 50 Syrians, who were brought to Cyprus, set up a camp just 1,5 km away from the Monarga camp, yet unlike the Armenians, they do not want to either work or receive training. Five of them even escaped from the camp on 12 January. In a note sent to the Foreign Ministry by the Ministry of War, the former was asked to warn Romieu to be more attentive about the Syrians³¹.

Meanwhile, the success stories of Colonel Romieu had been praised in French military and political environments. The Chief of the French Military Mission in Hijaz, Edouard Bremond, prepared a report for the French Foreign Ministry where he applauded Romieu by virtue of his ambitious efforts to shape up the Legion in such a short span of time. Moreover, Bremond also glorified the Arme-

29 Telegramme sent to French Minister, Aristide Briand, by the French plenipotentiary minister to Egypt, 23 January 1917, Archives of French Foreign Ministry, File No: 891, *Turquie: Legion d'Orient II (Décembre 1916- Mai 1917)*, p. 78

30 Telegramme sent to French Minister, Aristide Briand, by the French plenipotentiary minister to Egypt, 23 January 1917, Archives of French Foreign Ministry, File No: 891, *Turquie: Legion d'Orient II (Décembre 1916- Mai 1917)*, p. 78

31 Telegramme addressed to French Foreign Minister, Aristide Briand, by French Minister of War (involving Colonel Romieu's report on 19 January 1917), 6 January 1917, Archives of French Foreign Ministry, File No: 891, *Turquie: Legion d'Orient II (Décembre 1916- Mai 1917)*, p. 105

nians in the camp thanks to their excitement, courage, intelligence and energy in the sense that they would generate a powerful force under the French commandship. On the contrary, the Syrians received negative comments since it was believed that sectarian fractions among them resulted in a weaker race with small power³².

On 6 January 1917, the Ministry of War issued a confidential regulation on the matter of the establishment of the Eastern Legion, in which certain features of the latter were listed: an auxiliary force that was based on voluntarism, comprised of Ottoman subjects, especially Armenians, Syrians and Arabs, was formed on 15 November 1916, under the commandship of French officers in Cyprus³³. The Legion's legal basis would be laid down by the regulation 7.966 9/11 on 26 November 1916.

These legal arrangements, however, could not end the debates over the status of the Eastern Legion between the Foreign Ministry and the Ministry of War. As a matter of fact, both ministers had to hand over their offices to their new fellows in March 1917: Minister of War Hubert Lyautey replaced by Lucien Lecaze on 14 March, and Foreign Minister Aristide Briand with Alexander Ribot on 20 March. Nevertheless, the debate did not cease with the new ministers. In the letter sent by the Ministry of War to Foreign Ministry on 25 March 1917, Lacaze, in defying Ribot, stated that to equalize the status of the Armenians and of the Syrians with that of other soldiers would be against both the Recruitment Law of 16 August 1915 and the statements made in the Senate session on 3 July 1915 when the law was discussed³⁴. For that reason, no payment would be in order concerning the soldiers' families. However, it was decided that if a soldier becomes unable to

32 Letter sent to the French Ministry of Foreign Affairs by the Chief of the French Military Mission in Hijaz, 12 February 1917, Archives of French Foreign Ministry, File No: 891, *Turquie: Legion d'Orient II (D cembre 1916- Mai 1917)*, p. 118

33 The French Minister of War's regulation entitled 'Instruction sur les Conditions de Reception en France des Volontaires d'Origine Ottomane Destines a la "Legion d'Orient"', dated to 6 January 1917, Archives of French Foreign Ministry, File No: 891, *Turquie: Legion d'Orient II (D cembre 1916- Mai 1917)*, p. 75

34 Letter addressed to the French Foreign Minister by the Minister of War, 25 March 1917, Archives of French Foreign Ministry, File No: 891, *Turquie: Legion d'Orient II (D cembre 1916- Mai 1917)*, p. 159

work anymore as a result of injuries, then 500 francs would be paid to his wife, while 400 francs would be spared for his father, 200 francs for the mother, 150 francs for sons under the age of 18 and 100 francs for unmarried daughters below the age of 18³⁵. Such an arrangement symbolizes the compromise that was struck between the Foreign Ministry and the Ministry of War.

4. Efforts of Gathering Volunteers in the American Continent

While on the one hand, France was debating the legal status of the Eastern Legion, on the other hand, the Armenian delegations had arrived America on January 1917 and had started to work for signing up voluntary soldiers for the Legion. However, there was a serious problem since the United States had not yet entered the War³⁶ and that it was forbidden by the US law for the waging parties to seek voluntary troops in American soil because it would automatically imply that the US was taking part. That is why French ambassador to Washington, Jusserand, in his letter addressed to the Foreign Ministry, could not hide his frustration vis-à-vis what had been asked from him.

“Given the uncertainty of a war between the US and Germany, it should have been necessary for us to refrain from every initiative that could put us and our interests in a dangerous position. However, it is to my great astonishment to realize that the tasks with which I am entrusted nowadays involve breaching the laws of the country to which I'm accredited, as if it was natural to do so”³⁷.

Jusserand also pointed to the fact that the Lebanese and the Armenians in the US were being followed by Turkish and German agents. Thus the secret character of the recruitment for the Legion could not be maintained for a long time³⁸. In

35 Letter addressed to the French Foreign Minister by the Minister of War, 25 March 1917, Archives of French Foreign Ministry, File No: 891, *Turquie: Legion d'Orient II (Décembre 1916- Mai 1917)*, p. 160

36 The United States entered World War I by declaring war on Germany on 6 April 1917.

37 Letter sent to French Foreign Ministry, by the French ambassador to Washington, Jusserand, 11 February 1917, Archives of French Foreign Ministry, File No: 891, *Turquie: Legion d'Orient II (Décembre 1916- Mai 1917)*, p. 110

38 Letter sent to French Foreign Ministry, by the French ambassador to Washington, Jusserand, 11 February 1917, Archives of French Foreign Ministry, File No: 891, *Turquie: Legion d'Orient II (Décembre 1916- Mai*

another letter written by Jusserand a week after the previous one, he repeats his warnings and states that the British does not support Armenians to be recruited even in Egypt which is completely loyal to them³⁹. The French Foreign Ministry, in turn, underlined that France could not remain indifferent to this Armenian initiative on the Eastern Legion and that the French missions in “both Americas” would not be violating their host countries’ laws by offering any sort of help to these Armenian delegates⁴⁰. Jusserand is known to have met with the Armenian delegates on 2 March 1917 and advised them to refrain from any activities that could risk France to get into trouble⁴¹.

Actually, what Jusserand was cautious on was a very serious matter. The codes of war states that if a waging party recruits in the territories of a non-waging party, the latter could be regarded as having entered the war as well. In other words, if it is revealed that delegates appointed by France signed up volunteers from United States to fight in the French Army, this could amount to the inclusion of the US in the war.

5. Syrian Voluntary Recruitment in American Continent

When the Armenian delegates set foot on America in February 1917, the French authorities decided that a similar path should be followed concerning the Syrian recruitment from America, meaning Syrian delegations would be dispatched. French plenipotentiary minister to Egypt, Defrance, was tasked to choose the delegates. It was stated that two Arab delegates had been contacted and that one of them had accepted the mission⁴².

1917), p. 110

39 Letter sent to French Foreign Ministry by the French ambassador to Washington, Jusserand, 20 February 1917, Archives of French Foreign Ministry, File No: 891, *Turquie: Legion d'Orient II (Décembre 1916- Mai 1917)*, p. 110

40 Letter sent to the French ambassador to Washington, Jusserand, by the French Foreign Ministry, 22 Şubat 1917, Archives of French Foreign Ministry, File No: 891, *Turquie: Legion d'Orient II (Décembre 1916- Mai 1917)*, p. 119

41 Letter sent to French Foreign Ministry by the French ambassador to Washington, Jusserand, 2 March 1917, Archives of French Foreign Ministry, File No: 891, *Turquie: Legion d'Orient II (Décembre 1916- Mai 1917)*, p. 128

42 Letter addressed to French ambassador to London, Paul Camdon, by the French Foreign Ministry, 19

The Syrians were not the only community in America that France had aimed for. For lower costs, she wanted to begin recruiting Syrians from Egypt. However since the latter was occupied by the Britain, the French Foreign Ministry had to receive British approval in order to commence signing up from Egypt. Within this framework, the French ambassador to London, Paul Cambon, was requested to inform the British government on the matter. In a letter submitted to the French Foreign Minister Aristide Briand, Cambon asserted that he had accomplished his mission to inform the British government about the establishment of the Eastern Legion on 28 February 1917, yet, under the existing war conditions, it was not possible for the British to offer any kind of support⁴³. In other words, the British were not keen on the idea of the Eastern Legion at all, to the extent that they thought it could posit a threat to them. In a letter dated to 6 March, the French plenipotentiary minister to Egypt, Defrance, informed French Foreign Minister Briand that he tried to talk British High Commissioner of Egypt, Sir Francis Reginald Wingate⁴⁴, into allowing the Syrians in his province to be recruited for the Legion, but that his response had not been affirmative⁴⁵. Upon that Defrance notified Colonel Romieu to give up this initiative at least for the moment. Wingate told Defrance that they did not want to be deprived of the Egyptian Syrians' workforce because they could be used for British Workers Union⁴⁶.

In order to compensate for the British negative answer, France, one again, turned its face to the American continent. In a letter addressed to the French Foreign

February 1917, Archives of French Foreign Ministry, File No: 891, *Turquie: Legion d'Orient II (Décembre 1916- Mai 1917)*, p. 117

43 Letter addressed to French Foreign Minister, Aristide Briand, by the French ambassador to London, Paul Cambon, 28 February 1917, Archives of French Foreign Ministry, File No: 891, *Turquie: Legion d'Orient II (Décembre 1916- Mai 1917)*, p. 127

44 Sir Francis Reginald Wingate (1861-1953): Enrolled in the British army as a cannoner instructor in 1880, he served in India, Yemen, Egypt and Sudan between 1881-1889. Ten years after he was appointed to the British troops, he became the British governor for the province, where he remained in Office until 1917. Being fluent in Arabic, Wingate served as the governor of Egypt between 1917-1919.

45 Letter sent to French Foreign Minister, Aristide Briand, by the French plenipotentiary minister to Egypt, Defrance, 6 March 1917, Archives of French Foreign Ministry, File No: 891, *Turquie: Legion d'Orient II (Décembre 1916- Mai 1917)*, p. 129

46 Letter sent to French Foreign Minister, Aristide Briand, by the French plenipotentiary minister to Egypt, Defrance, 6 March 1917, Archives of French Foreign Ministry, File No: 891, *Turquie: Legion d'Orient II (Décembre 1916- Mai 1917)*, p. 130

Minister Briand, the French plenipotentiary minister to Rio de Janeiro, Paul Claudel accounts for 8000-10000 Syrians living in South Brazil, according to the statement of M. Trad, the head of the Syrians Committee in Brazil⁴⁷. However, Claudel held that once the first enthusiasm is over, the recruitment process was understood to be very problematic since the Syrians living in Brazil had no affiliation with guns or any type of military practices. Despite that, by the time the letter was written, approximately 200 Syrians had been signed up for the Eastern Legion⁴⁸.

Claudel offered another interesting finding in the sense that recruitments from the American continent were not a new business. In the same time, a Czech committee in Argentina had been manipulating Czech-originated Argentinian citizens into fighting against Austria⁴⁹. He also added that such efforts could have been much easier if they were carried out in Brazil where the Ottomans had almost no representation in the country, except one whose mandate was at best ambiguous⁵⁰. He also attached the reports of the French consuls to Bahia and Sao Paulo to his letter. The Bahia consul, Orlandi, reported that a Lebanese by the name of Michel Chalhoub had established a three-persons committee in order to start recruiting for the Eastern Legion⁵¹. The consul to Sao Paulo, Birlé, in turn, informed that he had gathered up 200 volunteers under the framework of the Union of Syrian Patriots⁵².

47 Letter sent to French Foreign Minister, Aristide Briand, by the French plenipotentiary minister to Rio de Janeiro, Paul Claudel, 10 March 1917, Archives of French Foreign Ministry, File No: 891, *Turquie: Legion d'Orient II (Décembre 1916- Mai 1917)*, p. 138

48 Letter sent to French Foreign Minister, Aristide Briand, by the French plenipotentiary minister to Rio de Janeiro, Paul Claudel, 10 March 1917, Archives of French Foreign Ministry, File No: 891, *Turquie: Legion d'Orient II (Décembre 1916- Mai 1917)*, p. 138

49 Letter sent to French Foreign Minister, Aristide Briand, by the French plenipotentiary minister to Rio de Janeiro, Paul Claudel, 10 March 1917, Archives of French Foreign Ministry, File No: 891, *Turquie: Legion d'Orient II (Décembre 1916- Mai 1917)*, p. 139

50 Letter sent to French Foreign Minister, Aristide Briand, by the French plenipotentiary minister to Rio de Janeiro, Paul Claudel, 10 March 1917, Archives of French Foreign Ministry, File No: 891, *Turquie: Legion d'Orient II (Décembre 1916- Mai 1917)*, p. 138

51 Letter sent to the French plenipotentiary minister to Rio de Janeiro, Paul Claudel, by the French consul of Bahai, Orlandi, 22 February 1917, Archives of French Foreign Ministry, File No: 891, *Turquie: Legion d'Orient II (Décembre 1916- Mai 1917)*, p. 140

52 Letter sent to the French plenipotentiary minister to Rio de Janeiro, Paul Claudel, by the French consul of Sao Paulo, Birlé, Archives of French Foreign Ministry, File No: 891, *Turquie: Legion d'Orient II (Décembre*

Meanwhile, Syrian delegates who were supposed to go to America in order to recruit for the Legion were also determined in the early March, 1917. Dışişleri Bakanı Briand'ın Fransa'nın In a letter sent to the French plenipotentiary minister to Egypt, DeFrance, the French Foreign Minister, Aristide Briand, stated that Sheikh Yusuf Kazen and Cemil Merdan Bey were invited to France, for they were chosen to be sent to America⁵³. In his reply, DeFrance pointed that both Syrians had accepted the task, they had left for Paris and that 2000 francs had been paid to each⁵⁴.

On 28 March, DeFrance sent a letter to the new French Foreign Minister Ribot, where he argued that the British had started to soften their hardliner attitude on the matter of the recruitment of Egyptian Syrians for the Eastern Legion. Accordingly, a prominent local gentry of Cairo had visited Sir Francis Reginald Wingate in order to ask for the Syrians to fight on the French side. Wingate's reply was meaningful: "I assure you that the French are doing nothing but to strike a deal with us, and we do nothing but to attain the same"⁵⁵. But still, the French Foreign Ministry complained about the British uneasiness about the Egyptian Syrian recruitments and that this attitude was treated as a biased campaign against the French policy of Syria. (*une campagne préjudiciable à notre politique en Syrie*)⁵⁶.

In the meantime, Syrians and Armenians living in France appealed to their Foreign Ministry that they wanted to recruit volunteers in France for the Legion. An

1916- Mai 1917), p. 142

53 Letter sent to the French plenipotentiary minister to Egypt, DeFrance, by the French Foreign Minister, Aristide Briand, 13 Marh 1917, Archives of French Foreign Ministry, File No: 891, *Turquie: Legion d'Orient II (Décembre 1916- Mai 1917)*, p. 150

54 Letter sent to French Foreign Minister, Aristide Briand, by the French plenipotentiary minister to Egypt, DeFrance, 17 March 1917, Archives of French Foreign Ministry, File No: 891, *Turquie: Legion d'Orient II (Décembre 1916- Mai 1917)*, p. 155

55 Letter sent to French Foreign Minister, Aristide Briand, by the French plenipotentiary minister to Egypt, DeFrance, 28 March 1917, Archives of French Foreign Ministry, File No: 891, *Turquie: Legion d'Orient II (Décembre 1916- Mai 1917)*, p. 161

56 Letter sent to the French plenipotentiary minister to Egypt, DeFrance, by the French Foreign Minister, Aristide Briand, 16 April 1917, Archives of French Foreign Ministry, File No: 891, *Turquie: Legion d'Orient II (Décembre 1916- Mai 1917)*, p. 176

Armenian living in Marseilles by the name of Sahatjian and a Syrian, Paul Daher, referred to the military authorities in Marseilles for the voluntary participation of Syrians and Armenians to the Eastern Legion⁵⁷.

In a letter submitted on 18 May by the Foreign Ministry to the Ministry of War, it was stated that Syrian Dr. Cesar Jean Lakkah, Maronite Sheikh Joseph el Khazen and Muslim Lebanese Merdan Bey had departed for Lisbon as the first stage of their journey to Latin America in order to facilitate Syrians in the continent to join the Legion⁵⁸. The letter also came up with proposals on how to transfer the volunteers, who would be gathered by this committee, to France. According to that, the French representations in Latin America did not have the right to issue documents certifying that volunteers wanted to volunteer for the Legion service. The mandate belonged to the regional committees. The volunteers would be subject to physical examination in order to see whether they were fit for the military practice. Furthermore, they would be transferred to France in ships where they would travel in 4th class cabins while committee members would have the 3rd class. The committees would also hand over a list, comprising of the volunteers' names, surnames, ages and travel expenses, to the French Consulate. Upon the volunteers' arrival to France, the Foreign Ministry would inform the Ministry of War and the leaders of the Armenian and Syrian committees. If there was a possibility for the secret identity of volunteers to be revealed, important documents would not be sent by the same ships in which they travelled. One of three French ports (Bordeaux, Marseilles and Le Havre) would be used for unloading the volunteers, who were to be met by representatives of Syrian and Armenian committees. These representatives, in turn, would be selected out of the respected Armenian and Syrian residents of the aforementioned cities⁵⁹. Port authorities

57 Letter addressed to the Ministry of War by the French Foreign Ministry, 11 May 1917, Archives of French Foreign Ministry, File No: 891, *Turquie: Legion d'Orient II (D cembre 1916- Mai 1917)*, p. 194

58 Letter addressed to the Ministry of War by the French Foreign Ministry, 18 May 1917 Archives of French Foreign Ministry, File No: 891, *Turquie: Legion d'Orient II (D cembre 1916- Mai 1917)*, p. 205

59 Indeed, in the telegramme sent to the Governor of Bordeaux by the Foreign Ministry, it was requested that one or two well-respected local Armenians living were to be assigned to welcome the new arrivees. Archives of French Foreign Ministry, File No: 892, *Turquie: Legion d'Orient III (Juin 1916 – Octobre 1917)*, p. 13.  ukr  Ganem, the President of the Syrian Central Committee, wrote a letter back to the

were supposed to send a telegramme stating the number of the passengers and the name of the ship that transported them, to the French Foreign Ministry every time there was a new delivery. These telegrammes, in turn, would be immediately forwarded to Ministry of War and Syrian and Armenian committees⁶⁰.

In the telegramme sent by the Foreign Ministry to the French representations on the American continent the same day, information was provided on the dispatch of Syrian delegates to the Americans and that these French missions were asked to facilitate the operation of these committees. By the way, an important detail about Dr. Lakkah is significant since he was told to have been honoured by the most important French medals, “Légion d’Honneur” and “la Croix de Guerre”⁶¹.

On 19 May 1917, the French plenipotentiary minister to Egypt, Defrance, sent a telegramme to his Foreign Ministry in which he was asking for the latter’s assistance because he thought the Armenian delegate Hanemyan, who would gather up 5000 people for volunteer work, could suffer from some problems regarding their transportation⁶². In its reply, the Foreign Ministry informed Defrance that necessary measures would be taken in relation to that problem.⁶³ However, a number of 5000 was an exxageration and it would be soon observed that Hanemyan could not sign up that many volunteers.

On another letter dated to 20 May 1917, Defrance recommended his Foreign

French Foreign Ministry where he informed the latter that a respectable Syrian by the name of Dr. Samné was appointed to this task. Archives of French Foreign Ministry, File No: 892, *Turquie: Legion d’Orient III (Juin 1916 – Octobre 1917)*, p. 19

60 Letter addressed to Ministry of War by French Foreign Ministry, 18 May 1917, Archives of French Foreign Ministry, File No: 891, *Turquie: Legion d’Orient II (Décembre 1916- Mai 1917)*, p. 205

61 Telegramme sent to French Consulates and Diplomatic missions in the Americas by the French Foreign Ministry, 18 May 1917, Archives of French Foreign Ministry, File No: 891, *Turquie: Legion d’Orient II (Décembre 1916- Mai 1917)*, p. 208

62 Telegramme addressed to French Foreign Ministry by the French plenipotentiary minister to Egypt, Defrance, 19 May 1917, Archives of French Foreign Ministry, File No: 891, *Turquie: Legion d’Orient II (Décembre 1916- Mai 1917)*, p. 209

63 Telegramme addressed to the French plenipotentiary minister to Egypt, Defrance, by the French Foreign Ministry, 20 May 1917, Archives of French Foreign Ministry, File No: 891, *Turquie: Legion d’Orient II (Décembre 1916- Mai 1917)*, p. 218

Ministry to take initiatives targeting the placement of the Cebel Musa Armenian camp at Port Said under French administration. Accordingly, he stated that most of the men living in this camp had been transferred to Cyprus and had taken up military training, thus leaving the camp to a large extent for women and children, who wished to be managed not by the British, but by the French. Given that, Defrance advised his Ministry to start spreading French ideas and the language in that area⁶⁴. These opinions were also shared by Colonel Romieu, who argued that it would be just for France to be the guardian of the families, who had been left behind when the men of Cebel Musa Armenians, who he thought to be the most disciplined squad of the Eastern Legion, went to Cyprus⁶⁵.

In a letter sent to the French Foreign Ministry by the Ministry of War on 22 May, it was pointed out that the Syrian delegate Zeki Arnouk, who had just returned from the USA, stated the sheikh of the Pennsylvanian Ansaris⁶⁶, Abdulhamid, was ready to support the Eastern Legion with 500 volunteers⁶⁷. The Ministry of War decided to make a payment of 6000 francs (1200 francs for 100 Ansari volunteers) to Abdulhamid in return for his support⁶⁸.

The French plenipotentiary minister to Rio de Janeiro Ortaelçisi, Claudel, sent a telegramme to his Foreign Ministry in which he informed the latter about the transfer of 22 Syrian volunteers to France with the ferry called Samara⁶⁹. In another telegramme he prepared two days later, Claudel told his Foreign Ministry

64 Telegramme addressed to French Foreign Ministry by the French plenipotentiary minister to Egypt, Defrance, 20 May 1917, Archives of French Foreign Ministry, File No: 891, *Turquie: Legion d'Orient II (Décembre 1916- Mai 1917)*, p. 221

65 Letter addressed to the French plenipotentiary minister to Egypt, Defrance, by Colonel Romieu, 19 May 1917, Archives of French Foreign Ministry, File No: 891, *Turquie: Legion d'Orient II (Décembre 1916- Mai 1917)*, p. 222

66 A Shiah tribe giving around Lebanon, Palestine and Syria.

67 Letter sent to the French Foreign Ministry by the Ministry of War, 22 May 1917, Archives of French Foreign Ministry, File No: 891, *Turquie: Legion d'Orient II (Décembre 1916- Mai 1917)*, p. 227

68 The decision of the French Ministry of War, 22 May 1917, Archives of French Foreign Ministry, File No: 891, *Turquie: Legion d'Orient II (Décembre 1916- Mai 1917)*, p. 228

69 Telegramme sent to French Foreign Ministry by the French plenipotentiary minister to Rio de Janeiro, Paul Claudel, 26 May 1917, Archives of French Foreign Ministry, File No: 891, *Turquie: Legion d'Orient II (Décembre 1916- Mai 1917)*, p. 233

that the French consulate to Rio de Janeiro told him the French representatives were not authorized to recruit Syrians and thus an arrangement had to be formulated in order to cope with the increasing number of volunteers. It was also mentioned that 12 Syrian volunteers were waiting in Santos for being transferred⁷⁰. The French consulate to New York, Liebert, in turn, stated that 4 Syrians left Bordeaux on 2 June with the French ship Touraine⁷¹. On 26 June, a Syrian was sent to Bordeaux from New York with the Chicago ferry while 20 Syrians were transferred to Le Havre from Rio de Janeiro with the Ceylan ferry⁷².

In a secret report he filed for the Ministry of War, Colonel Romieu made the following remarks for the Armenian who arrived in Cyprus to join the Eastern Legion: “In the light of the recent developments, we should no longer wait for Armenian and Egyptian Syrian volunteers. The recent arrivees are already of poor-quality (de valeur très mediocre). Six Armenians came from Marseilles and two of them were horrible French citizens who had lived in the city and had been imprisoned before they volunteered for the job. Therefore, I had to ask for their return to France and be put under observation⁷³.”

In a telegramme addressed to the French Consulate to New York, it was stated that the magazine called Al-Hoda had published the photos of the Syrians volunteered for Eastern Legion on its issues of 28 April and 3 May. It was highlighted that such publications would trigger Turkish hatred against Syrians⁷⁴. Given this warning of his Foreign Ministry, Consulate Liebert alerted M. Mokarzel, a prom-

70 Telegramme sent to French Foreign Ministry by the French plenipotentiary minister to Rio de Janeiro, Paul Claudel, 28 May 1917, Archives of French Foreign Ministry, File No: 891, *Turquie: Legion d'Orient II (Décembre 1916- Mai 1917)*, p. 236

71 Telegramme sent to the French Foreign Ministry by the French consulate to New York, Liebert, 2 June 1917, Archives of French Foreign Ministry, File No: 892, *Turquie: Legion d'Orient III (Juin 1916 – Octobre 1917)*, p. 2

72 Letter sent to the the Ministry of War by the French Foreign Ministry, 26 June 1917, Archives of French Foreign Ministry, File No: 892, *Turquie: Legion d'Orient III (Juin 1916 – Octobre 1917)*, p. 32

73 Telegramme, involving the secret report of Colonel Romieu dated to 1 May 1917, addressed to French Foreign Ministry by the Ministry of War, 28 May 1917, Archives of French Foreign Ministry, File No: 891, *Turquie: Legion d'Orient II (Décembre 1916- Mai 1917)*, p. 238

74 Telegramme addressed to the French consulate in New York by the Foreign Ministry, June 1917, Archives of French Foreign Ministry, File No: 892, *Turquie: Legion d'Orient III (Juin 1916 – Octobre 1917)*, p. 4

inent Syrian in the US, that this kind of propaganda activities should never be repeated again in the future⁷⁵.

In a letter sent to French Ministry of Domestic Affairs by the Foreign Ministry on 13 June 1917, it was argued that most of the Armenians and Syrians who had come to France to volunteer for the Eastern Legion, were proven unfit in medical examinations for the military service, and that some arrangements were required to provide for their return⁷⁶.

Meanwhile, the expenses for the transfers of volunteers from Americas to France were initially covered by these regional committees, which were then compensated by the French Foreign Ministry out of the state budget. For instance, a regional committee by the name of Lebanese League for Progress sent three Lebanese to Bordeaux from New York with the Rochembeau ferry on 21 April 1917⁷⁷. Their travel expenses costed 431,91 francs which was billed by the Lebanese league⁷⁸. A similar register was sent to the French Foreign Ministry in order for the latter to make the payment for the travel costs of two Lebanese persons, Joseph Frangieh and Saideh Kabalam Michel⁷⁹. The Foreign Ministry forwarded the bill for 314,44 francs to the Ministry of War⁸⁰.

Conclusion:

- 75 Telegramme sent to the French Foreign Ministry by the French consulate to New York, Liebert, 9 June 1917, Archives of French Foreign Ministry, File No: 892, *Turquie: Legion d'Orient III (Juin 1916 – Octobre 1917)*, p. 8
- 76 Letter sent to French Ministry of Domestic Affairs by the French Foreign Ministry, 13 June 1917, Archives of French Foreign Ministry, File No: 892, *Turquie: Legion d'Orient III (Juin 1916 – Octobre 1917)*, p. 15
- 77 Telegramme addressed to the French Foreign Ministry by the French consulate to New York, Liebert, 11 July 1917, Archives of French Foreign Ministry, File No: 892, *Turquie: Legion d'Orient III (Juin 1916 – Octobre 1917)*, p. 56
- 78 The travel bill of the Lebanese League for Progress on 2 July 1917, Archives of French Foreign Ministry, File No: 892, *Turquie: Legion d'Orient III (Juin 1916 – Octobre 1917)*, p. 57
- 79 The travel bill of the Lebanese League for Progress on 30 June 1917, Archives of French Foreign Ministry, File No: 892, *Turquie: Legion d'Orient III (Juin 1916 – Octobre 1917)*, p. 62
- 80 Letter sent to French Ministry of War by the French Foreign Ministry, 13 July 1917, Archives of French Foreign Ministry, File No: 892, *Turquie: Legion d'Orient III (Juin 1916 – Octobre 1917)*, p. 61

This article has dealt with the process through which the Eastern Legion was transformed from a small community to a big battalion from November 1916 to May 1917. The following main points constitute the fundamental events of the process:

- In this period, France suffered from a serious military shortage. Especially at the end of two years of the war, the elite squads of the French army had been severely damaged on the French-German border. This is why, for her war strategy in the Middle East, France, instead of her own forces, preferred to use the local troops whose common point was to challenge the Ottoman control in the region. Thus, the Eastern Legion, which had been planned to be constituted by only Armenians of Cebel Musa, incorporated Muslims, Christian Syrians and Lebanese soldiers.
- France aimed to recruit not only Armenians and Syrians from the Middle East, but also their fellows who had immigrated to the American continent throughout 19th and 20th century and who formed considerable communities there. For that purpose, Armenian and Syrian delegations were established and dispatched to America, with all expenses covered, in order to conduct propaganda activities. Bu nedenle Amerika'ya gönderilmek üzere Ermeni ve Suriyeli delegasyonları oluşturmuş, bunların bütün masraflarını karşılayarak Amerika'da propaganda faaliyetlerine girişmesine vesile olmuştur.
- The French was aware of the fact that these Armenian delegates had instigated some of the Armenian rebellions which pervaded the last 30 years of the Ottoman Empire, for they themselves stated that these delegates had been involved in terrorist activities.
- The French campaign for volunteer recruitment in the US was against the rules of the international law because the efforts of a waging party to recruit troops in a non-waging third country would automatically make the latter a war-party. That is why the delegates carried out their mission in great secrecy. However, it is still

very difficult to argue that the US was entirely unaware of the situation, since she could be argued to have given signals of her entry to the War on the side of the Allied Powers by remaining silent against recruitment activities.

- There was a debate between the French Foreign Ministry and Ministry of War on the legal status of the Eastern Legion. While the Foreign Ministry asked for the Armenian status to be elevated to that of French soldiers, the War Ministry reminded that it was impossible, according to the French law, to recruit soldiers from the countries against which France was waging war and thus the Armenians could not be granted the same rights enjoyed by the French troops.
- In the meantime, although they were allies, a strife between France and Britain on the matter of recruitments was most obvious. The fact that Britain obstructed French efforts to recruit Syrians living in Egypt can be regarded as proof to that.