

# From Terrorism to Insurgencies: The Armenian Revolutionary Nationalists Against the Ottoman State, 1912-1915

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## Introduction

If Armenian nationalism emerged in the Ottoman Empire in 1862, with the revolt of Zeytun, this is was not until the 1880s that the first nationalist parties were established, namely the Armenakan (later absorbed by the Ramkavar) in 1885, the Hunchak in 1887 and the Armenian Revolutionary Federation (ARF or Dashnak party) in 1890. Up to 1904, these organizations combined rebellions (especially in Sasun in 1894<sup>1</sup> and 1904<sup>2</sup>, Zeytun in 1895-1896 and Van in 1896)<sup>3</sup> and two kinds of terrorism: Individual assassinations (against Ottoman officials, for example); and mass terrorism, namely the fire of Salonika in 1890<sup>4</sup> and the failed attempt to ravage İstanbul in August 1896, the hostage taking at the Ottoman Bank being the only implemented part of a more general plan<sup>5</sup>. These years shaped the dual nature of Armenian revolutionary nationalism (terrorism and rebellion) as well as its virtually constant appeal to an external power. Indeed, the goal of all these violent activities was to provoke a foreign intervention—Russian, British or both,

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1 Justin McCarthy, Cemalettin Taşkıran and Ömer Turan, *Sasun. The History of an 1890's Armenian Revolt*, Salt Lake City, University of Utah Press, 2014.

2 Le vice-consul de France à Kharpout au ministre des Affaires étrangères, 26 Mai 1904, Archives du ministère des Affaires étrangères (AMAE), P, 16741.

3 Justin McCarthy, Esat Arslan, Cemalettin Taşkıran and Ömer Turan, *The Armenian Rebellion at Van*, Salt Lake City, University of Utah Press, 2006.

4 Stephen Bonsal, *Heyday in a Vanished World*, New York, W. W. Norton & C, 1937, p. 286-289.

5 Mr. Herbert to the Marquess of Salisbury, 27 and 31 August, 2 September 1896, in Muammer Demirel, *British Documents on Armenians (1896-1918)*, Ankara, Yeni Türkiye, 2002, p. 197-204 and 214-216; Gaston Auboyneau, *La Journée du 26 août 1896 à la Banque impériale ottomane*, Villeurbanne: Imprimerie Chaix, 1912; Louis Rambert, *Notes et impressions de Turquie*, Genève-Paris, Atar, [1926], p. 19-20. Hans-Lukas Kieser, *Talaat Pasha. Father of Modern Turkey, Architect of Genocide*, Princeton-Oxford, Princeton University Press, 2018 cites Rambert 72 times, but never his comment on the ARF.

it did not matter—, including the incitation of the Muslim population to commit homicidal reprisals against Armenian civilians<sup>6</sup>.

From the failure of the second Sasun rebellion to the Young Turk revolution, however, these organizations focused on terrorism, in particular the attempt to assassinate Abdülhamit II and the one to destroy İzmir, both in 1905<sup>7</sup>. It was also the beginning of the anti-Russian parenthesis of the ARF's history, a parenthesis that ended in 1912. Being hostile to both Russian and Ottoman states from 1904 to 1908, the ARF cooperated with Japan during the Russian-Japanese war of 1904-1905<sup>8</sup> and consolidated its presence in Iran by 1905<sup>9</sup>.

The 1908-1912 period was the most original. Officially, the ARF was the ally of the Committee of Union and Progress, and indeed, their cooperation against Russia until the first weeks of 1912 is incontrovertible<sup>10</sup>. However, the Erzurum branch of the party hardly accepted the alliance<sup>11</sup> and the Van one began to reconstitute, as early as 1908, its stocks of weapons emptied by the operations of the Hamidian police<sup>12</sup>. Correspondingly, the legalism of the Hunchak was not practiced by the Adana branch of the party in 1908-1909<sup>13</sup>. Marked by ambiguity, at the very least, this period ended in 1912, when all the Armenian nationalist revolutionary organizations returned to the side of Russia and against the Ottoman Empire. The literature supporting the views of these organizations present their actions in 1912-1915 as mostly, if not only, defensive. As our knowledge of these issues

6 William L. Langer, *The Diplomacy of Imperialism. 1890–1902*, New York, Alfred A. Knopf, 1960, p. 150-160, 204-210 and 349-350; Jeremy Salt, *Imperialism, Evangelism and the Ottoman Armenians, 1878-1896*, London-Portland, Frank Cass, 1993.

7 Maxime Gauin, “The Missed Occasion. Successes of the Hamidian Police against the Armenian Revolutionaries, 1905-1908”, *Review of Armenian Studies*, No. 30, 2014, p. 113-131.

8 Mehmet Perinçek, *Ermeni Milliyetçiliğinin Serüveni*, İstanbul, Kaynak Yayınları, 2015, p. 45-48.

9 Houri Berberian, “The Dashnaksutiun and the Iranian Constitutional Revolution, 1905-1911”, *Iranian Studies*, XXIX-1/2, Winter-Spring 1996, p. 7-33.

10 Michael A. Reynolds, *Shattering Empires. The Clash and Collapse of the Ottoman and Russian Empires, 1908-1918*, Cambridge-New York, Cambridge University Press, 2011, p. 98-102.

11 Le consul de France à Erzeroum au ministre des Affaires étrangères, 3 Mars 1909, (*AMAE*), P 16742.

12 Le chargé d'affaires de France au ministre des Affaires étrangères, 19 Juillet 1908, (*AMAE*), P 16742; McCarthy, Arslan, Taşkıran and Turan, op. cit., p. 132-143.

13 Le vice-consul de France à Mersin et Adana au ministre des Affaires étrangères, 23 Octobre 1908, (*AMAE*), P 16742; Dispatch of consul Bie Ravnal (Mersin) to the Under-Secretary of State, 6 May 1909, National Archives and Records Administration (NARA), College Park, RG 84, Records of Foreign Service Posts, Diplomatic Posts Istanbul, vol. 216.

has been obscured by “historiography by political committees and committed historians”<sup>14</sup>, the necessity for impartial studies is even more acute.

The goal of this paper is to analyze the reasons and developments of this anti-Ottoman, pro-Russian turn, up to the insurrections and relocations of 1915. The first part analyzes how the Armenian revolutionary nationalists initially returned to terrorism and prepared insurrection, at the benefit of Russia, from 1912 to 1914. The second part is about their insurgency strategy in 1914-1915. The third and last part studies the articulation between this strategy and the Ottoman state’s response.

### **Years of Escalation (1912-1914)**

#### **A. The International Context**

The first major attack against the territorial integrity of the Ottoman Empire, after 1908, was the Italian invasion of Libya (1911-1912). In 1901 Italy had signed an agreement with France, leaving her free hands in Morocco in exchange for no French interference in Libya, but the agreement did not include any reference to a military conquest, precisely because it was, unlike Morocco, an Ottoman province<sup>15</sup>. Regardless, Rome took profit of the French expansion in Morocco and even more of the crisis between Paris and Berlin (very close to a war) to impose a very broad interpretation of the 1901 agreement<sup>16</sup>. That having been said, the Quai d’Orsay had warned (in vain) the Ottoman embassy in Paris, then helped Fethi Okyar, the Ottoman military attaché in Paris, to pass in Libya to organize the resistance to the Italian invasion, André Tardieu (1876-1945), who was at that time the unofficial voice of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, supported the Ottoman point of view<sup>17</sup>.

Even more serious were the Balkan wars (1912-1913), because of the rapidity of

14 Andrew Mango, “Historiography by Political Committee and Committed Historians: Review Article”, *Middle Eastern Studies*, XXV-4, October 1989, p. 531-562. Also see Michael M. Gunter, “A Reply to Joseph Kéchichian and Keith Watenpaugh”, *International Journal of Middle East Studies*, XXIX-3, August 2007, p. 514-517; and Yücel Güçlü, “Review Essay”, *Journal of Muslim Minority Affairs*, XXVIII-3, September 2018, p. 441-450.

15 Abel Combarieux, *Sept ans à l’Élysée avec le président Émile Loubet. De l’affaire Dreyfus à la conférence d’Algésiras*, Paris, Hachette, 1932, p. 106.

16 Joseph Caillaux, *Mes Mémoires*, volume II, Paris, Plon, 1943, p. 60-196.

17 Osman Okyar, «Les rapports franco-turcs à l’époque d’Atatürk vus sous l’angle de la mission militaire de Fetih Okyar comme attaché militaire à Paris», in Paul Dumont and Jean-Louis Bacqué-Grammont, *La Turquie et la France à l’époque d’Atatürk*, Paris, ADET, 1981, p. 7-15.

the Ottoman defeat during the first one, the nature of the lost territories and also because of the impunity for war criminals, including the war crimes perpetrated between Christians, in clear violation of the conventions of Geneva (1864) and The Hague (1899 and 1907)<sup>18</sup>. These wars were also the occasion to notice, beyond any doubt, the designs of the Russian government, particularly when he threatened to declare war to the Ottoman Empire because of the reconquest of Edirne in mid-1913. St. Petersburg also asked for a joint operation of the Triple-Entente, but Paris absolutely refused any action of this kind<sup>19</sup>. At the same time, the Bulgarian branch of the Armenian Revolutionary Federation organized a volunteer unit for the Bulgarian army, led by Antranik Ozanian (in spite of the fact that Antranik had bitterly left the ARF in 1907)<sup>20</sup> and Gareguin Nzhdeh (1886-1955; an ARF official).

It had nothing to do with any kind of coincidence. Indeed, the Russian policy toward the Armenian issue in general and the ARF in particular radically changed in 1912, one of the first turning points being the trial of ARF members that took place this year, and that ended by a remarkably lenient verdict. For reasons of domestic policy (easing the tensions in the Caucasus) and of expansionist designs toward the Ottoman Empire, the Armenian issue was perceived as a tool again and the ARF as the most obvious collaborator in this regard<sup>21</sup>. The same year, the leader of the ARF in Van Aram Manukian delivered a speech comparing the situation of the Armenians in Russia and in the Ottoman Empire, concluding that in the first case it is much better<sup>22</sup>. Beside this event, the ARF of Van did all what it could, observed the French Vice-Consul, to be seen positively by the Russian authorities<sup>23</sup>. Indeed, in 1913, the Russian ambassador in İstanbul admitted to

18 Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, *Report of the International Commission to Investigate the Causes and Conduct of the Balkan Wars*, Washington, 1914; Comité de la défense nationale ottomane, *Les Atrocités des coalisés balkaniques*, İstanbul, 1913, 3 volumes; Justin McCarthy, *Death and Exile. The Ethnic Cleansing of Ottoman Muslims, 1821–1922*, Princeton, NJ: Darwin Press, 1995, p. 135-177.

19 Maurice Paléologue, *Au Quai d'Orsay à la veille de la tourmente. Journal, 1913-1914*, Paris, Plon, 1947, p. 173-175.

20 Kapriel Serope Papazian, *Patriotism Perverted*, Boston, Baikar Press, 1934, p. 26-31.

21 Despatch of the British consul in Erzurum, 14 October 1913, The National Archives, Kew Gardens (London), FO 195/2450; Richard Hovannisian, *Armenia on the Road to Independence. 1918*, Berkeley-Los Angeles-London, University of California Press, 1967, p. 22-23 and 31; Gaïdz Minassian, *Géopolitique de l'Arménie*, Paris, Ellipses, 2005, p. 15.

22 Le vice-consul de France à Van au ministre des Affaires étrangères, 6 Octobre 1912, (AMAE), P 16743.

23 Le vice-consul de France à Van au ministre des Affaires étrangères, 30 Novembre 1912, p. 38, (AMAE), P 16743.

this French counterpart that the previous year, the vice-king of the Caucasus had signed a pact with “the Armenians”. The document does not say who exactly, but it was obviously not with the ordinary peasants and artisans—rather the ARF, and possibly also the other Armenian nationalist parties, namely the Hunchak and the Armenakan/Ramkavar. The same document explains that Boghos Nubar (1851-1930), the leader of the Ramkavar and the delegate of the Catholicos, knew about the risk of “sinking” in playing so much the game of Russia<sup>24</sup>.

As a result, it clearly appears that this daring affirmation by Ronald Grigor Suny is actually at the opposite of the truth: “On the eve of the World War I tsarist hostility toward Armenian intellectuals and activists culminated in the arrest and massive trial of five hundred Dashnaks”<sup>25</sup>. Mr. Suny, as his endnotes prove, knows nothing of the archives regarding the subject he deals with, but in this precise case, he also deliberately ignored the historiography, including the Armenian one.

From 1912 to 1914, St. Petersburg advocated “reforms”, initially to obtain an autonomous “Armenia” in Anatolia,<sup>26</sup> in spite of the fact that the Armenians were clearly in minority in all these provinces<sup>27</sup>, unlike the Maronites in Mount Lebanon, for example. Yet, as observed the Russian ambassador in Paris on 13 March 1913, “in this affair”, the Armenian parties, including the Ramkavar of Boghos Nubar, “have the firm intention to follow, in all things, the indications of the Russian Government”<sup>28</sup>. The first reaction of the Ottoman Empire was to ask London for British inspectors, with the explicit goal to eliminate any Russian interference in giving a monopoly of reforms to the UK—a project welcomed by Louis Mallet,

24 L'ambassadeur de France à Constantinople au ministre des Affaires étrangères, 20 Octobre 1913, (*AMAE*), P 16745.

25 Ronald Grigor Suny, “*They Can Live in the Desert but Nowhere Else*”. *A History of the Armenian Genocide*, Princeton-Oxford, Princeton University Press, 2015, p. 205.

26 Kâmuran Gürün, *The Armenian File*, London-Nicosia-Istanbul, K. Rüstem & Bro./Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 1985, p. 171-185; Ahmet Seyhun, “A Last Attempt to Solve the Armenian Question. The Reform of 1914”, in Hakan Yavuz and Feroz Ahmad, *War and Collapse. World War I and the Ottoman State*, Salt Lake City, University of Utah Press, 2016, p. 656-680; Stéphane Yerasimos, «Comment furent tracées les frontières actuelles au Proche-Orient», *Hérodote*, n 41, 2<sup>e</sup> trimestre 1986, p. 128-130.

27 Justin McCarthy, *Muslims and Minorities. The Population of Ottoman Anatolia and the End of the Empire*, New York-London, New York University Press, 1983, p. 70-78; Meir Zamir, “Population Statistics of the Ottoman Empire in 1914 and 1919”, *Middle Eastern Studies*, XVII-1, January 1981, p. 85-106.

28 René Marchand (ed.), *Un livre noir. Diplomatie d'avant-guerre d'après les documents des archives russes, 1910-1917*, Paris, Librairie du travail, volume II, 1923, p. 47-48.

the director of the Eastern department of the Foreign Office. However, Russia strongly opposed this scheme, and the British government declined the Ottoman offer<sup>29</sup>.

The French ambassador Maurice Bompard (1854-1935) had asked his Russian counterpart to accept the deal proposed by İstanbul to London, arguing that the only result would be a German intervention; but Bompard's demand was in vain<sup>30</sup>, and the future showed his prevision accurate. For months, Germany opposed the Russian project, then a compromise was found between Berlin and St. Petersburg in September 1913: Instead of creating an autonomous Armenia, the German-Russian text proposed two big regions, and instead of one governor independent of the Porte, it proposed two Inspectors-Generals, and left to the Ottoman cabinet the possibility to choose and dismiss the other high civil servant. The Ottoman cabinet resisted for three more months, then accepted, with the condition that these Inspectors-General be from small countries<sup>31</sup>. The agreement was formally reached on 8 February 1914.

Meanwhile, the leader of the French Socialist Party, Jean Jaurès (1859-1914), who, after a very short period of support of the "Armenian cause" (1896-1897), became one of the fiercest Western supporters of the integrity of the Ottoman Empire<sup>32</sup>, warned that the Armenian issue would be used as a pretext to continue in Anatolia the work of dismemberment started by the Balkan coalition in Macedonia and Thrace (1912)<sup>33</sup>, then blamed Russian expansionism (1913)<sup>34</sup>. His warnings were accurate and without effect.

### **B. Internally: A Predominantly Terrorist Strategy - for the Time Being**

The most serious act of terrorism actually perpetrated by Armenian nationalists during the period 1912-1914 was incontrovertibly the assassination of Bedros Kapamacyan, a wealthy merchant, very popular in all the communities, who had

29 Joseph Heller, "Britain and the Armenian question, 1912-1914. A study in Realpolitik", *Middle Eastern Studies*, XVI-1, January 1980, p. 8-9.

30 L'ambassadeur de France à Constantinople au ministre des Affaires étrangères, 23 mai 1913, (*AMAE*) P 16744.

31 Le chargé d'affaires à Constantinople au ministre des Affaires étrangères, 31 décembre 1913, (*AMAE*) P 16745; Heller, art. cit., p. 10-20.

32 Jean Jaurès, « En Orient », *L'Humanité*, 6 octobre 1908, p. 1; Jean Jaurès, « Union nécessaire », *L'Humanité*, 6 avril 1909, p. 1.

33 Jean Jaurès, « La Pologne turque », *L'Humanité*, 1<sup>er</sup> novembre 1912, p. 1.

34 Jean Jaurès, « Conjectures », *L'Humanité*, 29 juillet 1913, p. 1.

been elected as mayor of Van in 1909 thanks to the massive support of Muslim electors. Kapamaciyan, a loyal Ottoman Armenian and a supporter of the CUP, was assassinated by the ARF on 10 December 1912. Kapamaciyan never liked the ARF—and reciprocally—but the immediate cause of his assassination was a series of fires in Van set by Kurds according to the Dashnaks and to the patriarchate, but by the local branch of the ARF as a provocation, according to Kapamaciyan<sup>35</sup>. Two suspects were quickly arrested, but, as observed by the British vice-consul, “it is unlikely that anything will be proved against them. The wife and daughter of Bedros Bey, likewise his coachman [witnesses of the crime], as it is usual in such cases, decline to say a word which might help the police by fear of revenge” and anyway, the vali “has shown himself weak and vacillating”<sup>36</sup> (unlike, as we shall see, his successor Tahsin). Such a weakness, as well as the fact that Kapamaciyan was neither armed nor escorted by a bodyguard may be attributed to the general climate of incompetence, clumsiness and disorganization during the short-lived liberal cabinet<sup>37</sup>, more particularly during the first Balkan war.

Whatever the reasons, the previsions of the British Vice-Consul were confirmed. The two suspects gave the names of Aram Manukian (1879-1919) and Arshak Vramian (1871-1915), two leaders of the ARF in Van, who later were responsible for the uprisings in the vilayet of Van, in 1914-1915. Yet, neither the arrested suspects nor Manukian and Vramian were actually sentenced. The exceptional personality of Kapamaciyan and the impunity of the crime were blow for the loyal Armenians of the city. As a result, the ire expressed against the ARF during his funerals remained words without practical consequences<sup>38</sup>.

In spite of the significance of the crime, it is striking to notice how few the references are in the studies on the Armenian question. In the 260-page published version of his doctoral dissertation on the ARF in the Ottoman Empire, from 1908 to 1914, Dikran Kaligian never mentions the assassination of Kapamaciyan, or even his name. Considering the scope of his research in the ARF archives and the British ones, as proved by the endnotes, it is merely unthinkable that Mr. Kaligian never read a document on this affair; as a result, this omission

35 McCarthy, Arslan, Taşkıran and Turan, *op. cit.*, p. 164-166; Papazian, p. 69.

36 Report of 9 January 1913, in Demirel, p. 560.

37 L'ambassadeur de France au ministre des Affaires étrangères, 23 septembre 1912; Le vice-consul de France à Van au ministre des Affaires étrangères, 26 septembre 1912, (*AMAE*), P 16743.

38 Hasan Oktay, “On the Assassination of Van Mayor Kapamaciyan by the Tashnak Committee”, *Review of Armenian Studies*, No. 1, 2002, p. 79-89.

has to be considered deliberate. Even more strikingly, in his book published in 1917—and still presented as a reference today (2018)<sup>39</sup>—, Clarence Ussher, one of the main American missionaries in Van until 1915, avoids to say anything on Kapamaciyan<sup>40</sup>, in spite of the fact that his station absolutely knew about the murder.<sup>41</sup> Remarkable, too, is this daring affirmation by Ronald Grigor Suny: “Even though they had announced publicly in August 1912 that their alliance with the CUP had been terminated, the Dashnaks continued to search for ways to work with the Young Turks”. Obviously, Mr. Suny says nothing on murder as an original conception of “working with”<sup>42</sup>. It is true that Yektan Türkyilmaz at least mentions the murder, but he devotes to this issue only three lines in a footnote, entirely based on the Memoirs of one Dashnak leader<sup>43</sup>. In spite of the fact that Kapamaciyan’s name is incorrectly written “Set Kapamachian” (sic) in his dissertation, it would be an unfair critique to imagine that Mr. Türkyilmaz is unable to recognize the importance of this crime. His laconism should rather be attributed to an intent to dissimulate the relevance of the event to his uninformed readers.

This assassination is even more relevant as it was not isolated at all. The same month, the ARF killed six Kurdish civilians and one gendarme, officially in reprisal for the murder of one of its leaders. Yet, if it is incontrovertible that, after some successes of the Van authorities against Kurdish bandits in March 1912, the public safety deteriorated at the end of the spring, during the whole summer and at the beginning of autumn, on the contrary, during the last months of the year 1912—in spite of the general context and of the weakness showed in the Kapamaciyan affair—the public safety significantly improved, at least as far as Kurdish banditry was concerned. As a result, these seven murders cannot be called simple acts of reprisals but an element of a coherent strategy of tension. It is confirmed by the statement of Vramian, a former ARF deputy at the Ottoman Parliament (1908-1912) to the French Vice-Consul: “It does not matter if the Armenians are killed instead of living as they are living! We are determined to restart the revolutionary action we had suspended for four years; for every assassinated Armenian we will

39 Kieser, *Talaat Pasha*, p. 205.

40 Clarence D. Ussher, *An American Physician in Turkey*, Boston-New York, Houghton Mifflin Company, 1917. This is only one of the numerous problems of this book: McCarthy, Arslan, Taşkıran and Turan, op. cit., p. 226-227, n. 79 and p. 253, n. 21.

41 McCarthy, Arslan, Taşkıran and Turan, op. cit., p. 174, n. 77.

42 Suny, op. cit., p. 197.

43 Yektan Türkyilmaz, *Rethinking Genocide: Violence and Victimhood in Eastern Anatolia, 1913-1915*, PhD dissertation, Duke University, 2011, p. 147, n. 70.



kill ten Kurds, and if necessary, we will attack higher [characters]: *Valis*, Ministers and even the *sultan*"<sup>44</sup>. The threat was taken seriously by Ambassador Maurice Bompard, who called Vramian a man "ready to all violence" and the revolutionary Armenian parties organizations willing to organize an insurrection, "even at the price of the global peace", if their aims are not satisfied.<sup>45</sup> The ARF did not try to do so during the forthcoming months, but assassinated in the province of Van several of its own former members, who were becoming "embarrassing"<sup>46</sup>.

These terrorist activities were not limited to one province. Indeed, in April 1913, a stock of bombs accidentally exploded Erzincan<sup>47</sup>. Neither were they limited to the ARF. The congress of the Hunchak Party that took place in Constanza (Romania) in September 1913 decided to assassinate the Ottoman Minister of the Interior, Talat. Thanks to an agent that infiltrated the organization (Arthur Esayan), the Ottoman police were able to arrest the conspirators in August 1914, before they could carry out the congress' decision. The investigators seized two Parabellum revolvers and 59 cartridges, among other pieces. The investigation continued until February 1915 and the trial took place in May. The terrorists were sentenced, then executed<sup>48</sup>. The Ottoman sources are largely confirmed by the contemporary report of the Okhrana (Russian political police) who followed the congress of September 1913<sup>49</sup>. Yektan Türkyilmaz' description of these events, based, as often, on Armenian printed sources, is not dishonest but laconic<sup>50</sup>, and the author, in spite of this concession to the truth, shows an insufficient understanding of the national security concerns of the Ottoman government.

Yet, as early as 1913, the signs announcing a possible series of uprising by the Armenian revolutionaries multiplied. This year, troubles erupted in Zeytun<sup>51</sup>, a

44 Le vice-consul de France à Van au président du Conseil, ministre des Affaires étrangères, 19 décembre 1912, (*AMAE*), P 16743.

45 L'ambassadeur de France à Constantinople au ministre des Affaires étrangères, 18 mai 1913, (*AMAE*), P 16744.

46 Le vice-consul de France à Van au ministre des Affaires étrangères, 31 août 1913, (*AMAE*), P 16744.

47 Despatch of the British consul in Erzurum, 23 April 1913, FO 195/2450.

48 Ahmet Tetik (ed.), *Armenian Activities in the Archive Documents*, Ankara, ATASE, volume III, 2006.

49 Hoover Institution, Stanford, Okhrana records, reel 385. Thank you to Jean-Louis Mattei for the translation.

50 Türkyilmaz, op. cit., p. 156-157.

51 Report of British Vice-Consul Fontana (Aleppo) to his chargé d'affaires, 21 October 1913, FO 371/1773/ 52128.

traditional stronghold of the Hunchak party. More concerning, in spring 1913, a Russian “journalist” by the name of Berezovsky-Godinsky traveled in eastern Anatolia, including two weeks in Bitlis, where he was hosted by the Russian consulate. He previously was the correspondent of his newspaper in Vienna, but the Austro-Hungarian authorities had expelled him. The speech delivered in front of a group of Armenians, in Bitlis, is a masterpiece of cynicism:

“Is it humanity, is it Christianity that attracts Russia toward the Armenians? No, my dear friends. In the 20<sup>th</sup> century where we live, all these stupid things are unknown [sic]. That is because the Armenian issue is a state issue for Russia, and nothing more. Russia possesses one and a half million of your kind in its different cities; so, reform or occupation of your regions are our responsibility. [...] You must arm yourself. [...] You know well, probably, that all our [diplomatic] representatives in Turkey jointly work with the Dashnaks [...]

Russia does not want, and never wanted to send you missionaries. She prefers to send you cannons and soldiers instead of missionaries. [...] I have had a lot of relations with the competent people of the Russian government”<sup>52</sup>.

The fact that the author of this speech was the host of Russian diplomacy leaves no particular doubt regarding the accuracy of the last sentence.

Regardless, if this incitement is the most serious, it is not the only one. In Autumn 1913, a member of the British Parliament, Noel Buxton, who also was the chair of the British Armenia Committee (London) went to Eastern Anatolia and incited the leaders of the ARF, Hunchak and Ramkavar to pursue their action against the Ottoman government and to follow the instructions coming from Tbilisi, as Russia was, according to him, the only power that could help them<sup>53</sup>. Correspondingly, at its congress of Paris on 4 January 1914, the student branch of the ARF asked the party to focus on “revolutionary” action and announced having collected 27,549.63 francs for the purchase of weapons to be distributed among Ottoman Armenians.<sup>54</sup> The call was heeded: “By 1914 Dashnak and Hunchak branches

52 Le vice-consul de France à Van au ministre des Affaires étrangères, 2 mai 1913, (*AMAE*), P 16744.

53 Le vice-consul de France à Van au ministre des Affaires étrangères, 9 octobre 1913, (*AMAE*), P 16745. Not everybody in UK shared the committee’s view: Cuthbert Francis Dixon-Johohn, *The Armenian Question, its meaning to Great Britain*, Leeds, Nutt & Co, 1914.

54 Undated report of the Okhrana (almost certainly January 1914), Hoover Institution, Stanford, Okhrana records, reel 385. Thank you to Jean-Louis Mattei for the translation.

in eastern Turkey had evolved into IMRO-style paramilitary organizations that devoted their primary energies to weapons smuggling, as an Okhrana agent attending a Dashnak conference in Berlin reported to the tsar<sup>55</sup>. It was even more heeded as Aryanist racism, the myth the Armenians as “one of the purest and best peoples from the Aryan race”, born in 19<sup>th</sup> century, became consensus among the Armenian nationalists during the 1910s<sup>56</sup>.

### C. The Sublime Porte Maintains the Ottomanist Policy

As this paper is devoted to the Armenian issue, I will not insist on the excellent relations of the 1913-1918 CUP cabinets with the Jewish community leadership<sup>57</sup> or on the Greeks who remained loyal, such as Senator Aristidi Yorgancıoğlu Paşa (1848-1928), a personal friend of Talat<sup>58</sup>. Ohannes Kuyumciyan (1858-1933), a Catholic Armenian, who served as general secretary of the ministry of Foreign Affairs, from 1909 to 1912, was appointed as governor of Lebanon by the anti-CUP, short-lived cabinet in December 1912. Regardless, instead of considering Kuyumciyan to be unreliable, the new CUP cabinet formed in January 1913 maintained him in his functions. Contrary to what is sometimes claimed by ignorance, Kuyumciyan did not leave his position of governor because it was suppressed in September 1914 (the function actually remained until 1918) but resigned in June 1915, as a result of the diminution of his powers at the profit of Cemal, and more generally because he did not like the martial regime.

55 Sean McMeekin, *The Russian Origins of the First World War*, Cambridge, MA-London, Harvard University Press, 2011, p. 149.

56 Perinçek, op. cit., p. 31-40; Editorial of *Haiastan* (organ of the ARF in Bulgaria), 19 August 1914, translated in *Aspirations et agissements révolutionnaires des comités arméniens, avant et après la proclamation de la Constitution ottomane*, İstanbul, Matbaai Orhaniye, 1917, p. 155; Bertha Papazian, *The Tragedy of Armenia*, Boston-Chicago: The Pilgrim Press, 1918, p. 8, 23 and 43; Kourken Tahmazian, *Turcs et Arméniens, plaidoyer et réquisitoire*, Paris, Imprimerie H. Turabian, 1919, p. 45; Mikaël Varandian, *L'Arménie et la question arménienne*, Laval, Imprimerie G. Kavanagh & Cie, 1917, 14-15 and 23-24. Tahmazian was the main leader of the Hunchak in France until 1921, and Varandian the ideologue of the ARF from 1905 to his death, in 1934: Le chef du service des Renseignements généraux à M. le préfet de police de Paris, 25 octobre 1919, Archives de la préfecture de police de Paris, Le Pré Saint-Gervais, BA 2146; Kapriel Serope Papazian, op. cit., p. 21.

57 Feroz Ahmad, “The Special Relationship: The Committee of Union and Progress and the Ottoman Jewish Political Elite, 1908–1918”, in Avigdor Levy (ed.), *Jews, Turks, Ottomans: A shared history, Fifteenth through the Twentieth Century*, New York, Syracuse University Press, 2002, p. 212-230; Michel Bar Zohar, *Ben Gourion, le prophète armé*, Paris, Fayard, 1966, p. 43-44; Salâhi Sonyel, *Minorities and the Destruction of the Ottoman Empire*, Ankara, Türk Tarih Kurumu, 1993, p. 321-323.

58 S.R. Marine, Turquie, n° 532, 4 avril 1919, Centre des archives diplomatiques de Nantes (CADM), 36/PO/1/7.

Kuyumciyan remained in Beirut until September 1915, then went back to İstanbul and was appointed as senator the same month<sup>59</sup>. Even more remarkably, Hrant Abro remained the legal advisor of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs from 1914 to 1922, Berç Keresteciyan (1870-1949), deputy general manager of the Ottoman Bank until 1914, was promoted as director general this year and remained in this position until 1927<sup>60</sup>.

In a more political field, Bedros Hallaçyan was elected at the CUP's central committee in January 1913, reelected as member of the parliament for Istanbul in 1914. The same year, Artin Boşgezenyan was reelected as CUP deputy of Aleppo; Onnik İhsan was elected as independent deputy of İzmir; and Dikran Barsamyan as independent deputy of Sivas. The three last ones remained in functions until 1919. Hallaçyan was representative of the Ottoman Empire at the International Court of Arbitration from 1915 to 1916 and chair of the committee in charge of rewriting the Ottoman code of commerce from 1916 to 1918<sup>61</sup>. Arriving in Switzerland in mid-1918, officially for health reasons, he was immediately suspected by the French military intelligence in Bern to actually come as an agent of the Ottoman government<sup>62</sup>. Correspondingly, Manuk Azarian Efendi (1850-1922) remained senator of İstanbul from 1908 to the end of the Ottoman Empire, and maintained close ties with the CUP until 1918<sup>63</sup>.

Those who would answer that these personalities remained exceptions should consider the continuity of the CUP policies regarding the military. After the law of 8 August 1909 on the military for Ottomans of all faiths and the opening of the officers' schools to non-Muslims in 1910, the law of 12 May 1914 extending and reorganizing the compulsory military service maintained the principle of

59 Engin Deniz Akarlı, *The Long Peace: Ottoman Lebanon, 1861-1920*, Berkeley-Los Angeles-London, University of California Press, 1993, p. 80-82, 199 and 231, n. 65.

60 Semi Ertan, *An Armenian at the Turkish Parliament in the Early Republican Period: Berç Türker Keresteciyan*, MA thesis, Sabancı University, 2005; Yücel Güçlü, *The Holocaust the Armenian Case in Comparative Perspective*, Lanham-Boulder-New York-Toronto-Plymouth, University Press of America, 2012, p. 86.

61 Feroz Ahmad, *The Young Turks. The Committee Union and Progress in Turkish Politics, 1908-1914*, Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1969, p. 104; Mehmet Biçici, "Osmanlı Meclis-i Mebusânı'nda Ermeni Mebuslar ve Faaliyetleri (1914-1918)", in *19.-20. Yüzyıllarda Türk-Ermeni İlişkileri*, İstanbul Üniversitesi/Türk Ocakları, 2015, volume I, p. 357-359 and 366-367; Güçlü, *op. cit.*, p. 79-84 and 93.

62 Information de Berne, no. 3090, 3 août 1918, (AMAE), P 1572. Similar claim (for the year 1919) in Edgar Pech, *Les Alliés et la Turquie*, Paris, Presses universitaires de France, 1925, p. 98.

63 S.R. Marine, Turquie, n° 532, 4 avril 1919, CADN, 36 PO/1/7.

recruitment without religious discrimination. Minister of War Enver publicly emphasized that non-Muslims can be “excellent soldiers”, giving the example of Ottoman Bulgarians who had fought *against* the Bulgarian army in 1912-1913<sup>64</sup>. Correspondingly, Fuat Dündar’s allegations of a “demographic engineering” by the CUP toward the Greeks of Eastern Thrace and Western Anatolia from 1913 to 1915 are based on manipulations of Ottoman documents and on neglect of the security context, such as the Greek collaboration with Bulgarian invaders in Eastern Thrace during the Balkan Wars<sup>65</sup>.

Concerning the Armenians more particularly, the French Vice-Consul in Mersin wrote on 2 May 1913 that the ceremonies of Easter “took place in the utmost calm: The authorities had taken measures to avoid any panic”. “The concerns of the Armenians”, he added are due to the dubious allegations spread by the Liberal Union against the CUP<sup>66</sup>. Correspondingly, his colleague of Erzurum reported on 19 December 1913 that “the most perfect calm reigns in the vilayet”. He added that the only sources of concern are the agitation of the ARE, the “tendentious news” this party disseminates regarding the implementation of the reforms in eastern Anatolia, and “the campaign conducted in Europe by [Boghos] Nubar Pasha”<sup>67</sup>. Indeed, as noticed by the British consul in the same city on 23 September 1913, “the accounts of crime which have been published in the Armenian press” are “much exaggerated”<sup>68</sup>. And, as his successor observed in January 1914, “the vali is an honest man”, and the general helps him to maintain order with very dissuasive methods: “The first who moves will be shot (*le premier qui bouge sera fusillé*)”<sup>69</sup>. As late as July 1914, “public security seem[ed] admirable between Erzurum and Erzincan, and in the neighborhood of Erzincan town”<sup>70</sup>.

It is true that the province of Van experienced problems of banditry in spring

64 Odile Moreau, *L'Empire ottoman à l'âge des réformes. Les hommes et les idées du «Nouvel Ordre» militaire (1826-1914)*, Paris, Maisonneuve et Larose, 2007, p. 46-50 and 70-71.

65 Ahmet Efiloğlu, “Fuat Dündar’ın, Osmanlı Belgelerinde Kaybolan ‘Modern Türkiye’nin Şifresi’”, *Belleten*, LXXIV/270, August 2010, p. 531-570; Ahmet Efiloğlu, “Fuat Dündar and the Deportation of the Greeks”, *Middle East Critique*, XXIII-1, 2014, p. 89-106; Ahmet Efiloğlu, “The Exodus of Thracian Greeks to Greece in the Post-Balkan War Era”, in Yavuz and Ahmad, p. 330-370.

66 (*AMAE*), P 16744.

67 (*AMAE*), P 16745.

68 Demirel, op. cit., p. 603.

69 Report of 18 January 1914, in Demirel, op. cit., p. 638.

70 Despatch of the British Consul in Erzurum, 3 July 1914, in Demirel, p. 643.

1913, between the departure of the vali Izzet and the arrival of his successor, Tahsin<sup>71</sup>, but as early as July, the “energetic measures” of the local authorities curbed this violence: One leading Kurdish bandit was killed, three Kurdish tribes, notorious for their practice of plunder, were defeated, and, as a result, “15,000 sheep” were given back to their owners<sup>72</sup>. Then, in October 1913, “the redoubtable bandit Mir-Mehe”, who had plundered for eight years both Kurdish and Armenian villages and murdered inhabitants (the number of his victims was estimated to be 200, including 50 gendarmes), was killed by the Ottoman soldiers who were looking for him. His uncle and accomplice were killed, too<sup>73</sup>.

These facts substantiate the conclusion of the British Vice-Consul in Van, Ian Smith, in January 1914: “Since the arrival of the present vali, Tahsin Bey (Hasan Tahsin Uzer, 1878-1939), strong measures have been taken against various Kurdish brigands, so at present the Armenians have little to complaint in his respect”<sup>74</sup>. Far from stopping at the beginning of 1914, the action of the local authorities continued: In July of the same year, another Kurdish gang chief was killed, together with two of his associates, apparently by the CUP<sup>75</sup>. In the words of the French Vice-Consul Tahsin was a “civil servant of the highest value”, who restored order everywhere<sup>76</sup>.

In this context, it is important to notice what the reaction of the Armenian nationalists was. In September 1913, after one of their religionists was killed in Van city, during a clash between the gendarmes and criminals, these parties accused the gendarmes. Yet, the experts (including one Armenian) concluded that this man was killed by a Mauser, a weapon the Turkish gendarmes generally did not possess, and the shot took place from behind, when the victim was facing the gendarmes. As a result, he clearly was killed by an accidental shot from

71 Le vice-consul de France à Van au ministre des Affaires étrangères, 24 mai 1913, (*AMAE*), P 16744.

72 Le vice-consul de France à Van au ministre des Affaires étrangères, 31 août 1913, (*AMAE*), P 16744.

73 Le vice-consul de France à Van au ministre des Affaires étrangères, 21 octobre 1913, (*AMAE*), P 16745.

74 Report of 10 January 1914, Demirel, op. cit., p. 634. Also see Heller, p. 20.

75 Le vice-consul de France à Van au ministre des Affaires étrangères, 7 Août 1914, (*AMAE*), P 16745.

76 Le vice-consul de France à Van au ministre des Affaires étrangères, 10 Octobre 1914, (*AMAE*), P 16745.

another Armenian. Regardless, the affair was used by the ARF for violent verbal attacks against the gendarmerie and the vali. Policemen were threatened with guns by Armenians<sup>77</sup>. In July 1914, the French Vice-Consul deplored again “the ingratitude” of the ARF and the Ramkavar toward Tahsin Bey<sup>78</sup>. Quite remarkably, Yektan Türkyilmaz bases his account of the accidental killing of September 1913 on mostly Armenian printed sources, ignores Western archives, uses the Ottoman ones very randomly, then writes: “What is extremely striking is that the doctors examining the wound stated conclusively that the wound was caused by a rifle used by soldiers”<sup>79</sup>, an allegation that is based on no archival document. Correspondingly, Mr. Türkyilmaz is silent on the baseless campaign of Armenian nationalists against Tahsin in mid-1914.

Even more frivolous, however, is the allegation of Yves Ternon, who claims, without providing *any* source that Tahsin was appointed as vali of Erzurum in “July” (sic: actually October) 1914 because in was in good terms with the Armenian community<sup>80</sup>. In fact, as observed the French Vice-Consul, Tahsin was sent to Erzurum because the concentration of military forces needed an exceptional administrator<sup>81</sup>, and his successor Cevdet Bey was precisely responsible for the elimination of Kurdish bandits in 1913<sup>82</sup>. Completely frivolous, too, is the claim of Hans-Lukas Kieser: “In 1912-1913, he [Ziya Gökalp, a member of the CUP’s central committee] had given up Ottomanism in favor of pan-Turkism”<sup>83</sup>. Mr. Kieser gives no source for this extraordinary claim. And indeed, there is none.

77 Le vice-consul de France à Van au ministre des Affaires étrangères, 16 Septembre 1913, (*AMAE*), P 16745.

78 Le vice-consul de France à Van au ministre des Affaires étrangères, 21 Juillet 1914, (*AMAE*), P 16745.

79 Türkyilmaz, op. cit., p. 93.

80 Yves Ternon, *Les Arméniens, histoire d’un génocide*, Paris, Le Seuil, 1996, p. 240.

81 Le vice-consul de France à Van au ministre des Affaires étrangères, 10 Octobre 1914, (*AMAE*), P 16745.

82 Le vice-consul de France à Van au ministre des Affaires étrangères, 31 Août 1913, (*AMAE*), P 16744.

83 Hans-Lukas Kieser, “The Ottoman Road to War”, in Hans-Lukas Kieser, Kerem Öktem and Maurus Reinkowski (ed.), *World War I and the End of the Ottomans*, London-New York, I. B. Tauris, 2015, p. 36. This assertion is reiterated in Kieser, *Talat Pasha*, p. XI, 9, 11-12, 17, 98-104 and passim, without a significant discussion of what Gökalp actually wrote. P. 433, n. 25 he recommends a book which defends a thesis in full contradiction with his: Uriel Heyd, *Foundations of Turkish Nationalism*, London, Luzac & C., 1950, p. 128-129.

Gökalp's pan-Turkism was cultural, and not political, still less expansionist<sup>84</sup> and his criticism of the Tanzimat was not about the equality between Muslims and non-Muslims but about the illusion to create an Ottoman nation<sup>85</sup>. The CUP itself never had a pan-Turkist policy<sup>86</sup>. Claims of the opposite are attempts to distract the attention from the national security concerns that determined the decision to relocate in 1915.

## **World War and Insurgencies (1914-1915)**

### **A. At the Service of the Russian Big Brother**

The ARF organized its congress at Erzurum in July-August 1914 (the exact dates are difficult to establish). Initially, the CUP delegates sent to negotiate with the Dashnak leaders only asked for the neutrality of this Armenian nationalist-revolutionary party, but, after they noticed the beginning of the recruitment of volunteers for the Russian army by the ARF, they tried to take the organization out of the Russian alliance in proposing an autonomous Armenia on both sides of the boundary, in case of a victory of the Triple-Alliance. The ARF refused, officially proclaimed its neutrality, and immediately violated this proclamation<sup>87</sup>.

Indeed, one of the first contribution of the Armenian nationalists to the Russian effort to defeat the Ottoman Empire was the recruitment, under the leadership of the ARF<sup>88</sup> of volunteers, from Russia (students in medicine who were exempted from military duty, for instance) but also from Romania, Bulgaria (600)<sup>89</sup> and

84 Ziya Gökalp, *The Principles of Turkism*, Leyden: E. J. Brill, 1968, p. 17 (translated from the Turkish and annotated by Robert Devereux); Taha Parla, *The Social and Political Thought of Ziya Gökalp, 1876-1924*, Leyden: E. J. Brill, 1985, p. 34-38.

85 Niyazi Berkes (ed.), *Turkish Nationalism and Western Civilization. Selected Essays of Ziya Gökalp*, London, George Allen & Unwin, 1959, p. 56-58, 72, 127, 133-135, 206-208, 223, 249, 270, 276 and 283-290.

86 Feroz Ahmad, "Book review", *Middle Eastern Studies*, VI-1, January 1970, p. 104-105; Michael A. Reynolds, "Buffers, not Brethren: Young Turk Military Policy in the First World War and the Myth of Panturanism", *Past and Present*, no. 203, May 2009, p. 137-179.

87 Hovannes Katchaznoui, *The Armenian Revolutionary Federation Has Nothing to Do Anymore*, New York, Armenian Information Service, 1955, p. 5; Onur Öno, "The Eight World Congress of the Dashnaksutyun and Its Aftermath", in Yavuz and Ahmad, p. 781-799; Morgan Philips Price, *War and Revolution in Asiatic Russia*, London, George Allen & Uwin, 1918, p. 243-245.

88 Aram Turabian, *Les Volontaires arméniens sous les drapeaux français*, Marseille, Imprimerie nouvelle, 1917, p. 40.

89 Report of the Ottoman representative in Bulgaria, 7 November 1914, in İnanç Atılğan and Garabet Krikor Moumdjian (ed.), *Archival Documents of the Viennese Armenian-Turkish Platform*, Klagenfurt-Vienna-Ljubljana-Sarajevo, Wieser Verlag, 2009, p. 72-73.



above all from the Ottoman Empire<sup>90</sup>. After the First World War, Avetis Aharonian (1866-1948; ARF leader) and Boghos Nubar claimed the number of 50,000 for the total of Armenian volunteers<sup>91</sup>. Such a figure is not implausible: The Ottoman documents used by Yusuf Halaçoğlu estimate the number of *Ottoman* Armenian volunteers alone to be 50,000<sup>92</sup>, and as early as 29 October 1914, namely just before the entry of the Ottoman Empire in the war, the British Consul in Batumi estimated the total to be almost 45,000<sup>93</sup>. It is indeed essential to observe that, according to Dashnak published sources as well as the Russian archives, the efforts of recruitment began months before the Ottoman and Russian Empires declared war on each other. The final report of the Russian Consul in Erzurum mentions hemorrhagic desertion from this vilayet (50,000), mostly made of Armenians<sup>94</sup>. In particular, at the end of October 1914, a gang of 6,000 Armenians from Erzurum crossed the Russian border to join the Russian army, including at least 3,500 who were sent by the Tsar's officers in the Caucasus to improve their military training<sup>95</sup>. Like before the outbreak of the First World War, this Russophile policy was supported by British subjects: "Lord Bryce and the 'Friends of Armenia' were appealing for funds to clothe and equip the Armenian volunteers on April 2<sup>nd</sup>, [1915] [...]"<sup>96</sup>.

An extreme example of intellectual dishonesty, by a supporter of the "Armenian genocide" label, toward the issue of the Ottoman Armenian volunteers in the Russian army, is provided by Yves Ternon. He discusses the issue on two pages in pretending, without any discussion of the sources, that all were from Russia, and then contradicts himself in mentioning those coming from Anatolia, but without any explanation on their number or on the meaning of such a betrayal in war

- 90 Morgan Philips Price, *A History of Turkey: From Empire to Republic*, London-New York, George Allen & Uwin/MacMillan, 1956, p. 91.
- 91 Avetis Aharonian and Boghos Nubar, *The Armenian Question Before the Paris Peace Conference*, New York, The Armenian National Union of America, 1919, p. 6; Boghos Nubar, letter to the *Times* of London, 27 January 1919, [http://www.ataa.org/reference/nubar\\_letter.html](http://www.ataa.org/reference/nubar_letter.html)
- 92 Yusuf Halaçoğlu, *Facts on the Relocation of Armenians (1914-1918)*, Ankara, Türk Tarih Kurumu, 2002, p. 105.
- 93 Demirel, op. cit., p. 665.
- 94 Hratch Dasnabedian, *History of the Armenian Revolutionary Federation Dashnaksutyun. 1890/1924*, Milano: Oemme, 1989, p. 117; Katchaznouni, op. cit., p. 5; McMeekin, op. cit., p. 154-158 and 275, n. 38.
- 95 Undated report (written at the beginning of 1915), Tetik, op. cit., volume I, p. 110-111. Also see Maurice Larcher, *La Guerre turque dans la guerre mondiale*, Paris, Chiron, 1926, p. 395.
- 96 Cuthbert Francis Dixon-Johnson, *The Armenians*, Northgate, Toulmin & Sons, 1916, p. 47.

time<sup>97</sup>. A surgeon by education and by profession, Dr. Ternon should stick to surgery.

Regardless, the most significant contribution of the Armenian nationalist revolutionists to the Russian war effort was the revolt of Van<sup>98</sup>. As early as January 1914, the Consul of the UK, Ian Smith, observed that the ARF “during the past year has actively concerned itself with the secret importation of arms and their distribution among its followers. Mauser pistols are the favorite weapons”. As a result, “In Van it is said that the Armenians are now better armed than the Kurds, and there is no doubt that they have obtained a number of modern rifles”.<sup>99</sup> Considering the increase of the public safety in Van that has been demonstrated earlier in this paper, such a quantity of Mauser cannot be called a measure of “self-defense”<sup>100</sup>. Correspondingly, the efforts of the ARF to accumulate weapons in Van increased in October 1914<sup>101</sup>, namely before the declaration of war and at a moment when the results of Tahsin’s policy were even clearer than in January. The local uprisings multiplied in the countryside of the vilayet during the months of February and March 1915, then the revolt in Van city broke out in April. The heavy armament of the Armenian insurgents made the battle particularly intense<sup>102</sup>. The combination of the ARF-led revolt and of the ARF-organized volunteer’s units was decisive in the Russian conquest of the city of Van. That is why the Tsar himself congratulated the Armenian revolutionary nationalists<sup>103</sup>.

However, the systematic practice of massacre, rape and plunder by both Armenian insurgents and Armenian volunteers, as early as the end of 1914, against the Muslim civilians, increasingly raised concerns among the Russian officers, much

97 Ternon, op. cit., p. 218-219 and 242.

98 Halaçoğlu, op. cit., p. 52.

99 Report of 10 January 1914, in Demirel, op. cit., p. 635-636.

100 This allegation is defended, for instance, in Vahakn Dadrian, “The Secret Young-Turk Ittihadist Conference and the Decision for the World War I Genocide of the Armenians”, *Holocaust and Genocide Studies*, VII-2, 1993, p. 194-195.

101 Haig Gossoian, *The Epic Story of the Self Defense of Armenians in the Historic City of Van*, Detroit, General Society of Vasbouragan, 1967, p. 13.

102 Edward J. Erickson, *Ottomans and Armenians. A Study in Counter-Insurgency*, New York-London, Palgrave MacMillan, 2013, p. 166-169; McCarthy, Arslan, Taşkıran and Turan, op. cit., p. 176-232; McMeekin, op. cit., p. 168-169 Rafael de Nogales, *Memoirs of a Soldier of Fortune*, New York, Harrisson Smith, 1932, p. 271.

103 Gabriel Korganoff (Gorganian), *La Participation des Arméniens à la guerre mondiale sur le front du Caucase (1914-1918)*, Paris, Massis, 1927, p. 26 and 28.

less for humanitarian reasons than by fear that these crimes would undermine the capacity of the Tsar's army to dominate the region and continue its offensives until the victory. That having been said, these concerns developed only progressively, and the Russian command did not dissolve Armenian volunteers' units until December 1915<sup>104</sup>. In the short run, the Armenian rebellion at Van was a blow for the Ottoman military and a source of hopes for the Russian army.

Indeed, "The Van uprising acted as a catalyst and uprisings broke out in other cities in the Third Army's area of responsibility", particularly in Erzurum and Sivas, where Armenian guerillas attacked the telegraphic lines and the roads, including the one between Erzurum and Sivas, that was vital for the units of the Ottoman army fighting the Russians on the Caucasian front<sup>105</sup>. In the case of Erzurum, the continuity with the desertions and flow of volunteers for the Russian army is clear. Yet, the vali of the vilayet was Tahsin, the same Tahsin who had crushed Kurdish bandits in Van in 1913-1914. Even more relevantly, Tahsin was acquitted by a martial court in 1919—in spite of the completely unfair procedure of these tribunals—thanks to testimonies of Armenians<sup>106</sup>. Arrested for "massacres", after this acquittal and without any evidence, at the initiative of the British High Commissioner at İstanbul and against the will of the *British* military command, Tahsin was sent to Malta<sup>107</sup>. In other words, he was among these 144 Ottoman officials who were probed in vain by the UK: The investigation ended in 1921 by a complete failure to find proofs against them<sup>108</sup>. The crystal clear innocence of Tahsin makes impossible the acceptance of the thesis of the Armenian insurrectional activities in Erzurum, in spring 1915, as "self-defense".

To deny the military rationale of the Ottoman government's decision, a tactic as old as the "genocide" claims<sup>109</sup> but increasingly used since the 2000s is to present a distorted narrative of the Anatolian Assyrians (particularly Nestorian

104 McCarthy, Arslan, Taşkıran and Turan, op. cit., p. 233-257; Reynolds, op. cit., p. 156-158.

105 Erickson, op. cit., p. 168.

106 Note on Tahsin (undated, but most probably written in 1921), FO 371/6501, f 538.

107 Telegram of the British headquarters of İstanbul, 10 Mach 1921, FO 371/6499/E 3276.

108 Despatch of the British ambassador in Washington, 13 July 1921 and minute of W. S. Edmonds, 27 July, FO 371/6504/E 8519; Letter of R. W. Woods, on behalf of His Majesty's general prosecutor, 21 July 1921, FO 371/6504/E 8745; Letter of Judge Lindsay Smith to the British High Commissioner in İstanbul, 24 August 1921, FO 371/6504/E 10023.

109 James Tashjian, *Turkey, Author of Genocide*, Boston, Commemorative Committee, 1965, p. 23-24.

Assyrians) during the First World War<sup>110</sup>. In fact, as early as 1913, Vice-Consul Zarzecki reached the conclusion that the Nestorian patriarch Mar Shimoun was “one of the most active agents of Russia” in the region<sup>111</sup>. The later events proved Zarzecki right, one more time. At the beginning of the First World War, Shimoun organized the assassination of his own uncle, who was a loyal Ottoman citizen, opposed to any revolt<sup>112</sup>. Then, Shimoun organized an uprising that led to violent battles with local Kurds then to a mass exodus to Iran, in the worst possible conditions<sup>113</sup>. The appreciation of Colonel Chardigny, the French military attaché in the Caucasus, is one of the most accurate: “It is certain that Russia is responsible for the woes of the Assyrian people. [...] It was Russia that provoked the revolt of the Nestorian Assyrians of Mar Shimoun”<sup>114</sup>. Regardless, it did not prevent the nationalist Assyrians from continuing to help Russia in 1916. They participated in the offensives of this year against the Ottoman Empire, committing massacres of Muslims together with Armenian volunteers and Cossacks, and provoking a new tragedy for the ordinary Assyrians<sup>115</sup>. Eventually, in February 1918, Mar Shimoun’s men killed dozens of Muslims in Urmia (Iran), a series of crimes that caused a clash, followed by the massacre of hundreds of Muslims (including children), this time by Assyrians and Armenians from the Caucasus. The conflict continued with a massacre of Kurds in March of the same year and a counter-massacre of Christians in July<sup>116</sup>.

110 Kieser, *op. cit.*, p. 154, 185, 203-205, 234, 239-240 and *passim*; Suny, *op. cit.*, p. XIV, XIX-XX, 208, 232, 234 and 245.

111 Le vice-consul de France à Van au ministre des Affaires étrangères, 24 Mai 1913, (*AMAE*), P 16744.

112 Nicolas Gasfield, « Au front de Perse pendant la Grande guerre — Souvenirs d’un officier français », *Revue d’histoire de la Guerre mondiale*, II-3, juillet 1924, p. 129; Bülent Özdemir, *Assyrian Identity and the Great War*, Dunbeath, UK: Whittles Publishing, 2012, p. 51-53.

113 Yonca Anzerioğlu, “The Revolts of Nestorian Christians Against the Ottoman Empire and the Republic of Turkey”, *The Muslim World*, C-1, January 2010, p. 48-51; Florence Hellot, « L’ambulance française d’Ourmia (1917-1918) ou le ressac de la Grande guerre en Perse », *Studia Iranica*, XXV-1, 1996, p. 50-51 and 60.

114 Le colonel Chardigny, chef de la mission militaire française au Caucase, à M. le ministre de la Guerre, 13 avril 1919, *CADN*, 1SL/1V/138.

115 Arnold Talbot Wilson, *Loyalties: Mesopotamia. A Personal and Historical Record*, volume II, 1917-1920, London, Oxford University Press, 1930, p. 31-32.

116 Paul Caujole, *Les Tribulations d’une ambulance française en Perse*, Paris, Les Gêmeaux, 1922, 73-90, 93-94 and 101-103; Gasfield, *art. cit.*, p. 131-145; Hellot, *art. cit.*, p. 56-79; Émile Zavie, *D’Archangel au Golfe persique. Aventures de cinquante français en Perse*, Paris, La Cité des livres, 1927, p. 173, 248-250, 258-260, 266, 269-272 and 276-277.

A similar tactic, sometimes added to the previous ones, is to present the relocation of Greeks from the Black Sea in 1916-1917 as a persecution<sup>117</sup>, or even as an extermination<sup>118</sup>. First of all, this relocation, too, was due to military necessities. Indeed, the Greek archbishop of Samsun—in absolute contrast with his counterpart of Trabzon, a prudent man who preserved the safety of his coreligionists—organized guerrilla activities against the Ottoman state as early as 1914, and these activities increased in summer 1916, in the context of successful Russian offensives and of the defeat of the Armenian nationalists. Then, this counter-insurrectional relocation was carried inside Anatolia and without massacres<sup>119</sup>.

## **B. Rebellions and Anglo-French Landings**

Far from having been limited to a support for the Russian army, the strategy of the ARF and other Armenian revolutionary nationalists had a Mediterranean component, aiming to obtain an Anglo-French landing in the region of İskenderun and/or of Mersin. After a seven-day trip on the coast, the British consul in Aleppo had concluded in 1913 that “the Armenians of Deurtyol are now well-armed with modern rifles, every male adult having one in his possession. Männlichers [Austrian-Hungarian rifles] and Mausers are hidden for immediate use in emergency”<sup>120</sup>. The same year, his colleague of Adana received anonymous letters from Armenians asking for a British occupation of the plain of Çukurova and promising full support for such an invading army<sup>121</sup>. In 1913, the Ramkavar-dominated Armenian Committee for National Defense distributed a “confidential” printed memorandum to the main consuls of Mersin, asking for a Russian “occupation or annexation” of northeastern Anatolia after an “Armenian insurrection” and an autonomous Cilicia after a naval operation<sup>122</sup>.

This pre-war news was not forgotten when the Ottoman army, at the request of Germany, attacked Egypt with the aim to take control of the canal of Suez.

117 Akçam, op. cit., p. 63-96; Suny, op. cit., p. 330.

118 Balakian, op. cit., p. 286 and 339; Kieser, op. cit., p. 257-258 and 355.

119 Stéphane Yerasimos, «La question du Pont-Euxin (1912-1923)», *Guerres mondiales et conflits contemporains*, n° 153, janvier 1989, 10-16. Kieser, op. cit., p. 466, n. 157, recommends this article of Prof. Yerasimos, so he perfectly knows that his “Greek genocide” claims are wrong.

120 Despatch of consul Fontana to the charge d'affaires in İstanbul, 21 October 1913, (FO), 371/1773/52128.

121 Demirel, op. cit., p. 569-573.

122 Comité arménien de la défense nationale, *La Question arménienne et les solutions qu'elle comporte*, np, 1913, available at: <http://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/bpt6k97349473>

The British reaction was to attack in and around İskenderun, to cut railroad connecting Anatolia with the Arab provinces of the Ottoman Empire. It is even less forgotten as Boghos Nubar presents his first proposal of help for a landing as early as November 1914<sup>123</sup>.

From December 19, 1914 to the beginning of February 1915, the *HMS Doris* attacked the gulf of İskenderun. This vessel had 11 6-inch guns, three 12-pounders, and three 18-inch torpedo tubes. It was commanded by a very capable officer, Captain Frank Larkin, who finished his career as Rear Admiral Sir Frank Larkin. Among other damages, Larkin's vessel destroyed five bridges and landed men who cut a telegraphic line. Larkin reported, on December 27: "The Armenian railway officials themselves are smashing the electric batteries on the lines with particular satisfaction". Correspondingly, six Armenian villages of Musa Dag prepared an uprising but the weapons were confiscated. At the same time Field Marshal Lord Horatio Kitchener advocated the occupation of İskenderun and the subject was seriously studied in London<sup>124</sup>.

In a memorandum submitted to the British authorities on 3 February 1915 Boghos Nubar explained that "the [Armenian] populations of Cilicia were ready to revolt" since 1914 and "after His Majesty's Government decided to send an expedition to the shores of Alexandretta, General Sir John Maxwell" asked him about "the kinds of support the Armenian population of Cilicia might offer to the expedition". During the conversation, Boghos Nubar promised a full participation. The same month, the revolt of Zeytun, organized by the Hunchak, broke out<sup>125</sup> and continued in March. The rebels captured the armory of the gendarmerie, killed several gendarmes and—not unlike their comrades of Erzurum or Sivas—destroyed the telegraphic line<sup>126</sup>. In mid-1915, the Ramkavar estimated the number of insurgents to be 25,000 in Çukurova and 15,000 in "neighboring regions"<sup>127</sup>.

123 M. DeFrance, ministre de France en Égypte, à M. Delcassé, ministre des Affaires étrangères, 21 novembre 1914, in Hasan Dilan (ed.), *Les Événements arméniens dans les documents diplomatiques français*, Ankara, Türk Tarih Kurumu, 2005, volume I, p. 244-245.

124 Edward J. Erickson, "Captain Larkin and the Turks. The Strategic Impact of the HMS Doris in Early 1915", *Middle Eastern Studies*, XLVI-1, January 2010, p. 151-162; Stanford Jay Shaw, *The Ottoman Empire in World War I*, volume II, Ankara, Türk Tarih Kurumu, 2008, p. 876-880.

125 Note de l'ambassadeur de Russie à Paris, 23 février 1915, Arthur Beylerian (ed.), *Les Grandes Puissances, l'Empire ottoman et les Arméniens dans les archives françaises (1914- 1918)*, Paris, 1983, p. 7.

126 *Osmanlı belgelerinde Ermeni İsyamları*, Ankara, volume IV, ed. Yusuf Sarnay, 2008, p. 105-108 and 113-115. Thanks to Sümeyye Hoşgör for the translation.

127 Note to the British government, July 1915, in Jean-Claude Montant (ed.), *Documents diplomatiques français. 1915*, volume III, 15 septembre – 21 décembre, Berne, Peter Lang, 2004), p. 98.

Also, in March 1915, Mikael Varandian (1870-1934), a leader of the ARF, presented his own project to the British and French authorities, arguing that around 20,000 Armenians who were born in this region and who were at that time in the Balkans, in Western Europe or in America, would be ready to land with the Entente's army as volunteers. To gain the support of his interlocutors, Varandian exposed his vision of an eastern Anatolia divided between the Russians in the north, the British and the French (or, when he spoke to His Majesty's representative, the British only) in the south<sup>128</sup>.

These projects of Nubar and Varandian failed for reasons which had nothing to do with the effectiveness of the Armenian insurgents. In London, Winston Churchill convinced the cabinet to give the priority to the operations in Çanakkale, because it would directly eliminate the Ottoman Empire from the war and even more because it would open the Straits to provide to the Russian ally what he needs<sup>129</sup>. Churchill convinced his colleagues even more easily as the French cabinet had vetoed a massive British operation in İskenderun in February<sup>130</sup>. In Paris, as late as April 1915, the Minister of Foreign Affairs Théophile Delcassé (1852-1924) opposed the partition of the Ottoman Empire, above all because he considered it as sharing with Russia and UK what France already had, as this country possessed the biggest part of the Ottoman debt, the biggest share of investment in Turkey and the cultural preeminence. As a result, Delcassé saw the landing in Çanakkale as the occasion to replace the cabinet in İstanbul and to impose the Entente's control preventing any new German-Ottoman alliance—but nothing else<sup>131</sup>. Indeed, if the British government accepted a partition of the Ottoman Empire as early as November 1914-February 1915<sup>132</sup>, the French one accepted it only in

128 Copie d'une communication du ministre français à Sofia, 3 mars 1915, in Beylerian, p. 12-13; Memorandum of Mikael Varandian to Sir Edward Grey, 20 February 1915, FO 371/2484/37609; Ciphred telegram of the British Minister in Sofia to the Foreign Office, 3 March 1915, in Demirel, op. cit., p. 667.

129 Christopher M. Bell, *Churchill and Sea Power*, Oxford-New York, Oxford University Press, 2013, p. 59-75; Marc Ferro, *La Grande Guerre. 1914-1918*, Paris, Gallimard, 1969, p. 116-117 and 121-124.

130 James Barr, *A Line in the Sand. Britain, France and the Struggle that Shaped the Middle East*, London-New York, Simon & Schuster, 2011, p. 15.

131 Lettre du ministre des Affaires étrangères au ministre de la Guerre, 28 avril 1915, (*SHD*), 7 N 2150. To understand the reasoning of Delcassé: Jacques Thobie, *Intérêts et impérialisme français dans l'Empire ottoman (1895-1914)*, Paris, Publications de la Sorbonne, 1977; Jacques Thobie, *Les Intérêts culturels français dans l'Empire ottoman finissant*, Paris-Louvain: Peeters, 2008.

132 C. Jay Smith, "Great Britain and the 1914-1915 Straits Agreement with Russia: The British Promise of November 1914", *The American Historical Review*, LXX-4, July 1965, p. 1015-1034;

the second half of 1915, and not without regret<sup>133</sup>. Even after this acceptance, the mutual distrust between London and Paris, regarding the Near East in particular, remained<sup>134</sup>.

A last factor that blocked the projects of Nubar and Varandian was that, both before and after the change of position of Paris, the Frenchmen who advocated a landing often preferred Beirut for the place of landing<sup>135</sup>, or an operation beginning in İskenderun but continuing by an occupation of Syria and Lebanon, with the cooperation of Christian Arabs<sup>136</sup>. Indeed, the legacy of exchanges and cooperation between France and the Maronites<sup>137</sup> was incomparably superior, culturally, sentimentally but also economically, to the weak relations between Paris and the Armenian nationalist revolutionists<sup>138</sup>. As late as February 1916, Admiral Frédéric Moreau (1858-1929), who negotiated with the representatives of Nubar, wrote that “when you deal with Armenians, you are sure to be duped” (sic) and advocated the pure and simple cancellation of projects of military cooperation<sup>139</sup>.

One of most extraordinary allegations regarding the French policy has been made by Yektan Türkyilmaz:

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Nevzat Uyanık, *Dismantling the Ottoman Empire. Britain, America and the Armenian question*, London-New York, Routledge, 2016, p. 20-32.

- 133 Raymond Poincaré, Notes journalières, 18 septembre 1915, Bibliothèque nationale de France, département des manuscrits, (*NAF*), 16031, f. 144, available at: <http://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/btv1b8555827n?rk=64378;0>
- 134 James Barr, op. cit., passim; Justin McCarthy, “Cilicia. A Missed opportunity in World War I”, in Yavuz and Ahmad, op. cit., p. 800-803.
- 135 Projet de débarquement d'un corps expéditionnaire en Orient, 20 janvier 1915, (*SHD*), 16 N 3198.
- 136 Pierre Roche, Note relative aux conditions topographiques et climatériques d'une attaque française contre Alexandrette et Alep, et aux immédiats résultats de guerre de l'occupation des deux villes, Novembre 1914, (*SHD*), 16 N 3198, dossier J.
- 137 Andrew Arsan, “‘There is, in the Heart of Asia... an entirely French Population.’ — France, Mount Lebanon and the Workings of Affective Empire, 1830-1920”, in Patricia M. E. Lorcin and Todd Shepard (eds.), *French Mediterraneans. Transnational and Colonial Histories*, Lincoln-London, University of Nebraska Press, 2016, p. 76-100; Yann Bouyrat, *La France et les Maronites du Mont Liban. Naissance d'une relation privilégiée (1831-1861)*, Paris, Paul Geuthner, 2013; Dominique Chevallier, « Lyon et la Syrie en 1919. Les bases d'une intervention », *Revue historique*, CCXXIV-2, avril-juin 1960, p. 275-320.
- 138 “The mountain population, largely Armenian and Kurdish, would be the only interesting ones [in military terms], but they feel nothing but indifference for France, who until now made very few efforts to develop her influence on them”. Hypothèse d'un débarquement à Alexandrette, 8 février 1915, p. 3, (*SHD*), 16 N 3198.
- 139 Lettre à Albert Defrance, 8 Février 1916, (*AMAE*), 56 PA-AP 2.



“In his memoirs (published in 1957), Malkhas [Ardashes Hovsepien, 1877-1962, an ARF leader] suggests that, soon after the outbreak of the European war, the French Prime Minister, Gaston Doumergue, contacted (Victor) Bérard (1864-1931) to inquire what stance his ‘Armenian friends,’ particularly the ARF, would take Doumergue, highlighting the crucial role the French played during the reform debates, asked Bérard to contact the ARF Committee in Geneva and counsel them that they ‘should not miss that opportunity of joining the Entente so as to secure the future of the Armenian people’”<sup>140</sup>.

Actually, as Mr. Türkyilmaz himself noticed, Gaston Doumergue (1863-1937) was not the President of the Ministers’ Council (Prime Minister) anymore in summer 1914: His cabinet resigned on 8 June 1914. It cannot be a confusion between the months preceding the outbreak of the First World War and the ones following it. Indeed, in March 1914, when Doumergue was the chief of the government and the Minister of Foreign Affairs, the Quai d’Orsay gave the permission to Vice-Consul S. Zarzecki to publish as an article a slightly edited version of a report he had sent in October 1913 to the ministry<sup>141</sup>. This text, where the Armenian revolutionary nationalists were described as one of the two main reasons for disturbances in Van and Bitlis (the other being the chiefs of nomadic Kurdish tribes) was considered by the ARF to be a kind of declaration of war, and its newspaper in İstanbul published a series of extremely vehement articles in reaction to the one of Zarzecki<sup>142</sup>.

Correspondingly, there cannot be confusion with the short time (August 1914) when Doumergue was Minister of Foreign Affairs without being the chief of the government. Indeed, far from having advocated the creation of an Armenia in eastern Anatolia, Doumergue asked the Russian government at least twice to give “the most unambiguous assurances” to the Ottoman one, about the integrity of the Ottoman Empire<sup>143</sup>. Consistent with this stance, Doumergue did not

<sup>140</sup> Türkyilmaz, op. cit., p. 173.

<sup>141</sup> S. Zarzecki, La question kurdo-arménienne dans les vilayets de Van et Bitlis, 11 Octobre 1913, (*AMAE*), P 16745; Lettre de S. Zarzecki à Gaston Doumergue, 21 Mars 1914; Lettre du chef de cabinet à S. Zarzecki, 31 Mars 1914, (*AMAE*), 394 QO 1566; S. Zarzecki, « La question kurdo-arménienne », *La Revue de Paris*, 15 avril 1914, p. 873-894.

<sup>142</sup> A translation in French of all (but one) these articles are in the despatches of Zarzecki’s successor, dated 18 and 28 May 1914, (*AMAE*), P 16745.

<sup>143</sup> See his telegrams to ambassador in St. Petersburg Maurice Paléologue, 11 and 16 August 1914, and the answer of Paléologue, on 17 August: Jean-Claude Montant (ed.), *Documents diplomatiques français. 1914*, Paris, Imprimerie nationale, 1999, p. 42, 62 and 68.

participate to the pro-Armenian meetings organized in Paris in 1916 and 1920<sup>144</sup>. On the contrary, he repeatedly criticized the Sèvres treaty and advocated for its revision, including to satisfy the “legitimate” demands of the Turkish national movement<sup>145</sup>.

If evidence is still needed to prove that Mr. Türkyilmaz cited a false assertion, let’s observe that there is nothing confirming this claim in the personal papers of Doumergue<sup>146</sup>; in the diary of Maurice Paléologue (1859-1944), director of political affairs at the Quai d’Orsay from 1912 to 1914 then ambassador to St. Petersburg from 1914 to 1917<sup>147</sup>; in the speeches on the Armenian issue delivered by Bérard in 1920 and 1921<sup>148</sup>; or in the note of Boghos Nubar presenting in 1920 a list of “promises” made—according to him—to the Armenian nationalists by the French cabinet during the world war<sup>149</sup>. This last example shows that Mr. Türkyilmaz’s knowledge of the Armenian sources is far from being comprehensive.

That having been said, the Ottoman government could not know these differences between Russia, the UK and France. He only saw the Russian offensive in the north-east and the landings in the south, backed by Armenian rebellions.

## **Ottoman Counter-Insurgency and Armenian Insurgents (Spring-Autumn 1915)**

### **A. The Gradual Evolution of the Ottoman Response**

The main source of inspiration of the Ottoman military and cabinet was a practice

<sup>144</sup> *Hommage à l’Arménie*, Paris, Ernest Leroux, 1919; *Pour l’Arménie indépendante*, Paris, Ligue des droits de l’homme, 1920.

<sup>145</sup> Gaston Doumergue, «La question du pétrole», *Le Petit Méridional*, 27 juin 1920, p. 1; Gaston Doumergue, « Le traité de Sèvres — Pour sortir d’une situation difficile », *Le Petit Méridional*, 28 novembre 1920, p. 1; Gaston Doumergue, « Dans le Proche-Orient — La politique à suivre », *Le Petit Méridional*, 26 juin 1921, p. 1.

<sup>146</sup> (AMAE), 64 PA-AP 1.

<sup>147</sup> Paléologue, *Au Quai d’Orsay*, op. cit.; Maurice Paléologue, *La Russie des tsars pendant la Grande guerre*, Paris, Plon, 1921-1922, 3 volumes. Jules Laroche, a diplomat who saw Paléologue every day in 1913-1914 correspondingly says nothing on any alleged proposal made to the ARF by his Minister: Jules Laroche, *Au Quai d’Orsay avec Briand et Poincaré. 1913-1926*, Paris, Hachette, 1957.

<sup>148</sup> *Pour l’Arménie indépendante...*, p. 31-58 (p. 31-32, Bérard says the opposite: In August 1914, he was asked by the “Armenian revolutionaries” to present their proposals to the French government and the Russian embassy in Paris); Victor Bérard, « Le gaspillage des forces françaises en Syrie et en Cilicie », *Les Cahiers des droits de l’homme*, 25 janvier 1921, p. 27-30; 25 février 1921, p. 84-88.

<sup>149</sup> Lettre de Georges Leygues à Justin de Selves, 28 décembre 1920; Lettre d’Aristide Briand à Justin de Selves, 13 février 1921, (AMAE), P 16670.

that emerged at least in the 18<sup>th</sup> century but that was theorized in the second half of the 1890s. It can be summarized as follows. An insurgent is a human being; an insurgent need to eat and drink, but hardly can find the necessary himself. As a result, if an insurrection cannot be suppressed by classical methods, the army has to relocate part of the civilian population who (willingly or by force) provides the indispensable logistic assistance. This method was practiced by the Spanish army against the Cuban insurrection (1896-1898), by the U.S. army against the Philippine national movement (1899-1901) and by the British army against the Boers (1899-1902). During the first years of 20<sup>th</sup> century, these experiences—which all had a significant cost for the civilian population, including in terms of human losses—were known and studied by the main armies of the world<sup>150</sup>. Yet, these losses cannot be attributed to any racial or religious prejudice: The Cubans are mostly descendants of Spanish settlers and all are traditionally Catholic; the Boers are traditionally Protestants, like the vast majority of the British, and the physical differences between the two populations are almost impossible to notice.

The chronology of the Ottoman response confirms its counter-insurrectional nature. Far from having relocated the whole Armenian population of Anatolia as early as the first revolt, the Ottoman government began in expelling only the Armenian population of Dörtöl, which had welcomed the British operations. The order justifies the relocation in terms of national security only: “Through the assessment of the existing situation, the government is doing the things necessary to prevent the emergence of factors which could lead to disturbances and uprisings”<sup>151</sup>. Then, in April-May 1915, the revolt of Zeytun was crushed by military operations and by a forcible relocation to Konya<sup>152</sup>, namely to a city of central Anatolia, further from the Arab provinces than Zeytun is. This fact in itself is a refutation of the baseless thesis of a “genocide” or “ethnic cleansing” aiming to eliminate the Armenian presence from Anatolia: If the policy of the CUP cabinet was to use any uprising as a pretext to send the Armenians to the Arab provinces, why were those of Zeytun relocated inside Anatolia?

It is true that the scope of the relocations changed at the end of May, as a result of the insurrections of the spring. However, as late as 2 May, Minister of War Enver wrote to Minister of Interior Talat:

150 Erickson, op. cit., p. 79-96.

151 Telegram of Minister of Interior Talat to the vali of Adana, 2 March 1915, *Turkish-Armenian Conflict Documents*, ed. Hikmet Özdemir and Yusuf Sarnay, Ankara, TBMM, 2007, p. 11.

152 Halaçoğlu, op. cit., p. 58-60.

“Around Lake Van, and in specific areas known by the Governor of Van, Armenians are constantly gathered and prepared to continue their insurrection. I am convinced that these Armenians who have gathered must be removed from these areas, and that the rebellion’s nest must be destroyed. According to the information provided by the 3rd Army Command, the Russians brought the Muslims within their borders into our country under wretched and miserable conditions, on 20 April 1915. In order to respond to this, as well as to reach the goal I have stated above, it is necessary to either send these Armenians and their families to Russia, or to disperse them within Anatolia. I request that the most suitable of these two alternatives be chosen and carried out. If there is no inconvenience, I would prefer that the families of the rebels and the population of the region in rebellion are sent outside our borders, and that the Muslim community brought into our borders from abroad are relocated to their place”<sup>153</sup>.

This document proves, if still necessary, that the escalation of the Ottoman response only followed the escalation of the military risk. Correspondingly, the minutes of the Ministers’ council show an Ottoman cabinet concerned by public safety instead of any kind of “genocidal” plans<sup>154</sup>.

In front of what is for them a considerable difficulty, one of the methods of the authors supporting Armenian nationalism is to use a fake document, the “Ten Commands”, supposed to be a genocidal decision of the CUP in December 1914, January 1915 or February of the same year, in any case before the rebellion at Van<sup>155</sup>. The fact that the forgery was exposed as early as 1973<sup>156</sup> does not seem to concern them. Another misleading source is the book of Mevlanzade Rifat. Rifat was a staunch opponent to the CUP, as early as 1908 and sentenced to exile after the failed counterrevolution of April 1909. After the First World War, he was one

153 Gürün, op. cit., p. 199.

154 Minutes of the Ministers’ council, 30 May 1915; Regulation date 30 May 1915, Özdemir and Sarnay, op. cit., p. 75-76 and 80-81; Stanford Jay Shaw and Ezel Kural Shaw, *History of the Ottoman Empire and Modern Turkey*, Cambridge-New York, Cambridge University Press, volume II, 1978, p. 376.

155 Taner Akçam, *The Young Turks’ Crime against Humanity*, Princeton-Oxford, Princeton University Press, 2012, p. 197; Peter Balakian, *The Burning Tigris*, New York, Perennial, 2004, p. 189-190; Dadrian, “The Secret Young”, art. cit., p. 173-178; Raymond Kévorkian, *The Armenian Genocide*, London-New York, I. B. Tauris, 2011, p. 242; Ternon, op. cit., p. 223-224.

156 Gwynne Dyer, “Correspondence”, *Middle Eastern Studies*, IX-3, 1973, p. 378-379; Guenter Lewy, *The Armenian Massacres in Ottoman Turkey*, Salt Lake City, University of Utah Press, 2005, p. 49-50; Stanford Jay Shaw, *From Empire to Republic: The Turkish War of National Liberation, 1918-1923. A Documentary Study*, Ankara, Türk Tarih Kurumu, 2000, volume I, p. 315-317. Also see Donald Bloxham, “Donald Bloxham Replies”, *History Today*, LV-7, July 2005, p. 68.

of the pioneers of Kurdish nationalism, as a member of the central committee of the Hoybun, the ancestor of the PKK, established in 1927. In 1929, Rifat published a book where he pretended to be a former CUP official and to provide the proceedings of a meeting where the extermination of the Ottoman Armenians had been decided. The book was part of a more general rapprochement between Armenian and Kurdish nationalists. In spite of the fact that Rifat's real life and purposes were exposed in the scholarly literature as early as 1973<sup>157</sup>, his book has been used for four more decades, with the deepest contempt for the basic rules of history writing<sup>158</sup>. The "testimony" of S. Tehlirian (1897-1960; assassin of Talat Paşa in Berlin, in 1921) during his trial also continues to be used<sup>159</sup>, in spite of the fact that it is proven by documents from the ARF itself that Tehlirian lied from the beginning to the end during his trial: He was in Belgrade, and not in Erzincan, in 1914, and joined the Russian army directly from Serbia; he never was relocated and saw no scene from the 1915 forcible relocation; his sister never was raped by Turks, because he never had a sister; far from having acted alone, Tehlirian was part of the terrorist network Nemesis, established at the end of 1919 by the ARF; and so on<sup>160</sup>. Similarly, the Andonian "documents" continues to be used<sup>161</sup>, in spite of the repeated demonstrations that they are nothing but forgeries<sup>162</sup>, comparable to the *Protocols of the Elders of Zion*<sup>163</sup>. The "testimonies" collected by Andonian

157 Dyer, art. cit., p. 379-382.

158 Vahakn Dadrian, "The Convergent Roles of the State and Governmental Party in the Armenian Genocide", *Studies in Comparative Genocide*, New York, ed. Levon Chorbajian and George Shirinian, St Martin's Press, 1999, p. 100; Fatma Müge Göçek, *Denial of Violence*, Oxford-New York, Oxford University Press, 2014, p. 571, n. 327; Raymond Kévorkian, op. cit., p. 247; Akaby Nassibian, *Britain and the Armenian Question 1915-1923*, London-Sydney, Croom Helm, 1984, p. 90.

159 Balakian, op. cit., p. 345; Sévane Garibian, "'Commanded by my Mother's Corpse': Talaat Pasha, or the Revenge Assassination of a Condemned Man", *Journal of Genocide Research*, XX-2, June 2018, p. 220-235.

160 Christopher Gunn, "Getting Away with Murder: Soghomon Tehlirian, ASALA and the Justice Commandos, 1921-1984", in Yavuz and Ahmad, op. cit., p. 896-917; Marian Mesrobian MacCurdy, *Sacred Justice: The Voices and Legacy of the Armenian Operation Nemesis*, New Brunswick, NJ-London, Transaction Publishers, 2015, p. 116-128, 136-140 and 198-228.

161 Akçam, op. cit., p. 272; Balakian, op. cit., p. 346-347.

162 Maxime Gauin, "Düzmece ve düzmecenin kullanımı: 'Andonyan Belgeleri'", *Parlamento*, Nisan 2016, p. 60-61; Ömer Engin Lütem and Yiğit Alpogan, "Review Essay: 'Killing Orders: Talat Pasha's Telegrams and the Armenian genocide'", *Review of Armenian Studies*, no. 37, 2018, p. 45-82; Şinasi Orel and Sürreya Yuca, *The Talat Pasha 'Telegrams': Historical fact or Armenian fiction?* Nicosia-Oxford, K. Rüstem & Brothers/Oxford University Press, 1986.

163 Bernard Lewis, *From Babel to Dragomans. Interpreting the Middle East*, Oxford-New York: Oxford University Press, 2004, p. 389.

also are the main source for Raymond Kévorkian<sup>164</sup>, in spite of the fact that Mr. Kévorkian does not dare to use the “documents”. Yet, without even entering the issue of the sincerity, the simple fact that the man who conducted the interviews and transcribed them as he wanted should prevent any serious historian from taking them at face value.

The most daring method, however, is to invert purely and simply the meaning of Ottoman documents. For example, Taner Akçam claims that the note sent by the Minister of Interior Talat Pasha to the Grand Vizier Sait Halim (1865-1921) on 26 May 1915 is “the clearest possible refutation of the official Turkish version of the events of 1915, which insists that the policies toward the Armenians were the result of the wartime exigencies” and strong evidence that the decision was actually taken to prevent the implementation of the reform scheme of 1914<sup>165</sup>. In fact, the note says exactly the opposite of what Mr. Akçam pretends (my emphasis):

“Unfortunately, while the means to bring about a final solution to this problem (by reforms) is being worked out, some of the Armenians living in places close to the battlefields have recently become involved in activities aimed at creating difficulties for our army in its fight against the enemy to protect the Ottoman borders. Those Armenians are trying to impede the operations of the army, and the transfer of supply and ammunition. They are combining their aspirations and activities with those of the enemy’s and are fighting against us in the ranks of the enemy. Within the country, they dare to carry out armed attacks against the military forces and the innocent civilians, to become involved in acts of murder, looting and plundering in the Ottoman cities and towns, to provide supplies to the enemy’s navy and to inform them of the places with fortified posts. *The conduct of such rebel elements has rendered it necessary to remove them from the area of military operations and to evacuate the villages serving as operational bases and shelters for the rebels*”<sup>166</sup>.

## **B. The New Wave of Armenian Rebellions and the New Ottoman Reactions**

The strong response of the Ottoman state and the incapacity of the Russian

<sup>164</sup> Kévorkian, op. cit., passim.

<sup>165</sup> Akçam, op. cit., p. 136-137.

<sup>166</sup> Özdemir and Sarnay, op. cit., p. 58-59. For other examples of such manipulations in the same book: Maxime Gauin, “Review Essay — ‘Proving’ a ‘Crime against Humanity?’”, *Journal of Muslim Affairs*, XXV-1, March 2015, p. 141-157; Kent Schull, “Book Review”, *The Journal of Modern History*, LXVI-4, December 2014, 975-976.

army to prevent the relocation (not to say its indifference to these events) did not stop the insurrectional movement immediately. In particular, by mid-July 1915, Armenians in Musa Dağ, on the Mediterranean coast, fortified their villages to fight the Ottoman army. Some of the rebels were veterans of the Balkan wars (1912-1913), sixty were Armenian deserters of the Ottoman army, and they largely helped the revolt resist for more than a month the Ottoman army, which took the villages one by one after violent clashes. At the beginning of September, the insurgents were in touch with the French Navy, who landed agents, and the survivors of the insurrections eventually fled on two French vessels. In spite of this renewed attack against the Ottoman military, “there is no indication that the division [who suppressed the insurrections in the area of the gulf of İskenderun] received orders for the general killing of the Armenian population”<sup>167</sup>. One more time, it is impossible to describe the uprising as “self-defense”. Indeed, even an Armenian (Gregorian) priest wrote in his diary that during the six first months of the war “the Turks left the Armenians alone” and even for August, he complained about taxes and seizure, not massacres. Even more remarkably, he clearly wrote that crimes (killing of prisoners) were committed on both sides<sup>168</sup>. Considering the paroxysmal violence at Van and the ongoing relocation, a rebellion against the Ottoman state, under the pretext of taxes and requisitions, then the killing of Turkish soldiers, were among the very last things that could be, in this context, called “self-defense”.

Even more remarkable, perhaps, is the insurrection of Urfa in September 1915. Indeed, Urfa city was exempted from relocation in May 1915. Then, in August, the Ottoman police saved the local Armenian community from an attack by a Kurdish gang<sup>169</sup>, in a context of uprisings by Armenian revolutionary nationalists since June. As a result, the rebellion started in mid-September without any provocation from the Ottoman side, on the contrary. This insurrection was not a minor affair: Artillery was necessary to suppress it, and a German officer wrote in his diary that “the entire defense is very well prepared and led. The band is well provided with weapons and ammunition”. This appreciation is corroborated

167 Edward J. Erickson, “Bayonets on Musa Dagh”, *The Journal of Strategic Studies*, XXVIII-3, June 2005, p. 529-548 (quotation p. 543).

168 Le ministre de France en Égypte au ministre des Affaires étrangères, 1<sup>er</sup> octobre 1915 — Annexe. Renseignements du *D’Estrée*. Extraits du journal d’un prêtre orthodoxe arménien, Abraham der Kalousian, in Dilan, op. cit., volume I, p. 296-298.

169 Report of Samuel Edelman, U.S. Consul in Aleppo, 26 August 1915, *NARA*, RG 59, M 353, reel 44 (867.4016/23).

by the time and the number of men that were necessary to end the insurrection. Correspondingly, the quality of the training and the quantity of weapons and ammunition are incompatible with the idea of a spontaneous uprising<sup>170</sup>. Regardless, in 1917, namely when it was still impossible to guess who would win the world war<sup>171</sup>, 6,000, among those who had been expelled after the rebellion of September-October 1915, were allowed to go back to Urfa<sup>172</sup>.

All these facts confirm “there is no serious evidence for a decision and a plan of the Ottoman government to exterminate the Armenian nation”<sup>173</sup>. In the absence of such evidence, Ronald Grigor Suny found more suitable to edit an Ottoman document purely and simply. Indeed, he quotes as follows a telegram sent by Minister of Interior Talat Pasha to the governor Mehmet Reşit on 12 July 1915<sup>174</sup> (my emphasis):

“[...] in Mardin, for example, some seven hundred people from among the Armenians and other Christian inhabitants were recently taken outside of the city at night and, *with due authorization*, slaughtered like sheep *by those individuals who had been brought from Diyarbakir* [...]”.

Actually, the documents say:

“Particularly, *from individuals sent from Diyarbakir recently*, it has been learnt that in Mardin, a total of seven hundred people consisting of Armenians and other Christians, also including the bishop, had been taken from their houses at nights and killed by beheading like sheep”<sup>175</sup>.

Far from having given “authorization” to kill, the orders from İstanbul repeatedly banned violence, both before and after the new series of Armenian rebellions, and 1,397 perpetrators were punished<sup>176</sup>. In particular, in autumn 1915 alone, more than 20 Muslims were sentenced to death and executed for having killed Armenians. The second main series of trials took place from February to May 1916,

170 Erickson, op. cit., p. 207-208.

171 Ferro, op. cit., p. 310-346.

172 Lewy, op. cit., p. 203.

173 Bernard Lewis, «Les explications de Bernard Lewis », *Le Monde*, 1<sup>er</sup> janvier 1994. Similar conclusion in Odile Moreau, *La Turquie dans la Grande guerre. De l'Empire ottoman à la République de Turquie*, Paris, SOTECA/Belin, 2016, p. 209.

174 Suny, op. cit., p. 294.

175 Özdemir and Sarnay, op. cit., p. 161.

176 Gürün, op. cit., p. 212-213.



as a result of the work of investigative commissions established at the initiative of Talat<sup>177</sup>. During this period, 67 Muslims were sentenced to death (including twelve for murder), 524 to jail and 68 to exile, hard labor or imprisonment in forts (*kalabendlik*)<sup>178</sup>. Among the 67 who were sentenced to death, 51 had been already hanged at the beginning of June<sup>179</sup>. The trials continued at least until January 1917. The total of the sentences is 1,397<sup>180</sup>. Reconciling these facts with the “genocide” charge is as plausible as imagining Hitler ordering in 1942 to dismantle the gas chambers of Auschwitz and to execute its commandant. They make futile the attempts<sup>181</sup> to conciliate the counter-insurgency interpretation and the “genocide” label. That is probably why Hans-Lukas Kieser denies, without having done any work in the relevant files, without answering anything to the historians who have used them, the very existence of these sentences<sup>182</sup>.

That having been said, it is now necessary to underline that even the second wave of Armenian uprisings did not lead to a general expulsion from Anatolia to the Arab provinces of the Ottoman Empire.

### **C. The Maintenance of Significant Exemptions from Relocation**

One of the clearest confirmations of the counter-insurgency nature of the 1915 relocation is the fact that hundreds of thousands of Armenians remained at home in spite of the successive waves of insurrections. According to a draft written in 1917 by a secretary of Talat, between 350 and 400,000 Armenians—particularly in Western and Central Anatolia—were not relocated and Edward J. Erickson estimates that the actual figure may have reached 500,000<sup>183</sup>. This last figure is the most credible, for two reasons: The draft does not include the exempted Armenians of Istanbul and Thrace; and there are several instances of underestimations, for

177 Minutes of the Ministers’ Council, 29 September 1915, Özdemir and Sarnay, op. cit., p. 294.

178 Yusuf Sarnay, “The Relocation (Tehcir) of Armenians and the Trials of 1915–1916”, *Middle East Critique*, III-20, Autumn 2011, p. 299–315.

179 “Turks Avenge Armenians—Fifty-one Muslim Soldiers are shot for Mistreating Christians”, *The Washington Post*, 4 June 1916, p. A2.

180 Shaw, *The Ottoman Empire*, op. cit., volume II, p. 1098-1099.

181 Donald Bloxham, “Terrorism and Imperial Decline: The Ottoman-Armenian Case”, *European Review of History/Revue européenne d’histoire*, XIV-3, 2007, p. 301-324; Ahsan I. Butt, *Secession and Security: Explaining State Strategy against Separatists*, Ithaca-London, Cornell University Press, 2017, p. 125-162.

182 Akçam, op. cit., p. 395-398; Kieser, op. cit., p. 241.

183 Erickson, op. cit., p. 215-218.

example about the provinces of Izmir and Konya—where there was no Armenian rebellion and limited activities of the revolutionary parties<sup>184</sup>.

Indeed, as noticed the French Navy's intelligence service, the Armenians of İzmir were not persecuted or expelled, still less killed, "even during the war"<sup>185</sup> and those of Konya never suffered because of the Turks in this province. There was no massacre during the reign of Abdülhamit II or during the CUP decade<sup>186</sup>. Similarly, an American report written for the Peace Conference of Paris, and largely based, as far as populations are concerned, on the conclusions of Dr. W. Post—an American missionary who had worked in Konya until 1917 and who made no secret of his dislike for the Turks—explained that the Armenians were more numerous in this province in 1917 than in 1914, because "the number of exiles introduced to the vilayet is much greater than that of the emigrants (from Konya)"<sup>187</sup>. Taner Akçam and Burçin Gerçek have tried to deny the exemption from relocation allowed to most of the Armenians residing in this province<sup>188</sup>, but, as usual, their assertions are based on distortions of sources<sup>189</sup>.

As I already exposed these distortions, in a paper left entirely unanswered, I shall develop another example here. Ronald Grigor Suny writes: "The [American] schools [of İstanbul and Anatolia] were forcibly closed, their faculty and students deported, in 1915"<sup>190</sup>. Yet, he provides no source for this extraordinary allegation. Actually, as observed Caleb Frank Gates (1859-1946), director of the Robert College from 1903 to 1932, in his memoirs, his college continued his activities during the whole war: "Evidence was not lacking that the Turkish government itself was favorably disposed toward the College" and, even in 1917-1918 "we were left in peace"<sup>191</sup>. Lynn A. Scipio, a professor at this college from 1912 to

184 *Aspirations et agissements*, op. cit., p. 80-82 and 216.

185 S.R. Marine, Turquie, 16 décembre 1920, (*SHD*), 7 N 3211. For a confirmation, see the letter of Charlton Wittall to General Townshend, 10 February 1921, FO 371/6499/2265.

186 S.R. Marine, Turquie, n° 1351, 25 novembre 1919, (*SHD*), 1 BB<sup>7</sup> 235.

187 O. J. Campbell, Report on the Vilayet of Konya, p. 8, Hoover Institution Archives, Stanford University (California), Paris Peace Conference (1919-1920), U.S. territorial section, box 4.

188 Burçin Gerçek, Taner Akçam and Ömer Türkoğlu, *Turkish rescuers. Report on Turks who reached-out to Armenians in 1915*, 2015, available at: [http://www.raoulwallenberg.net/wpcontent/files\\_mf/1435335304ReportTurkishrescuerscomplete.pdf](http://www.raoulwallenberg.net/wpcontent/files_mf/1435335304ReportTurkishrescuerscomplete.pdf), p. 10-16.

189 Maxime Gauin, "On a Booklet Dealing with the Righteous Turks", *Review of Armenian Studies*, No. 32, 2015, p. 229-236.

190 Suny, op. cit., p. 47.

191 Gates, op. cit., p. 219-239 (quotations p. 226 and 232).

1943, notes in his own memoirs that, at the beginning of the First World War, “we were able to get Mr. Galakadjian” as a new professor of physics—and Scipio does not mention any “deportation” of Galakadjian or of any other Armenian of the school. He also confirms the Memoirs of Gates in writing: “We at the college were not regarded as enemies by the Turks but rather as friends and we were treated accordingly”. Then, he emphasizes that, in spite of German pressures in 1917, “the college was not taken over”<sup>192</sup>.

Similarly, the annual report of the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Mission for 1916 underlines the remarkable activity of the college at İzmir and, far from mentioning any “deportation” of students, it observes that 68 Armenians were among the students for the year 1915-1916<sup>193</sup>. In fact, only two U.S. schools, in Merzifon and Antep (today Gaziantep) were closed by the CUP cabinet, after the severance of diplomatic relations with Washington (1917), and not in 1915<sup>194</sup>. I deliberately used published sources on the issue of the American schools, to prove that Mr. Suny does not even know the bibliography.

These exemptions are impossible to conciliate with the “genocide” or “demographic engineering” labels. They prove there was not intent to exterminate the Armenian population, to physically eliminate her from Anatolia or to behead her elites in general. As a result, the argument which consists of saying “there is no Armenian in Anatolia anymore”<sup>195</sup> ignores both the actual situation in 1918 and the devastating policy of Armenian and Greek nationalists during the Turkish war of independence<sup>196</sup>.

192 Lynn A. Scipio, *My Thirty Years in Turkey*, Rindge, New Hampshire, Richard R. Smith Publisher, 1955, p. 122-123 and 150-151.

193 American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Mission, *The Annual Report*, Boston, Board Congressional House, 1916, p. 90-91.

194 Gates, op. cit., p. 243.

195 “But, Istanbul aside, there are no Armenians in Turkey. What happened, if not genocide?” Nicolas Tavitian, “Correspondence”, *The Middle East Quarterly*, XIII-1, Winter 2006, [https://www.meforum.org/articles/2006/correspondence-\(1\)](https://www.meforum.org/articles/2006/correspondence-(1)) Actually, it is false: There are Armenians in Hatay today and there were Armenians in cities such as Ankara and Tokat at least until the 1970s.

196 Maxime Gauin, “How to Create a Problem of Refugees: The Evacuation of Cilicia by France and the Flow of Armenian Civilians (1921-1922)”, *Review of Armenian Studies*, No. 25, 2012, p. 67-101; Maxime Gauin, “Revisiting the Fire of Izmir”, *Journal of South Asian and Middle Eastern Studies*, LIV-1, Fall 2017, p. 31-53; Yerasimos, « La question du », art. cit., p. 17-34.

## Conclusion

The Armenian nationalist revolutionists' choice, by 1912, of a terrorist strategy against the Ottoman state—including the loyal Armenians serving it—was determined by considerations of international politics and by territorial ambition: The Ottoman state was considered doomed to explode, and Russia, in spite of the merciless repression of 1903-1912 and of its obviously selfish aims, was considered the natural partner to obtain an “Integral Armenia”, from the Black Sea to the Mediterranean Sea. It was by no means a “self-defense” against an “oppressive Ottoman state”. Indeed, the improvements in the public safety in 1913-1914 and the acceptance of the “reform” of 1914 by the CUP cabinet did not change anything in the stance of the ARF, Hunchak and Ramkavar—if these organizations did not take the agreement of 1914 as a proof of weakness.

Then, the insurgencies of 1914-1915, were, as Bernard Lewis observed, “the deadliest of all threats”, as “the Armenians, stretching across Turkey-in-Asia from the Caucasian frontier to the Mediterranean coast, lay in the very heart of the Turkish homeland-and to renounce these lands would have meant not the truncation, but the dissolution of the Turkish state”<sup>197</sup>. As early as 1897, the French Vice-Consul in Maraş predicted that the Armenian revolutionary nationalists could perhaps demolish “the Ottoman building, but all would remain buried under its rubble”<sup>198</sup>. That is exactly what happened in places such as Van, at a heavy price for Ottoman civilians of all nationalities and religions. And eventually, the Turkish Republic emerged from these ruins.

197 Bernard Lewis, *The Emergence of Modern Turkey. Third Edition*, Oxford-New York, Oxford University Press, 2002, p. 356.

198 Le vice-consul de France à Marache au ministre des Affaires étrangères, 2 Janvier 1897, (*AMAE*), P 16738.

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