

REVIEW OF ARMENIAN STUDIES

A QUARTERLY JOURNAL OF HISTORY,
POLITICS AND INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

VOLUME 1 NUMBER 4 2003

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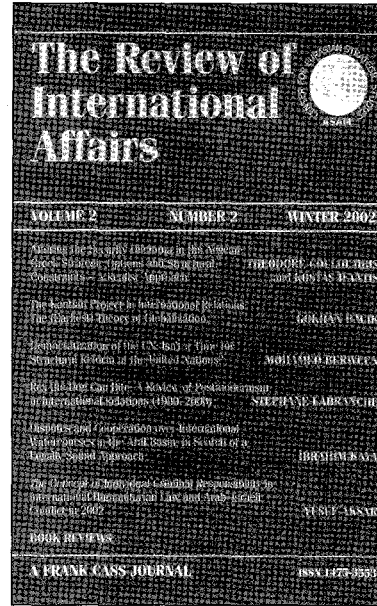
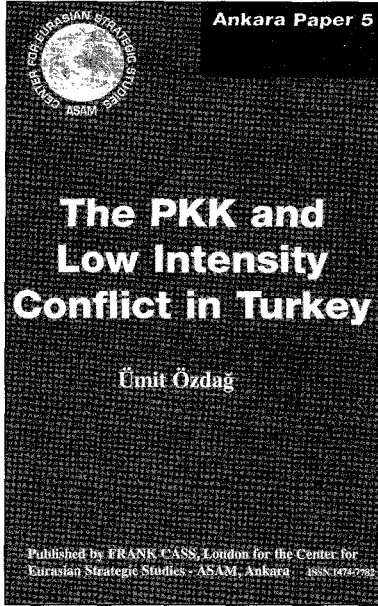
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EDITORIAL NOTE

The first volume of the quarterly **Review of Armenian Studies**, published by the **INSTITUTE FOR ARMENIAN RESEARCH**, is completed so far by this fourth issue.

Retired ambassador Ömer E. LÜTEM evaluates the recent developments in Armenia, common to the three previous issues. The parliamentary elections and the ongoing discussions around the elections are analysed by him, especially in terms of its possible outcomes for the relations between Turkey and Armenia. Turkish-Armenian relations are also discussed under a separate section by Lütem. The Armenian Diaspora and its activities, and the 'genocide' draft resolution are other topics examined in *Facts and Comments*.

The Jewish-Armenian relations around the concepts of 'genocide' and 'holocaust', the Armenian attempt to attach the Armenian allegations to the Holocaust Memorial Day, and the Jewish response to it are debated by Assoc. Prof. Dr. Esat ARSLAN.

Assist. Prof. Dr. Mustafa S. BİLGİN, as a historian, deals with the attitudes of the Great Powers to the Armenians under the Ottoman rule. The writer mainly argues that the problems between the Ottoman administration and the Ottoman Armenians broke out as a result of Great Power intervention in the internal affairs of the Ottoman Empire.

Dr. M. Vedat GÜRBÜZ investigates the Nagorno Karabakh problem in the period between 1988 and 1994. Azerbaijani domestic policies, and the negative impacts of the conflict in Azerbaijan are explained in the article.

The recently excavated mass grave in Gedikli/Tavus village in Iğdır is focused by Dr. Şenol KANTARCI. Kantarcı tells his observations during the excavation with photos and documents.

The article by Assist. Prof. Dr. Memet YETİŞGİN on the Zeitun Revolt of 1895 is the last article in this volume and issue. The composition of Muslim and non-Muslim population of Maraş and

Aleppo, and the causes of the revolt and the uprising process are analysed in detail.

A newly published book on the Armenian regulations from the Tanzimat period to the Second Constitutional period by Murat Bebirođlu is reviewed by Hasret DİKİCİ, and other recently published books on Armenia and the Armenians are mentioned in the section of *Recent Books*.

With best wishes,

The Editor

FACTS AND COMMENTS

Ömer E. LÜTEM*

The major events that took place in the summer of 2003 in Armenia, the Armenian Diaspora and Turkish-Armenian relations can be summarized as follows:

1- Parliamentary Elections and the New Armenian Government

Parliamentary elections in Armenia were held on May 25, 2003 and none of the political parties won a majority.

Prime Minister Andranik Markarian's Republican Party of Armenia won 32 of the 131 available seats, and thus, ranked as the first party.

The second successful party was the Country of Law that had been established in 1998 and is known to be closely affiliated with President Kocharian. A Western source has stated that this party benefits from the vast financial aid of a Western country, and, that the leader of the party, Arthur Baghdasarian, does not conceal his ambition of becoming president.¹

The alliance that the relatives and political supporters of Karen Demirchian and Vazgen Sarkasian (Speaker of Parliament and Prime Minister, respectively, in 1999, and both were killed in Parliament during an attack on October 27 of the same year) had formed against President Kocharian during the presidential elections was operational during the parliamentary elections as well. This alliance formed the 'Justice Block' and took part in the elections. Despite its being the major opposition movement in the country, the Justice Block obtained even less votes than the Republican and Country of Law parties. The Block maintains that this failure must be attributed to the election fraud.

* Ambassador (Rtd).

¹ David Petrosyan, 'Parliamentary Elections Preliminary Results and First Impressions', *The Noyan Tapan Highlights*, No. 21, June 2003.

The historic Armenian Revolutionary Federation (Dashnaks), known for its ultra nationalist and chauvinistic ideas, ranked fourth in the elections. This party was banned in Armenia during the presidency of Ter Petrosian, but was allowed again on the political arena after it started supporting Kocharian in the 1998 presidential elections.

The Republican Party and the Country of Law Party, both of which supported President Kocharian, were successful in the elections, but it is difficult to explain the relative failure of the Dashnaks despite the significant financial support of the Diaspora. It is possible that some of the voters did not look favorably upon the Dashnak attitude on the 'genocide' question, that is, of no immediate relevance, their extremist stance on the Karabakh issue and their rather passive position on other topics of internal politics.

The falsifications and irregularities² witnessed during the presidential elections were also seen during parliamentary elections. It appears that voting in the place of other electors and box stuffing were particularly common.³ Due to the economic hardship in Armenia, approximately one million of her citizens have migrated to the other countries, especially to Russia. It is known that many of these people who have left the country are still listed on the voters' registry. One source⁴ claims that the total of such persons, who were listed but who no longer live in Armenia, make up 30 % of the electorate and that many persons have voted in their place.

As in the presidential elections, the parliamentary elections were also followed by a large number of foreign observers. Two observer missions were particularly important. The first was an international mission led by the Parliamentary Assemblies of the OSCE and the Council of Europe as well as by the OSCE's Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR). The American Bob Barry headed this mission. The other one was the delegation of the Commonwealth of Independent States, which had witnessed the presidential elections and was once again headed by the Russian Yuri Yarov.

² *Review of Armenian Studies*, Vol. 1, No. 3, pp.19-20.

³ *Noyan Tapan*, May 27, 2003.

⁴ *Agence France Presse*, May 25, 2003.

In the long and detailed report that the OSCE/ODIHR published⁵ following the elections, it was stated that the preliminary results indicated that, compared with the presidential balloting in March, the parliamentary elections did represent an improvement in terms of the freedom of campaigning and the freedom of press; while it fell short of international norms in the field of democratic election standards.

On the other hand, the Head of the Commonwealth of Independent States Observer Mission, Yuri Yarov, stated that the elections met the requirements of Armenian election law and that they were open and democratic. He also added that there had been some irregularities but that these were not of a proportion that would change the outcome of the elections.⁶

The differences of opinion of the two missions for the presidential elections surfaced again regarding parliamentary elections. In fact, this difference reflects two different conceptions. While the Western countries see free and fair elections as a precondition of democracy, some of the former Soviet block countries tend to consider elections as more of a formality.

Armenia faces serious problems with Azerbaijan and Turkey due to the Karabakh conflict and her allegations of genocide. On the other hand, Armenia, which has excellent relations with Russia, tries to be in very good terms with the European states and the USA. Therefore, foreign policy should be of a particular significance for that country. Despite this, foreign policy issues commanded little space in the election programs of the parties; and vague terms devoid of real content were used. In line with this trend, little space was devoted to the relations with Turkey.

Only the two historic parties, Armenian Revolutionary Federation and the Armenian Democratic Liberal Party (Ramgavar), used the 'genocide' issue for election campaign; while other parties almost did not mention this subject. This fact proves that the people of Armenia, unlike the Armenians of the Diaspora, do not see the 'genocide' as a main concern.

The Constitution of Armenia came into force in 1995 during the era of Ter Petrosian. This Constitution drew great criticism because

⁵ OSCE/ODIHR Election Observation Mission - Parliamentary Elections, Republic of Armenia, May 25, 2003, Statement of Preliminary Findings and Conclusions, Yerevan, May 26, 2003.

⁶ *ArmenPress*, May 26, 2003.

of the vast powers it gave to the President of State. With the support of President Kocharian, a new draft was prepared. This draft, which amended 80% of the existing 114 articles, was ratified by the Parliament. A referendum concerning the constitutional amendments was held simultaneously with the parliamentary elections, but, as the necessary percentage of approval was not obtained, the amendments were rejected.⁷

The rejection of amendments was first and foremost a failure for President Kocharian. However, this gives the president an opportunity to claim that he is working for democratic conditions to be established in the country. Had the referendum yielded a 'yes' vote, it would have meant a slight curtailing of the powers of the president, yet as things stand today, the president continues to enjoy vast powers including dissolving parliament; and appointing as well as ousting the prime minister.

After the elections the Republican Party of Prime Minister Andranik Makarian, the Country of Law Party and the Armenian Revolutionary Federation set up a coalition government in which the Republican Party holds 7 ministerial seats as well as the seat of the prime minister; and the Country of Law and Armenian Revolutionary Federation hold three ministerial seats each. President Kocharian became the de facto fourth partner of the coalition by personally appointing the ministers of defense, foreign affairs and justice.

The 34-year-old leader of the Country of Law Party, Arthur Baghdasarian, was elected as the speaker of parliament; and his two deputies were elected from the ARF and the Republican Party.

The program read out by Prime Minister Markarian on June 19 in Parliament basically proposed to improve education, health and social services in the next four years, and to fight poverty. It is stated that the annual increase of GNP in the country must be no less than 6 % for this to be realized. Since Armenia's GNP increased by 12,9 % last year, this objective can be realized. Upon the insistence of the ARF, an addition was made to the program in which it was stated that corruption, which had hampered the development of the country for so long, would be fought.⁸

⁷ *ArmenPress*, May 28, 2003.

⁸ *RFE/RL*, June 19, 2003, and *ArmenPress*, June 20, 2003.

In the program, there was no reference to the policies of the state on foreign policy, human rights and the Karabakh conflict. While delivering the program, Prime Minister Markarian only stated that Karabakh cannot be a part of Azerbaijan, adding that there must be a common border between Armenia and Karabakh; and that Karabakh must have the right to self-determination.⁹

It is obvious that the government left the determination of foreign, defense and justice policies to the president. In practice, however, this de facto leads to the existence of two kinds of government in Armenia: one is responsible from the foreign, defense and justice policies; and a second one is accountable for the rest. On the other hand, it is possible that the government did not include the policies left to the President into its program because it wished to stress that the government is not responsible from those matters.

2- Turkish-Armenian Relations

Armenian official circles, that hoped that Turkey would resume diplomatic relations with Armenia and/or open her borders after the Turkish AKP (Justice and Development Party) came to power, was disillusioned by the Turkish Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdoğan's statements when he visited Azerbaijan in January 2003.¹⁰

The Armenians once again became optimistic when it was reported that the Turkish Foreign Minister said in Antalya in May 2003: 'if Armenia is ready to recognize the territorial integrity of Turkey and to renounce its territorial claims, Ankara is ready to be friends with Yerevan'.¹¹ Answering the questions of journalists on May 25, Armenian Foreign Minister Vardan Oskanian repeated the desire of Armenia to start negotiations with Turkey without preconditions and that it was a positive development that Abdullah Gül had not tied the issue to the Karabakh issue. Oskanian added, 'if that is the official policy of Turkey, it must be welcomed. I believe that through this the path to the normalization of our relations will be opened'. Oskanian also praised the incumbent Turkish authorities for introducing positive changes in their foreign

⁹ *Haykakan Jamanak*, June 20, 2003.

¹⁰ *Review of Armenian Studies*, No. 3, p. 22.

¹¹ *Arminfo*, May 21, 2003.

policy, which in turn 'has changed the overall situation in the region'. He expressed hope for a meeting to take place between the two countries' foreign ministers soon where a more detailed discussion of this announcement could be held.¹²

In recent years, the foreign ministers of the two countries had been meeting quite frequently. Yet, the elections held both in Turkey and Armenia halted these contacts. The NATO Ministerial Meeting and the Euro-Atlantic Partnership Council in early June 2003 brought the two foreign ministers together in Madrid. According to the press statement of the Armenian Foreign Ministry 'they discussed regional issues, the Nagorno Karabakh resolution process, as well as bilateral matters. The ministers agreed that improved relations between the two countries would have a positive effect on the regional stability and security. Ministers Oskanian and Gül found this first get-acquainted session valuable for promoting dialogue, and they agreed to meet again'.¹³

The positive atmosphere created by the Madrid meeting caused the Dashnaks to clarify their policy. ARF Supreme Body Representative Armen Rustamian made the following statement in response to a question of a journalist: 'Turkey must first observe neutrality on the Karabakh issue; second it must recognize the Armenian genocide. If these two conditions are satisfied, only then will it be possible to think about developing truly normal relations with Turkey'.¹⁴ It's noteworthy that while the Dashnaks are introducing preconditions, for years, the Armenian Foreign Ministry has insistently stated that there are no preconditions attached to developing relations or starting diplomatic relations with Turkey. Since the Dashnaks are a coalition partner there seems to be a dormant disagreement within the government concerning the relations with Turkey.

On the other hand, Armenian Foreign Minister Oskanian, in reference to the meeting in Madrid, stated that the Turkish Government's stance on Armenia had undergone substantial changes, adding that the Turkish regime was inclined to normalizing relations with Armenia. He also said that the dialogue between the two states would continue, and that even with small steps, a positive change in bilateral relations would definitely be

¹² *ArmenPress*, May 25, 2003.

¹³ Press Release, Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Armenia, June 4, 2003.

¹⁴ *Asbarez*, June 12, 2003.

achieved. He added that the resolution of this issue was one of the conditions for the membership of Turkey to the European Union (EU).¹⁵

The Copenhagen Criteria, which stipulate the conditions for Turkish membership to the EU, do not mention relations with Armenia. Yet, the European Parliament has tried to create a linkage to the Copenhagen Criteria by adding to its most recent resolution¹⁶ concerning Turkish accession to the Union the following sentence: 'Of course the resolution of the Cyprus question and the normalization of relations with Armenia also form part of the fulfillment of the Copenhagen Criteria.' Yet, the final and binding position on this issue is that of the European Commission which conducts the accession negotiations.

In its aforementioned resolution, the European Parliament called also on the Turkish authorities to promote good neighborly relations with Armenia and stated that first steps in this direction could be the resumption of diplomatic relations and the opening of borders.

As to the 'genocide' issue, a proposal aiming at the addition of an article to the resolution that would require Turkey to recognize the 'Armenian genocide' was rejected, and instead, only a reference to previous resolutions on this matter was made.

As can be seen, this resolution of the European Parliament supports Armenian views. This has caused Armenian Foreign Minister Oskanian to claim that the normalization of the relations between the two countries is a pre-requisite for the accession of Turkey to the EU.

In the same speech, Oskanian also said that the USA was insistent on the resolution of the conflict between the two countries. It has been known for a long time that the USA, with the aim of achieving peace and stability in the Caucasus, has been trying to bring about normalization in Turkish-Armenian relations. It is also known that the USA has been trying to bring closer the representatives of civil society organizations through initiatives such as the Turkish-Armenian Reconciliation Commission and through the meetings of the journalists and women's associations of both sides.

¹⁵ *Arminfo*, June 12, 2003.

¹⁶ This report, known as the Oostlander Report in reference to its author and the attached resolution was passed on June 5, 2003 with 216 in favor, 75 opposing and 38 abstention votes.

In a letter¹⁷ of the American State Department addressed to some congressmen, who represent Armenian interests, it was stated that during the visit of Foreign Minister Gül to Washington on July 24, Foreign Secretary Powell raised with him the need for reconciliation between Turkey and Armenia, and that the two ministers specifically addressed the opening of the land border. The said letter summarizes American policy on this issue as follows: 'Progress on Turkish-Armenian reconciliation is a top priority for us and we will continue to press the issue with the highest levels of the Turkish and Armenian governments at every opportunity'.

On the other hand it is obvious that Turkey has become under pressure due to the possibility of a resolution being passed in American Congress that would also refer to the alleged Armenian genocide.

The successful meeting between the two foreign ministers in Madrid, the most recent pro-Armenian resolution of the European Parliament, the insistence of the USA on reconciliation between the two states, and the draft resolutions in Congress led to an impression that there would soon be positive developments in Turkish-Armenian relations. There was speculation in the press of both countries that Turkey would soon open the border with Armenia; and that Prime Minister Erdoğan would make a formal statement on this matter in his visit to Kars at the end of June.¹⁸

However, Prime Minister Erdoğan did not mention the opening of borders in his Kars speech on June 27; and stated that the normalization of relations would come about only after the Armenian side gave up its allegations of genocide.¹⁹ During an appearance on television Foreign Minister Gül said; 'there is no border gate (between the two countries) at the moment but why shouldn't there be one in the future?' He pointed out that Turkey wanted good neighborly relations with Armenia and went on to say 'There is nothing to be ashamed of in our history'.²⁰

Thereby it became clear that, despite the pressure from the USA and the European Parliament, Turkey did not intend to fully normalize her relations with Armenia until the latter changed her

¹⁷ ANCA Press Release, August 5, 2003.

¹⁸ *Radikal*, June 25, 2003; *Azg*, June 27, 2003.

¹⁹ *Azg* in reference to the *TRT* on June 29, 2003.

²⁰ *Anadolu News Agency*, June 29, 2003.

attitude towards Turkey, for example, retracted her allegations of genocide.

Reacting to Erdoğan's attitude, some of the Armenian press pointed out that, although Turkish Prime Minister had not chosen to normalize relations with Armenia, he had also not mentioned the resolution of the Karabakh conflict as a precondition and that this in itself was a positive sign.²¹

As relations with Turkey became a topic of discussion in Armenia, Foreign Minister Oskanian gave an interview on Armenian state television on July 2. In summary, Oskanian said that Turkey was paying more attention to bilateral relations today while previously the focus was on Karabakh. He stressed that the two sides expressed the intention of normalizing bilateral relations step by step, adding that border trade and the opening of the railway lines were possible without establishing diplomatic relations. Oskanian also said that Armenia never used the recognition of the genocide as a condition for the normalization of Turkish-Armenian relations, however, they had told the Turkish side that recognition of the genocide will remain on the agenda of Armenian foreign policy. He stated that they would take up the genocide issue after establishing diplomatic relations with Turkey.²²

Regarding the proposal of Turkey that a trilateral meeting to be held between Turkey, Azerbaijan and Armenia; Oskanian said that the purpose of such a meeting may not be the discussion of the Karabakh problem, and that Turkey cannot be the mediator in the search for a settlement. He added that the main subjects of the agenda must be regional cooperation, bilateral relations and the settlement of the Karabakh conflict within the framework of these issues.

The most important aspect of the statements of the Armenian foreign minister is that Turkey no longer regards the Karabakh problem as a factor in her relations with Armenia. On the other hand, although Oskanian does not say it openly, it is clear that Turkey wishes to continue her involvement in the Karabakh problem through the trilateral meeting mentioned above. It is also understood that the two sides wish to develop their relations step by step (by allowing border trade or opening the railway line) and

²¹ *Armenialiberty*, July 1, 2003; *RFE/RL*, July 30, 2003.

²² Public Television of Armenia, July 2, 2003 in *Ann Groong*, July 4, 2003.

to establish diplomatic relations at the end of this process. Finally, Armenia will not bring up the issue of the genocide until it has set up normal relations with Turkey.

As to the Prime Minister Erdogan's statement in Kars, the first reaction came from the Dashnaks who made the following statement: 'The AFR has on numerous occasions announced that it supports the establishment of normal relations between Armenia and Turkey, but that this can only come about when Turkey accepts the historical truth. The Armenian-Turkish dialogue can bear results only when Turkey accepts the fact of the Armenian genocide, which is not an object of negotiation. No Armenia-Turkey or Armenian-Turkish dialogue has any future prospect as long as Turkey continues to take sides on the question of Artsakh/Karabakh and does not lift its blockade of Armenia.'²³

President Kocharian's press spokesman Ashot Kocharian stated that Armenia wished to normalize her relations with Turkey without any pre-conditions and added that this would allow both sides to take up a number of issues, including the most sensitive ones. As mentioned above, Foreign Minister Oskanian said that Armenia had never used the recognition of genocide as a condition for the normalization of Armenian-Turkish relations. On another occasion, he made very clear the policy of the government when he said 'no matter if Turkey recognizes the genocide or not, Armenia is ready to establish diplomatic relations with that country'.²⁴ All these statements contradicted with Dashnaks' pre-conditions.

Arthur Baghdasarian, who is the leader of the junior partner party in the coalition and was also elected as the Speaker of Parliament, proposed that a Turkish-Armenian parliamentary commission is set up so as to develop bilateral relations.²⁵ The Deputy of the Dashnak Party criticized Baghdasarian describing his proposed step as incorrect reminding him that there are no diplomatic ties between Turkey and Armenia.²⁶

These discussions regarding Turkey quickly turned into a debate in the Armenian public opinion with the focus being on whether or not Armenia would benefit from the opening of the border with Turkey.

²³ *Asbarez*, June 30, 2003.

²⁴ *Haykakan Jamanak*, July 11, 2003.

²⁵ *Hürriyet* and *A1 web*, July 11, 2003.

²⁶ *Mediamax*, July 14, 2003.

Although Deputy Trade Minister Tigran Davtiyan said that there would be an increase of 1 billion dollars in local production if the border with Turkey were to be opened,²⁷ the Dashnaks claimed that the opening of the border would be a matter of national security; those that would be harmed by the opening of the border would outnumber those that would benefit from it and that cheap Turkish goods of inferior quality would harm production in Armenia.²⁸

The Dashnaks also opposed to the connection of the railway lines of the two states in case the border is opened. The Dashnak Deputy Speaker of Parliament, Vahan Hovanisian, stated that the opening of the border would be profitable for Armenia only in case of transit, when along with the railway with Turkey, the railway with Azerbaijan and Abkhazia are opened, too. He also said that Armenia would become an appendage of the Eastern Turkish market, otherwise.²⁹

It is clear that the Dashnak objection to the opening of the border is based on political reasons than economic ones. The economic excuse, that the Armenian market will be flooded by Turkish goods if the border is opened, is in fact not a probability since Turkish businessmen are already trading with Armenia via Georgia.³⁰ It would be normal that Turkish exports would increase somewhat if the border is opened, but it should be expected that the Armenian exports to Turkey would increase as well. In addition to this, experience shows that restricting imports with the fear of being swamped by cheap imports only promotes smuggling.

The true concern of the Dashnaks is that development of trade may lead to the improvement of political relations. Since the philosophy of this party is based on opposing Turkey in every field, they perceive any improvement in Turkish-Armenian relations as a threat to their existence, and, therefore, attempt to prevent it.

Although Foreign Minister Oskanian stated that the opening of borders would not have a negative impact on the Armenian economy,³¹ it can be seen that the government circles in Yerevan are starting to have doubts on this subject.

²⁷ *Panarmenian*, July 2, 2003.

²⁸ *Yerkir*, July 11, 2003.

²⁹ *Armenia Now*, July 29, 2003.

³⁰ *Golos Armenii* (August 13, 2003) states that Turkish exports to Armenia are worth 25-30 million Dollars, while Armenian exports are worth approximately 10 million Dollars.

³¹ *Golos Armenii*, July 19, 2003.

The member of the coalition partner Republican Party and Deputy Speaker of Parliament, Tigran Torosyan, stated that his party was not in favor of opening the border with Turkey, but did support the initiation of dialogue without preconditions, adding that the opening of the border should not mean uncontrolled trade.³²

The Armenian Minister of Trade and Economic Development, Karen Cheshmaritian, said that there was no in-depth analysis of the consequences of opening the border with Turkey, that while opening the railway one should bear in mind both the capacity of Armenia increasing its exports and the potential opportunities of Turkish imports; also stressing that another question to consider would be how comfortable an environment Armenia would be for Turkish investors. The minister pointed out that the World Trade Organization (WTO) norms were not valid in their relations with Turkey, saying, 'When we entered the WTO, Turkey said that it would apply Article 13 in the charter of this organization. This means that the principles of the WTO in trade between Turkey and Armenia are not valid. Thus, both Turkey and Armenia can apply with regard to each other any trade regime that is deemed necessary by the two governments.'³³

Obviously, the members of the Armenian government, under the influence of the Dashnaks, are already looking for ways of limiting trade with Turkey even before any decision has been taken to open the borders. On the other hand, the issue being important, some political parties have requested the Turkish-Armenian relations to be discussed in the Parliament.

3. The Diaspora and Turkey

The Director General of the Department of Intelligence and Research of the Turkish Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Ambassador Ecvet Tezcan, traveled to the USA in early June to hold talks with the leading organizations of the Diaspora. The aim of the visit was to inform these organizations of the views of Turkey and to learn their opinions at a time when efforts to normalize Turkish-Armenian bilateral relations were intensified.

The visit of Ambassador Tezcan caused concern in the Dashnaks. The Dashnak organization Armenian National

³² *Interfax*, July 30, 2003.

³³ *Golos Armenii*, August 13, 2003.

Committee of America (ANCA) published a press release and asked the other Armenian organizations to remain vigilant against such Turkish initiatives.³⁴ The President of ANCA, Kenneth V. Hachikian, said: 'We stand in principle that the very existence of such meetings in the absence of full acknowledgement and acceptance of responsibility for the Armenian genocide will only serve the Turkish Government's campaign to deny the Armenian genocide. We believe that it would be a very serious mistake to accept the invitation to meet this senior Turkish official', thereby trying to prevent Armenian organizations from meeting with Ambassador Tezcan.

The Armenian Assembly of America (AAA), which is the second largest Armenian organization in the USA, stated that they would meet with Ambassador Tezcan only if the Armenian 'genocide', Turkish-Armenian relations, the Karabakh peace process, and treatment of the Armenian minority in Turkey would be discussed as well.³⁵ When told that this would be possible, representatives of the AAA met with Ambassador Tezcan; and with a press statement they made public the content of the meeting.³⁶ According to this statement, the representatives of the AAA told Ambassador Tezcan that the Diaspora is united in its insistence that Turkey should deal with the Armenian 'genocide', establish normal relations with Armenia that are not dictated by the Azerbaijani position on Karabakh, and end its restrictions and pressures on Armenian communal life in Turkey.

The historic Ramgavar Party (Armenian Liberal Democratic Party) met with Ambassador Tezcan without preconditions. According to an article published in the media of the party,³⁷ the Ramgavar delegation told Tezcan that the important issues between Turkey and Armenia could be resolved through continuous contacts and negotiations. They also took up the issues of the Armenian 'genocide', the Turkish embargo on Armenia, the peaceful resolution of the Karabakh conflict, the plight of the Armenian population in Turkey and the condition of architectural monuments in historic Armenia, which they say is part of Turkey today. After expressing his views on these issues, Ambassador Tezcan said that instead of hearing these assessments from third parties, as had

³⁴ ANCA Press Release, June 6, 2003.

³⁵ AAA Press Release, June 6, 2003.

³⁶ AAA Press Release, June 12, 2003.

³⁷ Mirror On Line, June 15, 2003.

been the case in the past 80 years, he had decided to hear them directly from the Armenians of the Diaspora. He added that as long as Armenians keep the right perspective and they do not entertain illusions, these discussions may constitute concrete steps towards more substantial changes in the relations of Turkey and Armenia.

Ambassador Tezcan also traveled to the west coast of the USA where he met with representatives of the Armenian Benevolent Union (AGBU) and the Western Diocese of the Armenian Church of North America. Like their counterparts on the east coast, during these meetings, the Armenian side dwelled upon issues such as genocide, the normalization of relations between Turkey and Armenia, and the Armenian minority in Turkey.³⁸

Ambassador Tezcan also met with other representatives of Armenian organizations in both the east and west coasts, however, the names of these organizations were not made public.

Armenian organizations made press statements about these contacts, and the Diaspora media –especially that of the Dashnaks–covered these contacts in detail. The aim of the Dashnak media was to prevent the other organizations from having meetings with Ambassador Tezcan, and to use this opportunity to make public their hardliner views once again. The other Armenian organizations, on the other hand, tried to deflect criticism of the Dashnaks by making public that during their meetings with Tezcan they had taken up issues on which all Armenians would agree such as the normalization of Turkish-Armenian relations, ‘genocide’, and the Armenian minority in Turkey.

The contacts of Ambassador Tezcan once again displayed the deep split between the Dashnaks and the other Armenian organizations. The Dashnaks demanded that Turkey must first recognize the genocide and accept its responsibility (in other words give land to Armenians and pay them compensation) in order to meet with the Turkish representative. The other Armenian organizations did not make such demands and only brought up the issue of the ‘genocide’ during the meeting with Ambassador Tezcan. Since there was no mention of it in their declarations, they did not bring up territorial claims or demand compensation. This was more in line with the attitude of the Armenian government, which contrary to the Dashnaks, favored the initiation of dialogue without preconditions.

³⁸ AAA, AGBU, *Western Diocese of the Armenian Church of North America*, Press Release, June 18, 2003.

4. The 'Genocide' Draft Resolution in the U.S. Congress

A draft resolution aiming at commemorating the anniversary of the signing of the UN Convention on Genocide by the USA had been submitted to the American House of the Representatives in 2002. The draft also intended to reaffirm U.S. support for the Convention. A paragraph of the resolution reads 'the enactment of the Genocide Convention Implementation Act marked a principled stand by the United States against the crime of genocide and an important step toward ensuring that the lessons of the Holocaust, the Armenian genocide, the genocides in Cambodia, Rwanda and elsewhere will be used to help prevent future genocides'. This wording meant indirect recognition by the House of Representatives of the alleged Armenian genocide.

This draft (H.Res.183) was re-introduced again to The House of Representatives in early 2003. Due to the unfavorable atmosphere in the USA concerning Turkey's attitude regarding the American operation in Iraq, the draft was quickly passed in the Judiciary Committee and become ready for final voting. However, the Speaker of the House, Dennis Hastert, did not have the draft voted yet.

This draft was submitted to the Senate (S. Res 184) and was supported by 30 Senators out of 100. But, also here, the draft was not yet voted.

On the other hand, there was a new attempt in the Senate to make an addition to the draft budget of the U.S. State Department in which indirect recognition of the alleged genocide was intended. The Senate went into recess before this attempt could be finalized.³⁹

The American Jews were disturbed by the Armenian attempt to usurp a topic that basically concerned the Jewish people.

One of the reasons for the above mentioned drafts' not being voted is the objections of the Jewish lobby. The American Jews were disturbed by the Armenian attempt to usurp a topic that basically concerned the Jewish people. The American Jewish Committee

sent a letter to Congress stressing that the genocide issue should

³⁹ Nethaber, May 28, 2003.

not be attached to the draft budget of the State Department and called for the reference to the Armenian 'genocide' to be removed.⁴⁰

Sources in Washington reported that U.S. Vice President Dick Cheney and Deputy Defense Secretary Paul Wolfowitz and Assistant Secretary of State Richard Armitage had personally contacted senators asking them not to vote in favor of the draft resolution.⁴¹ The departing U.S. Ambassador in Ankara, Robert Pearson, confirmed the intervention of Cheney.⁴² Turkish Prime Minister Erdoğan said that he had spoken three times to Vice President Dick Cheney who was sincere and kept his promise. Erdoğan noted that the resolution did not come onto agenda thanks to the efforts of Cheney.⁴³

It would be normal to assume that the U.S. officials had intervened to offset the very negative impact on Turkish society of the mistreatment by U.S. forces of 11 Turkish soldiers whom they detained in the Northern Iraqi city of Sulaymania on July 4. It appears that a resolution on the 'genocide' was halted because it would have led to very serious tensions as an event immediately following the detention of the Turkish soldiers by the U.S. troops. Yet it should also be remembered that these drafts remain on the agenda of both the House and Senate and that they will be easily voted if the U.S. Government would not have any objection.

⁴⁰ *Hürriyet*, July 11, 2003.

⁴¹ *Sabah*, July 11, 2003.

⁴² *Turkish Daily News*, July 12, 2003.

⁴³ *Anadolu News Agency*, July 13, 2003.



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PROVOKING THOUGHTS OF ARMENIANS IN THE JEWISH HOLOCAUST PLATFORM

Assoc. Prof. Dr. Esat ARSLAN*

Abstract:

The Armenian campaign to include the Armenian claims into the Holocaust Memorial Day has been one of the most important targets of Armenian lobbying in recent years. This strategy aims to draw a parallel between the experiences of the European Jewry in the course of World War II and that of the Armenians in the Ottoman Empire during World War I. It is focused on a broad look at the subject in this article.

Keywords:

Holocaust Memorial Day, Diaspora, Jewish-Armenian-Turkish Relations, Hitler, Anti-Semitism.

INTRODUCTION

We met intentionally the new point of view of Armenian activists at the beginning of the new millennium. The first Holocaust Memorial Day in the United Kingdom provided a very valuable opportunity for Armenians' strategy. At the second anniversary, on the occasion of Holocaust Memorial Day, Armenian-Jewish solidarity was staged by overwhelming efforts of American and European Armenians at the same place. All of the partial Armenian historiographers and writers, (in fact, briefly Armenian activists), on the Turkish-Armenian relations who participated in these occasions got replete from the audience with contradictions, exaggerations and falsifications. Some historical and current events, misconceptions and misrepresentations relating to Turco-Armenian relations and the inadvertently, or deliberately, perpetuated hatred and enmity, inherited from the past and currently promoted by those who seem to have a vested interest in their repetition, are adversely affecting those relations. As though Holocaust Memorial Day only concerns Armenians, they attempted to use this platform, which completely belongs to Jewish people. But Jewish people allowed them to use their

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platform. This situation took place by their permission. The Institute of Contemporary History and Wiener Library in London held a conference in the name of the 'Generations of Genocide' at the School of Oriental and African Studies (SOAS), on January 26-27, 2002.

First of all, one of the characteristic specialties of this conference was to try to display Armenian-Jewish solidarity. Dr. Vahank Dadrian, an Armenian-American -one of the most enthusiastic defenders of the Armenian myths, former lecturer at the University of Buenos Aires, Zoryan Institute, Cambridge MA and Toronto- even gave the inauguration speech. He, along with Jewish Professor Yair Aeron, lecturer at the Open University of Tel Aviv, Israel, spoke about 'Zionism and Armenian Genocide' in the House of Commons on January 24 and gave the lecture, named 'Two Perspectives on the Armenian Genocide' at the London School of Economics (LSE) on January 25. It is mentioned by a historian as, 'It was a terrible shame of an academic gathering.' Unfortunately, the Turkish scholars who participated were not able to offer impartial papers. The occasion was portrayed, as if it was the Turkish side, which couldn't obtain the right to speak. And all of them accused those who not only spoke against them during break time but also asked the explicit questions of being 'deniers' and 'perpetrators,' In addition to all these, Armenian activists emphasized that Turkish participants were ordered to speak by the Turkish government. Two of the participants were lecturers of Turkish private universities; the other was a columnist.

JEWISH HOLOCAUST UNIQUENESS AND THE ARMENIAN QUESTION

Uniqueness of the Jewish Term - Holocaust

As you may easily see, the Armenians have commemorated the Remembrance of Armenian Martyr's Day on April 24 for 87 years. As a matter of fact, April 24, 1915, which has been put forward as the day of the 'Armenian Holocaust' by Armenians themselves, is actually the date when Armenian separatist leaders were confined and their organizations were shut down. There occurred no bloody events on that day. After this event, the ongoing incidents, which were inter-communal conflicts between the Muslims and the Armenians in the eastern part of Turkey, brought bloody incidents in the course of World War I. It is inevitable that violence breeds

I believe many Jewish scholars reserve the term 'Holocaust' to the unique experiences of the Jewish people in Nazi Germany.

violence. From 1798 to 1914, Russia and the European powers attacked the Ottoman Empire; those who began a war were Russian, the European expansionist powers, and betrayed and manipulated non-Muslim Ottoman subjects. Only in 1914 did the Ottomans (in fact Germans in Ottoman uniforms, led by Admiral Schouson on Goeben and Breslau, German destroyers) caused a wage of war of Ottomans against the enemy forces, Russia and the European expansionists. Briefly, great British historian Arnold J. Toynbee's 'Challenge and Response' thesis in A Study of History (London, 1949) was found to be a main principle of history against the Ottoman Empire. Every time they challenged the Ottoman Empire. The Turks defended themselves and were the victims of the unjust situation because of what was done to them in those wars and rebellions. We may recognize the inter-communal incidents that took place during 1915 – 1916 as bilateral victimized occasions.

The conflict has arisen from the different interpretations of an historical event. Armenian activists claim that the displacement of Armenians in 1915-1916 constitutes the crime of genocide. The displacement did not intend to destroy the Armenians, on the contrary, it intended to protect them and remove them from war zones for their own security, and also for the security of the Ottoman forces. It has been stated that there is enough evidence to display that the Ottoman government did not intend to destroy Armenian civilians. Unfortunately, these incidents were at first described by Armenian activists as 'massacres.' The first to use the term 'massacre' in connection with the Turkish-Armenian incidents of 1915-16 was used by the Catholicos of Echmiadzin in April 1915. When Raphael Lemkin coined the term in 1944, it was elevated to 'genocide,' and after the Jewish Holocaust in Nazi Germany, Armenian writers began to talk about the 'Armenian proto-holocaust, which in recent times became the 'Armenian Holocaust.' Nearly all of them have called these inter-communal incidents in the eastern part of Turkey in 1915-16 as the 'Armenian Holocaust,' and participants in the 'Generations of Genocide' conference, which took place in England, repeated this expression. I believe many Jewish scholars reserve the term 'Holocaust' to the unique experiences of the Jewish people in Nazi

Germany. It is so difficult to understand why Jewish people have allowed the term to be used by the Armenians.

In the meantime, Armenian militants and rebels committed mass treason and took up arms against their government they also massacred local Muslim and Jewish people in Hakkari region. Here is a document, obtained from the Turkish Foreign Ministry archives, which is aimed at Jewish people living in the eastern part of Turkey in the province of Hakkari:

'From: Foreign Affairs Ministry

To: Foreign Missions in Constantinople

Subject: Atrocities to be made by Russian Army and Armenian in Van

Date: 16 September 1916

Van province was a place where the cruelest massacres were staged. Before Russians invaded Van, 1,200 women and children wanted to flee by means of 14 rowboats. Armenians sank some of the rowboats and also fired at other rowboats. When Russians invaded Van, they distributed poisonous loaves of bread in order to Turks who couldn't flee from the city. They died. (...) Jewish people who fled from Hakkari Province were murdered on the way.'

If this document, which was obtained from primary sources, is examined carefully, one can easily see that the mentioned forces also massacred the local Muslim and Jewish population. Likewise, the Armenians and the Greeks showed a similar negative attitude towards Jews in the Balkan War of 1912:

'TELEGRAM

The White House
Washington

NOV 21 1912

THE PRESIDENT

Received cable report from Constantinople from reliable source that the Greeks are plundering Jewish quarter* in Salonika, destroying the synagogues, raping women, that the German and French ambassadors have protested to the government at Athens and that similar action by our Government is prayed for.

Adolf Kraus'¹

* There were 16 Jewish quarters at that time in Salonica. (E.A.)

¹ National Archives of USA, Washington, RG 59, Box 4515, 367.11/59

Offering this telegram to the President in the same day by Secretary, president directed him to send to P. C. Knox, Secretary of State for his consideration:

THE WHITE HOUSE
WASHINGTON

November 21, 1922

Dear Mr.-Secretary,

The president directs me to send you for the enclosed telegram from Adolf Kraus. President of the B'Mal B'Rith.

Sincerely yours
Charles D. Hughes
Secretary to the President

Hon. P. C. Knox,
Secretary of State

Enclosure²

As it is clearly seen, Greeks also plundered 16 Jewish quarters in Salonika, destroyed synagogues and raping women in 1912. Why did they do so? Because they saw the Turkish and the Jewish brotherhood in the course of history.

Likewise, as it is mentioned above, some Armenians displayed the same attitude towards Jewish people not only in the World War I, but also during the World War II. In the course of World War II, they collaborated with the Nazis, forming the 812th Battalion of the (Nazi) Wehrmacht. Its successor, members of the Armenian legion published anti-Jewish, pro-Nazi propaganda in the Armenian daily Heirenik and the Armenian weekly journal. Whereas, Turkish diplomats, throwing their lives into jeopardy, saved Jewish people from the Nazi Administration, such as the hero in Schindler's List. For instance, Faruk Sayar, a real Turkish hero, with Turkish counterfeit passports, removed 170 Jews from a concentration camp, Draney, in the middle of Paris and sent them to Turkey by ship, raised anchor from Romania. This was not documented anywhere. Sayar's Jewish friend, Mordo Dinar, told his daughter before his death:

² National Archives of USA, Washington, RG 59, Box 4515, 367.11/59

'Faruk had never told us this incident. Before dying, said such as: the most difficult phase of the mission was to find 170 Turkish names for them.'³

Looking at another example, in 1943, Jewish Professor Avram Galanty was a Parliament deputy. It was a Turkish tradition to elect Jews, Armenian and Greek deputies to the Turkish Parliament. This tradition didn't change in the time of the 1960 coup. General Cemal Gürsel, the leader of the 1960 coup, had three representatives of the state presidency, Jew Erol Dilek, counselor of the Grand Rabbi, Armenian Hermine Agavni Kalutsyan, and Greek Kaludi Laskari.⁴ In the meantime, Turks not only did accept Jewish scientists who fled from Nazi Germany, but also sent them to Turkish universities, in 1932.

In addition, Turks assisted Jews to escape from Spain in 1492, embraced them and gave them the most beautiful land throughout the history. Turkish and Jewish people showed mutual solidarism and established brotherhood between them in the course of joint history. Where lies the fault? It is suggested that the fault lie with some of us for trying to learn Turkish-Jewish joint history, written intentionally by them. Consequently, 'Holocaust Uniqueness' cannot be discussed, and this term only belongs to Jewish people. A significant portion of Armenian propaganda efforts in the recent years has been devoted to establish a link between their own historical experiences and those of European Jewry in the course of World War II. Just by taking a material form, you may see the Armenian link in Jewish and Holocaust websites.

**ANOTHER DEFINED WORD, 'DIASPORA', WHY IS IT USED?
ARE WE BECOMING DEPENDENT UPON THE ARMENIANS BY
USING THIS WORD?**

While encyclopedias define Diaspora as 'the scattering of Jews all around the world after the exile', besides the bible defines it by saying 'Christian Jews'. The underlying factor for the relentless Armenian efforts in using the term Diaspora, which is related totally to Jewish history, is their ambition to identify the 1915 events with the Holocaust conducted by Nazis.

³ Nilgün Cerrahoğlu, 'Soykırım Günü', *Cumhuriyet*, 28.01.2002.

⁴ History of Turkish Parliamentary

Also migration of Armenians to other countries occurred before the Ottomans. They traveled to the Balkan Peninsula and to Poland, were exiled from Iran. Then, it must also be regarded as an act of deportation when Fatih Sultan Mehmet allowed them to reside in Istanbul, which was turned down by Byzantine. Protestanization of Armenians and providing transport to the United States by American missionaries in the 19th century should also be regarded as a practice of Diaspora. A Diaspora based upon the events of 1915 and their stress on the genocide is a reflection of the identity crisis that the Armenians are suffering. To stress on the 1915 events, which has no similarity with the Jewish Holocaust, and avoiding remembering Armenian terrorism having its roots back from 1882, is actually an indication that they do not accept to face the historical facts. Why are we legitimizing the Diaspora claims of the separatist Armenians outside of Armenia by using the word? Can't we use 'Armenian-American, Armenian-European, Armenian abroad remaining outside of Armenia' instead?

One more thing, never forget that it may be a head trouble for the countries which support these unjust claims. Hatred turns to terminate itself.

**AN ARMENIAN DECEPTION:
'WHO REMEMBERS THE ARMENIANS - ADOLPH HITLER'**

A commonly used quotation of an alleged statement by Adolph Hitler concerning the Armenian incidents in 1915-16 is a forgery and should not be used. Prof. Dr. Heath Lowry proved it in his article, which he wrote,⁵ and Dr. Robert John, a historian and political analyst of Armenian descent from New York City, demonstrated how he had traced the original document in The Military Branch of the National Archives of the USA. Dr. John showed slides of this document, undated and unsigned, with some words cut out of the last page. The statement was supposed to have been made at a meeting of the top German staff of Obersalzberg on August 22, 1939, a few days prior to his invasion of Poland. Everything written to date has attributed the purported Hitler quote, not to primary sources, but a book that was first

⁵ Heath W. Lowry, 'The U.S Congress and Adolf Hitler on the Armenians', *Political Communication and Persuasion*, Vol. 3 No. 2, pp. 111-140

published in 1942, entitled 'What About Germany' and authored by Louis Lochner and an article that appeared in the Times of London on Saturday, November 24, 1945.⁶ The document was released to the international press covering the Nuremberg War Crimes trials on Friday, November 23, 1945. The trials had commenced that Monday. The document was one of several made available to the press that day. Two hundred fifty copies were given to press correspondents, but only five copies were given to the 17 defense counsels -24 hours before the Court convened on Monday. Much later in the trial, the German defense lawyers were able to introduce the most complete account of the address, taken down by German Admiral Hermann Boehm, which runs to 12 pages in translation. There is no mention of the Armenians, the last clause or the rest of the 'quotation' Dr. Robert John said he believed that the document was introduced to create a climate of hate which was needed to stifle the protests of eminent American jurists such as Sen. R. Taft and Chief Justice Harland Stone.⁷ Afterwards, this quotation was formed in different clauses. For instance, 'who still talks/remembers nowadays of the extermination/annihilation of the Armenians' or 'who after all speaks today of the extermination of the Armenian'. At last it changed this version 'who remembers the Armenians' frequently used Hitler's quote is nothing but a forgery.

This Thematic Definition At the Holocaust Museum in Washington D.C.

Nevertheless, this thematic definition, attributed to Hitler, as I mentioned above, proves there was nothing but a make up, has been at the Holocaust Museum in Washington D.C. Those who have visited should know that this museum has brought a completely new and extraordinary concept of museumology. While the atrocities, beyond human imagination, applied on mankind and on the Jewish race were clearly displayed with documents; observing that similar atrocities are still being applied at different geographic terrain throughout the world, with mankind's unlearning attitude deepened one's anguish. On the other hand, the fact that the important, unjust and unjustified point disconcerting all of us insistently remain non-rectified at this

⁶ Lowry, The U. S... , pp. 113-114

⁷ Armenian Reporter, Vol. 27, No. 40, 1984

exceptional Museum that has been made monumental in order to 'prevent similar events from happening' and claims to be the voice of moral values; continues to hurt us in the name of humanity, in the name of history and casts a big shadow over this monument claiming to sound moral values. It is been stated in the page 164 of a publication, published in 1995, by the mentioned Museum as follows:

'Eventually it was accepted that considering the thematic definition of the exhibition, it should not include a chapter on the Armenians. But in view of the promise that has given to Armenian community'⁸

It will be observed that this quote by Hitler, somewhat looked upon as the source of 'consent for Holocaust', still is being displayed at the very esteemed museum, without clarifying the logic, and any verification; as though it is a forgery, just for the sake of fulfilling a promise made to Armenians previously.

As far as I find out, it has been thought that it has not been removed this so-called thematic definition from this Museum. We shouldn't forget Mustafa Kemal's quote, founder of Turkish Republic State, said in 1925:

'Chronicling history is just as important as making it; if the chronicler does not remain faithful to the achiever, reality takes on a form that confuses mankind.'

Do we believe in myths desired to be heard or actual history, come to light? Do we continue to allow those to distort truths?

Hate Hurts, Hater and Hated

As it is known, it was offered the affirmation of the USA record on the Armenian genocide in the name of the Resolution 596, on October 4th, 2000. Later, it was withdrawn without affirmation thanks to the right-minded administrators. If examined the 2nd section findings, the 18th paragraph of this draft resolution, it will be observed as follows:

'(18) Raphael Lemkin described the crime as 'the systematic destruction of whole national, racial or religious group.' The sort of thing Hitler did to the Jews and the Turks did to the Armenians.'⁹

⁸ The Holocaust Museum in Washington, Rizzoli, New York, 1995, p. 164.

⁹ House of Representatives, 106th Congress, 2nd Session, Report 106-933, H. Res. 596, Oct. 4th, 2000, p. 2.

You can compare equate things let's look at this paragraph, the first party is Hitler the second party is all of the Turkish People. Simply, the whole of the Turkish people has intentionally equated Adolph Hitler as guilty of the crime of Genocide. Would you mind I would like to ask all of you? How many Hitlers are there in Turkey? Respond to answer is 67 million Hitler. It seems to me, it is observed their point of view, how to distort truths on purpose. The time has come to stop psychologically damaging our nation and our children. We should begin to have a campaign 'Do not allow those to distort historical events and truths.'

As long as the Jewish community all over the world allows Armenian activists to use their platform, Muslims' hate will continue. Why? After Armenia gained its independence, it became an expansionist state. As you know, Armenia occupied Nagorno Karabakh, which was Azerbaijani territory through the 20th century, with imperialist methods. This incident is against the U.N. Security Council resolutions. Armenians caused an influx of about more than one million Azerbaijani refugees, who are still living in camps in very poor conditions. What I say in these circumstances is that it is obvious that Armenia invaded Azerbaijan. In a way, Armenia's occupying a neighbour's land by the use of terrorism and forcing more than 1 million poor Muslim from their homes, is a very good reason for the Muslim world to hate Jews. Because it depends on Armenian and Jewish solidarity. It shouldn't be forgotten that 'Hate hurts, hater and hated.'

Anti Semitism Which was Established as a Base to Holocaust - There Hasn't Been Any Anti-Armenian Policy in Turkey

Anti Semitism, applied towards the Jewish people, lies in the root of the Holocaust and has been around for about 1,000 years. There has been non anti-Armenian policy in our country and there is no chance of such a policy.

Not only did Armenians want to speak Turkish in their daily lives, they also wanted to write their poems in Turkish in their own alphabet. There were many Armenian Turkish poets and troubadours. The best builders of minarets, the tall thin towers, which form one or more part of a mosque, from which Muslims are called to prayer, were Armenians. Armenians even took part in mosque building organizations and foundations. In other words,

there were many Armenians among those who contributed to the joint Turkish culture. In the beginning of the World War I, the Armenian Ottoman subjects joined the Ottoman military. Some of them also died in the Ottoman uniform in order to save our country from the enemy. The number of dead reached to hundreds when even the officers serving in the health teams alone are taken into account. For instance, in August 1916, the health squadron leader Captain Agop Ekmekçiyen, Captain Dilbekçiyen and Captain Ferhatyan died in 1915 at the front, yet it is strange to see that these Armenian patriots died at the time of the so-called Armenian genocide. Captain Aristidi Tereyannis, who was Greek in origin, Captain Bahor, Captain Corci who was Jewish, Captain Elmasyan and others died for the sake of our fatherland. Gülhane Military Medical Academy paid a tribute by inscribing the names of those people at the entrance to its museum on a granite plate, forever immortalizing them. If you find yourself in the area, please pray for their souls of those brave men.

During World War I, war and violence were common in the eastern Turkey. The war went on between the Ottoman Empire and Russia, and the other was inter-communal violence between Muslims and some Ottoman Armenians. The ethnic conflicts in the Eastern Anatolia began when Armenian rebels attacked the Muslims in Van, then spread to other cities and to the every corner of the country. The Russians and Armenians forced the Muslims of the Eastern Anatolia from their homes with great loss of life, just as they had done to earlier generations of Muslims in other regions. In Van province, nearly two-thirds of the Muslims were dead by the end of the war.¹⁰

The Ottoman Armenians Betrayed and Manipulated

Unfortunately, the Ottoman Armenians were manipulated for the sake of the schemes of the European expansionist powers. As well as the Russians, who tried to settle our hard working Armenian patriots onto lands that they gained, the French manipulated the Armenians after World War I because they could not send their military forces to that region. Just as the United Kingdom manipulated Greece, the first nation-state formed in the 19th century, and used it as a British sword in the Eastern Anatolia during the Turkish War of Independence.

¹⁰ Justin McCarthy, *Victims and Charitable Men*, (Isparta, 2001), p. 40.

CONCLUSION

First of all, as the Turkish historians, researchers and scholars, as the grand children of 3 million victimized Turkish people in the World War I, we also look forward to using this platform in order to respond the lies, the exaggerated claims and the calumnies of Armenian activists. We anticipate participating in the Holocaust Memorial Day in the United Kingdom in as a workshop at least as a

**Both Armenians and Turks
need to realize that they
cannot improve their
relationship by relying on
prejudice, hatred and a
sense of vengeance...**

respond cell at the School of Oriental and African Studies. As Ben Barkow, the president of the Wiener Library promised us, we hope to meet the Armenian Activists in the round table in order to tell about ourselves.

Turks have been brothers to the Jews for over 500 years, and have embraced and given them a homeland. That will continue for sure up to eternity. As for the Turkish-Armenian relationship, both Armenians and Turks need to realize that they cannot improve their relationship by relying on prejudice, hatred and a sense of vengeance, so skillfully incited and manipulated in the past by the selfish expansionist powers.

Armenians and Turks, who, before the expansionist powers embarked upon policies aiming to exploit them for their own interests, had lived in amity, and even fraternity with each other, deserve to reconcile their differences and solve their current problems for a better future for their peoples.

If Armenia and Turkey, excluding the Armenians abroad, really desire to reconcile their differences, no matter how entrenched these may seem, then common ground may be found to do so.

ATTITUDES OF THE GREAT POWERS TOWARDS THE OTTOMAN ARMENIANS UP TO THE OUTBREAK OF THE FIRST WORLD WAR

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Abstract:

This article examines the reasons behind the Great Powers' involvement in the affairs of the Ottoman Armenians. It searches how their involvement affected Ottoman-Armenian relations. The paper argues that Armenian-Ottoman relations were to remain good until the second half of the 19th century. From this time onwards, however, these relations began to decline because of the Great Power's direct involvement in the Ottoman internal matters. The paper also deals with the responses of the Ottoman Government to the foreign intervention and how it affected the Ottoman relations with the Great Powers.

Keywords:

The Ottoman Empire, Great Powers, The Ottoman-Russian War of 1877, Sultan Abdülhamit II, The Eastern Question, Anglo-Russian Rivalry, Tsar Alexander II, The Young Turks, Armenian Revolts

INTRODUCTION

This study scrutinizes Turco-Armenian relations in the context of the Great Power politics. It also examines the reasons behind the Great Power's interests in the affairs of the Ottoman Armenians. As a background, the paper first deals with the beginning of close relations between the two communities in course of time. Throughout the history, it is well known that the Armenian population, after they had been deported and persecuted in many times by the Persian and Byzantine Empires, found the Turkish justice and Islamic tolerance as a great relief to themselves. The paper shows that the Armenian population had received such a great deal of freedom and tolerance from the Ottoman administration that this established a strong bond and trust between the two communities, and that is why the Armenians were called as the trustworthy subjects, 'Millet-i Sadıka' by the Ottomans.

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These cordial relations between the Ottomans and Armenians however began to weaken during the second half of the 19th century at a time when the Ottoman Empire started to descent from the power. This situation provided a good opportunity for the Great Powers, which had long waited for the disintegration of the Ottoman Empire. These powers also gave promises to Armenian leaders for setting up an independent or an autonomous Armenia in return for their cooperation with them. Their real aim, however, was to use the Armenian question as a pretext to interfere in the domestic affairs of the Ottoman Empire and whereby seizing the opportunity to destroy the Empire from inside. Afterwards the Armenian groups under foreign instigations began to arm themselves and revolt against the state.

This study is based on first hand, and second hand materials available both in Turkish and English. It examines the topic in two parts: first part provides background information for the topic, and deals with the foreign involvement in the affairs of the Ottoman Armenians until the outbreak of the Ottoman-Russian War of 1877-78. The second part starts with the examination of the results of the Ottoman-Russian War with which the Armenian question turned into an international issue for the first time. The study, then, analyzes the policies of the Great Powers of the time towards the Ottoman Armenians up to the eruption of the Great War in 1914.

Historical Background: Great Powers and Turco-Armenian Relations Up to the Outbreak of the Ottoman-Russian War of 1877

It was historically known that the Armenian population who had settled in the Southern Caucasus region had been badly treated by the ruling powers of the time such as the Roman, Persian and Byzantine Empires before the Seljuk's Empire established its domination in the region. The arrival of Seljuks in the region hence brought peace and tolerance to the Armenians. In 1071 the Armenians came under the rule of the Seljuks when the Sultan, Alp Arslan, terribly defeated the Byzantine Empire. Unlike the Byzantine Empire, the Seljuks provided a great deal of freedom and rights for the Armenian Church. The famous Armenian historian Mateos described the Seljuk Turks in the following sense: *'Sultan Melikşah conquered Byzantine territories. He treated well the Christians... He brought peace and welfare to the Armenian population'*.¹

After the Seljuks, the Mongols captured the Armenian lands and this caused them to scatter to eastern Anatolia, Cilicia, and other places around the Caucasus. When the Ottoman State was established in 1299, its founder, Osman, gave permission to the Armenians to organize themselves in Anatolia as a separate community, and they built their church in Kütahya. The Ottoman-Armenian relations further improved after the conquest of İstanbul by Sultan Mehmet II, who rendered further rights and liberties to Armenian community. Afterwards, Ottoman-Armenian relations were steadily developed, and in time the Armenians became one of the most trustworthy subjects of the Ottoman State called as Millet-i Sadıka. Later on, following further Ottoman conquests, all the areas inhabited by the Armenians were added to the boundaries of the Ottoman Empire during the reign of Selim in 1514.²

Not long before, the communities under the rule of the Ottoman Empire were reorganized in accordance with their religion, each under its own religious head who had some powers of civil jurisdiction and administration, called as 'Millet' system. The Armenian community was also integrated into the Millet system whereby they obtained further religious rights and liberties. The Armenian community was recognized as 'Gregorian Millet' under the Millet system. The Ottoman administration acknowledged the Patriarch of İstanbul as the religious head of the Armenian community.³

The Millet system was an important factor for the development of Armenian nationhood. The religious community identity eventually led the creation of the Armenian National Assembly in 1862 after the Regulations for the Armenian Nation was promulgated in 1860. According to the regulations, the Armenians would be under an elected council of 140 representatives, mixed clerical and lay, the Patriarch being as the official president. The Ottoman Government accepted this plan on 29 March 1863. This act, hence, became the first crucial step for the formation of Armenian national aspirations. Though this was the case, the

¹ Erol Kürkçüoğlu, 'Tarihi Süreçte Selçuklu-Ermeni İlişkileri' *Ermeni Araştırmaları*, No. 8, Winter 2003, pp. 335-341.

² Foreign Office Handbook, May 1919, FO 373/5, p. 16; Salahi Ramadan Sonyel, *The Ottoman Armenians: Victims of Great Power Diplomacy*, (London: Rustem & Brother, 1987), pp. 10-11

³ Erdal İter, *Ermeni Kilisesi ve Terör*, (Ankara, 1999), p.22; Sonyel, *The Ottoman...*, pp. 10-11.

Armenian community was still loyal to the Ottoman Government and it was still regarded as trustworthy community by the latter.⁴

Since the early 17th century, the Armenian community began to attract economic interests of the Great Powers because of their success in trade and commerce. They engaged in trade with India and received in 1688 privileges from the Company of London Merchants to the East Indies. The Armenians hence began to earn fame in international trade. A century later, when the Ottoman Empire began to decline, the European Powers approached the Armenian population from political aspects. These powers began to think the use of the Armenian community for the purpose of weakening the Ottoman State from inside. This European interest thus established a ground for spreading separatist ideas among the Ottoman Armenian community.⁵

France was the first European state which showed political interest in the affairs of the Ottoman Armenians. There were also religious and economic reasons behind its interest. In 1535, France obtained the rights of capitulations from the Ottoman Sultan and this led her to send its missionaries into the Ottoman territories in order to spread Catholic Faith among the Armenian community. The Armenians who engaged in trade were attracted to choose Catholicism as a result of the economic privileges given to France.⁶

France, which longed to extent its economic and political interests to Anatolia and Mediterranean, planned to use the Armenian population to realize these objectives. The French administration hoped that the Armenian inhabitants in the Ottoman Empire would see France as savior to rescue them from the Ottoman rule. The French thought that the Armenians, who occupied higher posts in the governmental offices in the Empire would be useful to realize French political aims. During the reign of Sultan Murat IV, (1623-1640), it was reported that the Gregorian Armenians in the Empire began to be converted into Catholicism and this, under the French propaganda, eventually led the spread of separatist ideas among the Armenian community. To influence the Armenians more, the French authorities opened a new

4 Foreign Office Handbook, May 1919, FO 373/5, p. 16.

5 Foreign Office Handbook, May 1919, FO 373/5, p. 17; Salim Cöhce, 'Osmanlı Ermeni Toplumunda Siyasallaşma Çabaları' *Ermeni Araştırmaları*, No. 8, pp. 51-53.

6 Cöhce, 'Osmanlı...', pp. 51-53.

department of Armenian Language in the School of Eastern Languages. Eventually, Sultan Mahmut II, because of growing French pressures, recognized the Catholic Armenians as a separate religious community under Millet System. France, thereafter, declared itself as the protector of Catholic minorities within the Ottoman Empire.⁷

In the meantime, Russia was another power which began to show political, economic and military interests towards the Armenians. Russia had long commercial ties with Armenians since 11th century. The latter's importance to Russia was at first of an industrial and commercial, later on of a military character. As Russia turned into a powerful Empire towards the end of 17th century, its Tsarist policy had always been to reach an outlet into the warm waters of the Mediterranean with the ultimate goal of seizing the city of Istanbul and the Turkish Straits. To fulfill this objective, Russia began to consider weakening the Ottoman strength from within itself by inciting national desires of Ottoman Christian population, especially those with whom it shared a common Orthodox religious heritage such as the Greeks, the Slavs and the Armenians.⁸

A century later, Peter the Great of Russia encouraged the Armenians to settle in his country in order to prosecute and to teach the manufacture of silk. The Russian-Armenian contacts also encouraged some of the Armenian leaders in the Ottoman Empire to turn their faces to Russia for salvation. Peter the Great, saw the Armenians as valuable allies against the Ottomans when he commenced his military campaign towards Caucasus, Persia and Central Asia from 1722 onwards. However, this Russian campaign against the Turks was not much successful, and hence Peter the Great who promised help, abandoned the Armenians on their own fate. Some decades later, when the Russians attacked the Ottoman Empire in 1768, their Empress, Catherine II, gave long expectations to Armenians for setting up an Armenian Kingdom under Russian Protection, but with no result.⁹

In 1802, Alexander I added Georgia, which had been under Russian influence since 1783, to the territories of the Russian

7 Yusuf Sarıncay, 'Fransa'nın Ermenilere Yönelik Politikasının Temelleri', *Ermeni Araştırmaları*, No. 7, pp. 55-65.

8 Report on the Bosphorus and the Dardanelles by Foreign Office Research Department, 6 January 1947, FO 371/96550; Foreign Office Handbook, May 1919, FO 373/5, p. 18.

9 Foreign Office Handbook, May 1919, FO 373/5, p.18; Sonyel, *The Ottoman...*, pp. 11-12.

Empire. In 1828, by arrangement with Persia, Russia obtained Erivan together with the ecclesiastical capital (Echmiadzin) of Armenia. By the treaty of Adrianople (Edirne) in 1829 Russia acquired much of the Caucasus region, along with some recognition as protector of Christians under the Ottoman rule. During the war between Russia and the Ottoman Empire in 1828, the Armenians began to demand Russian protection against the Muslim rule. Throughout the war, the Armenians in Erzurum and Kars collaborated with Russia, and at the end of the war, fearing from Turkish retaliation, many of the Armenian inhabitants of the two cities fled to Russia. Simultaneously, in accordance with the agreement reached between the two countries, around 40 thousand Armenian people migrated from the Ottoman territories to Russia.¹⁰

During the period 1811-1841, when Mohammad Ali, under Ottoman suzerainty, made the Sultan's position uncertain both in Egypt and İstanbul, the Ottoman Empire began to rely on Russia for its survival. The Sublime Porte for a time recognized the Russian influence when she upheld the privileges of the Christians. However, this influence was ruined during the Crimean War with the serious defeat of Russia by other European Powers in coalition with the Turks in 1856. Though Russia began to degrade from her role of sole protector over the Armenian population in the Ottoman Empire, Tsar Alexander II continued to carry out his plan in setting up an independent Armenia under Russian protectorate until 1881 at a time when he was assassinated.¹¹

In the period from the Crimean War to the war of 1877-78, the European Powers, other than Russia, did not much interested politically in the affairs of the Ottoman Armenians and the latter kept themselves aloof from the provocative activities of their brethren in the Caucasus. Moscow in line with Pan-Slavism policy was busy to provoke a Slav rebellion in the Balkans, and an Armenian rebellion in the eastern Anatolia. However, the Porte still continued to maintain its confidence on the Armenian fidelity. Nevertheless, at this time, some Armenian papers began to openly defend the idea of an independent Armenian state.¹²

¹⁰ Foreign Office Handbook, May 1919, FO 373/5, pp.18; Davut Kılıç, 'Rusya'nın Doğu Anadolu Siyasetinde Eçmiyazın Kilisesi'nin Rolü (1828-1915)' *Ermeni Araştırmaları*, No. 2, pp. 52-53.

¹¹ Foreign Office Handbook, May 1919, FO 373/5, p.19.

¹² Esat Uras, *Tarihte Ermeniler ve Ermeni Meselesi*, (İstanbul: Belge Yayınları, 1987), pp. 181-198; Sonyel, *The Ottoman...*, pp. 15, 23-28, 42.

Great Powers' Involvement in the Armenian Affairs after the Ottoman-Russian War

The Ottoman-Russian War was eventually commenced on 24 April 1877 by the Russian attack with a pretext claiming that the Christians were badly treated by the latter. The real aim behind the Russian move was, in fact, to realize its Pan-Slavist aims that were the destruction of the Ottoman Empire. The war ended with a serious defeat faced by the Ottoman Empire on 31 January 1878. During the war, before the Russian Armies occupied Erzurum, some Armenians betraying the Ottomans had joined the invaders.¹³

Moreover, this war created an opportunity for some of the Armenian separatist groups who were after an independent state. Armenian nationalists appealed to British Ambassador asking him to secure British assistance for the establishment of an Armenian State. In his report to the Foreign Office, the British Ambassador stated that these kinds of activities by some of the Armenian groups were indeed supported by the Russian agents and the Armenian educated people and intellectuals were in general opposed to collaboration with Moscow against Istanbul.¹⁴ Furthermore, the Armenian Patriarch Nerses, in his letter to the British Foreign Office in 1878, asked for the British intervention towards the establishment of an independent state in Eastern Anatolia.¹⁵

At the end of the war, to begin with, the treaty of San Stefano (Yeşilköy) was concluded by Russia and the Ottoman Empire in February 1878. However, the European Powers did not recognize the treaty because it contained harsh terms for the Ottoman Empire in which it threatened the interests of the Great Powers. As a result of the Great Power's intervention, the Treaty of Berlin was signed in July 1878. Article 61 of the treaty obliged the Porte to carry out a reform program for the Armenians. Therefore the Great Powers put the Eastern Question, that was the plan to divide the Ottoman Empire, on practice. This plan began to be realized in accordance with the terms of Berlin Treaty as Serbia, Montenegro and Romania were detached from the Ottoman territories, Bulgaria

¹³ Sonyel, *The Ottoman...*, p. 45.

¹⁴ For the British Report see, Sonyel, *The Ottoman...*, pp. 40-41; Uras, *Tarihte...*, pp. 199-226.

¹⁵ İtler, *Ermeni...*, pp. 37-38.

became autonomous; and under the guise of reform package for the Armenians, the European Powers were given a free hand to interfere into the domestic affairs of the Ottoman Empire.

This treaty also initiated a new age for the Armenian minority as well as for the Ottoman-Armenian relations. The issue of the Armenian Question, for the first time, was included in an international treaty. The treaty, in time, became an instrument for the foreign powers to encourage rebellions among the Christian

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Minorities against the Ottoman authority. This hence led the Armenians to plan their rebellious activities with the ultimate objective of setting up of an independent or autonomous state in the eastern Anatolia where they lived as a small minority group. As a result, Ottoman-Armenian relations began to worsen from this time onwards.

On Ottoman-Armenian relations, Sultan Abdülhamit II made the following remarks in his memoirs:

'How absurd is to accuse us (the Turks) of persecuting the Armenian people. If one looks at the Ottoman History, he can easily see that the Armenians have always lived in comfort and benefited greatly from the economic resources of our country. If one is familiar with this, he knows that the Armenian subjects are far richer than the Muslim ones are. In all times, the Armenians have occupied high offices including the post of Grand Vizier in the state. The number Armenian officials constitute the rate of one in three from the all officials in the state. Furthermore, the Armenians, as it was the case for the other minorities, are not conscripted but they pay only a small amount of tax instead. They are the ones who control the tax system. When Reşit Paşa wanted to end the old tax (iltizam) system in 1839 the Armenians had first shown their opposition to it...'¹⁶

The new Sultan, Abdülhamit II, was an expert on the nature of Great Power politics and hence well recognized their objectives. He wanted to carry out the reform program for the Armenians on his own terms, but not on the conditions that were imposed by the foreigners. Therefore, when the Armenians realized that the Sultan was not to be a toy in the hands of the Great Powers they began to

¹⁶ Sultan Abdülhamit: *Siyasi Hatıratım* prepared by Ali Vehbi Bey (Istanbul: Dergah Yayınları, 1987), pp. 72-73.

adopt subversive and rebellious tactics through guerilla warfare and armed revolt. To realize their objectives, some Armenian groups set up revolutionary organizations such as Hunchak and Dashnak outside the Ottoman borders in late 1880's. With the foreign support behind them, these groups carried out long campaign against the state authority and civilian population by applying terrorist methods and causing escalation of bloodshed in Anatolia.¹⁷

After 1877-78 Ottoman-Russian War, England, which wanted to diminish Russian influence in the Middle East, emerged as a principal power closely interested in the affairs of the Ottoman Armenians. With the Cyprus Convention signed between London and İstanbul on 4 June 1878, Britain was recognized as a principal observer to control the realization of the reform package for the Armenians.¹⁸ Simultaneously, a radical change occurred in the perceptions of Ottoman and British governments towards each other.

These points were expressed by Sultan Abdülhamit II in his memoirs in the following sense:

*'...the issue of reform program for the Armenians was included to the treaty by the European Powers (Britain was chief of them) because they wanted to use it as pretext to interfere in the affairs of the Ottoman Empire. This led Armenians to rebel... Britain, through using the issue of reform package for the Armenians, threatened the Porte by saying that it could use the Armenian question against the Ottoman State.'*¹⁹

After the Treaty of Berlin, Britain asked for temporary possession of Cyprus Island in order to send military assistance to the Ottoman Empire in case of any further Russian attack to its territories. Eventually, the Sultan accepted the British occupation of the island on condition that London should return it after the Russian threat had passed. However, the British Government, in addition to its possession of the Cyprus, occupied Egypt in 1882. This British move signaled a change, opposite to its traditional approach to the Porte, in its policy towards the Ottoman Empire.

¹⁷ See for more information: *Documents On Ottoman Armenians*, Volumes I, II, (Ankara, Prime Ministry Directorate General of Press and Information, no date); Bilal Şimşir, *British Documents On Ottoman Armenians*, Volumes I, II, III, IV, (Ankara: TTK, 1989); *Documents on Massacre Perpetrated by the Armenians* prepared by Turkish Historical Association, (Ankara: TTK, 2001).

¹⁸ Sonyel, *The Ottoman...*, pp. 40, 53.

¹⁹ *Sultan Abdülhamit...*, pp. 80-81.

British statesman came to think that the protection of the Empire against Russia would not provide for the security of her interests in India, Africa and Mediterranean areas and hence it began to adopt a different policy. From the Ottoman point of view, the occupation of Cyprus and Egypt made a profound negative impact on the mind of Sultan Abdülhamit-II and his administration. They lost their confidence in Britain's role as the only European power anxious to ensure the survival of the Ottoman Empire. This idea forced the Ottomans to search for alternative policies. The Sultan hence approached Germany, which itself, was looking for an opportunity to enter the Middle East market, and thus, was ready for collaboration.²⁰

British-Armenian relations date back to the Crusades. During the wars between Christians and Muslims, King Henry asked for Armenian assistance when its army arrived at Cilicia and this request was met by the Armenian King. Though Armenian-British contacts continued on a small scale in the later periods no serious Armenian existence was recorded in Britain until the 17th century. In this century, Armenian traders came to contact with British merchants and the former were given special privileges from London in 1688. In fact, the Armenian merchants had, long before the British ones, begun to trade with India and they at the same time established their contacts with Britain. In the course of time, the Armenians in India became crucial to Britain as the latter planned to colonize the country. This was because the Armenians showed their readiness to help the British against the Indians. Therefore, the Armenian settlement in Britain began to occur.²¹

During 1840s, Britain began to send its missionaries to spread Protestant Faith among the Christian minorities, chief of them were the Armenians, in the Ottoman Empire. Britain first built a temple for the Protestants in 1842 in Jerusalem, and then, in 1846, it established an organization for some parts of the Armenian Community, which was recognized as 'Armenian Protestant Millet' four years later.²²

²⁰ Osman Okyar, 'Turco-British Relations in the Inter-War Period: Fethi Okyar's Mission to London' in *Four Centuries of Turco-British Relations* Hale and Bağış (eds.), (North Humberston: The Eothen Press, 1984), p. 65.

²¹ Foreign Office Handbook, May 1919, FO 373/5, p. 16; Sedat Laçiner, 'Armenian Diaspora in Britain and the Armenian Question', *Ermeni Araştırmaları*, No. 3, pp. 239-241.

²² Erdal İler, *Ermeni Meselesi'nin Doğuşunda ve Gelişmesinde İngiltere'nin Rolü*, (Ankara: Ankara Üniversitesi Basımevi, 1995), p. 160.

British-Armenian relations continued on trade in the following decades. In early 19th century, additional Armenian merchants went to Britain for doing trade. The Armenian merchants exported silk, natural fibers, textile products to the Ottoman Empire while they imported tobacco, and food to Britain. However, the number of Armenian settlers was still very small in Britain, for instance, there were only 60 Armenians in Manchester in the year 1860. Afterwards, the Armenian migration to Britain, mostly from the Ottoman territories, began to increase. They were traders and some rebels, and their immigration there began to affect the Anglo-Ottoman relations. The Armenian refugees embarked a campaign to arouse British public opinion against the Ottoman State.²³

These campaigns brought their results at a time when the liberal government under William Ewart Gladstone came to power in 1880. He paid attention to the Armenian allegations and adopted a hostile attitude towards the Porte under the guise of protecting the rights of Christians. Therefore, under these circumstances, England took the place of Russia to involve in the affairs of the Ottoman Armenians in the following three decades. In August 1878, the British Ambassador in İstanbul had already given a note to the Porte asking for the immediate commencement of the reform program for the Armenians.

The Ottoman Government, however, interpreted this act as British interference in the Ottoman domestic affairs and strongly reacted to it. Nevertheless, upon the constant pressures by the government in London, Sultan Abdülhamit gave his response stating that he could materialize the reform package on the condition that HMG (His or Her Majesty's Government) should provide the necessary credit to do the job. HMG, however, indicated that it could not provide enough credit, except a small amount, taking the Ottoman financial position into account that it was unable to repay its debt. The Ottoman finance, indeed, was under severe conditions at the time.²⁴

In 1879, the governments in London and Moscow made a joint approach to the Porte forcing the latter to establish two

²³ Laçiner, 'Armenian...', pp. 240-241.

²⁴ Elie Kedourie, *England and the Middle East: The Destruction of the Ottoman Empire 1914-1921*, (USA: Westview Press, 1987), pp. 20-22; George Lenczowski, *The Middle East in World Affairs*, (USA: Cornell University Press, 1980); Halil İnalcık and Donald Quataert (eds.), *An Economic and Social History of the Ottoman Empire*, Vol. II, (Cambridge University Press, 1994), p. 764; Sonyel, *The Ottoman...*, pp. 57-58.

commissions to examine the conditions of the Armenians where they lived. The Ottoman Government, however, was not in a position to carry out the reforms and repeatedly asked from Britain for financial assistance. When London turned into a deaf ear to İstanbul's requests, then Anglo-Ottoman relations began to strain increasingly.²⁵

In the meantime, some Armenian groups under Russian intrigues began to make plans for rebellion in places where they constituted a minor community. They thought that their community should be granted independence as in the cases that Serbia, Montenegro and Romania were given their independence. The Armenian Patriarch in İstanbul was also involved in these activities. Patriarch Nerses declared that it was the Church's ultimate objective to get either autonomous or independent Armenian State. In 1877, the first step was taken towards this end by inciting an uprising in Zeitun area (near the province of Maraş). Together with the British mediation, the mutiny ended in February 1879.²⁶

The fervent British involvement in the affairs of the Ottoman Armenians had a close connection with Anglo-Russian rivalry. As Russia, with the Treaty of Berlin, became a dominant power in Caucasus and the Balkans and, began to expand southwards, this Russian position constituted a serious threat to British supremacy in the Gulf and the route to India. Britain began to see the Armenian inhabitant areas as a buffer zone to block the Russian advance. For this reason, Britain, though was reluctant to provide any financial assistance, continued to pressure on the Sublime Porte for carrying out the reform scheme. Furthermore, it applied to Germany and Russia to make a joint approach for this purpose in 1883. However, neither Germany nor Russia showed any sympathy to the British request. This eventually led İstanbul to come closer with Berlin.²⁷

Russia itself began to reverse its traditional Armenian policy from 1883 onwards. This was because Moscow was uncomfortable with the British intervention in modifying the San Stefano Treaty

²⁵ Sonyel, *The Ottoman...*, pp. 57-66.

²⁶ Uras, *Tarihte...*, pp. 185-198, 210; Abdullah Yaman, *Ermeni Meselesi ve Türkiye*, (İstanbul: Otağ Yayını, 1973), p. 80.

²⁷ Foreign Office Handbook, May 1919, FO 373/5, p. 22; Şener Aksu (ed.), *Ermeni Sorunu Rehberi*, (Kocaeli: Kocaeli Üniversitesi Yayını, 2001), p. 38; Okyar, "Turco...", p. 65; Lenczowski, *The Middle...*, pp. 42-43.

and of its becoming a new protector of the Ottoman Armenian Community. The assassination of the Tsar Alexander II, who had some project of an autonomous Armenia in 1881, was another reason for the change of Russian policy. His successors thought that the growth of revolutionary ideas claiming independence in Eastern Anatolia was detrimental to the Russian interests. The successor governments in Moscow feared that these ideas might spread into the Russian borders and might initiate a revolutionary movement among its own Armenian subjects. Russia followed this policy until the Young Turks came to power in 1908.²⁸

Contemporaneously, the Armenian revolutionary organizations began to be set up. The Armenagan Party in Van was founded in 1885, and this was followed by Hintchak Party in 1887, and Dashnaktsutiun in 1890. Because of the reform program for the Armenians was not realized by the Porte for economic reasons, and the cession of Russian support for the Armenian Community, these parties took the matter in their hands by organizing rebellions and by adopting the methods of terror in different parts of Anatolia. By applying these methods, these organizations aimed at getting European intervention by propagating that the process of extermination of Armenian Community in Anatolia was commenced by the Ottomans. Thus, the years between 1890 and 1897, about 40 Armenian uprisings occurred.²⁹

As explained before, Russia, in the periods between 1883 and 1900, did not much involved in the affairs of the Ottoman Armenians. In the early 1900s, however, Moscow began to show some interest in the Armenian issue by asking the Porte for the initiation of the reform package. Not long before, Moscow, however, began to take a hostile attitude towards the Armenian population in Caucasus. Russia provoked the Tartars of Transcaucasia to attack the Armenian population there. Afterwards, the Tzarist Government made serious attempts to Russianize the Armenians and this resulted in great disappointment to the latter. The Armenian communities in Caucasus thereafter began to look for the Patriarchate in Istanbul with a view to realize their ultimate goal of the establishment of an independent state. Concurrently, the advent to power of the Young

²⁸ Foreign Office Handbook, May 1919, FO 373/5, p. 19.

²⁹ Azmi Süslü and others, *Türk Tarihinde Ermeniler*, (Ankara, 1995), pp. 125-187.

Turks with the Party of the Committee of Union and Progress, (CUP), in İstanbul further increased their hope of obtaining at least an autonomous Armenian State.

The members of the CUP were a group of reformers, who inspired their ideas from Britain and France. They wanted to take radical measures for reforming the whole system of the Ottoman Empire. They were against the regime of Sultan Abdülhamit II, and worked for bringing a constitutional regime to the Ottoman Empire. After series of meetings, the members of the CUP came together with other dissented groups such as Hintchak, Dashnak, and Jews etc. in November 1907 in Paris. All the groups agreed on the overthrow of the present regime at the time, but they had their differences on the role of the state authority. While the members of the CUP favored a strong central authority, the Armenian parties, in particular, defended to set up a decentralized system.³⁰

Consequently, the CUP came to power in 1908 as a result of revolution and forced the Sultan to promulgate the Constitution for a second time. A year later, the Young Turks removed Abdülhamit II from power. With the promulgation of the Constitution, the Armenian parties and the CUP came closer each other. Their flirt however did not last long. Though the Armenian groups were given additional rights, such as permitting them to carry arm, and freeing many Armenian prisoners, by the new government they misused these liberties, and soon under foreign intrigues, they began to arm themselves and organized new uprisings. Not long before, an Armenian revolt took place in Adana in April 1909. This mutiny did not fall from the Russian notice and made it to realize once more about the value of the Armenian alliance to its objectives.³¹

This new change occurred in Russian foreign policy towards the Armenians had a close connection with the developments taking place on international politics. In this period Germany began to enter the Middle East and the Near Eastern markets through the construction of Baghdad Railway, which was the greatest regional project at the time, frightened other powers such as Russia, France

³⁰ Semih Yalçın, 'Mustafa Kemal Paşa'nın İttihatçılığı' in Hasan Celal Güzel, et.al, (eds.), *Türkler*, (Ankara: Yeni Türkiye Yayınları, 2002), pp. 245-262; Hasan Ünal, 'İttihat Terakki ve Dış Politika, (1906-1909) in Hasan Celal Güzel, et.al, (eds.), *Türkler*, (Ankara: Yeni Türkiye Yayınları, 2002), pp. 212-227; Ahmet Eyicil, 'Osmanlı İttihat ve Terakki Cemiyeti', in Hasan Celal Güzel, et.al, (eds.), *Türkler*, (Ankara: Yeni Türkiye Yayınları, 2002), pp. 228-244.

³¹ Foreign Office Handbook, May 1919, FO 373/5, p. 23; Sonyel, *The Ottoman...*, pp. 280-281.

and Britain whom they all had deep economic and political interests in those regions.³² Therefore, the latter powers began to come closer and on 31 August 1907 Britain and Russia, leaving their rivalries aside, reached agreement on all issues related to these regions.³³ After having reached an agreement with Britain, Russia felt itself free to use the Armenian card against the Ottoman State.

After the Adana Revolt, Ottoman-Armenian relations began to get worse. In February 1911, the British Vice Consul in Van reported the following observations: *'It is impossible to overlook the fact that, in all places where there are no Armenian political organizations, or where such organizations are imperfectly developed, Armenians live in comparative harmony with the Turks and Kurds... because Turkish officials are not excited against the Armenians by intrigues, imaginary or otherwise...'*³⁴ In another British report, in March 1913, it was indicated that the Armenian revolutionary committees were active in Adana, Dörtüol and in other places to organize armed bands and public uprisings.³⁵ Confirming the British reports, Ottoman documents provide detailed information about the activities of the Armenian organizations. In these documents, it was reported that the branches of Hintchak and Dashnak Parties were busy to provide arms for the rebels in Anatolia whereby to prepare a ground for a widespread mutiny against the Ottoman authority.³⁶

Russia began to show a keen interest in the affairs of the Ottoman Armenians as the Great War was becoming ever closer. During the discussions between the foreign ministers of Russia and Britain, in May 1913, Sazanof, the Russian Foreign Minister, stated that Russia attributed a great importance to the reform question for the Armenians and he made a request that the three Ambassadors of the Triple Alliance should meet to discuss the reform scheme for the Armenians. The ambassadors of the Great

³² Mustafa Sıtkı Bilgin, 'Türk-Irak İlişkilerinin Tarihsel Boyutu, 1534-2002'in Ümit Özdağ, et.al, (eds.), *Irak Krizi (2002-2003)*, (Ankara: ASAM, 2003), p. 215.

³³ Nicolson to Grey, (Russia: Annual Report for 1907), 8 February 1908, *British Documents on Foreign Affairs: Reports and Papers from the Foreign Office Confidential Print* (Hereafter shortened as B DFA), Part 1, Vol. 5, Kenneth Bourne, D. Cameron Watt (eds.), (University Publications of America, 1983), pp. 75-81.

³⁴ Quoted from Sonyel, *The Ottoman...*, p. 282.

³⁵ Sonyel, *The Ottoman...*, p. 283.

³⁶ *Ermeni Komitelerinin Amal ve Harekat-ı İhtilaliyyesi* prepared by H. Erdoğan Cengiz, (Ankara: Başbakanlık Basımevi, 1983), pp. 118-142.

Powers eventually met in İstanbul in the summer of the same year. While the Russians, which became the champion of the Armenian cause was supported by Britain and France, Germany and Austrian Empire favored the Ottoman side.³⁷

Nevertheless, there existed some sort of disagreement between Moscow and London about the adoption of tactics for the Armenian reform program to be pursued towards the Porte. While Russia insisted on dictating their terms on the Porte without even consulting the CUP Government, Britain maintained that the Ottoman Government should be called to join the discussions. Russia, however, objected to the British tactic by stating that the Russian Government did pay a great attention to Armenian demands, which strongly objected to any idea of consultation with the Porte on the reform issue.³⁸ Though, later, Great Powers reached an agreement on the issue, the outbreak of the Great War prevented this agreement to be put on practice.

Just prior to the outbreak of the Great War, Russia draw the lines of its policy towards the Ottoman Armenians. Sazanof, in his speech to Duma on 23 May 1914, pointed out that:

*'...Contiguity of the Eastern provinces of Anatolia with Russia including many Armenians among their inhabitants, could not leave the Imperial Government indifferent to the position of affairs near our frontier...'*³⁹ The Turkish documents provide the following information for the Russian activities concerning the Armenians that:

'According to reliable information from the Armenians in the Caucasus the Russians have provoked Armenians living in our country, by promises that they will be granted independence in territories to be annexed from Ottoman land, and that they have brought many of own men disguised as Turkish peasants to the Armenian villages in our country, that they have stored arms and ammunition in many places to be distributed to Armenians, and moreover, the of Russian General Loris Melikov went to the Van region for the same purpose. In this context, Armenian leaders in our country, have decided to pursue the following policy:

To (sic) They (will) preserve their loyalty in tranquility pending the declaration of war. If war is to be declared, Armenian soldiers in

³⁷ Buchanan to Grey (Russia: Annual Report, 1913), 4 March 1914, *B DFA*, Part 1, Vol. 6, pp. 365-368.

³⁸ Buchanan to Grey (Russia: Annual Report, 1913), 4 March 1914, *B DFA*, Part 1, Vol. 6, pp. 365-368.

³⁹ Buchanan to Grey, 24 May 1914, *British Documents On the Origins of the War, 1898-1914: The Testing of the Entente, 1904-1906*, Vol. 3, G. P. Gooch and Harold Temperley (eds.), (London, 1928), p. 796.

*the Ottoman Army will join the enemy with their arms. If the Ottoman Army advances (they will) preserve (their) loyalty and tranquility; should the Ottoman Army retreat (they will) form armed guerilla bands to fight against us.*⁴⁰

Therefore, it can easily be seen that, on the eve of the Great War, Russians accelerated their activities to provoke the Armenian community in Anatolia against the Ottoman authority. The government in Moscow had long planned to use its own Armenian subjects against the Ottoman Army. It became also clear that the Armenian groups both in Anatolia and Caucasus were ready to collaborate with the Ottomans' enemies. After Germany declared war on 1 August 1914, the Ottoman Government began to make preparations for the coming war. When these preparations became known, the Patriarch in Echmiadzin took an immediate action. In his letter to the Russian Governor in Caucasus, the Patriarch stated that if the Armenians were given independence all the Armenian communities would join the Russian forces against the Ottomans. In response to the Patriarch, the governor indicated that he would respond to the Armenian demands on the condition that the Armenian community should obey his orders. The Tsar also repeated the same promises to Patriarch when he met him later.⁴¹

Soon after these events, the Ottoman military authorities began to receive detailed information about the Armenian-Russian collaboration against the Ottoman State. On 7 October 1914, in a communication from the Ottoman intelligence officer to the third Army Command, the following was reported:

*'...Armenians in Russia are registering as volunteers to join the war, arms and bread is to be supplied by Russia and horses and clothing by themselves. Leaders for drafting volunteers are Aramalis from Papsin of Bitlis in Sarıkamış and an Armenian named Antranik in Kars. Antranik had proceeded to Tiflis to conscript volunteers from among the Christians there, after conscripting a number of volunteers from Kars. All Armenians in Russia will join the volunteers. Russia promised to allocate some of the lands to be captured from the Ottomans to them. Arshak, friend of informant was taken by force to Kars by the volunteers to join them.'*⁴²

⁴⁰ From Third Army to Various Units, 19 July 1914, *Documents* (Ankara: Prime Ministry Directorate General of Press and Information, no date) Document No. 1, Vol. 1, pp. 1-2.

⁴¹ Kamuran Gürün, *Ermeni Dosyası* (Ankara: TTK 1985), p. 197; Uras, *Tarihçe...*, pp. 580-585.

⁴² From Intelligence Officer, Ahmet, to the Third Army Commander, 7 October 1914, *Documents On Ottoman Armenians* (Ankara: Prime Ministry Directorate General of Press and Information, no date), Document No. 1895, Vol. 2, pp. 7-8.

In another document it was reported that:

*'According to information received, the Russians have established guerillas by arming Russian and Turkish Armenians in the Caucasus and Greeks, and anticipate expanding these guerilla organizations by sending them into Turkish land. These reports are gradually being confirmed and realised, and Armenian deserters from military units are increasing...'*⁴³

In the meantime, a revolt, which took place in Zeitun district in August 1914, was an indication for the future behaviors of the Armenian organizations. At this time, the Armenian population in this district refused to obey the orders from the government and later they began to revolt by attacking soldiers and civilians. Afterwards, the Ottoman administration sent orders to various governors to take necessary measures against any armed bands.⁴⁴ Under these circumstances, the Ottoman Empire went to war on the side of the Central Powers on 4 November 1914.

CONCLUSION

In broad sense, it can be concluded that Turco-Armenian relations, since the 11th century, had been well developed until the eruption of the Ottoman-Russian War in 1877. During this period, however, these relations were not free from anxiety. Starting from 16th century, the European Powers began to show some economic and religious interests in the affairs of the Ottoman Armenians. These were the commercial and missionary activities conducted by the Catholic, Orthodox and Protestant priests and merchants. These missionary works were also supported by the states of France, Russia, Britain and the United States. These activities, hence, established a ground for the Great Powers to pursue their political objectives, which caused the spread of separatist ideas among the Armenians against the Ottoman authority. Though this was the case, the Ottoman-Armenian relations were not much affected by the foreign influences until the outbreak of the Ottoman-Russian War in 1877.

In the early period, France was the first European state, which showed political interest in the affairs of the Ottoman Armenians

⁴³ Report by Third Army Command, 1 October 1914, *Documents*, Document No. 7, p. 18. For the similar reports based on British Documents see, Sonyel, *The Ottoman...*, p. 288.

⁴⁴ Sonyel, *The Ottoman...*, pp. 288-289.

in the 16th century. A century later, however, Russia became the most zealous power interested in the affairs of the Ottoman Armenians as it embarked an expansionist policy towards the Balkans and further south, and saw the Armenian minority as a valuable ally towards realizing its objectives against the Ottoman Empire. This Russian interest and supremacy over the Ottoman Armenians was to continue until 1883 at a time when Moscow modified its policy.

The Ottoman-Russian War of 1877-78 was a watershed in Ottoman-Armenian relations. As the Armenian question was internationalized at the end of the war, (with the Treaty of Berlin), it opened a formal gate to the foreign powers to interfere in the domestic affairs of the Ottoman State. This situation, hence, encouraged the Armenian groups in Anatolia to revolt against the Ottoman authority under foreign influence, which promised an independent or autonomous Armenia. The Great Powers, however, only wanted to use the Armenian groups for their own purposes leaving them in a state of war with their rulers, the Ottoman administrators.

After the Treaty of Berlin, Britain became a major power to deal with the Armenian Question. This was because, the treaty attributed Britain the chief responsibility to observe the realization of the reform package for the Ottoman Armenians. The other reason was the change of the British attitude towards the Porte. Expecting that the Ottoman Empire would die sooner or later, Britain came to think that the protection of the Ottoman Empire against Russia would not serve to its political and economic interests. Instead, Britain planned to stop Russian expansion southwards through the buffer state of Armenia under its control. In the meantime, in contrast to Britain, Russia began to disinterest in the Armenian issue, especially, after the assassination of Tsar Alexander II in 1881, and remained to do so until 1907.

From this time onwards, however, Russia re-oriented its policy. As Anglo-Russian alliance was restored in 1907, and a year later the new CUP Government came to power in Istanbul, these events created new opportunities for Russia to take up the Armenian issue into its hands once again. Thereafter, Russia became increasingly involved in the Armenian question until the outbreak of the Great War in 1914.

THE NAGORNO KARABAKH CONFLICT AND AZERI POLICIES, 1988-1994

Dr. M. Vedat GÜRBÜZ*

Abstract:

The Nagorno Karabakh problem is the longest-running conflict in the former Soviet Union. This problem and the Armenian occupation of Azerbaijan's territories deeply influenced the Azerbaijanian and Armenian domestic policies. The Armenian expansionist policies against Azerbaijan created one of the most touching human tragedies of the modern times. Because of the conflict in Karabakh, revival of Azerbaijani nationalism gained a great momentum. On the other hand, this problem negatively influenced Azerbaijani governments causing them to be coercive and corrupt. Although there were great expectations that Azerbaijan would achieve serious successes to improve its democracy and economic growth in relation with the country's promising human and economic sources, outbreak of an armed conflict with the Armenians, and Armenian occupation of considerable part of the Azerbaijani territories prevented these expectations to be realized. This paper mainly scrutinizes the Nagorno Karabakh conflict and Armenian occupation of Azerbaijani territories in the context of Azerbaijan's domestic policies.

Keywords:

Karabakh, APF, Elchibey, 'Black January', CIS, Armenian Occupation, Armenian Atrocities, OSCE-Minsk Group, Bishkek Protocol

INTRODUCTION

The Armenians have always dreamed of establishing a greater Armenia, one claiming ancient Armenian territory and drawing broader borders from east and south Turkey to deep into the Caucasus. When they realized that they could not achieve this dream by themselves, they looked for foreign assistance. The Russian Empire became the Armenians' big brother to restore their historical territories. When Russia invaded Eastern Turkey at the beginning of World War I, the Armenian nationalists joined the Russian invasion. When Russia was forced

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to withdraw, many Armenians withdrew from the Russian troops and settled in, what are today's known, Armenia and Azerbaijan. Armenian casualties during the war created a deep national grievance, one kept alive during the following generations both among the Armenians in Armenia and in Diaspora. These historical hatreds resurfaced before the Soviet Union's disintegration.

When the Bolshevik revolution occurred, the Armenians, particularly in Azerbaijan, not in Armenia, had supported the Bolsheviks. Despite the Armenians expected a lot from Moscow, the Soviets created an Armenian Soviet Socialist Republic (SSR), being the smallest of all Soviet republics.

The breezes of Glastnost created ethnic problems and territorial claim storms in Azerbaijan. With the beginning of Glastnost, Azeris found themselves in an ethnic clash with the Armenians over the Armenian enclave of Nagorno Karabakh in Azerbaijan. History is above everything in Caucasus politics. Unresolved ethnic clashes create problems, and history often repeats itself. Primordial ideologies appeal to the rights of nations to do so. In this sense, as early as in 1987, Gorbachev's advisor, Abel G. Aganbegian, an ethnic Armenian, announced that both Karabakh and Nahchevan were part of the historic Armenian territory and these territories should be given to Armenia.¹ In February 1988, Armenian demonstrations took place in Nagorno Karabakh and in Yerevan for Nagorno Karabakh's secession from Azerbaijan. On July 12, the Armenian Karabakh Soviet unilaterally declared its secession from Azerbaijan. Moscow did not recognize this declaration and formed a special commission to improve Karabakh's autonomous status.

Armenian territorial claims created nationalistic reactions in Azerbaijan. Azeri intellectuals started a propaganda campaign, claiming that Karabakh was historically Azeri territory and that the enclave was economically linked to Azerbaijan. Due to rising ethnic problems, the Azeris began to leave Armenia and Karabakh, generally pouring into the port cities of Baku and Sumgayit. Azeri refugees increased the tension, and anti-Armenian riots broke out in March 1988 in Sumgayit, resulting in 26 Armenian and 6 Azeri casualties.

¹ Audrey L. Altstadt, *The Azerbaijani Turks*, (Stanford: Hoover Institution Press, 1992), p. 156.

Mass public protests started in Baku from November 17, 1988. The Azeri and Soviet governments were ineffective in solving ethnic problems. No violence occurred during the protests, and the meetings continued until December 4th, when Azeri police forces cracked down on the demonstrations.² The number of demonstrators reached half a million during the day and 20,000 at night.³ Demonstrations were led by individuals, because at that time there was no political organization to undertake this task. People took responsibility for the country's integrity and filled Lenin Square in Baku. Nemat Penakov became a leading figure in the demonstrations, and people titled him 'son of the people.'⁴ Nemat Penakov was a 26-year-old worker in Baku and appeared to be the 'Lech Walesa of Azerbaijan.'⁵

NATIONAL REVIVAL IN AZERBAIJAN

Armenian claims to Karabakh were the driving force behind the creation of a new mass national movement in Azerbaijan.⁶ Nationalist publications and publications about Azeri history greatly increased during the Glastnost period. Azeris made some adjustments against Armenian claims that the Armenians in Karabakh were not indigenous people. Rather, they were the Armenians, who came from Turkey and Iran. They argued that Stalin deported some 100,000 Azeris from Armenia in 1948. Even Gorbachev reminded the Armenians that before the Revolution Azeris had comprised forty-three percent of the population of Yerevan.⁷

Besides making these historical interpretations, Azeri intellectuals revived their national values. First, Azeri Turkish gradually replaced Russian in the schools. Bahtiyar Vahabzade, one of Azerbaijan's prominent poets, argued that although Azeri Turkish theoretically enjoys the status of the Republic's state language, in practice it had not been used for conducting official business for fifty years. He argued that a man who does not know

² Alstadt, *The Azerbaijani ...*, pp. 201-202.

³ Elizabeth Fuller, *RL (Radio Liberty) 70/89*, January 31, 1989.

⁴ Elizabeth Fuller, *RL (Radio Liberty) 70/89*, January 31, 1989.

⁵ Tamara Dragadze, 'Azerbaijanis' *The Nationalities Question in the Soviet Union*, (London & New York: 1990), p. 168.

⁶ 'Interview with Tadeusz Swietochowski', *Uncaptive Minds*, Spring 1991, p. 6.

⁷ Dragadze, *Azerbaijanis ...*, p. 167.

his own language should not be provided with a job.⁸ Vahapzade attracted public attention to the establishment of the Azeri Popular Front, which would lead the people in national policies.

During the spring of 1989, after being released from prison, seven activists, who had joined the protests created the Azerbaijan People's Front (APF). The government recognized this underground organization in October. Tevfik Gasimov, one of the founders of the APF, said that the main goal of the APF was to gain political and economic sovereignty for the Azeri republic within the framework of the Soviet Union. The APF believed that Perestroika would make the Soviet Union more democratic and that the republics would obtain full autonomy, with the Soviet Union becoming a union of independent states. Gasimov said that, because of this speculation they naively affirmed their desire to remain within the Soviet Union.⁹

The APF's leader, Ebulfeyz Elchibey, defined the Front's movement as a mass one, with a democratic and national character. According to Elchibey, there was no class struggle. Rather, the problem was a struggle between the Azeri Communist Party and the rest of society. In the summer of 1989, the APF party program included human and civil rights, free elections, the political and economic sovereignty of Azeris in Azerbaijan, the equality of all nationalities, and the protection of all cultural freedoms.¹⁰

In 1989, some other short-lived political organizations -such as Birlik (Unification), Dirilish (Resurgence), Kizilbash, People's Front, the Social Democratic Organization, and National Salvation Organization- were formed. Birlik, the second-most popular organization after APF, pursued the policies of unifying Soviet Azerbaijan with Iranian Azerbaijan as one country. Dirilish aimed to revive pan-Islamist and pan-Turkist sentiments.

An intellectual circle that emerged from the Communist intellectual circle established the APF. But, the organization shared no political commonalties with the Communists. Indeed, the APF adamantly criticized the Communist government and led public

⁸ Yasin Aslan, Elizabeth Fuller, *RL 104/89*, February 1989.

⁹ 'The War Against the Azeri Popular Front: An Interview with Tevfik Gasimov', *Uncaptive Minds*, November-December 1990, p. 12.

¹⁰ Alstadt, *The Azerbaijani ...*, p. 205.

protests against it. The APF started massive strikes all over the country, and railway transportation between Azerbaijan, Armenia, and Georgia was cut. APF partisans launched attacks on the governmental building and seized power in Celalabad and Lenkoran, close to the Iranian border. The APF intensified its actions on the issue of Iranian Azerbaijan. The Front compared the Soviet-Iranian border with the Berlin Wall.

The APF organized a series of meetings throughout the Republic to call for the easing of restrictions on crossing the border with Iran. Hundreds of Azeris camped out on both sides of the border for nearly a month, waiting for a chance to see relatives. Eventually, angry mobs pulled down border fences and guard posts. Then, they crossed the border from both sides.¹¹ Since 1939, the border with Iran was closed, due to the APF's pressure; Soviet authorities negotiated with Iran to reopen the border at the end of 1988.¹²

The strikes ended after the APF's negotiations with the Azeri government. After these negotiations, the government recognized the APF, and it was agreed that the rail stoppage would soon be ended in return for some concessions, including the Azeri Communist Party's support for demands that Azeri Turks in Armenia be granted autonomy comparable with that of Armenians in Karabakh.¹³

Azeris' determination to keep Nagorno Karabakh integrated with Azerbaijan forged support for APF. In August, having mass public support, the APF imposed a railway blockade against Armenia and Karabakh. At the end of 1989, Armenians in Karabakh organized meetings to protest the Azeri blockade. On January 15, 1990, Russia sent around 17.000 additional troops to Karabakh to enforce the state of emergency. Russian troops virtually controlled the Karabakh and patrolled the Armenian-Azerbaijani border.¹⁴

The Armenians increased their military attacks in Karabakh, and the number of Azeri refugees from Karabakh and Armenia dramatically increased in Azerbaijan. The APF organized public

11 Ronald Grigor Suny, 'On the Road to Independence; Cultural Cohesion and Ethnic Revival in a Multinational Society', *Transcaucasia, Nationalism and Social Change*, p. 384.

12 'The War ...', p. 13.

13 Alstadt, *The Azerbaijani...*, p. 206.

14 'Azerbaijan, Seven Years of Conflict in Nagorno-Karabakh', Human Rights Watch, Helsinki, December 1994 by Human Right Watch, printed in the United States of America, p. 9.

protests in Baku. On January 13, 1990, hundreds of thousands of people joined the APF's rally in Baku, and the people called for the resignation of the Azeri Communist Party first secretary, Abdurrahman Vezirov, and for a referendum on the secession of Azerbaijan from the USSR.¹⁵ Gorbachev decided to send Soviet troops to Baku in order to ease the tension in the city. Actually, Gorbachev aimed to crush the nationalist APF by sending troops. On January 20, 1990, Soviet troops entered Baku and killed around 160 people, mostly civilians. The Azeris reacted strongly to Moscow's invasion, calling it 'Black January.' Although, the Soviets authorities had imposed a curfew, but thousands of Azeris gathered to protest the Soviet invasion. An estimated 100,000 of Azerbaijan's 380,000 Communist Party members destroyed their party membership cards during these meetings. In opposition to Gorbachev's plan, public support for the APF drastically increased after the invasion.

After the Baku invasion, Moscow replaced Azeri Communist Party first secretary Vezirov with Ayaz Muttalibov. Instead of embracing Glastnost and Perestroika, Azeri political life remained set in the ways of the early 1980s. The APF had little effect on the Azeri government's politics. Azerbaijan was politically the most conservative of the Trans-Caucasian republics. When the August coup took place against Gorbachev, Muttalibov was visiting Iran and announced to the Iranian media that he supported the coup. When the coup failed, he denied that he had supported it and sent a congratulatory telegram to Yeltsin.¹⁶

After the coup, however, Muttalibov remained a conservative Communist, but he changed his political agenda. Azerbaijan's territorial integrity was the most important goal of his agenda. Muttalibov sought economic autonomy and the possibility of secession from the USSR. With mixed feelings about Azerbaijan's future in the Communist Party and among the people, Azerbaijan declared its independence on August 20, 1991. Interestingly, in 1989, when some Azeri intellectuals were asked about when they thought that Azerbaijan would become independent, most answered sometime after the year 2000. They did not imagine that the country would be independent two years later.

¹⁵ Elizabeth Fuller, *RL 55/90*, January 24, 1990.

¹⁶ Elizabeth Fuller, *RL 320/91*, August 28, 1991.

In this period, the Communist Party was fully in power, and the opposition was not able to challenge the party's rule. Because of growing ethnic problems and Armenian territorial claims, the people defended their own rights through public rallies and strikes, not trusting that the Communist government of Azerbaijan would solve the problems.

The people's consciousness about their future was important in Azeri politics. Demonstrations and the search for political opposition paved the way for the establishment of the APF. But the Front was more reactionary rather than presenting its own agenda and programs. Generally, the opposition was willing to share the power to solve the country's problems but the opposition did not know how to deal with problems. Because of this uncertainty, some established opposition political organizations lived short.

AZERI POLITICS AFTER INDEPENDENCE AND NAGORNO KARABAKH PROBLEM

After independence, the Communist Party of Azerbaijan and the Azeri nomenklatura survived under new names. Some democratic changes in name but not in essence granted legal rights to the Communists in the newly independent Republic. The ruling Communist power paid lip service to democracy and the opposition groups. But, growing ethnic conflicts with the Armenians and quickly deteriorating economic conditions made the opposition stronger and more demanding.

After independence, Azerbaijan adopted a presidential form of government. Hence the office of first secretary of the Azerbaijan Communist Party re-emerged as that of president. And the Communist Party apparatus became the presidential apparatus. In September 1990, a parliamentary poll was conducted to elect the members of the Azerbaijan Soviet. The APF protested this poll because it was held under a state of emergency. The Communist Party won ninety-one percent of the 360 seats.¹⁷ Parallel to the continued Soviet political traditions, the Supreme Soviet of Azerbaijan acted as a parliamentary legislative body with its 360 members, and the Council of the Ministries took on the role of a cabinet.

¹⁷ Dilip Hiro, 'The Emergence of Multi-Party Politics in the Southern Caucasus: Azerbaijan', *Perspectives on Central Asia*, Vol. 2, No. 11, (Internet version.)

In September 1991, Muttalibov was elected as president in a non-contested presidential poll. He won ninety-eight percent of the votes, with a seventy percent turnout.¹⁸ The APF contested the fairness of the presidential election. The state of emergency still in force prevented a just election process. Muttalibov also joined the CIS, thereby undermining the great opposition from the APF not to join the commonwealth.

After the formal disintegration of the Soviet Union in December 1991, the Russian troops left Karabakh leaving their weapons and arsenal in the region in favor of the Armenians. Therefore, armed clashes between the Armenians and the Azeris intensified and these clashes turned into a full-scale war in 1992. Pouring Russian weapons, Russian troops and combatant groups fighting on Armenian side in the war, seriously strengthened Armenian military and political position against the Azeris.

In November 1991, due to firm public demands in taking some concrete actions towards the Karabakh problem, the Azerbaijani parliament abolished Nagorno-Karabakh's status of autonomous oblast. In exchange, the Nagorno-Karabakh parliament responded the Azeri parliament's decision holding a referendum of independence from Azerbaijan that this decision was supported by Karabakh Armenians. Therefore, on January 6, 1992, the Nagorno-Karabakh parliament took an illegal action, and declared independence from Azerbaijan.¹⁹

Because of the Azeri military and political defeat in Karabakh and massive opposition pressure, Muttalibov dissolved the parliament in early 1992 and appointed a fifty-member National Council that was divided equally between the Communists and the Popular Front. Due to the Soviet legacy, the separation of power between legislative and executive branches of the government was blurred. Important decisions were made by the presidential apparatus and by the Council of the Ministers, diminishing the role of the National Council in the government. In fact, all important political decisions were made by presidential decrees.²⁰ After independence, the new Azeri constitution was also adopted. This

¹⁸ Hiro, *The Emergence ...*

¹⁹ *Azerbaijan ...*, p. 9.

²⁰ Lale Larissa Wiesner, *Privatization in Previously Centrally Planned Economies: The Case of Azerbaijan*, (Frankfurt, Berlin, New York: European University Studies, 1997), p. 133.

constitution was the updated version of the 1978 Azeri Constitution, supplemented by the Declaration of Independence. This updated Soviet type of constitution gave the legitimate right to the president to act supremely over the parliament.

The opposition seriously pressured the Muttalibov government, when the Armenians massacred some 1000 Azeris in Hocali in March 1992. The APF made Muttalibov responsible for this massacre, because of his negligence in supporting the Azeris against the Armenian attacks. Russia took advantage of the Azeri defeat of the Armenians and forced Azerbaijan to sign the Collective Defense Treaty of CIS. Muttalibov was willing to sign this agreement, allowing Russian troops to solve the military conflict with Armenia. Muttalibov's attitude in signing the defense treaty created severe APF-led anti-government protests in Azerbaijan. On May 15, 1992, anti-government protestors took over the parliament, state television, and the presidential palace,²¹ forcing Muttalibov to resign. Under these tremendous pressures, Muttalibov indeed resigned and fled to Moscow. An interim APF government was formed under the leadership of the chair of the National Council, Etibar Memedov, until the previously scheduled presidential elections could be held one month later.

On June 7, 1992, the first democratic presidential election took place in Azerbaijan, and the APF's leader, Ebulfeyz Elchibey, won the contested election, gaining sixty percent of the vote. Elchibey's election program included the liberation of Karabakh in six months, the establishment of true democracy, the granting of human rights, and the secularization of the nation. In addition, new parliamentary and local elections were promised. Elchibey favored defense alliances with Turkey and the US, and he pledged to withdraw Azerbaijan from the CIS.²²

Elchibey proposed a pure democratic government in Azerbaijan. His ideals could not be achieved because of a lack of democratic traditions in the nation and strong Russian and Iranian opposition to the Azeri government. In October, Elchibey withdrew Azerbaijan from the CIS. He alienated Russia and Iran. This alienation resulted in a significant decrease of oil exports to these countries. Elchibey's radical political changes and a lack of administrative, political, and diplomatic skills, along with his pan-

²¹ Lexis-Nexis Country Profile, 'Azerbaijan.'

²² Hiro, *The Emergence ...*

Turkism alienated him from other nations. The failure of Turkey and the Western democracies to support his government left him alone at home and in the international arena.

In June 1992, the Azeri forces started a large scale offensive against the Geranboi (Shaumian) region of Azerbaijan and Mardakert in Nagorno-Karabakh. Azeri forces achieved military successes and took back 80% of Mardakert territories. In February 1993, the Karabakh Armenians started offensive in the Mardakert region and recaptured the places, where were taken back by Azeris. The Armenian counter-offensive advanced in Azerbaijani territories including Agdam and Fizuli. Azeri defeat was certain and the defeat created turmoil in the country.

Armenian offensive opened another bloody chapter in the war. The Karabakh Armenians with support of the Armenians in Armenia and the Russians waged a 'blitzkrieg' between March 27 and April 5 and invaded Kelbajar province. Before the offensive, around 60.000 Azeris lived in Kelbajar. Beginning by March 29, Karabakh Armenian forces with assistance from Armenia encircled the city for surrender. Heavy Armenian artillery and fired rockets from the territories of Armenian Republic ruined the city. The Azeri government burdened a great task airlifting remaining Azeri victims with its limited number of helicopters. Rescuing the victims and flying over the Murov mountains was very risky and dangerous. Armenian military campaign forced entire Muslim population to flee their homes or to face the massacres. The Murov Mountains were the only connection to Azerbaijan from Kelbajar. Thousands tried to pass the treacherous mountains to find a safe haven in Azerbaijan. Many of them perished and were killed by Armenian artillery and gunshots on their painful journey. Finally, the Armenians cleansed all Muslim population from Kelbajar leaving it empty and looted.²³ Great number of Azeris took refuge in the mountains and tried to survive under harsh conditions.²⁴

When the Armenians captured Azeri towns Fuzuli, Qubatlı and Zangelan, similar faith caught the Azeris who lived in those towns. Like Kelbajar, those towns were also deserted and their residents were either killed or forced to leave their homes. The results of the

²³ *Azerbaijan, ...*, p. 12.

²⁴ *Azerbaijan, ...*, p. 16.

Armenian offensive were catastrophic for Azerbaijan. On May 1, 1993, Azeri officials reported that there were some 546.000 registered refugees and displaced persons in the republic.²⁵

In February, the APF government criticized Colonel Surat Huseinov, who commanded the Azeri army in the war that he amateurishly organized the defense against the Armenian attacks and accused him ordering military withdrawal from the region. Huseinov, then, lost his commanding position.²⁶ In June 1993, Suret Huseinov, a former colonel and wool merchant, led a military rebellion against the popularly elected Elchibey.²⁷ His military base was in Gence, and in mid-June his forces gained control of Baku. Elchibey was forced to flee to Nahchevan. Therefore, the Elchibey government lasted only for a year. The communists prepared this coup and Huseinov's troops used arms against Elchibey, which were handed over to the communists, when the Soviet troops had invaded Baku in January 1990. On June 30, 1993, the military junta invited Haydar Aliev, the president of Nahchevan district, to establish his rule in Baku. In a return to his presidency, Aliev appointed the rebel Huseinov prime minister as well as defense, national security, and interior minister.

The failure of the Elchibey government in such a short time stemmed from various political reasons. As it was true in Elchibey's case, establishment of democratic institutions is not easy in after the reign of the totalitarian regimes. Three months before his election, when he was not even yet a candidate, Elchibey said in a speech to the parliament that 'the president you elect in three months will be overthrown in a year because the state we live in today is only deserving of a president who can be kept in power by force. We need to create structures that can protect a president and prevent him from turning into a dictator. If we fail to create such structures, whoever you elect as president will destroy himself or be destroyed by those nearest to him.'²⁸ Elchibey clearly defined hardship in the establishment of democracy in a country that had long totalitarian regime.

The Azeri people earlier had represented an admirable political and democratic unity in claiming their national rights. The Azeri

²⁵ *Azerbaijan, ...*, p. 17.

²⁶ *Azerbaijan, ...*, p. 11.

²⁷ Lexis-Nexis, 'Surat Huseynov.'

²⁸ Thomas Goltz, *Azerbaijan Diary*, (New York, London: M.E. Sharpe, 1998), p. 28.

people, who opposed the Communist government of Azerbaijan, created and supported the APF and finally ousted the Communists from power and elected Elchibey. Interestingly, the people became tired of politics. The people, who elected Elchibey, did not support him against the coup. However, hundreds of thousands of Azeris used to gather in the streets to protest the authoritarian regime; they kept their silence during the coup, and, moreover, supported the Aliev presidency. The main theme of this public attitude was a growing sentiment that life was better under Communist rule. Now their lives were ruined. The people also happened to believe that an authoritarian regime could solve Azerbaijan's mammoth problems. Aliev was also very credible and trusted among the people, and the people realized that Aliev was the only leader, who could solve the military conflict with Armenia and growing economic problems. Beginning with the Aliev government, the people become more pacified in politics. Oppositional political movements, however, grew.

ARMENIAN OCCUPATIONS, AZERBAIJAN AND INTERNATIONAL REACTIONS

Armenian atrocities and invasion of Azeri territories disturbed regional, European powers and the United States. First OSCE - Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe- tried for a cease-fire. Minsk Group talks between February 25-March 2 raised hopes that peace initials would success. Russia and Turkey volunteered to mediate the peace talks. On April 21, Azerbaijan and Armenia agreed to continue work on the OSCE Minsk Group peace process. With Turkey's great effort, on April 30, the UN Security Council adopted Resolution 822, which called for cease-fire, the withdrawal of all occupying forces from the Kelbajar region. In exchange, Azerbaijan would end the energy blockade. Armenia and Azerbaijan accepted the Resolution but the Nagorno-Karabakh Armenians refused it. The Nagorno-Karabakh State Defense Committee Robert Kocharian stated that the Resolution was not in the interest of the Karabakh Armenians. The Karabakh Armenians eventually did not accept the resolution but Azerbaijan declared a unilateral cease-fire on May 24.²⁹

Under the pressure of Ter-Petrosyan, Kocharian tended to accept the plan to evacuate from occupied Azeri territories in

²⁹ *Azerbaijan, ...*, p. 17.

exchange some guarantees for the Karabakh Armenians, but, eventually, Kocharian challenged all peace initials of OSCE and UN and Armenian forces seized another Azeri territory, Agdam, taking advantage of weak internal Azeri political position after the coup against Elchibey.³⁰ After a month long severe fights, on July 23, 1993, the Armenians captured Agdam with its 50.000 people. Although, Colonel Huseinov announced that he would personally lead the Azeri troops to save Agdam, his effort had no impact to save the city. As usual, the Armenians looted and burned Agdam and neighboring villages.

On July 29, 1993, the UN Security Council passed Resolution 853 regarding the Armenian-Azeri fighting. The Resolution condemned seizure of Agdam and called on all parties to cease supplying weapons to the belligerent sides, especially to the Armenians, because, military assistances by third parties, especially by Armenia and Russia, intensified the fighting and resulted the continuation of the occupation of Azeri territories. The resolution also called on the Armenia to use its influence with the Karabakh authorities to comply the UN resolutions and Minsk Group initiatives. The Resolution also called for the lifting of all economic and energy blockades in the region.³¹

Azerbaijan once again immediately announced the acceptance of the UN Resolution, but Karabakh Armenians denied the resolution declaring that the decision was biased and favored Azerbaijan. The Nagorno Karabakh authorities also claimed that OSCE Minsk Group tried to brand Karabakh aggressor while omitting Azeri aggression.³² Therefore, the Karabakh Armenians denounced the UN Resolution and continued occupation of more Azerbaijani territories.

On August 20, Fizuli fell to Armenians. After Fizuli, on August 31, the Karabakh forces, supported with Armenian troops, advanced in Azeri territories as far as within twenty kilometers of the Iranian border. Armenian military advance in Azerbaijan created tremendous situation for Azeri civilians. Helsinki Report on Karabakh stated that 'The Azeris displaced in the August 1993 offensive were trapped between the Araks River (the Iranian border) to the south, hostile Armenia to the west, and Karabakh

³⁰ Azerbaijan, ... , p. 17.

³¹ Azerbaijan, ... , p. 24.

³² Azerbaijan, ... , p. 24.

Armenian forces advancing from the north. Only a thin finger of land stretched along the Araks River towards the east and safety, but Karabakh Armenian forces shelled it from time to time. Artillery fire even fell on Iranian territory.³³

In August 1993, the ICRC reported that some 60.000 people were fleeing from Fizuli and Jebrayil to seek refuge in regions unaffected by the fighting. A reporter for Christian Science Monitor described the Azeri victims' exodus saying 'since the offensive began; the narrow road has been jammed with trucks and carts piled high with livestock and furniture. In fields alongside the roadside, just twenty miles from the fighting, thousands of refugees have set up makeshift homes.'³⁴

After recent Armenian offensive, some 60.000 refugees poured into Azeri town Imishli. The Azeri government, fearing social unrests, blocked the roads to prevent refugees to go Baku. The Iranian government agreed to establish a camp in Azerbaijan for 100.000 people. Turkey also immediately sent humanitarian aid and Turkish Red Crescent set up camps. The Saudi government also participated relief efforts.³⁵

After the latest offensive, regional powers and UN announced its serious concerns about Armenian aggression. On August 18, the UN Security Council condemned Armenian attack on Fizuli and demanded a stop to all attacks and cease of all hostilities. This time, Iran, traditional ally of the Armenians, also strongly warned the Armenians. Tehran based Kayhan International stated that if the Armenians continued the offensive, for sure, the government would adopt vigilant policies to halt Armenian offensive, which seriously threatened Iran's border security. Iranian Foreign Ministry and military authorities expressed their disturbance of Armenian offensive.

Turkey severely criticized Armenian policies and Turkish Prime Minister Tansu Çiller warned the Armenians that Turkey would not watch the happenings with its arms crossed. Turkey also started to reinforce the Armenian border. Interestingly major humanitarian goods came to Armenia via Turkey. According to the agreement with France and US, Turkey allowed mass shipment of Armenian

³³ *Azerbaijan, ...*, p. 29.

³⁴ *Azerbaijan, ...*, p. 30.

³⁵ *Azerbaijan, ...*, p. 30

aid materials through Turkey. But in April 1993, after the Karabakh Armenians with Armenians from Armenia and Russians seized Kelbajar and committed atrocities in the province, Turkey cut supply routes.

Amid of Armenian turbulence in the region, Russia started its own peace initial. Despite Russia politically supported Armenians and materially furnished the Armenian troops, removal of Elchibey regime and increasing Turkish and Iranian involvement into the Armenian-Azerbaijani conflict, urged Russia to take steps for a constructive peace implementation. On September 13, 1993, bilateral Azerbaijani-Karabakh talks were held in Moscow. During the talks, a cease-fire was declared by two sides but, as it happened before, the Armenians broke the cease-fire.³⁶

Armenian disobedience of the cease-fire harnessed new waves of fights. This time, Azeris were helped by outside groups. On October 21, Afghan 'mujahadeen' mercenaries attacked Armenian troops in Jebrayil. Armenian troops started counter attack and occupied Zangelan province. Thus, they succeeded to cut the thin strip of land along the Araks River that this land was the only route for the Azeris to escape to Azerbaijan. Armenians also captured strategic town of Horadiz on the Iranian border. The Armenian troops saved no Azeris in the town. They were either killed or they succeeded to flee to Iran. Because the Armenians destroyed the bridge on the Araks, which was main gate to enter into Iran, the Azeris had to cross the river. Many were drowned and Armenian troops frequently shelled the refugees who were trying to swim across the Araks River.³⁷ At the end, some 60.000 Azeris poured into Iran. Some 500.000 Azeris who lived in Armenian captured Azeri territories other than Karabakh, were uprooted and they became refugees.³⁸

At the end, the Karabakh Armenian forces occupied twenty to twenty-five percent of Azerbaijan's territories. Human Rights Watch reported in 1994 that 'Because 1993 witnessed unrelenting Karabakh Armenian offensives against the Azerbaijani provinces surrounding Nagorno-Karabakh, the vast majority of the violations during this period were direct result of these offensive actions. The

³⁶ Azerbaijan, ... , p. 31.

³⁷ Azerbaijan, ... , p. 31.

³⁸ Azerbaijan, ... , p. 35.

Armenia did not only militarily support the Karabakh Armenians, but also the country even released the prisoners and sent them to Azerbaijan to fight.

Azeri civilian population was expelled from all areas captured by Karabakh Armenian forces, Azeri civilians caught by advancing Karabakh Armenian forces during their offensives of 1993 were taken hostage and many Azeris were killed by indiscriminate fire as they attempted to escape.

Wide-scale looting and destruction of civilian property accompanied these actions. Some instances of looting and pillaging, such as in Agdam, an Azeri city of some 50.000 that fell to Karabakh Armenian forces in July 1993, were organized and planned by the authorities of Nagorno-Karabakh.³⁹

By mid-December 1993, Azerbaijan started a general offensive. Since June 1992, the Armenians for the first time were forced to retreat. Azerbaijani forces achieved impressive successes and took back some strategic places such as Horadiz, heights around Agdam and Mardakert. The Azeri forces pushed the Armenians south of Murov Mountains.

Azeri military successes created a panic in Karabakh and Armenia. While maximum age of compulsory conscription was increased from forty-three to fifty in Karabakh, calls were often made for volunteers in Karabakh, Armenia and in Diaspora. As if Armenia was not part of the war, after Azerbaijan's recent military success, Armenian President Ter-Petrosyan announced that if the Karabakh Armenians were faced with forced deportation or genocide, regular Armenian army forces would be deployed in the fighting.⁴⁰ Despite in every occasion, Armenia denied its participation, however, this country actively participated in the war sending troops and heavy weaponry. Moreover, some artillery fires came from Armenian territories. Armenia did not only militarily support the Karabakh Armenians, but also the country even released the prisoners and sent them to Azerbaijan to fight.⁴¹ It was not secret for western observers, journalists and human right workers to see and observe that each day thousands of armed

39. *Azerbaijan, ...*, p. 4.

40. *Azerbaijan, ...*, p 36.

41. *Azerbaijan, ...*, p. 47.

The Armenians occupied twenty-five percent of Azeri territory -seventy percent of Azeri arable land- and created some one million refugees.

Armenian troops poured into occupied Azerbaijani territories. The Republic of Armenia sent its police forces to perform police duties in occupied Azerbaijan.⁴² On April 26, 1994, Ashot Bleyan, an outspoken Armenian parliamentarian, accused the Armenian government of conducting an undeclared war. According to Bleyan, only during the last three or four months more than 1.000 Armenian youths were killed.⁴³

By mid-February, 1994, the Karabakh Armenians and troops from Armenia started a counter offensive. In short, they took back almost entire Azerbaijani territories, where were taken back by Azeri forces in their latest offensive. This fighting produced another 50.000 Azeri refugees.⁴⁴

In 1994 due to Armenian occupation of Karabakh and other Azerbaijani territories some 800.0000 Azeris became refugees. On the other hand, around 350.000 Armenians fled Azerbaijan since the Azeri land became hostile for the Armenians.⁴⁵ But these Armenians left Azerbaijan before the war when Azerbaijan did not declare her independence yet. Azerbaijani government burdened a great task to help refugees with its very limited budget. Turkey, Iran and Saudi Arabia established refugee camps through the country. The refugees lived in bad conditions, and according to the Azeri authorities, only five to ten percent of refugees were employed.⁴⁶

Neither democracy nor economic hardship occupied the most important central position for the Azeri public. The war with Armenia and the consequences of that war were the main public consideration. The Armenians occupied twenty-five percent of Azeri territory -seventy percent of Azeri arable land- and created some one million refugees. One out of seven Azeris became refugees in Azerbaijan. A million refugees poured into the Azeri

⁴² *Azerbaijan, ...*, p. 49.

⁴³ *Azerbaijan, ...*, p. 48.

⁴⁴ *Azerbaijan, ...*, p. 36.

⁴⁵ *Azerbaijan, ...*, p. 43.

⁴⁶ *Azerbaijan, ...*, p.45.

towns and lived in the streets, in the open air, in tents, and even in caves without any running water, electricity, food, and medicine. The unemployment rate was one hundred percent in some refugee camps. Former U.S national security adviser Zbigniew Brzezinski described the situation in Azerbaijan as one of the worst for refugees anywhere in the world.

It is an interesting point that Azerbaijan, whose population was two times bigger than Armenia's and had great natural and economic resources, actually lost the war against Armenia. The reason was strikingly odd in the Azeri case. As the historian Tadeusz Swietochowski said, Azerbaijan was a country without any friends. Russia militarily supported Armenia against Azerbaijan because the country was pursuing pro-Turkish, pro-Western policies under Elchibey's presidency. When Azerbaijan refused to sign the Collective Defense Agreement of CIS and even withdrew from CIS, Armenia and Russia signed some defense agreements and Russia established military bases in Armenia. Russian troops began to protect Armenian borders. Additionally, the Westerners helped Armenia. As the Washington Post correspondent in Azerbaijan, Thomas Goltz, said, the West speculated that Armenia was a Christian island in a sea of Muslims, and an outpost of Western civilization surrounded by backwardness. In this sense, Armenian and Russian atrocities in Azerbaijan did not gain popularity in the Western press and the public. The Armenian military advance in Azerbaijan with the Russian military support did not bother the West until the oil issue became popular in the West.

Elchibey, however, pursued pro-Turkish and pro-Western policies; he did not have considerable support from Turkey and the West. Turkey hesitated to enter into conflict with Russia in the Caucasus, and to give military support to Azerbaijan. In 1991, a well-equipped Armenian militia numbering around 100,000 existed, but there was no counterpart in Azerbaijan. The establishment of the Azeri military took a long time and was always hampered by shortage of material.

Armenia received an enormous amount of help from the European Union, the United States, IMF, and the World Bank. Armenia received the second largest amount of American foreign aid per capita. Due to Armenian military aggression, Azerbaijan closed its border with Armenia and blocked Armenia's landlocked economic supply lines. Then, Turkey closed its border with

Armenia, leaving the country with enormous economic problems. Azerbaijan's policy created a reaction in international politics. At the beginning of the 1990s, 18 countries, including the US, Israel, South Korea, and Canada, imposed a trade embargo against Azerbaijan. These countries refused to import Azeri goods and refused economic help. The United States helped to enforce this embargo long, even though American oil firms get the lion's share of Azeri oil projects, and even Azerbaijan excluded Iran in the oil deals at America's request.

According to Helsinki Human Watch Report of 1994, US Congress' Karabakh policies manipulated by domestic policies, which was greatly influenced by the Armenian lobby. According to Freedom Support Act of 1992 the Congress denied all kinds of aid to Azerbaijan, unless this country respected international human rights standards, abandoned its blockade of Armenia, ceased its use of force against Karabakh and Armenia, and sought a peaceful solution to the conflict. Azerbaijan was only former Soviet republics that US denied aid. But US government granted abundant assistance to Armenia. By 1994, total US governmental aid to Armenia reached to 335 million dollars.⁴⁷

Despite the victimization of Azerbaijan, the stupidity in the American Congress continued. Like a century ago because of biased and distorted news by missionaries and by propaganda officers had led public opinion and policy makers wrongly, the American Congress proved the traditional continuation of stereotype beliefs for Muslim societies. As usual, in any conflict between the Muslims and the Christian societies, the west simultaneously blamed the Muslims. The Azeris were not different and they had similar treat at the Congress. In February 1993, Rep. David Bonior of Michigan prepared a resolution to condemn Azerbaijan for its blockade of Armenia. When the Clinton administration sent a bill to the Congress to lift air restrictions of Azerbaijan, there was a great opposition against the bill. In March 1994, Democrat representative Dick Sweet of New Hampshire represented the ignorant and the bias American policies when he talked against the bill. He strongly urged that US had to retain the prohibition on American assistance to Azerbaijan 'until Azerbaijani troops cease their occupation of Nagorno Karabakh and stop their

⁴⁷ Azerbaijan, ... , p. 52.

aggressive actions against the republic of Armenia.⁴⁸ Perhaps Mr. Sweet did not know that Karabakh was Azerbaijani territory and it was occupied by Armenians with support of Armenian Republic and Russia. Mr. Sweet also was not aware that in 1994, no Azeri troops were in Karabakh, however, the Armenians seized a bulk of Azerbaijani territory other than Karabakh. Maybe he knew the truth but did not speak the truth because of some personal political gains on the expense of misleading American foreign policies.

The State Department adopted a balanced approach to the problem and usually condemned both sides. The Clinton Administration supported Russian led OSCE Minsk Group peace negotiations and Clinton stated that if both sides agreed, the US was positive in sending Russian troops to the region for peace keeping.⁴⁹

ALIEV'S PRESIDENCY

Haydar Aliev was Azerbaijan's most popular political leader. Beginning in 1969, Aliev became the first secretary of the Azeri Communist Party and ruled Azerbaijan for 18 years. During his rule, Azerbaijan succeeded in achieving some industrial and economic goals, and Aliev was rewarded from Moscow for these outstanding successes. When he developed the economy in the republic, he permitted widespread political corruption. A close associate of Soviet leader Leonid Brezhnev, Aliev also became a member of the Central Committee of the CPSU in 1971 and a full member of the Politburo in 1983. Then he became deputy prime minister of the Soviet Union. He was the first ethnic Turkic, who ever gained such high political office in the Soviet Union. In 1987, Gorbachev ousted him from his prestigious party post. After staying three years in Moscow, Aliev turned back to his hometown of Nahchevan and acted as president of the autonomous Nahchevan district. Aliev could not run in the 1992 presidential elections because he was 69 years old. According to the Azeri election rules, presidential candidates could not be older than 65.

In October 1993, Aliev was elected as president in a non-contested race. Aliev scored 99 percent of the vote with an official claim of 90 percent voter turnout. Some Western diplomats

⁴⁸ *Azerbaijan, ...*, p. 53.

⁴⁹ *Azerbaijan, ...*, p. 53.

announced that the turnout was actually around 50 percent.⁵⁰ Aliev began to distribute the governmental posts to former Communists. Fifty seats of the Azeri Parliament (Milli Mejlis) were held by former Communists.

On November 12, 1995, the elections were held for Azerbaijan's 124 seat new Parliament. The deputies would be elected for five years. According to the electoral law, 25 of the 125 seats of the Mejlis would be elected by a party list and 100 from a single-member district. Interestingly, however, almost a half percent of the Azeri population lived in the Baku district, and only 26 seats were elected from this district, because opposition was better organized in this district. Ninety-nine came from the regional areas.⁵¹ The elections were boycotted by the opposition because most of the opposition parties were closed down. Before the elections, Aliev reinstated several parties, which had been closed down earlier -including the APF, the Communist Party, and the Social Democratic Party. The bans on the Islamic Party and the Independent Democratic Party led by Leyla Yunusova were not lifted.

In the elections, twelve parties ran, but Aliev's New Azerbaijan Party gained 54 seats in the parliament. The Popular Front and National Independence parties each gained 4 seats. Non-affiliated party candidates won 55 seats in the parliament, and the remaining seats were shared among six parties. In February 1996, the parliamentary elections were repeated for 15 seats, and the New Azerbaijan Party increased its seats to 67 in these elections. Finally, ninety percent of Azeri parliament members were either from Aliev's Party or were friendly and loyal to Aliev, even if they ran independently. According to international observers, the elections did not meet international 'free-and-fair' standards.⁵²

ALIEV'S POLICIES

Aliev's political priority was to end the war with Armenia. The devastating results of the war would never let Azerbaijan deal with the country's other problems. Aliyev first established an

⁵⁰ Hiro, *The Emergence ...*

⁵¹ EIU, 'The Economist Intelligence Unit Country Report Georgia, Armenia, Azerbaijan', (London: 1995), p. 32.

⁵² 'Report on the U.S. Helsinki Commission Delegation to Georgia and Azerbaijan, April 22-23, 1996.' (Washington: Commission on Security Cooperation in Europe 1996), p. 6.

authoritarian regime, pressuring the opposition and imposing censorship on the press, and then warmed up relations with Russia. Aliev calculated on the presence of Russian help in finishing the war, Azerbaijan's rejoining the CIS, and the signing of the Defense Treaty. The Armenians still had occupied 20 percent of Azeri territory, which was four times larger than Nagorno Karabakh, and the Armenians were marching on Nahchevan in order to invade the district. Turkey and Iran strongly warned Armenia that if Armenia attacked Nahchevan, Turkey and Iran would enter the war and repel the Armenians from their borders with Nahchevan. Aliev started an offensive to force the Armenians to make peace. His offensive was successful at the beginning, but eventually failed to push back the Armenian military.

In September 1993, the legislature in Baku voted 31 to 13, with one abstention, to rejoin the CIS, but opposed further membership in the CIS. It did not favor the Defense Treaty. Parallel to Aliev's new policies, Azerbaijan gave oil concessions to Russian Lukoil in order to gain Moscow's confidence.

By May 1994, fighting became cool and fierce was over. Russia started another peace initiative. In May 1994, with Yeltsin and Nazarbayev's mediation, Armenia, Azerbaijan, and Karabakh signed the Bishkek protocol, calling for cease-fire and the beginning of troop withdrawals. As a result of Russian effort, on June 27, 1994, the defense ministers of Armenia and Azerbaijan and the head of Nagorno Karabakh's armed forces signed a cease-fire. On September 8, Aliyev and Ter-Petrosyan participated closed-door talks in Moscow under Russian auspices to find a solution to the problem.⁵³ In 1994, OSCE meeting in Budapest, the Karabakh Armenians were accepted to be negotiators besides Azerbaijan and Armenia. In 1994 CIS countries, except Armenia, signed a memorandum that CIS states would be respectful to member countries' territorial integrity and national sovereignty. These principles were reemphasized in Almati in February 1995. In Azerbaijan and Armenia, the opposition denounced the agreement, claiming that their presidents sold out the national interests. In Armenia, growing ultra-nationalist opposition forced Levon Terpetrosian, who was seeking to settle the problems with Azerbaijan and Turkey, to resign.

⁵³ *Azerbaijan, ...*, p. 36.

After signing the cease-fire with Armenia, Aliev pursued a comprehensive balance of politics between Russia and Turkey and the West. Aliev was anxious about the growing Russian influence in Azerbaijan and in the Trans-Caucasus. Russia stirred the ethnic conflicts in order to send its troops to the region and to gain military and political influence over the regional states. Because of ethnic problems, Russia sent troops to Georgia and Armenia, but Azerbaijan resisted Russia to receive Russian troops.

Because of the Chechen war in 1994, Russia closed its border with Azerbaijan. Azerbaijan's major oil export route was cut. Because of this incident, Azerbaijan began to trade with Iran, Turkey, and the West more than with Russia and the former Soviet republics. In time, Azerbaijan's dependence on Russia was greatly reduced, and this opportunity allowed Aliev to begin political maneuvers against Moscow.

Beginning in 1994, Azerbaijan wanted to improve its relations with the West and the Middle Eastern countries. Azerbaijan signed the NATO Partnership for Peace, giving Azerbaijan associate status. Aliev visited some Middle Eastern countries in order to develop relations with these nations. But Azerbaijan's warming relations with Turkey, America, and Israel bothered Iran. In exchange, Iran signed an economic cooperation agreement with Turkmenistan and Armenia in September 1995. Iranian foreign minister Ali Ekber Velayeti described it as a sign of the deep political understanding among the three. Iran became the second biggest trading partner of Armenia after Russia. This agreement dissatisfied Aliev, and he soured relations with Iran. Because of Iran's close ties with Armenia and Russia and because of the US pressure, Azerbaijan excluded Iran in oil negotiations.

The mistrust between Baku and Moscow led to open accusations on both sides. The Aliev government openly accused Moscow of interfering in Azeri domestic policies, supporting opposition and underground organizations that prepared coup attempts and an assassination attempt against Aliev. Baku openly accused the coup leader Huseinov, who was formerly Aliev's protector and prime minister, of being a Russian agent. In turn, Moscow accused Baku of supporting rebel Chechens and sending military aid. Azerbaijan and Georgia often complained about the Russian troops in Armenia and large Russian arms sales to this country. According to Aliev, Russia had 40,000 troops in Armenia, and sold sophisticated weapons to this country, including missile

systems capable of carrying nuclear warheads, shoulder-mounted anti-aircraft missiles, and even S-300 missiles. Aliev repeatedly called on Moscow to withdraw its troops from Armenia and stop arms sales to this country.⁵⁴

CONCLUSION

The Karabakh problem is the longest-running conflict in the former Soviet Union. After 1992, the Armenians enlarged their military operations area including the Azeri-populated areas around Nagorno-Karabakh. This war cost some 25,000 soldiers and civilians and uprooted more than a million people from their places.

The Karabakh problem greatly influenced both Azeri and Armenian domestic policies. In Armenia, the Karabakh Committee, which promoted idea of an independent Karabakh, was renamed as Armenian National Movement and its leader Levon Ter-Petrosyan first became the chairman of the Armenian Supreme Soviet, and later, he became Armenia's president. Robert Kocharian, who was head of the Karabakh Armenian forces, followed the same path. In Azerbaijan, the Karabakh problem popularized the APF and its leader Elchibey was elected as Azerbaijan's president. Then, war conditions replaced Elchibey with Aliev in Azerbaijan.

Azerbaijan's international alienation and Armenian military successes created political chaos in the country, and this problem was one of the reasons why democratic institutions did not develop in Azerbaijan. Azerbaijan's dependency to the regional powers, especially to Russia, and ostensible Russian assistance to the Armenians weakened the country's position against Armenian expansionism. When Armenian military movements advanced in Azerbaijan territories, Azeri politics became much more unstable and coups, plots followed one another helping Azeri governments being more strict and corrupt. Since the Armenian occupation of Azeri territories did not cease, Azerbaijan's political disorder continued parallel to the continuation of the Armenian occupation. Expected economic growth of Azerbaijan, because of the country's vast natural resources and agricultural potential, is also not achieved because of the political outcomes of the war with

⁵⁴ *Azerbaijan, ...*, p. 1.

Armenians and Armenian occupation. First of all, Russia and the west are responsible to encourage and assist the Armenian expansionism, undermining Azerbaijan's territorial integrity. While Russia economically and militarily supported Armenia and Karabakh Armenians, United States and Europe also poured variety of assistance to Armenia.

THE LOST LIVES IN THE OUTSKIRTS OF ARARAT: THE VICTIMS OF İĞDIR PLAIN

Dr. Şenol KANTARCI*

Abstract:

This paper narrates the excavation of the mass grave in Gedikli/Tavus village in Iğdır Province. In May 27, 2003, the archeologists accompanied by many Turkish and foreign scholars and journalists dug the dirt, which the archival sources pointed, and found the skeletons and bones of the Muslim victims, who were slaughtered by the Armenian bands in 1919. Like many of them exposed before, this mass grave also proves the Armenian atrocities in the region killing thousands of defenseless Muslim children, women and elderly people alike.

Keywords:

Armenian Atrocities against the Turks, Excavation of Gedikli/Tavus Mass Grave Site in Iğdır, Armenian Terror in Iğdır, Iğdır Plains, Mount Ararat.

After the excavation of the mass grave in the village we, consisted of many Turkish and foreign archeologists, journalists, and scholars, met in a hotel for a dinner. Almost all of the participants who joined the mass grave excavation were in the mood of sadness because of the bones and skeletons of the Muslim victims they had seen during the daytime.

When Kerstin Tomenendal, who joined the excavation from Austria, began to mention about what she had seen, she began to cry and said this: 'I have two children and if I would have been in the place of the Turkish mother, I would have done the same thing: I would have hug my children and wait the time of the horror'.

The scene that Mrs. Tomenendal had witnessed was the sight of a Turkish mother who was butchered by the Armenian bands along with her two children.

One of the last days of May, 2003, a crowd of people at Kars airport were taken by bus to take them to Iğdır. Soon, the number of people in the bus was reached to 40. The group was consisted of Turkish and foreign journalists from Egypt, France and Austria.

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Most of those on the bus did not know each other. For the majority of the group, this was their first visit to Kars and Iğdır situated in the eastern part of Turkey. As they travelled on the right side of Aras River, they saw the Armenian border and the Armenian villages on the hilly area on the left. All on the bus were looking at there with inquisitive eyes. Later, they noticed an oval structure with three separate tombs in Armenia. A researcher on the bus from Iğdır was explaining: *'That structure is Medzamor nuclear power station; this power station has been threatening both Iğdır and Yerevan for years. We are on the earthquake belt and the Angel of Death is sleeping or made to sleep on this belt...'*

After a short while drive, Mount Ararat was seen with all its glory, and beautiful Iğdır plain on its skirts. A green plain...

The researcher from Iğdır was telling those on the bus: *'You can take pictures of Mt. Ararat now. It is saluting you. Look, there is now cloud at the top, it is rare at this season...'*

It took an hour to enter the province of Iğdır¹ called as the beloved city of Dede-Korkut Oğuz. After resting for an hour, the group visited the saltern in Tuzluca. The saltern was like a large cave 270 meters below ground.

Ruj Gonzales de Clavijo, a Spanish ambassador was sent to Timur in Semerkand by the Spanish King in May 1404 told the following about the saltern in his book of travels: *'We rested at Nadjov village on May 27 1404. We went on our travel along (the right side of) Aras River. The road was not good and mostly steep. The next day, we stayed at another village. There, there was a castle on the top of the mountain. Everywhere was cocered with salt rocks. People from neighbouring villages are said to take salt from here and use it in their homes'.²*

The day ended with the visit of Alican frontier post.

The next morning, the group went to Gedikli /Tavus village, where the excavation of a mass grave was planned.

¹ 'Iğdır is the name of one of the clans of 24 Turkish-Oğuz family'. See, Nihat Çetinkaya, *Iğdır Tarihi, (Tarih, Yer Adları ve Bazı Oymaklar Üzerine)*, (Istanbul: 1996), p. 125.

² Çetinkaya, *Iğdır...*, pp. 75-76.

SOME IMPORTANT NOTES ABOUT THE CHARACTERISTICS OF THE AREA

As their relics indicated, a number of civilizations had existed in İğdir,³ a city to the east of Eastern Anatolian region. Archeological and prehistoric researches about İğdir have demonstrated that the origin of the city is as old as the origin of human race and the area has become a cradle for many civilizations. Black obsidian stone tools and flint stone tools found in İğdir plain prove that there was a settlement in the area in the Mesolithic Age. The first settlers of the area were Hurris. Following Hurris, such peoples as Mitannis, Kimmers, Sumerians, Subarians are known to have settled on the slopes of Mt. Ararat, on Aras river basin, and Eastern Anatolia. Later, the region was captured by Urartus, Scythians, Selevkos, Arsaks, Sasanids, Arabs, Byzantians, Seljuks, Mongolians, Çingizs, İlkhans, Jelayirids, Karakoyunlus, Akkoyunlus and Safavids.⁴

When the Ottoman Sultan Yavuz Sultan Selim had beaten the Safavids in 1514 in Çaldıran War, the region was included in the Ottoman territory. After the Ottoman conquest of Revan (Yerevan) in 1583, the administration of İğdir, Tuzluca and Aralık towns were connected to 'Aralık Kazası' which was the sub province of the city of Revan. The region fell under the Iranian rule with the Treaty of İstanbul, signed in 1736 and remained as Iranian territory until 1828. It was then included in the Russian territory after the outbreak of a war between Iran and Russia. The region remained as Russian territory until October 1917 Revolution. Afterwards, though the Turks recovered the province of İğdir with the signature of Brest-Litovsk Treaty later they lost the province. When the Turkish Armies withdrew with the Mudros Treaty on 30 October 1918, İğdir and the neighbouring area suffered from Armenian atrocities. At last, when 15th Turkish army corps under the command of Kazım Karabekir pushed Armenians to the north of

³ For the history of İğdir and its surrounding see, Fahrettin Kırzioğlu, *Kars Tarihi*, Vol. I, (İstanbul: 1953); Fahrettin Kırzioğlu, *Yukarı-Kür ve Çoruk Boyları'nda Kıpçaklar*, (Ankara: 1992); Fahrettin Kırzioğlu, *Selçuklular'ın Anı'yı Fethi*, (Ankara: 1970), Fahrettin Kırzioğlu, *Dede Korkut Oğuznameleri, I. Kitap*, (İstanbul: 1952); Fahrettin Kırzioğlu, *Osmanlıların Kafkas Ellerini Fethi (1451-1590)*, (Ankara: 1993); Fahrettin Kırzioğlu, *Anı Şehri Tarihi*, (Ankara: 1982); Mehmet Eröz, *Doğu Anadolu'nun Türklüğü*, (İstanbul: 1975); Yusuf Halaçoğlu, *XVIII. Yüzyılda Osmanlı İmparatorluğu'nun İskân Siyaseti ve Aşiretlerin Yerleştirilmesi*, (Ankara: 1998); Akdes Nimet Kurat, *Rusya Tarihi*, (Ankara: 1992); Veli Orkun, *Sürmeli Çukuru-İğdir Tarihi Coğrafyası*, (İğdir, 1955); Ali Sevim, *Anadolu'nun Fethi, Selçuklular Dönemi (Başlangıcından 1086'ya Kadar)*, (Ankara: 1988); Faruk Sümer, *Oğuzlar (Türkmenler)*, (İstanbul: 1980); Şeref Han, *Şerefname*, Vols. I-II., (İstanbul: 1970).

⁴ For more information see, Çetinkaya, *İğdir...*, p. 70.

Aras river on 14 November 1920, Iğdır and its neighbourhood was included in Turkish territory for the last time.⁵

MT. ARARAT: İĞDIR'S HAND TO THE SKIES

Mt. Ararat, which Evliya Çelebi called it as Türkmen Yaylağı,⁶ and Marco Polo said that it was impossible to climb the mountain when it was seen from a long distant. The top of Mt. Ararat has always white with snow. It is a friend of clouds in the sky. It also has a child under its wings: Minor Ararat.

'Ararat' is the international name for the mountain. It is wrong to think that it is an Armenian word. The term has no connection with the Armenian language. Historical sources reveal that the name was in use long before the Armenians came to the region. The name 'Ararat' in Urartu language is the name of the region around Mt. Ararat. It is also used as the mountain of Ararat region. When the Armenians realized this, they stopped using Ararat, which was adopted by themselves, and started to call Mt. Ararat as 'Masis Mountain'. However, the word 'Masis' is not Armenian, but it is a Georgian word.⁷

Marco Polo, who said that Mt Ararat goes up to the sky like a pyramid, noted that: *'The whole year its top is covered with snow, it is pure white, and cloudy. But the skirts of the mountain is green, covered with pasture, a unique place for Turks to graze their animals'*.⁸ The mountain is situated at the meeting point of Turkey, Iran and Nahcevan. Since it is a large and high mountain, it can be seen from all parts of Iğdır and Nahcevan, and from most parts of Ağrı, and from some heights of the cities of Van and Erzurum in Turkey. It can also be seen from the heights of Armenia and Iran.

Surp-Mari / Sürmeli (Karakale), built on the northwestern part of Mt. Ararat is said to have been the biggest and the most famous city of Iğdır plain. The city, built on dry soil after the big flood, is mostly believed to have been built by one of Noah's sons.⁹ It is said in a Seljuk document, Ahbarü'd-Devleti's-Selçukiyye, that:

⁵ http://igdir.meb.gov.tr/yapmadan_donme.htm

⁶ *Evliya Çelebi Seyahatnamesi*, Translated by Mümin Çevik, Vol. 1. (Istanbul: 1985), p. 639.

⁷ Çetinkaya, *Iğdır ...*, p. 70.

⁸ *Marco Polo Seyahatnamesi*, by Tercüman 1001 Temel Eser, p. 21.

⁹ The story of Noah's Ark is not scientifically proven.

'There were streams and gardens in that castle'. It is claimed that İğdir castle was destroyed in an earthquake in 1664, and the residents built the core of today's city of İğdir on the plain. The existence of a town called İğdir in an Ottoman document supports this view.

Spanish ambassador, Ruj Gonzales de Clavijo says that he came to İğdir/ Sürmeli at around noon on Thursday, May 29, 1404. He notes that the first city built after the great flood was Surmari (Sürmeli), the city had a castle with strong towers at the gate, the castle had two gates, and it was possible to go to the valley from the gate of the city. He also noted that he came to Karakale on Friday, may 30, 1404, and this castle was commanded by a woman, who said that she was under Timur's rule and protection and paid tax to him.¹⁰ He says that formerly the castle was the home of terrorists who attacked and robbed passing caravans. Timur later captured the castle, killed the head of the terrorists and left the rule of the castle to his wife. Timur is said to have destroyed all the doors of the castle so as to prevent the castle from being the home of terrorists and banned the construction of doors from then on. Clavijo further says that there are large pastures on the skirts of Mt. Ararat, lots of springs run through them, he met a number of city relics and a number of houses built from large stones on the way, and people painted silk with red dye from some insects in the valley.¹¹

The religious and mythical significance of Mt. Ararat comes from the belief that Noah's ark landed Mt. Ararat after the great flood. It has a unique place from the viewpoint of history of religions. Mt. Ararat was given different names throughout history: Oğuzlar called it as 'Arkuri' (The Mountain Beyond); Marko Polo (while passing through the region in 1290) as 'Akdağ'; Katip Çelebi (in his famous work Cihannüma) as 'Kül-i Argı'; Evliya Çelebi (in his famous work Seyahatname) as 'Kül-i Argı', the Western world as 'Ararat', the Arabs as 'Cebelü'l Haris', Iranians as 'Küh-i Nuh', Armenians as 'Masis Mountain'.¹²

¹⁰ Çetinkaya, *İğdir...*, p. 126.

¹¹ Çetinkaya, *İğdir...*, pp. 76-77.

¹² http://igdir.meb.gov.tr/yapmadan_donme.htm

MASSACRES COMMITTED BY THE ARMENIANS AGAINST THE TURKS IN İĞDIR

During World War I, when Russians entered into the Ottoman territory from the east, with the voluntary Armenian troops formed by Ottoman and Russian Armenians, Armenians in the Ottoman army fled with their arms and joined Russian army. Those Armenians who could not reach Russian army formed gangs and revolted. Guns kept in secrecy in both Armenian schools and in churches were taken by Armenians, and then they attacked to military recruiting offices to get more guns. With the instructions sent by the armed bands, which said, that *'If you want to survive, kill your neighbour first'*; the Armenians attacked Turkish cities, towns and villages and started to commit massacres. Armenians who attacked the Ottoman forces from behind limited the motion of the army, blocked the support reached to the army, ambushed convoys carrying the wounded, destroyed roads and bridges and made it easy for Russians to occupy the cities which they lived. The torture of voluntary Armenian troops in the Russian army was so unbearable that Russian commanders felt it necessary to take some Armenian troops from the front to the back.

The massacre of Muslim population by Armenian gangs in and around the city of Kars lasted between the years 1915¹³ and 1920.¹⁴ Especially with October Revolution in Russia in 1917, Russian army began to retreat and the Eastern Anatolia hence fell in the hands of Armenians and Georgians. In this period, massacre of Turks by Armenians started in many parts of eastern Anatolia.¹⁵

Before the World War I, massacre of Turks took place in many places like Erzincan, Bayburt, Erzurum, Kars, Ardahan ve İğdir¹⁶ under the leadership of Armenians like Murat of Sivas, Antranik, known as the Sason devil, and Arşak, carrying out massacre in Muş. The muslim population in the area faced the danger of extinction as the Russian officers were losing their control. Armenians, carrying on their activities in places under Russian occupation killed new-born babies, cut the abdomens of pregnant

¹³ Ottoman Archives-Political Section related to the Great War, Document No. 110 / 12-1, 2 (hereafter quoted as BOA. HR. SYS.HU).

¹⁴ The massacres committed by the Armenians against the Muslim people mostly took place in the years between 1918 and 1920.

¹⁵ Şenol Kantarcı, Kamer Kasım, et.al, *Ermeni Sorunu El Kitabı* (Ankara: 2002), p. 36.

¹⁶ BOA. HR. SYS.HU, Document No. 110 / 12-1.

**Massacre of Turks by
Armenians in Caucasia
and Eastern Anatolia were
done by the regular
Armenian troops.**

women, burned alive Muslims to death and tortured girls in an unspeakable way.¹⁷

Massacre of Turks by Armenians in Caucasia and Eastern Anatolia were done by the regular Armenian troops.¹⁸

In İğdir, Tuzluca, and Aralık numerous Turks were killed by Armenians regardless of children, young, or old. A report from 2nd Caucasian Army Corps to Third Army, dated 16 May 1918, indicated that Armenians kept their business on carrying out massacre and torture in the territory under their occupation. Besides, on 29 April 1918, the Armenians killed 3000 Muslim migrants coming with 500 carriages from Gümrü to Ahalkelek. In the same period, an Armenian troop with two canons and two machine guns attacked Muslim villages around Tuzluca and Yerevan, and killed women and children.¹⁹

Armenian gangs killed 50 Muslims in İğdir, 242 in Tuzluca, 200 in Oluklu, 300 in Çilhane, and 800 in Hacı Halil only in April 1918.²⁰

On 21 August 1919, a report, sent to 15th Army Corps commander Kâzım Karabekir by 9th Caucasian Division Commander, Colonel Rüşdü, noted that when the Kurds attacked the Armenians in Kağızman on August 18, Armenians started massacres filling the Muslim population into the mosques, those who could escape from this massacre, 200 people, mostly hungry and naked women, asked Muslim military personnel on Çukurçam and Kükürtlü mountains to shelter themselves, said that if the massacre of Muslim population was not stopped, there would remain even no single Muslim person in either in Elviye-i Selâse (Kars, Ardahan, Batum) or around Aras, and they said that it was inevitable to take necessary measures.²¹

The report by the commander of the twelfth division, Osman Nuri, dated 21 August 1919, sent to the fifteenth army corps

¹⁷ Abdurrahman Çaycı, *Türk-Ermeni İlişkilerinde Gerçekler*, (Ankara, 2000), pp. 75- 77.

¹⁸ BOA. HR. SYS., Document No. 2877/71.

¹⁹ Muammer Demirel, 'Osmanlı Belgelerine Göre İğdir ve Çevresinde Ermeniler'in Müslüman Halka Yaptıkları Katliam' *İğdir Tarihi Gerçekler ve Ermeniler Uluslararası Sempozyumu* (24-27 Nisan 1995) İğdir, Bildiriler Kitabı, (Ankara:1997), p. 66.

²⁰ Demirel, 'İğdir...', p. 66.

²¹ BOA. HR. SYS., Document No. 2877/73.

confirmed the situation. In addition, it was reported that the Armenian forces withdrew the Christian population in places they would massacre, for any reason, and by this way they attacked many villages around Kağızman, Iğdır and Kulp by sudden attacks using cannon and machine gun, and as a result they massacred and plundered the Muslim population.²²

In another report sent to the Ministry of War, these statements were recorded as in the following:²³ *'Armenians swore the Muezzins who were calling to pray, and they tortured women and raped them. They forced the naked Muslim women to walk among them'*.

On 17 September 1919, a group of Armenians went to Adbak village, six kilometers east of Iğdır, and massacred all of the people and brutally killed the people of Yağcı village, which consisted of three hundred houses one kilometer away from Adbak.²⁴

On 4 December 1919, in a telegraph sent by Osman Nuri Bey to the fifth army corps, it was reported that *'Armenians captured 3000 innocent people, mostly hungry, naked, and children, in the region of Kars, Sarıkamış and Kağızman'*.²⁵

On 11 March 1920, Armenian raiders suddenly attacked Ağbaba, Zarduşad, Şüregel, Çıldır (towns) and massacred the innocent people in these towns.²⁶ These Armenian raiders, in the region, massacred 2000 innocent people, mostly women and children, just in Zarduşad and destroyed exactly 28 villages and distributed many Muslim girls whom they brought to the Armenian houses in Gümrü and in Kars. Showing the underwears of those Muslim women, they sold them, and also awarded one of the Kurdish heads, Davud, who had worked well during the attacks, giving him a great deal of money.²⁷

A document dated 2 July 1920 manifested the other dimension of the massacres carried out by Armenians. In this document, it was reported that Armenians threw 1500 children in the stream in

²² BOA. HR. SYS., Document No. 2877/75, 79.

²³ BOA. HR. SYS., Document No. 2877 / 77.

²⁴ BOA. HR. SYS., Document No. 2602-1/219, 223 -230.

²⁵ BOA. HR. SYS., Document No. 2878 / 8.

²⁶ BOA. HR. SYS., Document No. 2878/18,21.

²⁷ BOA. HR. SYS., Document No. 2878 / 22.

December, and drown them out and as a result, drinking water could not be available due to these numerous dead bodies.²⁸

The letter of the Imam (religious head) of the Ersinek village tells identical events: *'Brothers, you are all aware of the situation, he who is captive. But this captivity and insult has never been witnessed. From the creation of the world to now such torture and massacre has never been done and cannot be seen. You cannot tell this by words. Just those innocent people know it. The scream of those innocent children and women reached the highest place. The people have given up all their goods, horses, and sheep or goats. There is not integrity any longer. As for the lives, just half of the Muslim people maybe one third is still alive'*.

In another report dated 5 July 1920 it was noted that in Kars, Sarıkamış, Karakurt, İğdir, and in their villages Armenian forces carried out massacre. In this report, it was stated that the Armenian forces commanded by General Obesyan was responsible for these massacres. In some villages innocent people were killed in an unbelievable way, and were burnt in houses, and they were thrown away to Aras River after being bayoneted, and many goods, animals, valuable things belonging to Muslim people were plundered. It was also noted that the number of the massacred Muslim people reached 25000 since 1918 in Kars and its surroundings.²⁹

In an another report dated 25 July 1920, it was stated that Armenians committed massacres not only in the Muslim quarters but also in many Malakan villages.³⁰ The people of Muslim and Malakan villages³¹ tortured by Armenians asked for help from the armed forces in the border.³²

The Armenian raiders, from 1915 to the end of 1920, savagely massacred thousands of Muslim women and children in the regions of Şahtahtı, Zenzegur, Nahçıvan, İğdir Serdarabad and in the hundreds of other villages.

As it can be seen in the archives that Antranik and Bapun raiders kept these villages under torture and attack for months,

²⁸ BOA. HR. SYS., Document No. 2878 / 42.

²⁹ BOA. HR. SYS., Document N: 2878 / 43.

³⁰ BOA. HR. SYS., Document No. 2878 / 30.

³¹ The Armenians also attacked Novoselim Malakan village looting all of the villager's goods and animals. See, (BOA. HR. SYS., Document No. 2878 / 38).

³² BOA. HR. SYS., Document No. 2878 / 34.

plundered their goods, captured their animals, and forced the survivors to immigrate.

LOST LIVES OF İĞDIR: EXCAVATION OF MASS GRAVE

According to the information drawn from the archives and from people who personally experienced the events, it was found out that Armenians had massacred nearly 150 Muslims in Tavus/Gedikli village of Tuzluca in İğdir.

This event in Gedikli is mentioned in the archives as follows:³³ *'A letter from a notable member of a tribe says that Armenians pillaged and looted the Muslim villages called Yukarıkatırlı (Koturlu), Aşağıkatırlı (Koturlu) and Tavus, and they murdered nearly 150 villagers. Later Muslim people got some help from other villages and with this help they captured two cannons and a machine gun from the Armenians; but, as their ammunition finished they demanded help. This was reported by the Head Officer of Karakilise.'*

This event was reported in an another document too.³⁴ The document indicated the following: *'...they destroyed completely the Tavus village whose population was 150...'*

The place of the mass grave in İğdir was found by the help of archives and the information given by the dwellers of the surrounding villages. The statements of Hacı Esad Acar, an old man who was born in 1912 and witnessed the event personally, was one of the most important evidences which led to find the location of the mass grave.

Hacı Esad³⁵ told the event as follows:

'Our village is a mountain village of Tuzluca. Molla Kemer and Güllüce villages, which are neighbours to our village, were among the places where Armenians lived. Our village was considered to be a rich one compared with the surrounding villages. One day a group of notable Armenians came and said us the following: 'we brought you food. Tell the villagers to gather, we will divide the goods that we brought to you. While we began to gather to take up the goods, the village was being surrounded by the Armenian soldiers. But we did not know what was going on at that time. We, around 70-80

³³ BOA. HR. SYS., Document No. 2878 / 78. (For the original document see appendix).

³⁴ BOA. HR. SYS., Document No. 2877 / 70.

³⁵ For the picture of Hacı Esad ACAR, see appendix.

people, came together in there. They suddenly forced us to go into a house and slaughtered most us with swords. Only I, myself, Abbas, Kılıç and Muhsin were survived. We were covered with dead bodies.

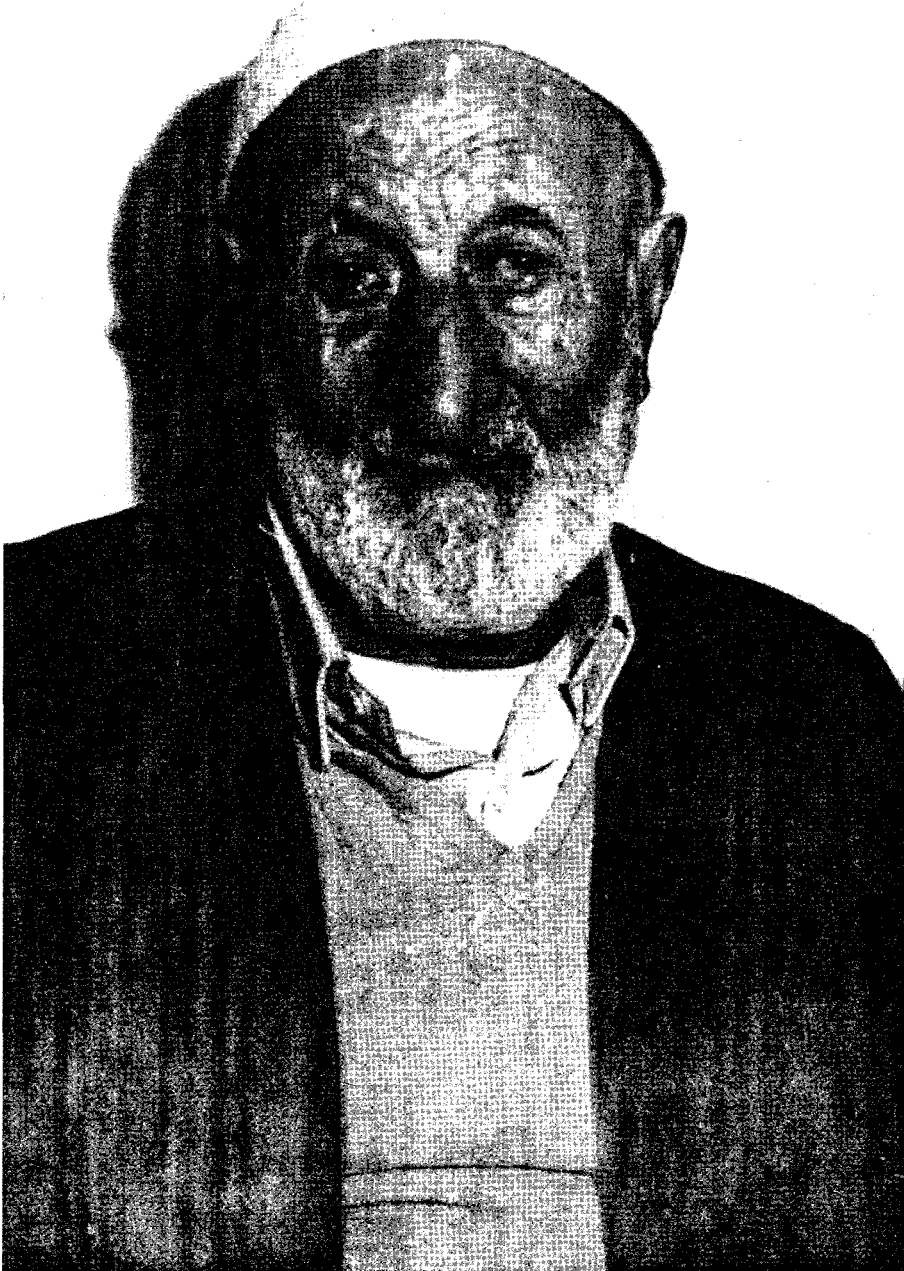
The surrounding tribal villagers who had heard the news came to rescue us and after forcing the Armenians to run away from the village, they came to the house in which the Muslims were butchered by the Armenians. When they entered in the house they heard the moanings coming from under the dead bodies and they hence rescued us.

The massacre in our village happened during the harvest of wheat. I cannot still believe how I could survive. My friend Kılıç was very badly wounded on several parts of his body. He soon died. The house in which the Armenians had brought us was Kelbayı(Keldayı) Celil's. There were seven relatives of him in the house. Their names were Ahmet, Hüseyin, İskender, Mehmet Ali, Meşedi Hüseyin, Mehmet, Hüseyin, and my sister Güllü. Armenians killed Güllü who was only six years old with six bayonet blows. Villagers who were able to escape when Armenians first came to the village, turned back afterwards. Some of them took the dead bodies of their relatives from the house and buried them. But many of them are still under the debris of that house. I learned, afterwards, that Armenians had murdered the wheat-harvesting villagers and filled them into water-wells'.

During our interviews with people³⁶ whose relatives had been subjected to this massacre in Gedikli village, we learnt that Armenians had brought nearly 100 villagers (in Ottoman archives this number is 150)³⁷ in Celil's house and slaughtered them with swords and bayonets. They stated that those who had been able to escape from this massacre turned back to their village later, but because of the strong smell caused by dead bodies they could not enter the house and they saw the house as their fathers' and grandfathers' grave. The excavation of the mass grave in Gedikli/Tavus village was conducted on 27 May 2003, before the eyes of a crowd of both Turkish and foreign scientists and journalists. The scene encountered at the very beginning of the excavation was of a kind that it can never be forgotten by either the native or foreign observers for a long time. This scene was consisted of the skeletons of a mother, whose head was cut into two pieces, embracing her two children three and seven-years-old.

³⁶ For the pictures related to interview, see appendix.

³⁷ BOA. HR. SYS., Document No. 2877 / 70; BOA. HR. SYS., Document No. 2878 / 78.



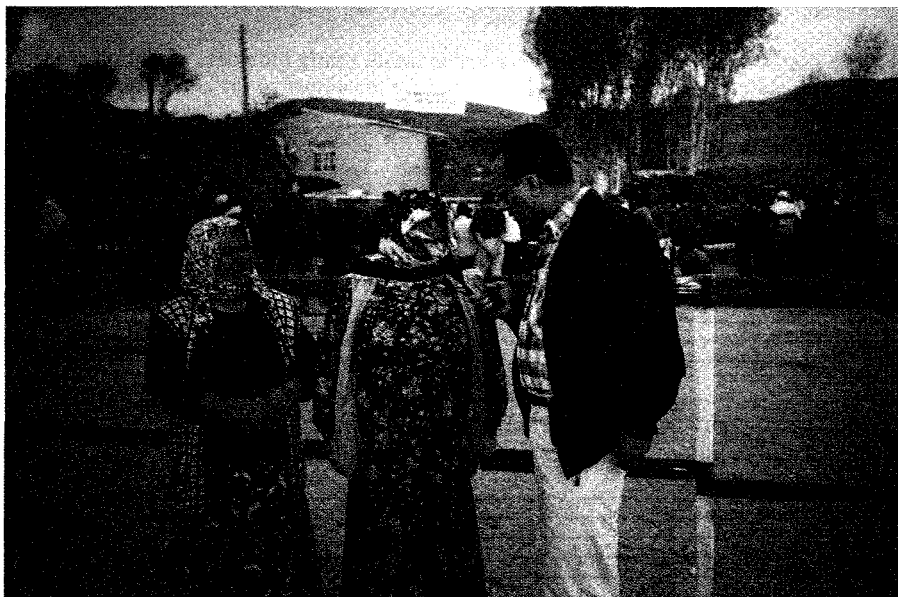
Esat Acar (Tuzluca, Gedikli Village)

Kulp Kazasında Ermenilerin şimdiye kadar tatbik etmiş oldukları mezalimi irade eder cetveldir. (Doc II. List that enumerates the atrocities so far committed by the Armenians in the district of Kulp)

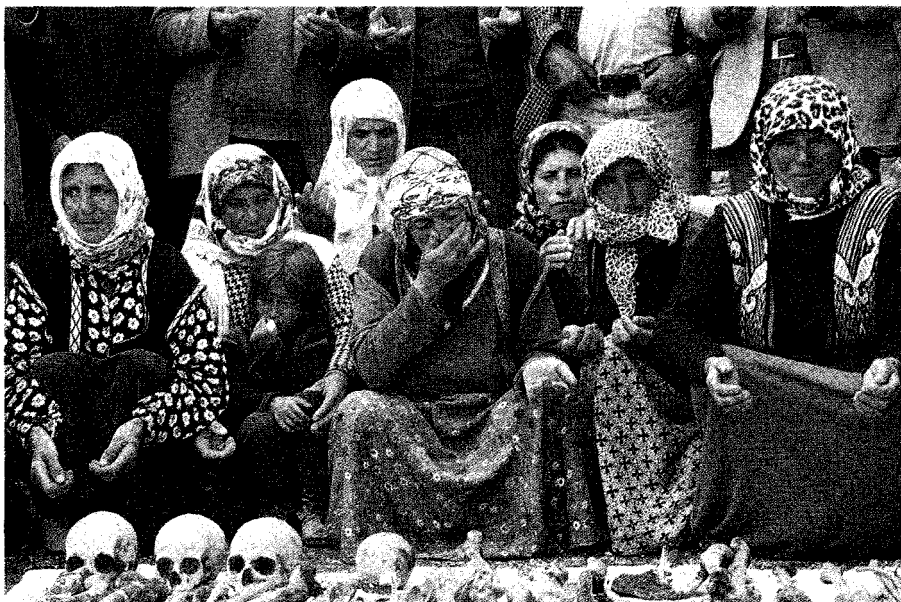
Esami-i Kura	Ruslar zamandaki Nüfus-ı Hane	Şimdiki Nüfus-ı Hane	Mülâhazat
Sürmeli	40	20	20 hane Ermeniler hark ve mahvetmişlerdir
Pirli	35	--	Büsbütün mahvolmuştur
Aşağı Sabgavat	20	--	"
Yukarı Sabgavat	25	--	"
Kamışlık	50	20	20 hane mahvolmuştur
Kara Bulak	20	--	Büsbütün mahvolmuştur. Köyleri de haraptır.
Pursa	20	10	10 hane kalmıştır
İki Katırlı	40	-	Hiç kalmamıştır. Demek ki köy de haraptır.
Tavusköy	40	--	Büsbütün mahvolmuştur. Köyleri de haraptır.
Enice	20	5	15 hane mahvolmuştur.
Karakoyunlu	25	--	Büsbütün mahvolmuştur.
Ali Köse	30	10	20 hane mahvolup
Sevgi	35	20	15 hane mahvolup
Eğrek	200	120	80 hane mahvolup
Kağın	30	5	25 hane mahvolup
Havimli	20	10	10 hane mahvolup
İki Kenzihler	40	4	36 hane mahvolup --mevcut demek ki köyde haraptır
Kuru Ağaç	40	20	20 hane mahvolup
Demirışan	50	20	30 hane mahvolmuştur
Karacabren	20	--	Cümlesi mahvolmuştur
Kayaharabesi	15	--	Cümlesi mahvolmuştur
İlan-ı Derviş ?	20	--	Cümlesi mahvolmuştur
Ağdis	40	20	20 hane mahvolmuştur
Hüsevinkent	20	10	10 hane mahvolmuştur

Number of Households under the Russian Administration.

Report of the army commander of the 11. Division dated 24 Kanun-ı Sani 1337 (24 Ocak 1921). The Ottoman Archives of the Prime Ministry, Foreign Affairs-Politics, No: 2878/78



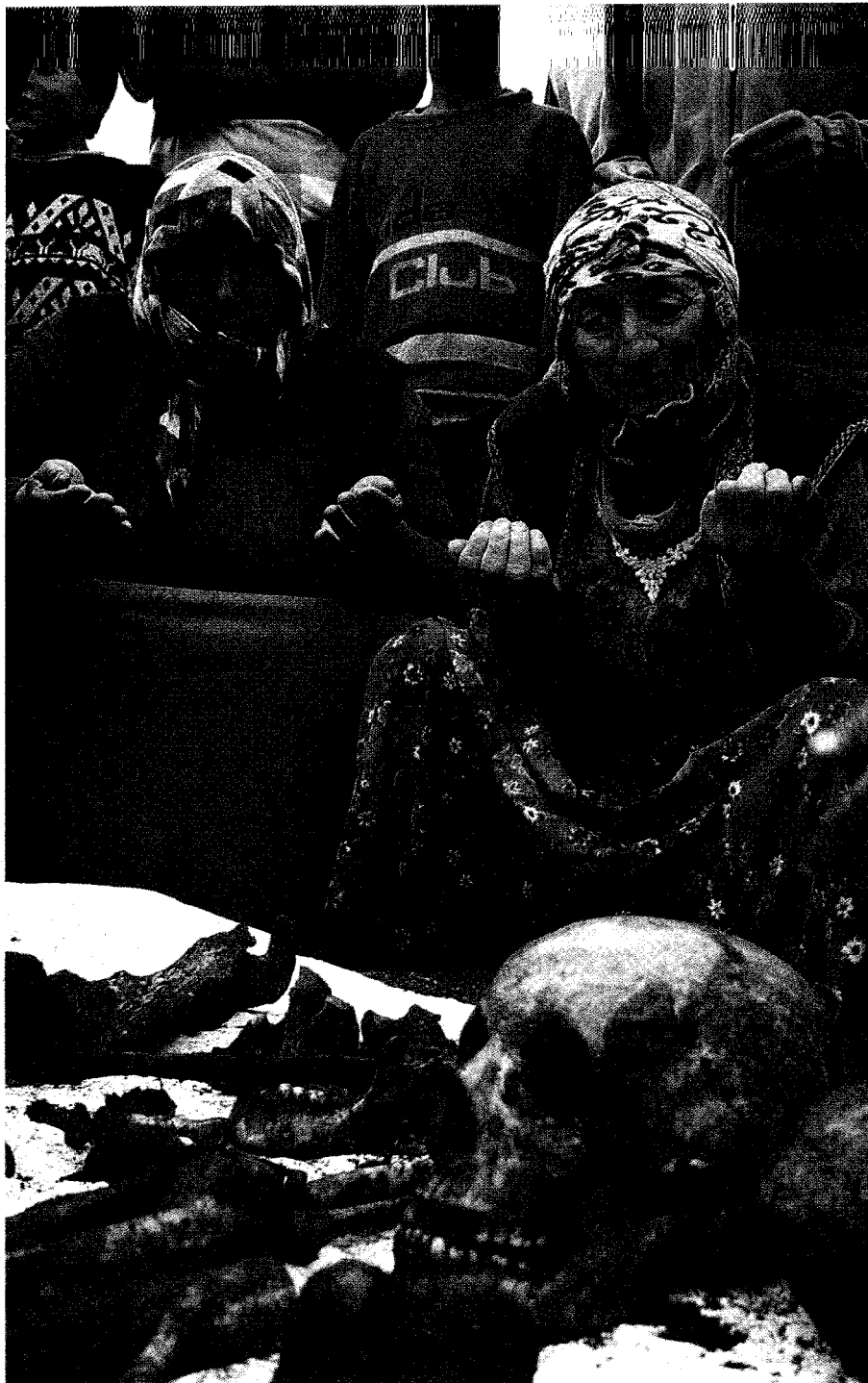
Interviews with the villagers in Gedikli-Tavus.



Picture related to the excavation of mass grave in Gedikli-Tavus Village.



A picture related to skeleton of a Turk whose head was cut by the Armenians.



Scenes from a mass grave excavation in Gedikli-Tavus Village.

THE MUSLIM AND NON-MUSLIM POPULATION IN MARAŞ AND ZEITUN REVOLT OF 1895

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Abstract:

Maraş, (Marash), was a sub-province of Aleppo administrative district, and, compared with the other parts of the Empire; it had a dense Armenian population towards the end of the nineteenth century. Most of the non-Muslims here lived in the city of Maraş, and in the town of Zeitun. Zeitun contained somewhere between 7,000 and 9,000 Armenian population while the Muslim population ranged from 6,000 to 7,000 in the same place. Nevertheless, when all of Maraş's population was concerned, approximately 19 percent of it was the non-Muslims, which were overwhelmingly Armenian in terms of the ethnic structure.

Because of its large number of the Armenian Population, rough and mountainous geography, historical-outlawed mentality and traditional rebelliousness of Zeitun Armenians, Zeitun became a convenient place for Armenian terrorist and separatist activities toward the end of the nineteenth century. Especially, the Armenian terrorist group called the Hunchaks prepared a big rebellion in 1895. They received assistance from the European Great Powers, especially from Britain. Their aim was to massacre the Muslims in order to get retaliated by the Muslims. If that happened, as they had thought, the Great Powers were to intervene in the Ottoman affairs, and to force the Ottoman government to grant more rights to the Armenians, leading to total independence. The article, hence, deals with the way in which the Zeitun Revolt was conducted, and examines the Armenian objectives behind it. Then, the last parts of the paper examine the outcomes of the Zeitun Revolt and scrutinize foreign influences behind it.

Keywords:

The Ottoman Empire, the Armenian Question, the Turks, the Armenians, Zeitun, Maraş, the Eastern Question.

INTRODUCTION: AN EVALUATION OF THE LATE OTTOMAN CENSUSES

One of the most discussed matters that has widely been discussed among historians and researchers is the

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numbers of the Ottoman ethnic groups in the late period of the Empire. Discussions have risen from different approaches to the matter among the different groups, who have been motivated by various sets of political, national and cultural values. In this respect, it would be much more convenient to look at the sources. Among the sources for the Ottoman population counts, the official statistical data of the Ottomans would be the first to be count on.

Even though the Ottomans had believed in the necessity of making regular census records since 1831 in order to both collect taxes and conscript soldiers, their findings had been widely contested by European and American researchers, as well as by the minorities, especially the Armenians, in order to have political gains.¹ This created a wide variety of different guesses for the Ottoman population statistics. This, also, caused many to predict unevenly on the events took place in the late Ottoman history. For example, in his article published in *Revue d'Orient* on 29 October 1895, a famous Hungarian historian, Arminius Vambery, who intensively wrote books and articles on the Turkish world in the second half of the nineteenth century, stated that the European media and the Armenian sources had greatly exaggerated the events in favor of the Armenians. He exemplified that E. Gladstone, one of the most renowned statesmen of Great Britain in the nineteenth century, had claimed that 10.000 Armenians were killed in the event of Sasun in 1894, though, in reality, there were together with the Muslims only 4.500 people in Sasun.²

As they had backed the Balkan Christians in accordance with their international interests, the Western big states tried to disintegrate the Empire and create an 'Armenia' in the Asiatic territories -the so-called Ottoman Armenia- of the Ottoman Empire, comprising six principalities, namely Van, Erzurum, Elazığ, Diyarbakır, Sivas and Trabzon. This was not possible as long as the demographic aspect of the region was concerned, because the Armenians were living not only in these six vilayets, but also in every part of the Empire, as wealthy merchants, small shop owners, doctors, bankers and farmers. Although the Armenians were densely populated in these provinces, they made

¹ Justin McCarthy, 'The Population of the Ottoman Armenians', in Türkkaya Ataöv (ed.), *The Armenians in the Late Ottoman Period* (Ankara: Türk Tarih Kurumu, 2001), p. 65.

² Bilal N. Şimşir, *Documents Diplomatiques Ottomans: Affaires Armeniennes, 1895-1896*, Vol. 3, (Ankara: Türk Tarih Kurumu, 1999), p. 75.

approximately 19 percent of these places. Not to mention their minority position in every big cities in the region. Indeed, they had never been a majority people in the region for centuries.³ As an American historian, Justin McCarthy, said, 'In reality, if all the Armenians in the world would come to the Eastern Anatolia, they could not make a majority in the region.'⁴ In general, the Armenian population made of 5.5 percent of the Empire's population. In this regard, İstanbul was one of their most crowded cities where the Armenians made of 18 percent of the total population. The total Armenians were around 1.185.392, of which 988.887 were Gregorian, 160.166 were Catholics, and 36.339 were Protestants.⁵ At the same period, the total population of the Empire was 20.475.225.⁶

Despite the real demographic estimates of the Empire, the Armenians, hoping to gain military and political backing of the big powers, overly exaggerated their number. For this aim, the Armenian Patriarchate claimed that within the six provinces 2.615.000 people were living, of which 1.018.000 (39% of the region's population) were the Armenians, 165.000 (6%) were the other Christians, and 1.432.000 (55%) were the Muslims. However, the Ottoman official records showed that there were living a total of 4.138.635 people, of which 784.917 (19%) were the Armenians, 176.845 (4%) the other Christians and 3.173.918 (77%) were the Muslims.⁷ Furthermore, according to the 1906 official statistics, within the Empire, including the Balkans, Anatolia and the Arab lands, while 74 percent of the total population was Muslims, only 26 percent were non-Muslims. Among the non-Muslims, there were the Jews, the Greeks, the Armenians and all the others. 'Anatolia and the Arab lands generally comprised 80 percent of the Muslim majority'.⁸

³ Erich Feigl, *A Myth of Terror*, (Salzburg: EZG, 1986), p. 61.

⁴ Justin McCarthy, 'Bırakın Tarihciler Karar Versin', *Ermeni Araştırmaları*, No. 2, (June-July-August 2001), p. 114.

⁵ Stanford J. Shaw & Ezel Kural Shaw, *Osmanlı İmparatorluğu ve Modern Türkiye*, Vol. 2. (Translated) Mehmet Harmancı, (İstanbul: E Yayınları, 1983), p. 250.

⁶ Shaw, *Osmanlı...*, p. 250.

⁷ McCarthy, 'The Population ...', p. 67.

⁸ Donald Quataert, 'The Age of Reforms, 1812-1914', in Halil İnalcık and Donald Quataert (eds.), *An Economic and Social History of the Ottoman Empire, 1300-1914* (Cambridge: University Press, 1994), p. 782.

The main goal of the Armenian separatists and the Armenians in exaggerating their number was to gain European support in the process of gaining new political rights.

For the Muslim and the non-Muslim population of the Empire, British consuls whose estimates had been closer to the official statistics, proved that the Armenian statistics were unreliable. Colonel C. W. Wilson, British general consul of Anatolia, stated that one fifth of the population of Sivas were Christians, and the Caucasian immigrants, who had come to

the region after the Russo-Turkish war of 1877-78, were not included in this estimate.⁹ Furthermore, as the British consul Henry Trotter found out, both the Christians and the Muslims had troubles to hide their actual number in the official censuses because the former did not want to pay the 'askerlik bedeli' (military exemption) tax and the later, especially the Kurdish and Arab tribes, did not wish to serve in the army.¹⁰ Thus, if there was some sort of miscalculation in the official statistics, it equally effected the Muslims and the non-Muslims.

The main goal of the Armenian separatists and the Armenians in exaggerating their number was to gain European support in the process of gaining new political rights. One of the solid example of their miscalculation and misrepresentation of the Armenian population took place in 1880 in Sivas. The Armenian bishop of this city represented a statistical data to British consul C. W. Wilson. According to this statistics the city's Christian population were 201.245 (approximately 22 percent of the total city population), and the Muslim people were 694.431 (78 percent of the total population) in number. Yet, the Patriarchate had a great change on paper in this statistics while presenting it to Europe. According to the new numbers, on the paper, the number of the Christians increased to 216.845 (approximately 36 percent) and the Muslim population decreased to 388.218 (around 64 percent) in the city.¹¹ Similar examples for exaggerative and wrong information provided by the Patriarchate to Europe can be found

⁹ Bilal N. Şimşir, *British Documents on Ottoman Armenians (1880-1890)*, Vol. 2. (Ankara: Türk Tarih Kurumu, 1989), p. 111.

¹⁰ Şimşir, *British...*, pp. 126-127.

¹¹ Şimşir, *British...*, p. 140.

in many instances. Since it was the Armenian Patriarchate to persuade the big powers to back their desire to gain an autonomous, or, if possible, an independent state, they were most likely to try every means, including better polished lies, and overly exaggerated realities. On the other hand, the Ottomans, who had less concerns for providing wrong or exaggerated population calculations, left much more reliable statistical data. Thus, it is more convenient to give more credit to the official records than any other sources, especially the Patriarchate's censuses.

Population of Aleppo Province and Maraş Sub-Province

In the discussed period, the population of Aleppo province was overwhelmingly in favor of the Muslims. Ottoman official records held in 1908 openly support this argument. According to these numbers, the total population was 903.269, of this total number, 759.040 were Muslims (84 percent), 65.033 were Gregorian Armenians (7 percent), 10.016 were Catholic Armenians (one percent) and 12.071 were Protestant Armenians (1.33 percent). The rest belonged to the Greeks, Jews, and the Maronites.¹² As these numbers show, while the percentage of the total Armenians was nine, the Muslim percentage of the province was making an overwhelming eighty four percent. Within the Aleppo province, one of the most crowded Armenian populations was living in Maraş sub-province. Despite this, the Armenians made only 19 percent of Maraş, which meant that 3.5-4.4 Armenians were living on per square kilometer in the region.¹³

Despite these reliable statistical records, the Armenian sources, as well as the Western missionary records, had provided various and exaggerated numbers for the Armenian population of Maraş. Their main objective in giving unreliable statistical information can be found in their concern for gaining political and religious supports in the conscience of the international community, especially in the Western consciousness. For example, one of the participants of the Near East Relief Organization, Stanley E. Kerr, claimed that 86.000 Armenians were living in Maraş and in its villages in 1914.¹⁴ As big an Armenian community as this size in

¹² Hicri 1326 (Miladi 1908) *Halep Vilayeti Sainamesi*, p. 504.

¹³ McCarthy, 'The Population...', p. 85.

¹⁴ Stanley E. Kerr, *The Lions of Marash: Personal Experiences with American Near East Relief, 1919-1922*, (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1973), p. 11.

Maraş in the said time was technically, economically and socially was unviable. An open exaggeration can be seen in the number itself. Furthermore, the same source also stated that the city of Maraş housed 22.000 Armenian people in 1920.¹⁵ By this estimates, the author not only contradicts himself with the extent of the number of the Armenian population, but also he proves that the Armenians were not exterminated during the Great War, and the so-called Armenian genocide never took place.

Despite one-sided and exaggerated sources, the Ottoman official records and the British estimates of the period generally represented quite similar statistical data. As Table 1 sent by Henry Trotter, a British consul in 1880 shows, while the British Consul Skene's findings and the Ottoman records came closer to each other, the Armenian Patriarchate numbers represent quite a different result.

Sources	Armenians	Total Non-Muslims	Total Muslims
Armenian Patriarchate	90,500	207,500	135,000
Consul Skene (1860)	--	100,000	400,000
Ottoman Official Records	67,634	95,702	539,702

Table 1: Halep province *male* population.¹⁶

Consul Skene's numbers for Maraş's population in 1860 give the percentage of the Armenians around 20 percent of the total population. Yet, in the following years until 1880's, the population of the region had drastic changes in favor of the Muslims because of the Armenian emigration to other countries, especially to the USA and Russia, and, most importantly, because of the Muslim immigrants settled in the region, especially after the Russo-Turkish War of 1877-78. These facts have to be taken into consideration and force researchers to accept the Ottoman official sources as the most reliable source for statistical data.

A closer look at the official census of Maraş taken in 1880 gives us a pretty good idea of percentages of different religious groups living in the city. As Table 2 shows, while the Armenians of all sects made 23 percent of the total population, the Muslims had a great clear majority of 77 percent.

¹⁵ Kerr, *The Lions ...*, p. 3.

¹⁶ Şimşir, *British...*, Vol. 2, p. 133.

Religious groups	Numbers	Total	Percentages
Muslims	49,818	49,818	75.99
Gregorian Armenians	12,063	15,316	23.36
Catholic Armenians	1,773		
Protestant Armenians	1,480		
Orthodox Greeks	278	278	0.46
Jews	91	91	0.13
Gypsies	53	53	0.08
Total	65,556	65,556	100.00

Table 2: Male population of Maraş in 1880.¹⁷

Not too much different than the official census records, the British Consul-General of Anatolia, C. W. Wilson, also telegraphed a statistical data to the British authorities on 8 March 1882. According to his estimates, the population of downtown Maraş was overwhelmingly Muslim, which was making 67 percent of the total population. Furthermore, the Christians and others all together comprised 33 percent, which was not at all an impressive number for a British official to provide a statistical data to back his country's policy of supporting Armenians against the Ottoman 'oppression'.

Besides, numerically being a minority in the city center of the Maraş sub-province, the Armenians, as well as the other Christians, were a small minority in the towns (kazas) of Maraş. As Wilson included in his report, the Ottoman official statistics show that among all the towns only Zeitun had some important Armenian existence. As the Table 3 shows, unlike the town of Zeitun where the Armenians were 12.252 (40%) while the Muslims were 17.990 (60%), the towns of Andırın and Pazarcık had no Armenians. The town of Elbistan, on the other hand, had only 804 Christians minority against the Muslim majority of 14.958.

Meanwhile, it is appropriate to state that the immigrants who came from the Caucasus escaping from both Russian and Armenian oppression during and after the Russo-Turkish War of 1877-78 were settled in the Maraş sub-province in great numbers. In addition, as a part of Ottoman policy of settling down the

¹⁷ Şimşir, *British ...*, Vol. 2, p. 129.

nomadic Turkmens, such as the Afshars and the Ceritlies, on the region, drastically changed the density of the Muslim population in Maraş in the second half of the nineteenth century. When Henry Barnham, British consul of Aleppo, visited the region in 1885 found out that Maraş had some 69.000 people, of which the Muslims were 54.000 and of which the Armenians were 15.000.¹⁸

Towns	Muslims	Christians	Jews	Total
Maraş	17,032	8,316	103	25,451
Andırın	7,226	--	--	7,226
Elbistan	14,958	804	--	15,762
Zeitun	8,995	6,126	--	15,121*
Pazarcık	11,613	--	--	11,613
Total	59,824* (%79.58)	15,246 (%20.27)	103	75,173*

Table 3: Maraş sub-province and surrounding towns' male population in 1882.¹⁹

Finally, when we look at the Aleppo Province Almanac of 1312 (1895), we can see that the Muslims were making 80% percent of Maraş's population. The Armenians, however, had the population of 19 percent of the total population.

¹⁸ Şimşir, *British...*, Vol. 4, p. 636.

* Originally 10,131, which recalculated and corrected.

* Originally 54,824, which recalculated and corrected.

* Originally 70,173, which recalculated and corrected.

¹⁹ Şimşir, *British ...*, Vol. 2, p. 425.

Religious Groups	Maraş ²⁰	Zeitun ²¹	Elbistan ²²	Pazarcık ²³	Andırın ²⁴	Total	%in Total
Muslims	37,648	7,534	37,818	17,892	14,072	114,964	79.43
Catholic Armenians	3,224	443	307	--	193	4,167	2.87
Gregorian Armenians	9,148	8,486	922	12	2,409	20,977	14.49
Protestant Armenians	2,874	261	306	--	--	3,441	2.37
Jews	198	--	--	--	--	198	0.13
Foreigners	981	--	--	--	--	981	0.67
Total	54,073	16,724	39,383	17,904	16,674	144,728	100.00

Table 4: 1312 (1895) Population of Maraş sub-province.

ZEITUN REVOLT OF 1895: CAUSES OF THE REVOLT

Demographic and geographic aspects of Zeitun had great effects on the Zeitun Revolt of 1895. The town, as the British consul at Aleppo, Henry Barnham, reported, was located twelve hours by horse ride and 57.6 kilometer away from the city of Maraş, lying on a quite rough and mountainous region. According to Barnham, the town had some 8-9.000 Armenian populations,

'who in time of peace earn their living as muleteers or as blacksmiths, but who take to the road and plunder when harsh treatment by the government makes it difficult for them to earn money by lawful means. Their past history is notorious, and has stamped them as an independent and warlike people, the use of arms being familiar to the women as well as to the men. The town is divided into Upper and Lower Zeitoun, which are separated by small ravine. About a mile from the town there is a flat-topped hill, on which stand the fort of Zeitoun, and in this fort there was...a garrison of 400 soldiers, commanded by a Binbashi, and the position was defended by two pieces of cannon.'²⁵

²⁰ Hicri 1312 (Miladi 1895) *Halep Vilayeti Salnamesi*, p. 271.

²¹ *Halep Vilayeti Salnamesi*, p. 273.

²² *Halep Vilayeti Salnamesi*, p. 276.

²³ *Halep Vilayeti Salnamesi*, p. 278.

²⁴ *Halep Vilayeti Salnamesi*, p. 279.

²⁵ Şimsir, *British ...*, Vol. 4, p. 634.

The town was located on an important gate between the Central Anatolia and the Eastern Mediterranean region. Because of its position, it controlled the trade route and gained a right from the government to protect and help the traders while traveling on this mountainous region.²⁶ This right which was called 'derbent teşkilatı' in the Ottoman administration provided the town's people to pay less tax in return for their services in protecting traders and travelers on this Taurus pass. Not only because of their right to pay less taxes, but also using the geographic aspect of their town as a means of escaping from government control, the town had always housed a large number of Armenian inhabitants.

Yet, as the almanac of Aleppo province dating 1890 states, Zeitun was twelve hours from the city of Maraş and received grain supplies from the towns of Elbistan and Andırın. Its people were doing transportation and iron works.²⁷ In the vicinity of the town, nice orchards and vineyards offered plenty of apples and grapes for the well-being of the people.²⁸ Furthermore, the town people were able to make fire arms and gunpowder to sell them with good price to have a lively economy.²⁹

According to the new official Turkish records, Zeitun, under the name of Süleymanlı,³⁰ is located 90 kilometers away from the city of Maraş and as a town of Maraş principality. Its geographic location is 940 meter above the sea level³¹ and, according to 1990 official census, it has 1.399 inhabitants.³² One of the most important reasons for losing the importance of the town and lowering the number of its inhabitants can be found in its troublesome history in the last years of the Ottoman Empire. Since the number of Armenian inhabitants of the town had risen many times in the period, the ancient trade route between the Central Anatolia and the Eastern Mediterranean, which was passing through Zeitun, began to lose its importance and safeness. This

²⁶ Mehmet Gürbüz, *Kahramanmaraş Merkez İlçe'nin Beşeri ve İktisadi Coğrafyası*, (Kahramanmaraş: İl Kültür Müdürlüğü, 2001), p. 14.

²⁷ *Halep Vilayeti Salnamesi*, p. 164.

²⁸ *Halep Vilayeti Salnamesi*, p. 239.

²⁹ Ahmet Eyicil, *Osmanlı'nın Son Döneminde Maraş'ta Ermeni Siyasi Faaliyetleri*, (Ankara: Gün Yayıncılık, 1999), p. 367.

³⁰ The original name 'Zeitun' was changed to 'Süleymanlı' in 1915 by a decree of the Sultan in order to commemorate the name of Binbaşı Süleyman who was killed by the Armenian insurgents in the town.

³¹ T. H. 'Zeytun', *İslam Ansiklopedisi*, Vol. 13, (Eskişehir: MEB, 1997), pp. 556-557.

³² *Kahramanmaraş'ın 1990 Genel Nüfus Sayımı*, (Ankara: DİE Matbaası, 1993), p. 26.

forced economic and commercial activities to seek a new alternative for a more safe and reliable route. For this reason, in the same period, the Tekir-Göksun-Kayseri trade route began to replace the one that had passed in the town of Zeitun.

The geographic suitability for unlawful activities helped Zeitun to be a favorable place for Armenians who were escaping from law and order. The town was also away from the civilized and cultured centers. Combination of its geographic aspects and its isolation from closer contact with big centers affected the inhabitants to develop a sort of wild and barbaric life style. Thus, 'lying in the most difficult stones of Taurus mountainous, the Zeitun volcano revolted from time to time and always drowned surrounding places with fire and blood.'³³ One of the British consuls, Ferdinand Bennet, while passing by Zeitun in June 1881, reported that the Christian population of the town was in an open revolt against the government; and the castle, which had been poorly constructed, and which contained some 200 soldiers could not control the town. Bennet said,

'The Zeitounlis themselves do not improve on personal acquaintance. I find them to be a semi-barbarous and depraved community, little better than savages, and so ignorant, self-opiniated, and conceited, that it is impossible to do any good with them by argument and persuasion. Strongly conceived that they are a power of themselves, the Turkish Government is afraid of them, very excitable, reckless, idle to a degree, and utterly ignorant of what goes on outside their own mountains, they are now in such a state that I can hardly conceive it possible that order can be restored without bloodshed. I find an utterly lawless community, split up into parties, quarrelling and fighting among each other, with no one to lead them, they are quite deaf to anything a Turk may say, no Moukhtars, or head of quarters, for the Government to appeal to in its collection of taxes, no Town Council, indescribable filth in the narrow and steep streets, and a parcel of inflammatory and evil-minded priests, who pretend to be animated by a love of justice, but whose hatred of the Moslem yoke is the real cause of their violent language'.³⁴

Among the causes of the Zeitun Revolt of 1895, provocative and separatist activities of Armenian secret and militancy organizations were as important as the geographic and

³³ Besim Atalay, *Maraş: Tarihi ve Coğrafyası*, (İstanbul: Dizerkonca Matbaası, 1973), p. 82

³⁴ Şimşir, *British ...*, Vol. 2, p. 237.

demographic aspects of the town. Especially, the Hunchaks, which was founded in Geneva in 1887 by a group of Armenian students, played a crucial role in planning and executing the revolt. This organization openly criticized and prepared terrorist activities against the Ottoman state in Europe, while secretly working within the Empire. Avedis Nazarbek, the leader of the party, in one of his letters to English Standard on 18 October 1895, stressed that they were teaching revolutionary doctrine, giving back oppression against the oppression, teaching self-protection methods, violence against the violence mentality in everywhere.³⁵ In addition, according to the news published in The Morning Advertiser in many places, fearing from revolutionary violence, many Armenians were leaving their homes for safer places. For example, the inhabitants of Kesseb village emigrated to Alexandratta on the Mediterranean shore.³⁶

Having had a quite bad reputation in rising against the established order in many times in its history, Zeitun increasingly became a gathering place for the Armenian terrorists, militants, separatists and criminals for combining their powers against the 'common' enemy, the Ottoman State. It was also one of the two places within the empire where the Armenians could carry arms without any restriction. Furthermore, the inhabitants of Zeitun could make their own shotgun, *Zeitunacı*,³⁷ and ammunition. Besides fire guns produced locally, the militants secretly brought from America and Russia the latest model fire guns, including martin. Moreover, many leaders of the revolt had been to Europe where they perfected themselves in the art of revolution. One of the Hunchak leaders, Agasi (Agassé), had traveled to the USA, England and Cyrus. He had secretly been working in Aintap and surrounding places to promote Hunchak causes and gain supporters and followers to this terrorist organization under the code-name Tufekchiyan since August 1895.³⁸ He also sent recruits to Zeitun to fight in the revolt, which had been planned for a long time. Agasi himself came to Zeitun lead a large rebel group that was estimated around 15.000 armed men.³⁹

³⁵ Şimşir, *Documents ...*, Vol. 3, p. 15.

³⁶ Şimşir, *Documents ...*, p. 53.

³⁷ Cezmi Yurtsever, *The 311 Legacies of the Zeitoun Armenians*, (Ankara: Köksav, 1999), p. 12; Şimşir, *British ...*, Vol. 2, p. 429. The other place was Sasun in the sub-province of Muş.

³⁸ Şimşir, *British ...*, Vol. 4, p. 638.

³⁹ Yurtsever, *The 311...*, pp. 36-37.

One of the Ottoman internal policies of settling the nomadic subjects on lands positively affected the Armenians. Especially, the *yörüks* (the nomadic Turkmens) wandered in Maraş and surrounding regions, namely Farsaks, Ceritlies, Afshars and Bozdoğan, began to be forcefully settled on lands starting in the mid-nineteenth century. These *yörüks* who professed Islam and lived a harsh life were moving from one grassland to another, and especially in the summers from one mountain to another, created some sort of authority over the Christian subjects who generally lived in villages and tilled the soils in the countryside. From time to time they were essential in controlling the Armenians of Taurus Mountains. Their settlements on lands gave the Armenians a kind of free-action against the official authority.⁴⁰ After being saved from a big controlling power of the *yörüks* by the government, the Armenians began to feel strong enough to oppress their weak Muslim neighbors wherever they felt themselves stronger than the Muslims. Thus, Zeitun was a perfect example for Armenian outlawed activities after the mid-nineteenth century.

While the settlement of the *yörüks* on lands eased the pressure on the Armenians, the settlement of the immigrants, who came from the Caucasus in large numbers after the Russo-Turkish War of 1877-78, in and around Maraş increased hateful angers of the Armenians against the government. This anger was based on Armenian assumption that the lands that they had tilled to produce crops were taken from them and distributed among the immigrants.⁴¹ Having had traditional and natural outlawed mentality, and having been used to banditry activities, this anger added a new strain on their hate and vengefulness against the government in Zeitun.

It is a vital question to ask why the Armenians who had lived side by side with the Turks since the mid-eleventh century began to increase their separatist and revolutionary activities starting in the mid-nineteenth century. Since the internal structures of the Turkish Empire had not changed in the negative trend for the minorities, even improved by the Sultan's decree of 1839 and

⁴⁰ Atalay, *Maraş*, pp. 74-82. Besim Atalay considered the settlement of the nomads as a shortsighted, wrong and destructive policy of the Sublime Porte. He wrote, 'In the end, Turkishness and its traditions were destroyed. These lovely men (the Turkmens) who had provided victories in three continents to the Turks disappeared and with them their homes, names, horses, sheep vanished. This is the result of blind imitation of the European civilization. What service they had once provided?'

⁴¹ Şimşir, *British ...*, Vol. 2, p. 239.

1856, what happened and occurred within the empire to have more and more minority risings? Because it is hard for any researcher to give a full answer to these and similar questions, it is left for them to seek answers to these questions not in the internal structures of the empire, but in the international relations gained new dimensions after Europe's rise in the world politics since the big geographic discoveries. In this respect, it was the imperialist interests of Russia, England and others on the Turkish Empire that began to turn every stone in internal affairs of the empire to create better environments for their economical, commercial, military, cultural and social interests.

As the globalization of the world developed, it brought new problems into lands where political organizations had little say in this development. Since Western countries, which had succeeded in industrialization in the nineteenth century, including England, France, the USA, Russia and Germany, established a sort of 'New World Order' which gave them power to organize the political, cultural, social, and economic spheres, they put their interests first on the table. These powers shaped the world's systems remained from the last several centuries. The Ottoman Empire could not escape from their 'free-will' and 'free-action' to save itself from disintegrating.

The big powers which were adamant in their pursuit of short and long-term interests always found 'problems' or 'questions' in the places they hoped to establish their interests. Since Russia had tried every means, including the so-called protectorate of the Orthodox and the Slavs, to intervene in the Ottoman affairs. She encouraged and supported minorities in the Balkans and in Anatolia to revolt against their legitimate rulers. Under the guise of protecting these Christian minorities from Turkish 'oppression', Russia wanted to pursue her traditional long-term policy of reaching warm waters by establishing a control over the Turkish Straits. On the other hand, the British tried to prevent the Russians from reaching warm waters by supporting territorial integrity of the Ottoman Empire until 1878. Both of the imperialist states found a great number of Ottoman subjects to help them further their interests. These middlemen of these imperialists were motivated by their desire to establish autonomous or independent states. Though the Balkan minorities, including the Serbs, Greeks, Romanians, and Bulgarians had some sort of majority in their desired lands, the Armenians had nowhere in the Empire to have a

majority. Despite this vital fact, they doggedly pursued their separatist cause and continued to be the middlemen of the imperialists.

'Armenian question, during the time of peace, opened the door for big powers to intervene in the Ottoman affairs to weaken her and provide the West a power over the empire; during the time of war, the aggressors played with it as a dimension of using the Armenians to attack the Turks behind the fighting lines.'

In this respect, the Armenians did more goods for the Imperialists than for themselves.⁴²

Besides imperialist games over the destiny of the Empire, some of the Ottoman political steps, though these were taken in good intention to provide more help for the minorities also contributed to revolts in the nineteenth century. Among these steps, the acceptance and the declaration of the Armenian Nation Regulation of 1863, as Armenian writer Kagik Ozanyan stated, helped the Armenians to feel themselves as a 'state' within the 'state'. It caused the Armenians to develop already existing rebelliousness. Furthermore, by this regulation, the Armenians felt freer to publish newspapers, pamphlets, and books to disseminate and further revolutionary activities.⁴³

Being seen as the 'visible spirit of the lost country' by the Armenian writes,⁴⁴ the Armenian Church played a very important role in stirring up revolutionary upheavals. Since the Armenians had almost never had any long-term independent state in their history, the church played a crucial role in keeping and in preserving the Armenian distinct traits and existence for millenniums. The Armenian Church and its religious leaders had a special place in the Ottoman Empire. Since the Ottomans left the non-Muslim communities within the empire to conduct their own religious, judicial, economical, social, cultural and educational activities without any strong restriction, as part of the so-called 'millet system', the non-Muslims, and especially leaders of these people, the 'milletbaşı', had large opportunities to develop their own differences. As the Ottoman Empire began to crumble and disintegrate by the internal and, more especially, by outside

⁴² Mim Kemal Öke, *Ermeni Meselesi*, (Istanbul: Aydınlar Ocağı Yayını, 1986), p. 130.

⁴³ Erdal İter, *Armenian Church and Terrorism*, (Ankara: Sistem Ofset, 1999), pp. 35-37.

⁴⁴ İter, *Armenian ...*, p. 13.

pressures in the nineteenth century, the Armenian religious leaders began to spread separatist propaganda among their communities.⁴⁵

These religious leaders had both religious and temporal powers over their people. This made them all the more strong to control and canalize the non-Muslims. The Armenians who feared of every pressure from their religious leaders because 'when an Armenian received the punishment of the church he was losing all his rights within the community, no-one was talking to him, nobody was selling anything to him, no-one was marrying to him, and even their bodies were not buried',⁴⁶ were alienated from the society. Furthermore, the Ottomans who wanted to establish a control over the Armenians and who wanted to rule effectively the Armenians established the Armenian Patriarchate. Yet, the Patriarchate had legitimate and lawful rights to keep all the Armenians culturally, religiously and socially intact, which made less likely for the Armenians to be mixed in the majority of the Turkish society and be assimilated into the Muslim groups.

As an obvious example for the involvement of the Armenian religious leaders in the revolts of the Armenians can be seen in a conversation took place in 1885 between the British ambassador C. N. E. Elliot and the Armenian Patriarch of İstanbul, Harouthioun Vehabedian. When the ambassador was asking the Patriarch to send new circulars to Anatolia to calm down the revolutionary upheavals, which occurred in many places including Zeitun, the Patriarch said, 'The Bulgarians had attacked the Turks and massacred them wholesale, but this conduct had not alienated the sympathies of Europe.'⁴⁷ In addition, the Catholicos of Sis (Kozan) told the general consul of Britain in 1882 that if the British helped him he would be a faithful helper of the British interests in the Cilicia region.⁴⁸

Although the Armenian leaders had adhered the idea of separating from the empire, they had failed to appreciate, indeed, did not want to appreciate, the historical and demographic realities of the Anatolian plateau. The Christians who pursued

⁴⁵ Salahî R. Sonyel, *Minorities and the Destruction of the Ottoman Empire*, (Ankara: Turkish Historical Society Printing House, 1993), p. 281.

⁴⁶ Ergün Aybars, *Türkiye Cumhuriyeti Tarihi I*, (İzmir: Ege Üniversitesi Basımevi, 1986), p. 81.

⁴⁷ Şimşir, *British ...*, Vol. 4, p. 457.

⁴⁸ Şimşir, *British ...*, Vol. 2, p. 346.

goals of independence in the Balkans at least had some sort of demographic facts to support their aims. The Armenians, on the other hand, had no-real and admissible arguments in terms of Armenian population in Anatolia. The Armenians even in their most crowded principalities had made only one fifth of the total population. Thus, they were minority on the lands that they claimed theirs.⁴⁹ Arminius Vambery stressed that pursuing the goal of any kind of Armenian separation in Anatolia was against the humanity and the reality. He believed in improving both the Christian and Muslim life standards all together, rather than, as the British 'liberals' did, in putting harmful thoughts to the brains of the people lived in the region.⁵⁰

Despite restless and unlawful activities of Zeitun Armenians, who revolted at least 57 times after 1780,⁵¹ the Ottomans had never established a strong and suppressive military rule over the town, and never seriously contemplated relocating them in another more secure place. Even this point would be enough to exemplify the Ottoman tolerance and commitment towards its subjects. The Ottomans had maintained a weak military existence, and led the ishans (mukhtars) of the Armenian quarters to rule over their co-religious people.⁵² Their military power in the town was most of the time fragile and there were around 160-200 soldiers living in a weak military fort which would be taken in a first assault by any large power.⁵³ Yet, despite their mild power in the region, the Ottomans managed to uncover a revolt which had been planned by Zeitun archbishop L. S. Garabet and his 45 friends in 1881. These people were taken to Aleppo where they were trialled and Garabet were found guilty of indulging revolt and making propaganda toward the people to rise against the state. He was sentenced to life while the others received various sentences.⁵⁴ However, with the pressure of the big powers, especially from Britain, the Ottomans had to declare amnesty and let them go free.

⁴⁹ Justin McCarthy, 'Bırakın Tarihçiler Karar Versin,' *Ermeni Araştırmaları*, No. 2, (June-July-August 2001), p. 118.

⁵⁰ Şimşir, *Documents ...*, Vol. 3, p. 78.

⁵¹ Erdal İter, *Ermeni Mes'elesi'nin Perspektifi ve Zeytun İsyanları, 1780 - 1915*, (Ankara: Türk Kültürünü Araştırma Enstitüsü Yayınları, 1995), p. 81.

⁵² İter, *Zeytun ...*, p. 77.

⁵³ Şimşir, *British ...*, Vol. 2, p. 83.

⁵⁴ Şimşir, *British ...*, Vol. 2, p. 112.

One of the most important reasons of Zeitun Armenians to revolt against the state was their allegation of a historical right. According to this allegation, the Sultan Murat IV granted a right for them not to pay any taxes. This claim would have to be an absurd one since the harsh rule of Murat IV would not have allowed to any discrepancies in his realm. Indeed, this claim would be an opposite of what the sultan wanted to achieve.⁵⁵ Besides their allegation of being exempt from taxes, the Armenians claimed that the government had collected large quantity of taxes. This claim also had to be wrong since these people had lived in a harsh and virtually uncontrolled region, which provided them to escape from their basic duties for the state. Indeed, the Zeitun Armenians had not paid their taxes. Even the government had reduced taxes and demanded half of the original taxes, the Armenians of the town refused to pay them.⁵⁶

Besides the resistance of the Armenians against the demands of the government, they also spread false rumors to justify their unruly actions. One of such rumors was that the Ottoman soldiers used a religious building, a monastery, as an accommodation, which was against the law and disgraced their religious feelings. Again, in another rumor, the Armenians claimed that around 500 Armenian children were given poisonous shots. These allegations were inspected by the British consul on the spot, and did not found any proof to support such claims.⁵⁷ Indeed, the British consul, Henry D. Barnham, confessed that nine out of ten accusations of the Armenians were not true.⁵⁸ They were made up stories and allegations that they were carefully selected and purposefully executed by the Armenians to take the attention of the big powers to their so-called miseries in the Empire in order to receive assistance from them in the process of a possible autonomy or independence.

In short, the Armenians who had undermined the historical, demographical and geographical realities engaged in infeasible ideas and activities. They were purposefully filled up with false hopes by the big powers. Their so-called educated and

⁵⁵ Kamuran Gürün, *Ermeni Dosyası*, (Ankara: Türk Tarih Kurumu, 1985), p. 158; Fahir Armaoğlu, *19. Yüzyıl Siyasi Tarihi, 1789-1914*, (Ankara: Türk Tarih Kurumu, 1999), p. 579.

⁵⁶ Şimşir, *British ...*, Vol. 2, p. 238.

⁵⁷ Şimşir, *British ...*, Vol. 3, p. 143.

⁵⁸ Şimşir, *British ...*, Vol. 4, p. 634.

intellectuals who had lived or studied in Europe and became revolutionaries and separatists sent wrong signals to their people. Foreign postal organizations carried harmful and revolutionary publications to Anatolia, which created fanatics among Armenians subjects of the empire.⁵⁹ Furthermore, missionaries and foreign schools, which received too much authority and rights by the capitulations and weaknesses of the Empire, pervaded every part of the peninsula. Every Armenian village and towns filled with propaganda of these people and organizations. Though these were to educate the Armenians, they created a hostile feeling among them against their Muslim neighbors⁶⁰ with whom they had had a respectful and peaceful co-existence for at least a thousand years.

After all, Zeitun was a special place for the Armenian separatists and revolutionaries as a headquarters of their activities. Whenever they wanted to indulge in any harmful activities they chose Zeitun as a best place to start, as they were going to do in 1914 in the early days of the Great War.

Development of the Revolt

Having had a quite bad reputation as bandits of Taurus Mountains, the Armenians of Zeitun engaged in more than a dozen revolts since the 1808.⁶¹ Their unruly activities were gained momentum after the declaration of Armenian Nation Regulation in 1860s. Revolts of 1862, 1878 and 1880 were serious and big movements. Yet, these risings seem to have been only preparing stages of the 1895 big revolt. Combined with both their traditional unruliness and open support of the Western powers, Zeitun came on the brink of a big uprising in 1895.⁶²

The weak government authority in the town encouraged thousands of Armenian convicts, bandits and revolutionaries to gather in the town prior to the revolt. These, along with the Zeitun people, were prepared by the revolutionaries for coming struggle with the government forces. The revolutionaries had spent a long time to plan the uprising. Thus, it was a well-planned rising which executed by a large group of Armenian armed men.

⁵⁹ Şimşir, *British ...*, Vol. 3, p. 73.

⁶⁰ Şimşir, *British ...*, Vol. 4, p. 444.

⁶¹ Şimşir, *Documents ...*, Vol. 3, p. 10.

⁶² Şimşir, *British ...*, Vol. 3, p. 429.

The sparkle that ignited the revolt came from protests held by Armenians in İstanbul and elsewhere. Because of a report that was inked by an international commission's long investigations, and that came out as short of Armenian expectations about the Sasun uprising of 1894 the Armenians became quite heated and angry. The commission found out that many Armenian revolutionaries and bandits initiated the event and caused many Armenians and Muslims to die during the Sasun events. This judgment of the international commission was largely protested by the Armenians. The Zeitun Armenians, feeling strong enough to rise against the government, found this opportunity to begin their horrible crimes in and around the town.

The events in Zeitun began in late October 1895. Yet, the British knew such happenings in advance. Their consul in Aleppo, Henry D. Barnham, one of his confidential report stated that one of the members of the Armenian revolutionary organizations had visited him on October 11 and told him that they were going to intensify their activities in Aintap, Maraş and Zeitun.⁶³ Again, knowing such events in advance, the British foreign secretary issued a confidential order on 23 October 1895 to the Admiralty, indicating that they had received news from the Embassy in İstanbul that the Armenians of Zeitun and Andırın were going to revolt against the government. In order to 'protect' them against the Turkish counterattacks, the fleet should be sent and prepared to help the Armenians on the Alexandratta bay.⁶⁴ In response to the order of 23 October, the Admiralty sent a telegram stating that they sent ships to the Alexandratta bay and vicinity.⁶⁵

The Zeitun Revolt of 1895 started on 24 October 1894. According to the Ottoman official documents, British newspapers published on 29 October 1895, and the reports of Barnham, the Armenians were responsible from starting the uprising. Leaders of the rising, Agasi, Hrachia, Abah, Nishan, Mleh and Garabet were sent by Nazarbeg, the leader of the Hunchak terrorist organization to Zeitun for the purpose of starting a revolt.⁶⁶ The first incident was a terrorist ambush to a gendarme unit. In order to investigate

⁶³ Şimşir, *British ...*, Vol. 4, p. 411.

⁶⁴ Şimşir, *British ...*, Vol. 4, p. 360.

⁶⁵ Şimşir, *British ...*, Vol. 4, p. 368.

⁶⁶ Esat Uras, *The Armenians in History and the Armenian Question*, (İstanbul: Documentary Publications, 1988), p. 746.

rumors that Baron Agasi was recruiting militants to the Hunchak organization in Alabash village, the gendarmes were sent from Maraş. Armenian terrorists attacked the gendarme unit. They killed two soldiers. This was the starting event of a bloody uprising.⁶⁷ With the support and participation of the militants of secret terrorist organizations, Armenian intellectuals, mountaineers, Armenian Patriarchate and the big powers, the revolt became a very dangerous and quite bloody one.⁶⁸

The next step for the militants was to secure Zeitun from any action taken by the Turkish military garrison stationed there to control the town. In a statement made by Said Paşa, the Sadrazam, dating on November 1 stated that Armenian bandits and terrorists were fiercely fighting with the military forces in Zeitun, and the soldiers were almost cornered by the superior forces of the insurgents.⁶⁹ The number of the insurgents, as British records indicate, was reaching to about 8.000 strong armed men.⁷⁰ In another source, the forces of the Armenian rebels were around 12 to 14 thousands.⁷¹ These Armenians were generally well-trained in guerilla warfare, and they had some sort of previous experience from fighting against the government forces. Most of them were familiar with the terrain as well. As mentioned earlier, the Ottoman military existence in the fort, on the other hand, was not strong enough to suppress any large scale Armenian uprising. Thus, after two-days fighting with the insurgents led by Agasi, the fort was taken and the remaining soldiers were captured by the Armenians. According to Uras, a Kaimakam, the highest officials of the town, fifty officers and some 600 soldiers were among the government officials living in the fort. They were imprisoned after the fall of the fort into the hands of the insurgents. These unfortunate Turks who had done no harm to the Armenians but to serve for their country in a harsh terrain were later killed by the Armenian men and women.⁷² Hatred of the Armenians towards the Turks must have been so high to let even women to kill

67 Yurtsever, *The 311 ...*, pp. 36-37.

68 Yalçın Özalp, *'Millet-i Sadıka' Patirtısı ve Maraş (Kahramanmaraş'ta) Ermeniler*, (İstanbul: Yılmaz Akçakale), p. 169.

69 Şimşir, *British ...*, Vol. 4, p. 415.

70 Şimşir, *British ...*, Vol. 4, p. 441.

71 Özalp, *'Millet-i ...'*, p. 189.

72 Uras, *The Armenian...*, p. 747.

imprisoned and helpless men. Besides Turkish officials and soldiers of the fort, the Armenians captured large quantity of ammunition and two cannons from the fort.

Upon these developments, in order to subdue the insurrection, a military unit that included 700 soldiers was sent from Maraş. But, this power also could not achieve the desired goal.⁷³ As the revolt got worse, the government arranged new troops under the commandship of Mustafa Remzi Paşa from Aleppo to move Zeitun to suppress the revolt.⁷⁴

It was a large-scale event that affected almost whole of Maraş, even whole of Aleppo province. As the revolt in Zeitun continued, the Armenian separatists in Maraş were killing innocent Turks and Armenians who were most probably pro-government. Horrifying massacres of the Armenian insurgents began to spread surrounding Muslim villages. They attacked the village of Kemerli, pillaged the place and wounded many villagers. In order to investigate this event, a group of gendarmeries were sent to the village. But they were met a large group of Armenian bandits, whose numbers were around 2.000. In the fight, the commander of the gendarmeries and four soldiers were killed and their bodies were burned by the Armenians.⁷⁵ The reports written down by the British consul also mentioned that on 28 October, five soldiers and the commander were killed by the Armenians.⁷⁶

While the Armenians were engaging themselves in horrifying massacres in Maraş, Aintap and Zeitun against the Muslims, many armed Muslim villagers around Maraş went to Maraş in order to 'kill gavurs and pillage them'. This kind of seeking revenge against the rebels created a quite dangerous state of existence in the region.⁷⁷ However, the government authorities in the big cities, including Maraş, Aintap and Urfa, successfully restrained Muslims to commit any crimes against the Christians, though, as the sources indicate, it was the Armenians who had long been preparing for such insurrections by secretly arming themselves, making their houses as a small arsenals and ammunition centers.

⁷³ Eyicil, *Osmanlı'nın ...*, p. 206.

⁷⁴ Şimşir, *Documents ...*, Vol. 3, p. 61; Şimşir, *British ...*, Vol. 4, pp. 634-636.

⁷⁵ Şimşir, *British ...*, Vol. 4, pp. 381-382.

⁷⁶ Şimşir, *Documents ...*, Vol. 3, p. 50; Şimşir, *British ...*, Vol. 4, p. 381.

⁷⁷ Şimşir, *British ...*, Vol. 4, p. 636.

The Armenian rebels were increasing their attacks and massacres against the Turkish villagers, travelers and military men. It was reported that they were attacked both Göçerke village and Lieutenant Hasan Ağa. While they were killing Lieutenant Hasan and his family, including his wife and kits, they left a great destruction on the village, on November 2, 1895.⁷⁸ On the same day, a group of Armenian rebels attacked not only Geben village but also Göksun. The number of rebels who attacked Göksun was around 2.500. While they were killed many Muslims and destroyed many houses in the first place, they were beaten before Göksun.⁷⁹ Furthermore, on November 4, the rebels raided on Ismaili village where they burned three houses.⁸⁰

A telegram sent by Tevfik Paşa, on November 11, indicated that the Armenians killed the vice tax collector of Zeitun, and the fate of the wife and four children of the deceased tax collector was not known. It also stated that the rebels attacked the village of Çukurhisar.⁸¹ One of the most horrible massacres committed by the Armenian insurgents during this revolt against the innocent Muslims took place in this village. According to sources, tens and hundreds of Muslims were killed, wounded and hideously tortured. According to British newspapers, the Armenians killed 12 Muslims. But, Tevfik Paşa's telegraph put the death toll of the Muslims to 80 and wounded to 15.⁸² Another source provided a graver picture. It stated that the Armenians cowardly killed 150 men, 40 women and 95 children. They also burned 180 homes of the villagers.⁸³ Even today people call the place as 'Şehitler Deresi' (Martyrs' Valley) where 40 Muslims were taken and killed in cold blood by the Armenians.⁸⁴

The Armenian attacks on civilians and Muslim villages continued throughout the rebellion. On 11 November, as Tevfik Paşa's telegraph states, the rebels attacked villages of Becansis and Kurtul. In the former place, they burned 57 homes. In the second place, on the other hand, they burned the entire village.

⁷⁸ Şimşir, *British ...*, Vol. 4, p. 432.

⁷⁹ Yurtsever, *The 311 ...*, p. 38.

⁸⁰ Şimşir, *Documents ...*, Vol. 3, p. 67.

⁸¹ Şimşir, *British ...*, Vol. 4, pp. 478-479.

⁸² Şimşir, *Documents ...*, Vol. 3, pp. 86, 96.

⁸³ Yurtsever, *The 311 ...*, p. 38.

⁸⁴ Yurtsever, *The 311...*, p. 8.

Many innocent Muslims regardless of women and men were killed by them. The British newspapers of November 16 published news about these events and even included that the Armenians were attacked the villages of Fersak and Biçenli.⁸⁵ Meanwhile, the Armenian rebels who were having food shortages and fears of approaching Turkish military forces appealed to the British for help and intervention on their behalf to the Turkish government.⁸⁶

Despite the food shortages begun to be felt among the rebels and increasing Turkish forces to end the rebellion, the Armenian rebels continued their criminal attacks against the Muslims. A group of them numbered around 800 made a big raid into the town of Andırın where they torched the government buildings, as well as civilian homes. They also killed and wounded many Muslims.⁸⁷ Sergeant Yusuf and one hundred Muslims were among the victims who were killed and thrown into a creek.⁸⁸ As sources recorded, some of the rebels who attacked Andırın were speaking English. This fact created suspicion in the minds of the officials about the British direct involvement in these terrible events. Upon this development and official inquiries, the British consul in Aleppo made an explanation and denied any involvement of a British people in the raids. He predicted that it would be the members of the Hunchak group who had been to Europe and knew how to speak English. These people would have acted as the British to spread wrong signals.⁸⁹

Although the British consul denied any direct involvement of their fellowmen in the revolt, the British had been in supportive of Armenian uprisings. In a memorandum issued by the British Embassy in İstanbul and signed by Adam Block on November 16, 1895, the English officials accepted that the Armenian rebels killed many Muslims. Only in Çukurhisar, these rebels killed 80 Muslims. Despite their acceptance of such criminal and inhumane acts of the Armenian bandits, the British warned the Ottomans not to harsh on the Armenians. They cautioned the Turks to be careful in dealing with the Armenians unless the big powers would be involved in the conflict and that would be the 'end of the Empire'.

⁸⁵ Şimşir, *Documents ...*, Vol. 3, pp. 96, 105.

⁸⁶ Şimşir, *British ...*, Vol. 4, p. 503.

⁸⁷ Şimşir, *British ...*, Vol. 4, p. 516.

⁸⁸ Yurtsever, *The 311 Legacies of the Zeitoun*, p. 12.

⁸⁹ Şimşir, *Documents Diplomatiques Ottomans*, Vol. 3, p. 111; Şimşir, *British ...*, Vol. 4, p. 643.

Furthermore, the British premier, Lord Salisbury, also sent a message to the Sadrazam asking him to be mild towards the Zeitun Armenians.⁹⁰

As the massacres and atrocious acts of the rebels increasingly gained more ground in and around Zeitun, thousands of the Muslims began to leave their homes. According to Barnham, these emigrants went as far away as the city of Aleppo. Meanwhile, the Armenians committed atrocities in the city of Maraş, killing a Turk. Upon this, there was a growing unrest in the city and many more were died because of the fights between the rebels and the Muslims. Barnham also reported that there were 40 British subjects in the Aleppo province, of which four were in Maraş, and all of these were in safe position.⁹¹

As the Armenians were widening their atrocious and cruel acts in the sub-province of Maraş, the Muslim life and property losses were increasing daily. These dreadful acts were enumerated by Tevfik Paşa, the foreign ministry of the Ottoman Empire, in his letter to Morel Bey, the Turkish ambassador in London, on 18 November 1895. According to this, the Armenians looted and burned the villages of Susikadı, Keçker, Musalı and Kerimli. Again, Tevfik Paşa's letter of 16 November stated that the Armenian rebels had attacked Bechan, Kurtul, Sugarju, Okatır, Devrek, Sarız, Köçürke, Keban, Çukurhisar and Andırın, where they pillaged houses, burned and destroyed them. In these attacks, they killed 266 Muslims, of which 16 were women. They also wounded over one hundred women, men and children. After mentioning that there were over 500 Muslims homes were burned during these raids, Tevfik Paşa wrote how brutally the Armenians committed these terrible crimes to their victims. They were *'cutting breasts of the women, slaughtering children before the eyes of their parents. They were also putting gunpowder on the eyes of their victims and then blowing them before killing many of the victims. Furthermore, these bandits were burning alive many of the family members of the soldiers whenever they caught them'*.⁹² The Reuter News Agency also reported these horrific events on 17 December 1895.⁹³ Tevfik Paşa's telegram to London dating

⁹⁰ Şimşir, *British ...*, Vol. 4, pp. 567, 571 and 593.

⁹¹ Şimşir, *British ...*, Vol. 4, pp. 574, 634.

⁹² Şimşir, *Documents ...*, Vol. 3, pp. 184-185.

⁹³ Şimşir, *Documents ...*, Vol. 3, p. 192.

December 19 stated that everywhere within the Empire, except in Zeitun, a state of tranquility was reigning. He also stressed that the Armenian rebels in Zeitun killed all the prisoners except a colonel, a binbashi, and the kaimakam.⁹⁴

British newspapers published on 21 and 23 December also wrote that the Armenian rebels killed all their prisoners except three high-ranking officers and officials. Moreover, according to these newspapers, the rebels attacked the villages of Arbendli, Ezbider and Mehil. They killed one person and stole animals in Arbendli. In Ezbider, under the command of Daniel Çavuş (sergeant) they killed a certain man named Necib Efendi and his two friends. In addition, in the village of Mehil, the rebels killed two men, five women and three children. They also took away cattle and sheep of the villagers. Meanwhile, Daniel Çavuş and his six men were killed by the soldiers.⁹⁵

One of the groups that suffered most from the atrocious crimes of the Armenian rebels was the Muslim women. The Muslim women of Zeitun sent a telegram to the Padişah, II. Abdulhamit, and urged him to stop such crimes and punish the Armenians in kind. They stated that the Armenians were attacking their villages, throwing their children in air and then letting them to land on sticks, torturing and killing their husbands in the most cruel manners. They also stressed that the Armenians burned to ashes at least fifteen villages, and took their properties. Finally, they attacked women and dishonored them by raping and other lowest and inhumane manners.⁹⁶

The fighting between the Turkish forces and the rebels continued for several months. The well-trained rebels who had piled up large quantities of rifles and ammunition prior to the rebellion used the terrain in the best of their interests and doggedly resisted the Turkish military forces. Yet, as the army began to besiege them in all fronts, the rebels started to commit not only massacres against the Turks, but also steal animals and foods around villages. In October 1896, the military forces were approaching the town; they came across many Muslim death bodies. Only on the banks of Zeytunsuyu, they collected 60 such

⁹⁴ Şimşir, *Documents ...*, Vol. 3, pp. 190-191, 193.

⁹⁵ Şimşir, *Documents ...*, Vol. 3, pp. 196, 203.

⁹⁶ Şimşir, *Documents ...*, Vol. 3, p. 232.

bodies.⁹⁷ In an official statement issued on 2 February 1896, the government enumerated the atrocities committed by the Armenians rebels in Zeitun. It showed that the Armenians had a long and bloody uprising starting in October 1895 and lasting into February 1896.⁹⁸

Harsh geographic aspects combined with a large number of determined rebels created big problems for the Ottomans to deal with it with small military units. In order to suppress the uprising, the Ottomans sent large armed forces under the commandership of Ferik Ethem Paşa. Ethem Paşa had managed to reach and besiege Zeitun on January 2, 1896. As they had secretly supported the Armenian rebels by providing hopes, fire arms, and political helps, the British warned the Ottoman government to be careful while handling Zeitun issue. Although the British believed in the honesty and justness of Ethem Paşa, they claimed that Zeitun was bombarded, some rebels were captured, and innocent Armenians were allowed to go Maraş. But, they were afraid that these Armenians who were allowed to go to Maraş would be massacred on the way to Maraş by the Kurds and Cercassians. Meanwhile, ambassadors of the big powers, except Russian ambassador, warned the Sublime Porte not to be too harsh on the rebels. The rebels on the other hand were not confident in the Ottoman 'guaranties' for their lives and they were refusing to lay their weapons and surrender.⁹⁹

While the British were working hard to find a solution in favor of the Armenians by both directly or indirectly establishing pressure on the government and by trying to pull other big powers to act positively towards the Armenians, the Ottomans, as Nazım Paşa claimed, were exhausted from ongoing struggle with the rebels. Nazım Paşa claimed that the Ottomans commissioned around 110.000 soldiers to put down the rebellion but they lost around 13.000 of them and began to fear of loosing the struggle. Thus, they sought interventions of ambassadors of big powers to seek an understanding with the rebels.¹⁰⁰ Whether it was the British to intervene in the conflict to save the Armenians from the Turkish forces who were so close to suppress and establish order on the

⁹⁷ Şimşir, *Documents ...*, Vol. 3, p. 232.

⁹⁸ Şimşir, *Documents ...*, Vol. 3, pp. 280-283.

⁹⁹ Şimşir, *British ...*, Vol. 4, pp. 669, 670.

¹⁰⁰ Hüseyin Nazım Paşa, *Ermeni Olayları Tarihi II*, (Ankara: Başbakanlık Devlet Arşivleri Genel Müdürlüğü, 1994), p. 320.

town, or the Ottoman government to end a long frustrating struggle with the rebels, the ending of the clashes were coming to a conclusion in January 1896. According to Uras, Zeitun was about to fall into hands of the military forces when the big power intervened in the conflict.¹⁰¹

The consuls of the six big powers residing in Aleppo were assigned and granted a permission to go into Zeitun to mediate between the government and the rebels. They reached Zeitun on January 11 and immediately started working to find a solution acceptable to both sides. They finally succeeded reaching an agreement on January 28, 1896.¹⁰² According to this agreement, the members of Hunchak, and all leading rebels were to go Europe, the government was to announce a general amnesty for all Armenians who took part in the rebellion, the appointment of a new kaimakam was to be approved by the European big powers, security forces of Zeitun were to be selected among the Zeitunlies, the Zeitunlies were not to pay past taxes and were to be exempt from taxes in the following five years, taxes were to be collected according to incomes of the inhabitants, property, living and religious rights were to be under the European guaranties, all the villagers and militants who gathered in Zeitun were to go back their homes freely, the Zeitunlies were to return their weapons, especially martinis, and two cannons they captured from the military fort after the Muslims living in the vicinity returned their weapons, but they were to keep their shotguns, the destroyed military fort was to be built by the government, the Ottoman military forces were to be a small unit who were to stay in the fort and were not to intervene in the security of the town, the consuls of the big powers were not going to leave Zeitun until the peace conditions were fully implemented, and the big powers were to have right to have consuls in Zeitun.¹⁰³

As the articles of the agreement show, the Ottomans had to sign a humiliating peace with the rebels who were happy to have supports of big powers. The rebels were also happy to gain a 'victory' over the Ottomans, but they were shortsighted to see their long-term interests. They widened the gape between the Muslims and the Christians, which created more hatreds and

¹⁰¹ Uras, *The Armenians...*, p. 747.

¹⁰² Özalp, *Maraş*, pp. 193-194.

¹⁰³ Hüseyin Nazım Paşa, *Ermeni ...*, pp. 320-321; Özalp, *Maraş*, pp. 194-195.

The Armenians purposefully planned and effectively executed many large scale revolts in many provinces, Among all these, Zeitun rebellion was the most dangerous and the longest uprising.

disappointments in both sides. By this agreement, the Ottomans *'not only lost some of their honor, but also they further complicated their sovereignty and independence within the Empire'*.¹⁰⁴ Despite horrific crimes of the rebels, the Ottomans could not punish the criminals, which left a bad example for the coming social unrests within the Empire. The

revolt ended in favor of both the rebels and the supporters of the rebels, the big powers.

CONCLUSION

The year 1895 was one of the most eventful years in terms of the Armenian uprisings throughout the Empire. The Armenians purposefully planned and effectively executed many large scale revolts in many provinces, including Trabzon, Diyarbakır, Elazığ, Malatya, Aintap, Van and Aleppo. Among all these, Zeitun Rebellion was the most dangerous and the longest uprising.¹⁰⁵ The rebellion was a product of three main forces, namely the big powers, especially Britain, who were motivated by their economical, military and cultural interests; the terrorists, who were educated and trained in Europe, and who were members of Armenian revolutionary organizations, especially the Hunchak; and the ignorant inhabitants of Zeitun, who were prone to a sort of independent and rough life, and who considered taxes as a burden for themselves. Along with these groups, the geography and weaknesses of the government served the rebellion to spread wider spaces and last longer. In order to suppress the revolt, the Ottomans had to struggle hard against not only the rebels but also the 'protectorates' of the rebels, the big powers. Thus, the rebellion tied down a large Turkish army¹⁰⁶ and faced a sticky situation in the international arena. The British had warned and even threatened the Ottomans not to indulge in any kind of harsh treatment against the Armenians. The British hopes of bringing

¹⁰⁴ Armaoğlu, *19.Yüzyıl ...*, p. 579.

¹⁰⁵ Şimşir, *Documents ...*, Vol. 3, p. 10.

¹⁰⁶ Kerr, *The Lions...*, p. 5.

international powers together to force the Ottomans to grant larger concessions to the Armenians were somewhat resisted by the Russians who did not want to see a British-controlled Armenians in their south of Trans-Caucasian lands. It would have been a bad example to their Armenian subjects and it would also have been regretful for the Russians to lose a hope of reaching the eastern Mediterranean. Furthermore, the Tsar, who did not want to see 'another Bulgaria', was not anxious to 'liberate' a new and hostile Christian group who would not want to serve Russian interests. Because of Russian objections to many British proposals, the Armenians could not obtain their desired helps from the big powers.¹⁰⁷ Yet, they still managed to receive some most modern weapons and strong enough political supports from the big powers.

Besides the military and political problems created by the rebellion, the already weak Ottoman economy became even worse by the growing military expenses. As the rebellion showed, the Ottomans had not dealt with effectively with the insurgents because their economy was not allowing them to establish well-trained and well-equipped military forces. Besides, the big powers which had a lot to say in the economic situation of the empire since they had landed large quantities of money felt strong and legitimate enough to intervene into the internal affairs of the empire.

The Zeitun Revolt was one of the most, if not the most, dangerous revolts of the Armenians prior to the Armenian revolt of Van in April 1815. In the revolt, thousands of Muslim civilians and soldiers were killed by the rebels. If the accounts of the leader of the revolt, Agassi, were true, the Armenians killed around 20.000 Muslims.¹⁰⁸ The time span of the revolt, the size of the military to put down the revolt and the large size of the well-trained and equipped rebels would be enough to accept that thousands of Muslims had been killed during the uprising.

When one compares the Muslims losses in the revolt with the Armenians, it would be seen that the Armenians were quite few in number. Although Lepsius, one of the most anti-Turkish writers in the Armenian question, claimed that around 6.000 Armenians

¹⁰⁷ Şimşir, *Documents ...*, Vol. 3, p. 302.

¹⁰⁸ McCarthy, 'Birakin ...', pp. 117-118; Kamuran Gürün, *Ermeni Dosyası*, (Ankara: Türk Tarih Kurumu, 1985), p. 160.

were killed during the conflict, the official statistics, as well as unofficial estimates, told another story. When one looks at the statistical data of Zeitun after the revolt, one can easily see that the Armenian inhabitants of the region preserved their number, and even slightly increased it.¹⁰⁹ It can be estimated the Armenian losses would have been as low as 125 people¹¹⁰ who were rebels and were killed during the fighting by military forces.

As the losses of both side compared, in terms of properties and lives, the Muslims had obviously been the most sufferers. The revolt showed that a well-prepared revolt would be quite costly to the Muslims and the Empire. The Muslims did not forget this humiliation and insult¹¹¹ at the hands of bandits, rebels and murderers, who had lived under their rule in safety, and who had been called 'millet-i sadıka' (loyal nation) for centuries. While the rebellion left a big and incurable scare on the hearts of the Muslims, the Armenians, especially the revolutionaries, celebrated it as a big victory over the Muslims. But, in the long run, this bloody confrontation deepened the gap between the two groups, and reduced the chances of a peaceful co-existence in the region. This hostile environment, though, served only to the interests of separatists and foreign interventionists, further paralyzed the country.

The rebellion contributed a lot to the fall of the good intentions of the Ottomans who had proclaimed the Gülhane Decree (1839), the Reform Decree (1856) and the Armenian Nation Regulation (1862) to provide better and equal rights within the Empire to all subjects regardless of their creeds. The rebellion showed that the Armenians were not just after equal rights but they wanted more than equal and better rights. They wanted to gain not only their total independence but also, as British Consul Wilson put it, power to rule over the Turks¹¹² who had ruled them for centuries. They were not just after political or judicial rights to equally co-exist with the Muslims. They were after taking a revenge. They wanted to insult, push away, rule or kill their ages-old masters who had

¹⁰⁹ 1318 (1900) *Halep Vilayeti Salnamesi*, p. 349. According to the Almanac of Aleppo dating 1900, there were 8.356 Muslims, 8.766 Gregorian Armenians, 336 Catholic Armenians and 250 Protestant Armenians in Zeitun.

¹¹⁰ Gürün, *Ermeni ...*, p. 160; Eyicil, *Osmanlının ...*, p. 246.

¹¹¹ Kerr, *The Lions ...*, p. 5.

¹¹² ŐimŐir, *British ...*, Vol. 2, pp. 51, 54.

never thought to assimilate or exterminate them, just to rule and provide a safe life for them.

The Armenians who participated in revolutionary activities and in rebellions motivated by the idea of committing bloody attacks on the Muslims in order to push the government to reprisal in kind so that they would have the intervention of the European big powers. By this way, they hoped to gain some sort of autonomy, or even independence, as the Balkan Christians had done. But, during the Zeitun Revolt, the big powers did not come to 'liberate' them. Instead, these powers secretly sent weapons to the rebels to increase their atrocious crimes, and partly provided political helps to protect the crimes and criminals. Their aim was not to bring an acceptable and honest solution to the problems. The ongoing problems of the Empire were serving much better to their interests in the region than any long-lasting solution. Thus, the Zeitun Revolt of 1895 increased chances of the big powers to use the instability of the country in favour of their economical and military interests in the region, rather than providing anything good to both the Turks and the Armenians.

After doing dirty jobs of the imperialist countries, the rebels left behind a worse reputation to the Zeitunlies. They were saved by the intervention of big powers from any punishment of their treasonous and awful crimes. *'After spilling so much blood of innocents in Maraş, the leaders of the rebels, whose travel tickets were bought by the government, went to Europe as heroes (!)'*.¹¹³ But, they were not heroes. They were terrorists, bandits, wrong models for the Armenians whose peaceful life began to change drastically. Furthermore, the rebellion served as a bad example for the coming atrocities committed by the Armenians who began to feel more carelessly and haughtily towards the Muslims. These carelessness and haughtiness came from the hopes of the Armenians that whenever they committed crimes, even in the most dreadful form, they were sure that the European interventions would save them from any harm coming from the government.

Zeitun Revolt was a perfect example for cooperation between imperialist big powers and terrorists. While the former would have used the latter as a tool to pursue its goals in less developed

¹¹³ Özalp, *Maraş*, p. 200.

places, the latter would have thought to get outside supports to reach its separatist aims. In this cooperation, the real losers, however, would have been both the legitimate governments and problematic communities under the rule of these governments. On the one hand, the regimes under attacks would receive great deals of political and economical deterioration. The separatist communities, on the other hand, would lose the confidence of their governments. It would lead to destabilization of the state to fall into small pieces for being swallowed by the big powers.

BOOK REVIEW

TANZİMAT'TAN İİ. MEŞRUTİYET'E ERMENİ NİZAMNAMESLERİ (THE ARMENIAN REGULATIONS FROM THE TANZİMAT REFORMS TO THE SECOND CONSTITUTIONAL PERIOD (MEŞRUTİYET))

Author: Murat BEBİROĞLU

(İstanbul: Ohan Matbaacılık Ltd., 2003). 340 pp.
ISBN 975-288-340-0

Hasret DİKİCİ*

The book by Murat Bebirođlu aims to deal with the regulations related to the Armenians in the Ottoman territory. Mainly, three regulations in 1860, 1863, 1916 are focused in depth. The writer relies on the original documents in Ottoman and Armenian in order to have a comprehensive approach. He also aims to analyse the governance of the Armenians and the East Orthodox Armenian Apostolic Church under the Ottoman rule in terms of the related economic and political factors.

Murat Bebirođlu divides the book into periods of Mahmut II, *Tanzimat* and *Islahat* Reforms, continuing with the 1860 and 1863 Regulations, and the treaties of Ayastefanos and Berlin. The First Constitutional Period is then studied. The next period, that of Abdulhamid II, is taken as a turning point by the writer. Bebirođlu claims that the contemporary attitude towards the governance of non-Muslims can be traced back to the Panislamist policies of II. Abdulhamid, which are argued to be discriminative and biased. The author concludes with the applications of the Second Constitutional Period and 1916 Regulation.

The difficulties of studying historical events are discussed in the initial paragraphs of the book, and then a glance is paid to the

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discussions about the origins of Armenians in general, and the Armenians of Anatolia in particular. The Armenian churches of Protestant and Catholic origin are also mentioned.

The reign of Mahmud II began with serious governance problems and instability. The uprisings and administrative deficiencies had urged the Sultan to take precautionary measures. The policies concerning the Ottoman Armenians intended to solve the internal sectarian conflicts for the sake of stability. After his short comments on the period of Mahmut the Second, Bebiroğlu turns to the *Tanzimat* and *Islahat* Reforms, and explains their consequences especially in terms of the Armenians of Ottoman Empire. Afterwards, 1860 Armenian Regulation which brought a new governance system is dealt from many aspects.

Coming to the First Constitutional Period, the reforms were not successful in that the aims are not achieved fully. According to the author, the failure of this was related to the unwillingness of the Turks to share the administration of the state with the non-Muslims. In addition to this, he argues, the growing budget deficit increased the pressure on the non-Muslims. He focuses on the declaration of the First Constitution (*Sahmanatrutyun* in Armenian) and its part related to the non-Muslims.

As mentioned above, Bebiroğlu pays special attention to the period of Abdulhamid II, and claims that his rule of *İstibdat*, which limited individual freedoms and rights, constituted the roots of the contemporary repressive policies. The appointment of Ahmet Cevdet Paşa as a minister is interpreted by the author as a proof of his argument, since Ahmet Cevdet Paşa was in favour of limitation of the privileges of the Armenian Patriarch. The subsequent events and the 1890 Armenian Regulation was given in the book in this framework. Next, the declaration of the Second Constitutional Period, the political unrest following the declaration, the Event of March 31st, and the new Regulation for the Armenians of 1916 are analysed in the same manner as before. Murat Bebiroğlu attached the original documents at the last chapter of the book, and some pictures of the Armenian patriarchs were also added.

The book by Bebiroğlu is very important in the sense that the writer carefully rests on the original documents, and makes his comments in accordance with them. He mainly focuses on the Regulations arranged by the Ottoman administration for the

governance of the non-Muslims, especially the Armenians; and he aims to understand the recent policies in terms of their historical background. Even though his ideas and comments on the historical process and about the official policy towards the Armenians can be a matter of debate, his study deserves attention in terms of its documentary character.

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