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# KAREL HANSA: THE CZECHOSLOVAK TRAVELLER IN SYRIA AND LEBANON IN 1922 AND HIS WORK FOR THE BENEFIT OF ARMENIAN GENOCIDE SURVIVORS<sup>1</sup>

Jiří Cukr, Marek Jandák

In 1922, the Czechoslovak traveller Karel Hansa visited the French Mandate for Syria and Lebanon, where he became acquainted with the lamentable living conditions and pitiful experiences of the survivors of the Armenian Genocide. He was deeply impressed by the work of Western humanitarian organizations, especially the American Near East Relief. This experience led Hansa to decide to write, lecture and try to organise humanitarian aid for Armenian orphans in Czechoslovakia, although his humanitarian efforts had only limited success.

*Key words:* Karel Hansa, Armenian Genocide, survivors, humanitarianism, Czechoslovakia, Syria, Lebanon.

## Introduction

In interwar Czechoslovakia, Karel Hansa was the only person who systematically dealt with the subject of the Armenian Genocide. Of significant historical value are his testimonies on the humanitarian situation of the survivors in Syria and Lebanon in 1922, where Hansa documents predominantly the transports of Armenian children from the territories occupied by Turkish nationalists. After his return to Czechoslovakia, Hansa attempted to organise humanitarian aid for Armenian orphans in Czechoslovakia. This transfer of the social practice of modern humanitarian work, as Hansa observed it in the Middle East, to Czechoslovakia did not go without the necessary adaptation to the different local environment. We follow the method with which Hansa tried to inform and mobilise the Czechoslovak public and the ways in which he tried to establish cooperation with Czechoslovak and foreign humanitarian organizations.

Karel Hansa achieved some success in the interwar period as a writer and lecturer, but he was never amongst the prominent figures of the public life in Czechoslovakia. By the second half of the 20th century he was already a forgotten persona.<sup>2</sup> This began to change

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<sup>1</sup> The article was received on 20.08.2020 and was accepted for publication on 03.10.2020.

This article was created with support of The Centre for the Transdisciplinary Research of Violence, Trauma and Justice at Charles University (UNCE/HUM/009). Translated by Terézia Klasová. For the purpose of this article, we have studied documents at the following institutions: National Archives of the Czech Republic, Prague (Národní archiv České republiky, NA); Prague City Archives (Archiv hlavního města Prahy, AMHP); the Research Library of South Bohemia (Jihočeská vědecká knihovna, JVK); State District Archives České Budějovice (Státní okresní archiv České Budějovice, SOkA ČB); State District Archives Písek (Státní okresní archiv Písek, SOkA Písek); State Regional Archives Třeboň (Státní oblastní archiv v Třeboni, SOA Třeboň) and State Regional Archives Prague (Státní oblastní archiv v Praze, SOA Prague).

<sup>2</sup> For example, his name is absent in most of the historical and contemporary biographical dictionaries. An ex-

over the last 15 years in connection with the increased interest of the Czech public in the topic of the Armenian Genocide, and also thanks to the activities of the Armenian community in the Czech Republic, which has grown significantly in numbers since the 1990s.

Current research on the life and work of Karel Hansa has its roots around 2006, when Hansa's book *Horrors of the East* was published in a reprint. Members of the Prague Armenian community, editor-in-chief of *Orer* (days) Hakob Asatryan and artist Tigran Abramjan, who received support from the Armenian community in Cyprus,<sup>3</sup> were behind the publication. As part of the then-unsuccessful initiative to recognize the Armenian Genocide,<sup>4</sup> Czech Senator Jaromír Štětina organised an international conference "The Armenian Genocide," attended by Vahagn N. Dadrian and Tessa Hofmann among the others. The conference took place in the Hall of the Czech Senate on April 4, 2006, and Hansa's work was presented there by Anna Sochová.<sup>5</sup> In recent years, several short texts<sup>6</sup> and in 2018 also a professional seminar at the Faculty of Arts, Charles University in Prague,<sup>7</sup> was devoted to Hansa. In 2020 the city of České Budějovice published Hansa's manuscript dealing with his visit to France in late 1920s.<sup>8</sup> The Theresienstadt Centre for Genocide Studies plans to start awarding the Karel Hansa Prize in 2021 on the occasion of the commemoration of the International Day of Remembrance and Dignity of the Victims of the Crime of Genocide.<sup>9</sup>

The aim of this article is to connect with and improve the result of current research, and to contribute to international research on the history of the Armenian Genocide and humanitarian work. In this text, we would also like to move beyond the simplistic hagiographical narratives, towards a more complex and at the same time ambivalent interpretation of Hansa's life.

## Early Life

At the end of the 19th century, Vienna was a multicultural metropolis of global importance, where people of all nationalities from the Austro-Hungarian Empire lived. The Czechs were the largest national minority in Vienna around 1900, as many individuals with their entire families came here for a better living or to fulfil their work duties.<sup>10</sup> It was employment

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ception here is the recent *Biografický slovník českých zemí*, vol. 22 (Prague: Historický ústav AV ČR, 2019), 193-194.

3 Karel Hansa, *Hrůzy východu* (Beroun: Josef Šefl, 1923). The book was reprinted in 2006 in Prague with an additional foreword by Hakob Asatryan.

4 Senator Jaromír Štětina did not succeed in his attempt in 2006, but the Czech Republic recognized the Armenian Genocide in 2017, when the initiative was taken by Deputy Robin Böhmisch. Marek Jandák, *Arménská genocida: příčiny, průběh a osobní svědectví 1915-1922* (Prague: Epoque, 2018), 359-365.

5 Jaromír Štětina et al., *Mezinárodní konference: Arménská genocida* (Prague, 2006), 41-46; Anna Sochová, "Karel Hansa: Očitý svědek následků arménské genocidy," *Parrésia* 12 (2018): 333-340.

6 Haig Utidjian, *The Art of the Armenian Book through the Ages* (Červený Kostelec: Pavel Mervart, 2016), 210-213; Jiří Cukr, "K dobrodružnému životu Karla Hansy (1890-1967)," *Výběr: Časopis pro historii a vlastivědu jižních Čech* 53, no.1 (2016): 55-57; Jandák, *Arménská genocida*, 483-511.

7 Andran Abramjan, Hakob Asatryan, Jiří Cukr, Marek Jandák and Anna Sochová spoke at the event.

8 Karel Hansa, *Poznatky a zážitky z Francie = Connaissances et expériences de France* (České Budějovice: České Budějovice 2020). The book is in Czech with a parallel French translation.

9 We received this information from director of the centre, Šimon Krbec, on 30 October 2020.

10 Jana Koudelková, *Češi ve Vídni = Tschechen in Wien* (Brno: Jihomoravský kraj, 2013).



in the postal services that brought Karel Hansa Sr. (1858-1918) and his newlywed bride Jarmila (1869-1943) to Vienna shortly after the wedding. Both came from working families. Karel's ancestors were millers, Jarmila's ancestors made their living as bakers.

Their eldest son, named after his father, was born to the newlyweds on November 25, 1890. He was baptized as Karel František Václav Hansa a week later, in the Catholic parish church of St. Jan Nepomucký on Praterstrasse, in the second city district (Leopoldstadt).<sup>11</sup> Members of the Czech community gathered in this district of Vienna, and the aforementioned church dedicated to the Czech patron was available to them.

The Hansas' stay in Vienna lasted at most three years; their daughter Maria (1891-1973) was also born there. Their father was soon transferred to a new job, and in 1892 he relocated to České Budějovice (Budweis), which at the time was a growing and prosperous centre with a population of 39,000 (1900), mostly ethnic Czech and Germans.<sup>12</sup> He returned to the immediate vicinity of his place of origin, having been born in a neighbouring village where his relatives still owned a farm and operated a mill. At first, Hansa Sr. worked as a postal clerk; later he advanced his career and social status, becoming a postal inspector and then chief postal inspector.<sup>13</sup> His wife did not have any formal employment; she took care of the children and the household. The Hansa family settled in a small house in an intensively developing suburb, where other siblings of the traveller-to-be Karel - Josefina (1893-1971), Václav (1895-1952) and Jaromír (1902-1956) were born.<sup>14</sup>

In České Budějovice, the young Karel started attending primary school in 1896. There were several schools of all levels in the city; some were single-sex schools, only a minimum of schools was mixed. The schools were also divided into German and Czech schools.<sup>15</sup> Karel Hansa was not among the best students throughout his studies and he also had received lower grades for behaviour. For example, in the spring of 1902, that means at the age of eleven, Hansa received 3 (two bands reduced grade) in behaviour, since he repeatedly smoked on the street and he did not restrain from this behaviour even after being repeatedly reprimanded.<sup>16</sup>

He did not even finish the middle school in České Budějovice and in the following years he often changed schools and residences.<sup>17</sup> Changes of schools and residences, at the time uncommonly frequent, lead towards an unstable environment, in which Karel grew up. This experience could have influenced his character traits and his choice of a volatile traveller's life. After forestry training in the Libnič district on the Hluboká estate (1906-1907),<sup>18</sup> Hansa finally graduated from the renowned Czech forestry school in Písek.<sup>19</sup>

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11 Pfarre St. Johann Nepomuk, Wien, *Taufbuch 1890-1892*.

12 Population of the town: 17 000 (1869), 24 000 (1880), 28 500 (1890) 39 000 (1900), and 44 500 (1910). *Encyklopedie Českých Budějovic* (České Budějovice: Nebe, 1998), 327.

13 *Budweiser Kreisblatt*, 15 May 1904, 4-5.

14 SOKA ČB, collection Archiv města České Budějovice, book 3011, fol. 64.

15 *Encyklopedie Českých Budějovic*, 490-491.

16 SOKA ČB, collection I. národní škola České Budějovice, book 25; collection I. střední škola Jírovcova ulice České Budějovice, book 15.

17 SOKA Písek, collection Měšťanská škola chlapecká Písek, book 5 and 6. SOKA ČB, collection Základní škola Lišov, book 10.

18 SOA Třeboň, collection Schwarzenberská ústřední kancelář Hluboká nad Vltavou, sign. 12 F 4a.

19 SOKA Písek, collection Vyšší lesnická a revírnická škola Písek, book 49.



**Figure 1.** The Hansa family, around 1910. Sitting from left to right Karel Sr., Jaromír and Josefina Sr., standing Josefina, Karel, Marie and Václav.

*Source: Family collection*

In the spring of 1910, Karel was participating in military service in the Hulan Cavalry Regiment. Later, Hansa moved to the former Ottoman province of Bosnia and Herzegovina, which Austria-Hungary had occupied since 1878 and annexed in 1908. As one of the more than 7,000 Czechs who had come here for work until then, Hansa viewed Bosnia and Herzegovina as part of the Orient, with which Austria-Hungary had a colonial relationship.<sup>20</sup> Hansa first worked as a forester in the town of Han Pijesak, then as a wood warehouse manager in nearby Sarajevo, and finally in Teslić with a Bosnian joint-stock company for wood processing.<sup>21</sup>

During WWI, he fought as sergeant in the 12th Hulan Regiment for the Habsburg Empire. In the autumn of 1915, he was severely wounded in his right forearm on the Russian battlefield around the Dniester River. Later, during his visit to Budapest, Hansa remembered

<sup>20</sup> Zdeněk Uhrek, *Češi v Bosně a Hercegovině* (Prague: Etnologický ústav AV ČR, 2011), 39-40; Clemens Ruthner, "Habsburg's Only Colony? Bosnia-Herzegovina and Austria-Hungary, 1878-1918," *Seeu Review* 13, no.1 (2018): 2-14.

<sup>21</sup> SOA Prague, collection Velkostatek Liteň, box 91, inv. no. 93; Hansa, *Z potulek Orientem* (České Budějovice: self-published), 281.

the doctors (“the butchers” as he called them) telling him there in 1915 that amputation of the hand is necessary; otherwise he will die from blood poisoning. He added: “I didn’t give in, I disagreed.” Hansa managed to preserve his arm and his life, but in 1922 the trauma from his injury still lingered: “I unwittingly raised my hand and saw the scars caused by the insidious dum-dum missile.”<sup>22</sup> He received a silver medal of the first class for his bravery, but he had to face the consequences of the injury for the rest of his life, since as a consequence he classified as “three-quarters handicapped.”<sup>23</sup>

After the end of the war, Hansa found a new job in the independent Czechoslovak Republic as a woodsman on the Liteň estate southwest of Prague.<sup>24</sup> However, after half a year, he moved directly to Prague, where he became the secretary of the forest workers’ union. In the years 1920-1922 he was also mentioned as editor of forestry magazines.

## **Experience with Armenian Genocide Survivors and Near East Relief**

Czechoslovakia was founded at the end of WWI on the territory of the former Austro-Hungarian monarchy. The basic concept in its state-building was the Wilsonian right to self-determination, which in this case concerned the Czechs and Slovaks, as they formed at least in theory a Czechoslovak political nation. However, Czechoslovakia was a *de facto* multinational state of Czechs, Germans, Slovaks, Hungarians, Rusyns, Poles and Jews, which was associated with the former Austria-Hungary not only by its liberal democratic establishment, but also by complex and often conflicting relations between its individual ethnic groups and large economic differences between the west and east of the state.

At the beginning of the 20th century there was a Czech expatriate community in the Ottoman Empire. Contact between the Bohemian lands and the Ottoman Empire was provided primarily by travellers, scientists and various people carrying out economic activity, and thus not missionaries or colonial officials.<sup>25</sup> During WWI, some Czech citizens of the Habsburg monarchy fought in the Ottoman Empire as its allies. The famous Czech Orientalist Alois Musil<sup>26</sup> had a prominent place among them; however, no testimony by any Czech soldier about the Armenian Genocide is known. On the other hand, unique eyewitness testimony of the violence between Armenians and Azerbaijanis in Baku in March and September 1918 does come from the Czech engineer Jan Kolář.<sup>27</sup>

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22 Hansa, *Z potulek Orientem*, 16.

23 *Verlustliste*, no. 286, (Wien 1915), 17; JVK, sign. P 5.392, Karel Hansa, *Poznatky a zážitky z Francie* (Prague: manuscript, 1949-1950), appendix “Poznávejte svět!,” 10. Henceforth this source will be cited as “Manuscript (1949-1950).” NA, collection Policejní ředitelství II, Všeobecná spisovna 1941-1950, box 2853, sign. H-671/8, Hansa’s letter to directorate, January 1925 (henceforth this source will be cited as “Police Directorate”).

24 SOA Prague, collection Velkostatek Liteň, box 91, inv. no. 93.

25 Miloš Mendel, Bronislav Ostránský, Tomáš Rataj, *Islám v srdci Evropy* (Prague: Academia 2007); Adéla Jünová Macková et al. (eds.), *Českoslovenští vědci v Orientu*, vol. I (Prague: Scriptorium, 2012), 37-49; Petr Pabian, “Islam in Czech Travel Literature of the Nineteenth Century,” in: “*We*” and “*the Others*,” ed. Luďa Klusáková, (Prague: Karolinum, 2004); Josef Kořenský, *Asie: kulturní obrázky z asijského jihu a západu* (Prague: Storch 192?), 204-206.

26 Oldřich Klobas, *Alois Musil zvaný Músa ar Rueili* (Brno: CERM, 2003); Karel Jaroš, *Z turecké armády do britského zajetí* (Prague: Paseka, 1995).

27 Jan Kolář, *Na vlnách revoluce v zemi věčných ohňů* (Prague: Československá grafická unie, 1936), 24-35.

Czech and Slovak post-communist historiography has so far hardly reflected post-colonial theory in the interpretation of the history of Czechoslovakia.<sup>28</sup> For the purposes of this article, we will conceptualize the situation here as “colonialism without colonies.”<sup>29</sup> This means that, although Czechoslovakia did not have control over any overseas colony and belonged to the European semi-periphery, it was linked to the global economy and to the discourses associated with colonialism and imperialism. For example, during the peace negotiations after WWI the idea (never to be realised) of acquiring Togo, former German colony in West Africa, became popular in Czechoslovakia for a short time.<sup>30</sup>

In the interwar period, Hansa cited “orientalist traveller and writer” as his profession. While working in Bosnia and Herzegovina, and during a visit to Syria and Lebanon in 1922, he encountered the colonial relationships of the Habsburg Monarchy and France, with respective the former territories of the Ottoman Empire. His relatively strong experience with colonialism was unusual in Czechoslovakia. Hansa based his texts on the ideas of the paternalistic duties of the “cultural west,” perceived black skin as an object of exoticization and stereotyped occidental and oriental women;<sup>31</sup> however during his stay in Syria and Lebanon he was not directly associated with the French colonial apparatus.

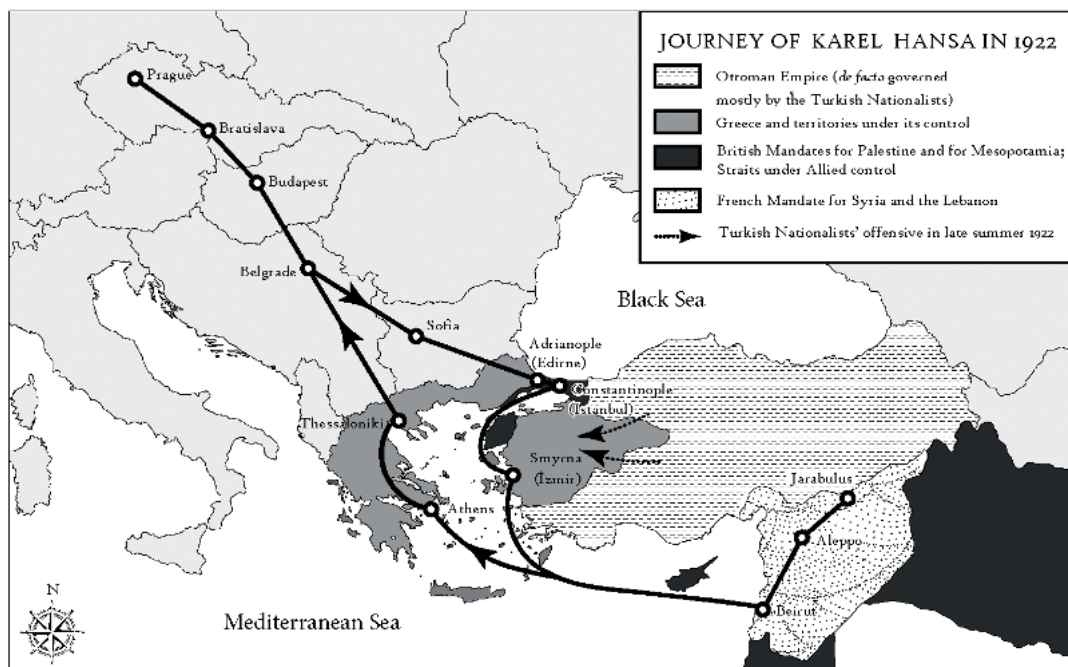
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28 Filip Herza, “Colonial Exceptionalism: Post-colonial Scholarship and Race in Czech and Slovak Historiography,” in *Slovenský národopis* 68, no. 2 (2020): 175-187; Pavel Barša, “The Zero Degree of Decolonisation,” *Artalk Revue* 4 (2020), at <https://artalk.cz/wp-content/uploads/2020/01/AR-4-EN-162045.pdf>, accessed 20.09.2020. See also Michael Borovička, *Velké dějiny zemí Koruny české: Cestovatelství* (Prague: Paseka, 2010), 545-551; Macková et al. (eds.), *Českoslovenští vědci v Orientu*, vol. I, 22-25.

29 Patricia Purtschert, Francesca Falk, Barbara Lüthi, “Switzerland and ‘Colonialism without Colonies,’” *Interventions* 18, no. 2 (2015): 286-302. See also: Matthias Bjørnlund, “Karen Jeppe, Aage Meyer Benedictsen, and the Ottoman Armenians: National Survival in Imperial and Colonial Settings,” *Haigazian Armenological Review* 28 (2008): 11-17.

30 Pavel Kosatík, *České snění* [Czech Dreams] (Prague: Torst, 2010), 192-206.

31 Hansa, *Z potulek Orientem*, 59, 89-92, 175-176, 183-187, 269-284.



**Figure 2.** Map of Karel Hansa’s Journey, by Martin Ďásek and Marek Jandák.  
 Source: Jandák, *Arménská genocida*, 488

Hansa’s decision to leave Czechoslovakia in the early summer of 1922 was an escape from the problems of his love life and an attempt to forget in a new, unknown environment.<sup>32</sup> At first he was briefly employed in Yugoslavia, where, thanks to his knowledge of Serbian and German, he found a position in the administration of an aristocratic residence in the town of Futog in Bačka.

Subsequently, equipped with diaries and a camera and dressed as a woodsman, he set out on a train journey through Adrianople (Edirne) to Constantinople. In mid-July 1922, Hansa decided to continue his journey on the steamboat *Hiperochy* via Smyrna (İzmir) to Syria and Lebanon. During his journey, he relied on the help of expatriate communities in Constantinople and Aleppo, and Czechoslovak diplomatic missions in Belgrade, Constantinople, Smyrna and Athens.<sup>33</sup> Hansa’s now lost diary entries became the basis for some chapters in his book *The Horrors of the East* (1923) and for the travelogue *From Wanderings through the Orient* (1925). His writings are full of short stories from his travels and descriptions of everyday life.

Southeast Europe and the parts of the Middle East where Hansa travelled were severely marked by WWI and a number of subsequent conflicts. Not only soldiers and state borders were on the move, but also refugees and genocide survivors. At the time of Hansa’s visit, Adrianople and Smyrna were still controlled by the Greek army, and the troops of the Entente were still occupying Constantinople. The Czech traveller witnessed the culmination

<sup>32</sup> Ibid., 5, 181. Hansa, *Hrůzy východu*, 132. Police Directorate, documents relating to Hansa’s passport.

<sup>33</sup> Hansa, *Z potulek Orientem*, 70, 73, 75 (Czechoslovak communities in Constantinople), 123-129 (Aleppo),

of the exodus of the Greeks from Anatolia in the Middle East and from Greece after the crushing defeat of the Greek armies in the war with the Turkish nationalists (1919-1922).<sup>34</sup> In addition, the presence of Russian emigrants in Hansa's texts illustrates the global extent of the post-war refugee crisis.<sup>35</sup>

Lebanon was struck with famine during WWI.<sup>36</sup> North-eastern Syria became a major destination for the deportation of the Armenian population in 1915, and the second phase of the Armenian Genocide took place here a year later.<sup>37</sup> The territory of the French Mandate for Syria and the Lebanon has therefore become a key place in the process of the shaping of modern humanitarianism.

Attempts to rebuild Armenian communities led mainly by the American Near East Relief (NER) and the League of Nations, failed due to a series of defeats of the French colonial forces in Cilicia by Turkish nationalists in 1920 and 1921. Turkish nationalists subsequently expelled genocide survivors from Cilicia and eastern provinces of the Ottoman Empire.<sup>38</sup> Approximately 200,000 genocide survivors were concentrated in Syria and Lebanon in provisional conditions in 1922, in the hope that in the future they would be permanently resettled in Anatolia or in Soviet Armenia. It was only after 1926 that the French authorities began their permanent establishment directly on the territory of the mandate.<sup>39</sup>

Hansa arrived in Aleppo, Syria, at the turn of July and August 1922. The humanitarian consequences of the Genocide and the ongoing exodus of the Armenians were clearly visible in the city itself. This is how the Czech traveller captured the contrast between the French headquarters, where the military band was just giving a concert, and the plight of Armenian children in the streets:

In the magnificent headquarters building, where the power and strength of a glittering golden sword gleaming in the glare of innumerable lights intertwined, the partying society completely forgot about the slender child creatures wrapped in tatters of their dirty clothes, huddled together in the alcoves of the palace, one warming up another and lying down to sleep at night - like those street dogs!<sup>40</sup>

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24, 279 (Czechoslovak diplomatic missions in Belgrade), 83 (Constantinople), 98-101 (Smyrna) and 98 (Athens).

34 Ibid., 99, 251-254.

35 Ibid., 53-54, 264-265. See also Philipp Ther, *The Outsiders: Refugees in Europe Since 1492* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2019), 54-69.

36 Keith D. Watenpaugh, *Bread from Stones: The Middle East and the Making of Modern Humanitarianism* (Oakland: University of California Press, 2015), 45-56.

37 Raymond Kévorkian, *The Armenian Genocide: A Complete History* (New York: I. B. Tauris, 2011), 625-696, 743-762; Hilmar Kaiser, "The Armenians in Lebanon during the Armenian Genocide," in *Armenians of Lebanon*, ed. Aida Boudjikian (Beirut: Haigazian University, 2009), 31-58.

38 Levon Marashlian, "Finishing the Genocide: Cleansing Turkey of Armenian Survivors, 1920-1923," in *Remembrance and Denial*, ed. Richard G. Hovannisian (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1999), 113-145.

39 Vahé Tachjian, "L'établissement définitif des réfugiés arméniens au Liban dans les années 1920 et 1930," in *Armenians of Lebanon*, 59-66.

40 Hansa, *Z potulek Orientem*, 197.



**Figure 3.** A sign in the English, Armenian and Arabic languages, marking the building of American Near East Relief in Aleppo.

Source: *Hansa, Hrůzy východu*

At a time when Hansa had difficulty finding affordable housing due to a lack of funds, he met Vahan Melikian, a NER official. Hansa allegedly impressed him with his willingness to “help one old woman in her misfortune,” so he arranged accommodation directly in the organization’s house after coming to an agreement with the director of the NER in Aleppo Hermann Kreider (1898-1967).<sup>41</sup> Subsequently, Hansa participated in the humanitarian activities of the NER, although he was not an employee but a guest.

NER was founded in New York in 1915, in response to reports of the ongoing extermination of the Armenian population. From the beginning, the organization distributed aid in cooperation with missionaries and American consuls in the region. After WWI, the NER expanded significantly by sending hundreds of humanitarian workers to the Middle East and through extensive fundraising in the United States, which generated an average of 12 million U.S. dollars a year between 1919 and 1923.<sup>42</sup> The NER, in cooperation with other smaller and mostly European partners, was part of an international network of non-governmental humanitarian organizations whose goal was to provide systematic and long-term

41 *Ibid.*, 150-152, 180-189. Hansa, *Hrůzy východu*, 114. Amerikan Bord Heyeti (American Board), Istanbul, “Personnel records for Herman H. Kreider,” American Research Institute in Turkey, Istanbul Centre Library, online in Digital Library for International Research Archive, item #13203, at <http://www.dlir.org/archive/items/show/13203>, accessed 22.09.2020.

42 James L. Barton, *Story of Near East Relief (1915-1930)* (New York: Macmillan Company, 1930), 410.

assistance to Armenians, Greeks and other people in need in the Middle East and Greece.<sup>43</sup>

In 1922, approximately 70,000 Armenian and Greek children, whom NER decided to evacuate from their orphanages in the Ottoman Empire, passed through Aleppo.<sup>44</sup> As an example of Hansa's activity with NER, we can mention the fact of his accompanying one of these children's transports.



**Figure 4.** Railroad bridge across the Euphrates River near the Jarabulus station of Bagdad railway; it was partially destroyed by the explosives during the World War. The man in the photograph is Hansa himself.

*Source: Hansa, Hrůzy východu*

Jarabulus, a town at the border with Turkey, lies on the Euphrates River, which separated the French mandate in the south and the area controlled by the Turkish nationalists in the north. Hansa arrived here after a wild Ford car ride with three Turks employed by the NER, as they could easily cross the border into eastern Anatolia. One of them, the eccentric Enwer [sic], became Hansa's guide and interpreter into German during his stay in Aleppo.<sup>45</sup> A NER station was set up in Jarabulus in a war-torn building without doors and windows. A group of NER workers, led by the Armenians Karabed [sic] and Said, was waiting for the orphans in order to provide food and lodging for the children. The much-anticipated transport of children travelled from the city of Harpoot through Urfa to Jarabulus. There,

43 Watenpugh, *Bread from Stones*, 91-156; Hans M. Jaatun, "From Religious Relief to Development Aid: The Near East Relief and the Emergence of International Humanitarianism, 1915-1930," *Global Histories* 5, no. 1 (2019): 50-63; Vahram L. Shemmassian, "The League of Nations and the Reclamation of Armenian Genocide Survivors," in *Looking Backward, Moving Forward*, ed. Richard G. Hovannisian (New Brunswick and London: Transaction Publishers, 2003), 81-112; Nefissa Naguib, Inger M. Okkenhaug (eds.), *Interpreting Welfare and Relief in the Middle East* (Leiden and Boston: Brill, 2008).

44 Hansa, *Hrůzy východu*, 112; Hansa, *Z potulek Orientem*, 211-212.

45 Hansa, *Z potulek Orientem*, 153-165, 192-195, 201-206.



they were supposed to cross the river and wait for the train to Aleppo. The children had to undertake a dangerous journey with the help of hired animals tormented by dust, insects and the heat of the sun. In addition, the railway bridge in Jarabulus had been destroyed during WWI, and train traffic to the north was interrupted; the children thus had to use a temporary pontoon bridge.



**Figure 5.** A caravan transporting the orphans across dry desert in northern Syria.  
*Source: Hansa, Hrůzy východu*



**Figure 6.** Orphans from Malatia (the children are equipped with hoods against heatstroke). *Source: Hansa, Hrůzy východu*

Hansa photographed the orphan transports and the refugee camps in Aleppo and Beirut, and later published them in his book *Horrors of the East*. His sketches from the life of humanitarian workers and orphans capture a number of fleeting moments. For example, we

can cite a short story about a group of children waiting for cattle wagons to arrive at the Jarabulus station, which shows orphans not only as suffering victims, but also as people actively living their childhood:

I vividly remember one of the boys, approximately 9 years old, who, with the serious face of the diplomat of the flock by which he was surrounded, tried to prove that those who travel in the first carriages, will reach the destination of the journey [...] much earlier than their companions in the carriages in the back. With his opinion, he caused a revolution among the children. Everyone wanted to get to the front, just behind the machine. [...] For a long time, Said had to make it clear to everyone that their cars would be placed last [...] and that they would all arrive in Aleppo in a heap and at the same time.<sup>46</sup>



**Figure 7.** A special train arranged by the American Near East Relief committee at Jarabulus station prepared to take several thousands of children to Aleppo.

Source: *Hansa, Hrůzy východu*

At the stations in Aleppo and then in Beirut, the transports were awaited by Armenian women, who hoped to find their children there. The arrival of children thus became a place of receiving bad news as well as for family reunification. This is how Hansa captured the meeting of mother and daughter in Beirut:

Only one of the women was fortunate. She found her daughter, an approximately eight-year-old girl, who came from Malatia. There she had left little Sophia in the protection of a prominent Greek family, when she herself had to leave the city with the other Armenian inhabitants and was deported. When the Americans began rescue work for the remnants of the Armenian people of Asia Minor, Sophia was accepted into the care of the committee. The mother recognized her daughter by the sign on the child's neck. With cries of unspeakable joy, she hugged her child, sprinkling her cheeks with a stream of tears.<sup>47</sup>

<sup>46</sup> Ibid., 177. See also Donald E. Miller, Lorna T. Miller, *Survivors: An Oral History of the Armenian Genocide* (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1993), 118-136; Nazan Maksudyan, *Ottoman Children and Youth during World War I* (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 2019), 105-136.

<sup>47</sup> Hansa, *Z potulek Orientem*, 210-211; Hansa, *Hrůzy východu*, 111, 113.

Modern humanitarianism embodied in the work of Hermann Kreider and his colleagues in Aleppo allowed Hansa to reformulate his relationship with refugees and survivors of the genocide he had previously perceived only as a passive observer. Hansa decided to involve Czechoslovakia in international structures to help Armenian orphans. He therefore began collecting material for his book in the refugee camps of Aleppo and Beirut and started to prepare for his return to his homeland. Hansa obtained information about the fates of the survivors with the help of interpreters or directly from German-speaking people.<sup>48</sup> He usually did not name his sources unless the individual was in a position of authority, and characterised them according to gender, occupation, age and place of origin.

I personally know one [student] from Zeitun, whose 32-member family was also deported and who were partly murdered during the deportation, partly died of suffering and various diseases. He alone remained alive and was severely wounded; he saved himself by hiding in a pile of corpses after the massacre and fleeing at night.<sup>49</sup>

In addition to including individual stories of survivors, Hansa tried to characterise the problems that the inhabitants of refugee camps had to face:

During my stay in Beirut in November and December last year, during the winter rains and freezing winds, and with very cold and wet nights, visiting local camps almost daily I saw terrible misery, illness and suffering beyond description. Streams of water, rolling incessantly from the clouds, spewed water into every corner of the flimsy tents and huts, where on the soaked and sludge-stained property, often on the bare ground, shivering mothers huddled in the cold, protecting the crying children with their flimsy clothes. The daily influx of water made the camp a real mudflat. There were no spades or shovels, to allow the ditches of water drains to be deepened or built anew. A wild, freezing north wind that had been blowing incessantly for weeks ruthlessly tore the soaked and rotten remnants of blankets and sacks from the tents, which threatened to break free of their pegs in the soaked soil at any moment. For weeks, the weather was terrible and staying in the camps was real suffering. [...] Everyone is coming out of the soaked tents - they are shaking from the cold and poorly dressed. Most are barefoot; emaciated baby legs are shivering with cold and are red as a crayfish. Children are crying - they are hungry. And mothers, with a tear in their eyes, helpless, running through the camp, searching for food for their children or for fuel on which the neediest could cook. There are no hotplates or pebbles, so these poor women have to help themselves with empty kerosene cans, in which they cook breakfast and lunch on a piece of charcoal - but also often dinner also. There is no milk, eggs or fat, so a simple rice soup is the only usual dish.<sup>50</sup>

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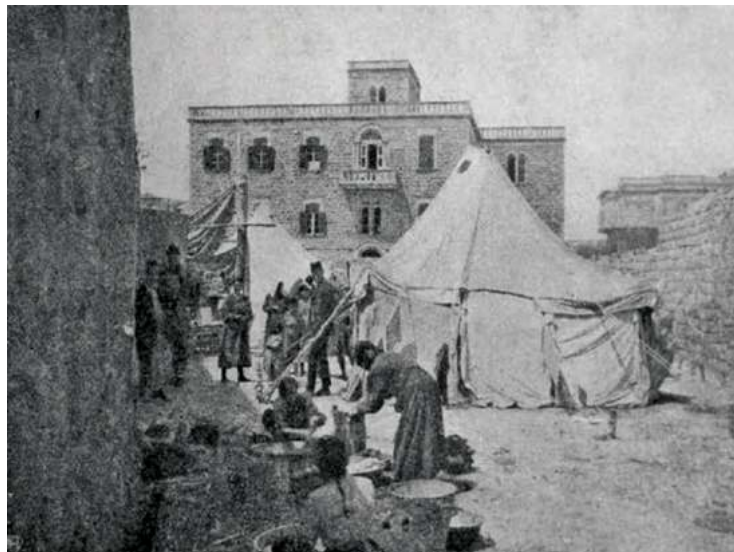
48 Hansa, *Hrůzy východu*, 95.

49 Ibid., 99, see also 100, 105.

50 Ibid., 104.

Elsewhere, Hansa writes about the lack of healthcare and the conditions in which sick children lived in the camps:

It is terrible to see sick little children, often wrapped in dirty rags or in wet strips of sacks, as I have seen during my various visits to camps and tents during the weeks of the autumn rains. The children lay there in the highest degree and deadly fever, unassisted, on bare ground, in sludge, mud, water. I will never forget those little creatures, those suffering for sins not committed.<sup>51</sup>



**Figure 8.** The life of remnants of the Christian population from Asia Minor; tents of refugees in Aleppo.

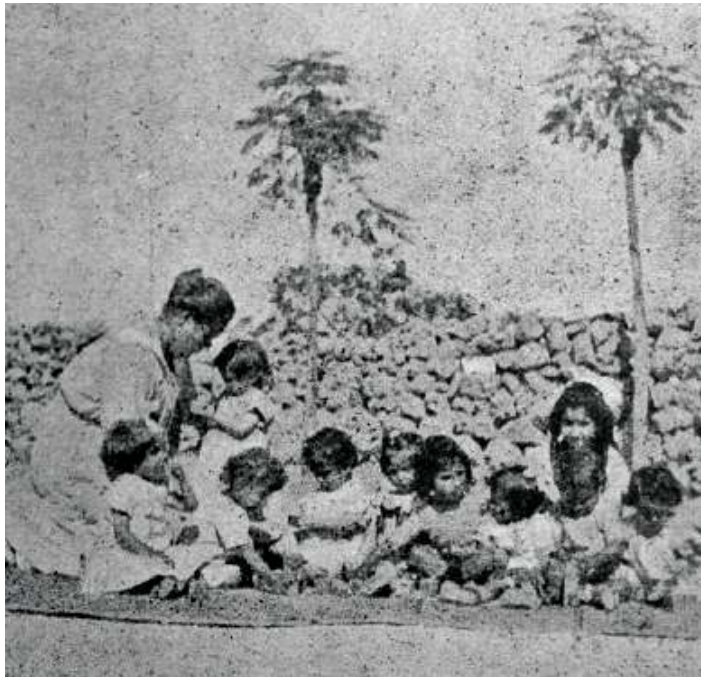
Source: Hansa, *Hrůzy východu*

Hansa was inspired by the work of various humanitarian workers he met. In Aleppo, it was the Swiss physician Max Müller of the German Christian Relief Society in the Orient (Christlicher Hilfsbund im Orient), who mainly treated the eye diseases of the refugees.<sup>52</sup> During his stay in Lebanon, Hansa was cared for by Krikor Khahigian, the administrator of the local NER house, who arranged visits to refugee camps as well as meetings with humanitarian workers and prominent members of the Armenian community. The visit to an orphanage in the settlement Zouk Michail led by the distinguished figure of the Scandinavian Women's Missionary Workers (Kvindelige Missions Arbejdere), namely Maria Jacobsen (1882-1960), had a great impact on Hansa. During a tour of the orphanage, Hansa played and talked with the children, then spoke at length with Jacobsen about her current work and also about her experiences from WWI. Hansa was absolutely enchanted by her story and the operation of the orphanage.<sup>53</sup>

51 Ibid., 100, see also 95-118. Hansa, *Z potulek Orientem*, 208-220.

52 Hansa, *Hrůzy východu*, 102.

53 Ibid., 116-118. Karekin Dickran, "Maria Jacobsen and the Genocide in Armenia," The Danish Peace Acad-



**Figure 9.** Madam M. Jacobsen with her sweethearts at the courtyard of the Danish orphanage at the Zuk Michael settlement in the Lebanon.

Source: *Hansa, Hrůzy východu*

Shortly before leaving Lebanon, Hansa met the Catholicos of Cilicia Sahak II (1849-1939), who appreciated his plan to organise aid for Armenian orphans in Czechoslovakia, but at the same urged caution and warned him against the opposition of various interest groups leaning towards support of Turkey in Europe.<sup>54</sup>

The most dramatic component of Hansa's activities was an eleven-day voyage on the Italian steamer *Marate* from Beirut to the Athenian port of Piraeus. The NER ship carried 896 Greek orphans, accompanied by Hansa and two American nurses. One of them, Silvia T. Eddy (1893-1954), is known by name.<sup>55</sup> During the voyage, the steamer got into a strong, fourteen-hour-long storm. The ship was crammed, poor hygiene prevailed, and some of the children were ill. Two boys even died during the trip, a four-year-old and the other an elev-

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emy 2004, 1-3, at <http://www.fredsakademiet.dk/library/karekin/ukmaria.pdf>, accessed 01.09.2020; Inger M. Okkenhaug, "Scandinavian Missionaries, Gender and Armenian Refugees during World War I. Crisis and Reshaping of Vocation," *Social Sciences and Missions* 23, no. 1 (2010): 64-71; Revised and expanded translation of Chapter 8: "Maria Jacobsen, KMA og Fuglereden i Libanon" - "Maria Jacobsen, KMA, and the Birds Nest in Lebanon" from Matthias Bjørnlund, *På herrens mark: Nødhjælp, mission og kvindekamp under det armenske folkedrab* (Copenhagen: Kristeligt Dagblads Forlag, 2015), at [https://www.academia.edu/42881210/Birds\\_Nest\\_on\\_the\\_Danish\\_orphanage\\_for\\_Armenian\\_genocide\\_survivors\\_in\\_Libanon](https://www.academia.edu/42881210/Birds_Nest_on_the_Danish_orphanage_for_Armenian_genocide_survivors_in_Libanon), accessed 20.05.2020. For more on Hansa's meeting with Jacobsen see Jandák, *Arménská genocida*, 509-511; see also 368-508.

<sup>54</sup> Hansa, *Z potulek Orientem*, 212-213.

<sup>55</sup> Amerikan Bord Heyeti (American Board), Istanbul, "Personnel records for Sylvia T. Eddy," American Research Institute in Turkey, Istanbul Centre Library, online in Digital Library for International Research Archive, item #12102, at <http://www.dlir.org/archive/items/show/12102>, accessed 24.09. 2020.

en-year-old. Despite all the difficulties, Hansa and the American nurses managed to keep the situation under control and avoided the threat of a fortnight's quarantine in the port of Athens.<sup>56</sup>

After a short visit to Athens and Thessaloniki, Hansa travelled by train to Prague in December 1922, where he wanted to begin his humanitarian work.<sup>57</sup>

### **Writing, Lecturing and Organising in Czechoslovakia**

The first obstacle faced by Karel Hansa at the beginning of his humanitarian endeavours was the insufficient awareness on the part of the Czechoslovak public of the deportations and massacres of Armenian citizens during WWI. Unlike the states of the Entente, where the story of the Genocide of the Armenian nation was an indisputable part of the war experience, mediated by the daily press and amplified by the long-term missionary relationship in the region and the interests of war propaganda,<sup>58</sup> the Habsburg Empire manifested the opposite dynamics. Germany and her ally, the Austria-Hungary, strictly censored their press during the war and prevented publication of reports about the genocide perpetrated by their ally.<sup>59</sup> For instance, in the time of Hamidian massacres (1894-1896) the main Czech newspapers *Narodní listy* and *Narodní politika* published numerous and often detailed reports about this event almost on a daily basis, whereas during WWI only concise reports, denying or downplaying the violence against Armenians in the Ottoman Empire were published. After the end of the war, a small number of factually largely accurate reports about the Genocide were published in the Czechoslovak press, but they remained without much attention in the turbulent post-war period, and the Czechoslovak public as a whole remained poorly informed about the Genocide.<sup>60</sup> Karel Hansa thus had to inform the Czechoslovak public before he could have started to organise humanitarian help and the collection of donations.

Karel Hansa started to lecture and to collect money for Armenian orphans in Prague and in other cities in Czechoslovakia, predominantly in southern Bohemia. He partially followed the tradition of traveller's lectures well established in the Czech speaking lands from the late 19th century.<sup>61</sup> His lectures were organised by a wide range of organisations including various civic societies, schools, churches or even the army. Hansa's first known lecture after his return to Czechoslovakia was called "On the current fate of the remnants of the Armenian nation," and it was organised by the Czech Women's Club in Prague and held on 24 January 1923.<sup>62</sup>

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56 Hansa, *Hřízy východu*, 119-144.

57 Hansa, *Z potulek Orientem*, 256-267.

58 Jo Laycock, *Imagining Armenia: Orientalism, Ambiguity and Intervention* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2009), 99-143; Peter Balakian, *The Burning Tigris: The Armenian Genocide and America's Response* (New York: Perennial, 2004), 219-296.

59 Artem Ohanian, *Armenia 1915: Austro-Hungarian Diplomatic Reports Prove the Genocide* (Vienna: Society for Promotion of Armenian History and Culture, 2011), 227-241; Hilmar Kaiser, *Imperialism, Racism, and Development Theories: The Construction of a Dominant Paradigm on Ottoman Armenians* (Ann Arbor: Gomidas Institute, 1998), 21-32.

60 Jandák, *Arménská genocida*, 120-129, 215-218, 252-257, 354-356. Řoutil et al., *Katastrofa křesťanů*, 463-475.

61 Borovička, *Velké dějiny země Koruny české: Cestovatelství*, 536-539.

62 *Národní politika*, 24 January 1923, 4.

In several extant reviews on Hansa's lectures from independent sources we can read that they "made a lasting impression" or that "[he] touchingly described the fate of the Armenian nation and its poor children; that his words moved hearts is evidenced also by the collected amount of money (90.5 crowns)". Every lecture was followed by a fundraising campaign for the Armenian orphans; recorded proceeds were around one hundred to a few hundred Czechoslovak crowns. The occasional problems recorded in the historical sources were related to low attendance.<sup>63</sup> An entry in a local chronicle about a lecture for a child audience shows Hansa's good relationship with children and his ability to communicate with them: "The speaker with his almost childlike rendition made the lecture so pleasant that he held the attention of the children for almost two hours."<sup>64</sup> Hansa himself collected a series of positive reviews of his lectures for the purpose of advertisement and communication with the authorities.<sup>65</sup>

The lectures were accompanied by approximately 180 images projected with a *laterna magica*. In July 1924, Hansa bought a small Praga Piccolo car to transport the projector and slides. He probably bought this car on credit, as was common at the time, and he sold it as soon as he temporarily stopped lecturing.<sup>66</sup> The last known lecture at which he collected money for Armenian orphans took place in the town Netolice, on 14 April 1926 in south Bohemia.<sup>67</sup> In the following two years, his lecturing activity stops and resumes in 1929, in connection with the forthcoming book of travels to Yugoslavia.<sup>68</sup>

Another component of Hansa's effort to overcome the lack of knowledge about the Armenian question in Czechoslovakia and to put his humanitarian activities on a firmer ground was the above-mentioned book *Horrors of the East*. This book can be seen as the first work in the Czech language systematically to map the nature of modern genocide and its consequences - phenomena which came to Central Europe 20 years later with the Nazi occupation. According to the holistic theory of genocide by the British historian Mark Levine, genocides local to the area were not an anomaly, for Eastern Europe and the adjacent areas including Anatolia (Leven calls them "The European Rimlands"), but a systemic trait of world historical development towards "a single, global, political economy composed of nation states."<sup>69</sup>

Hansa repeatedly amplified the historical importance and unprecedented nature of the violence in the Ottoman Empire at the beginning of the 20th century: "The credible eyewitness accounts of these acts prove that the atrocities committed against the Armenians

63 *Hlas lidu*, 24 December 1923, 3. *Jihočeské listy*, 28 April 1926, 3.

64 The lecture took place on 17 February 1926. SOkA ČB, collection Základní škola Ledenice, book 1, p. 29.

65 Police Directorate, advertisement for Hansa's lectures, c. 1930; reviews and recommendations of his lectures, 8 November 1946. Manuscript (1949-1950), 360-382.

66 Police Directorate, Hansa received his driver's licence on 1 February 1924. He bought a car on 21 July 1924, and sold it on 13 August 1926.

67 *Jihočeské listy*, 28 April 1926, 3.

68 Police Directorate, Hansa reported in a letter to the directorate his intention to give new lectures on the topic of Yugoslavia, 2 November 1929.

69 Mark Levene, *The Crisis of Genocide*, vol. I (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016), xiii. Beside Levene's two volume work, which directly examines the European Rimlands between 1912 and 1953, see also his overview on continuities and discontinuities: *Genocide in the Age of the Nation State: Volume I: The Meaning of Genocide* (New York: I. B. Tauris, 2008), 144-206.

are unparalleled in human history.”<sup>70</sup> However, he did not interpret this violence as part of modern historical processes, but, in agreement with historical orientalist views, saw it as a decline into “barbarism.”<sup>71</sup> Hansa implicitly ascribed to the “civilised West” a paternalistic role in the enforcement of humanitarian principles on a global scale. In relation to the Armenian tragedy, the West in Hansa’s interpretation ceased to be the personification of the positive values of progress and civilisation; on the contrary, the West betrayed these abstract values with its indifference towards the suffering Armenians.<sup>72</sup> He saw the survivors of the genocides as “victims of the reign of Young Turks, and the intrigues and weakness of European diplomacy.”<sup>73</sup>

The book *Horrors of the East*, which Hansa managed to write and publish in less than a year after his return to Czechoslovakia<sup>74</sup> differs from Hansa’s later works, which are mostly travelogues. As we have already mentioned above, *Horrors of the East* contains Hansa’s testimony from Syria and Lebanon from 1922, which predominantly has the character of a travelogue; nonetheless, the first two parts of the book try systematically to depict Armenian history before the genocide and the genocide itself. Hansa did not have a university education, only short experience as editor of a forestry magazine. Despite the shortcomings, especially in grammar and in his dealing with the early Armenian history, Hansa managed, thanks to his determination, to compose a compilation of documents, commentaries and authentic experiences that persuasively outlined the main characteristics of the Armenian Genocide for the Czechoslovak public. In the descriptions of the violence itself, Hansa relied on primarily Western observers.<sup>75</sup> The sources included in the book, though not systematically catalogued, contained much detail which must have had a lasting emotional impact on the readers.

To fulfil its goal of informing readers and encouraging their active contribution to the construction of a Czechoslovak orphanage in Lebanon, the publication of *Horrors of the East* needed to speak to the reader within a familiar ideological framework, which would have helped to legitimise such humanitarian action. Whereas the humanitarian reports of the League of Nations trove for political neutrality and humanitarian workers from United States of America presented their work in the framework of American exceptionalism,<sup>76</sup> in the Czechoslovak milieu Hansa spoke to readers in the language of solidarity towards nations striving for self-determination. *Horrors of the East* was composed as tragic story of Armenian national history, which, due to violent crimes failed to achieve victory in “heroic

70 Hansa, *Hrůzy východu*, 89, see also 44, 91.

71 For more on the dichotomy of “civilization” and “barbarism” in genocide studies, see: Alexander L. Hinton, Thomas La Pointe, Douglas Irvin-Erickson (eds.) *Hidden Genocides: Power, Knowledge, Memory* (Newark: Rutgers University Press, 2014), 2-11.

72 Hansa, *Hrůzy východu*, foreword lacking pagination by Hakob Asatryan (2006, reprint). Hansa, *Z potulek Orientem*, 212.

73 Hansa, *Hrůzy východu*, 91.

74 The first known advertisement for the new book in *Národní listy*, on 23 November 1923, 10. The book is also briefly mentioned earlier in *Světlozor*, 11 October 1923, 33.

75 Hansa quotes, for example, the German vice-consul Kuckhoff from Samsun, the American consuls Oscar H. Heizer from Trabzon, and Leslie A. Davis from Kharberd, and a number of unnamed sources. For examples of nurses of German Red Cross, American missionaries or German employees of the Bagdad Railroad, see *Hrůzy východu*, 49-80.

76 Watenpugh, *Bread from Stones*, 57-123.



fight of small nations for national and political liberation from the yoke of subjection.” Hansa contrasted the Armenian tragedy with the situation of the “happily liberated Czechoslovak nation,” which attained self-determination under favourable circumstances after the fall of the Austro-Hungarian Empire. At the same time, Hansa pondered on possible political solutions, and emphasised that Armenians as a nation wanted, and needed, a “motherland, their home.”<sup>77</sup>

Hansa’s appeal also aimed to direct the assistance towards the most vulnerable and evidently “innocent” group among the survivors - orphans.<sup>78</sup> Solidarity with Armenians as a Christian nation played a secondary but indisputable role in the mobilisation of help.<sup>79</sup>

Humanitarian help in general played an important role in the Austro-Hungarian Empire at the end of WWI, when the food supply system collapsed, and food riots erupted on the streets of the monarchy.<sup>80</sup> The “Czech Heart” organisation in particular contributed not only to an improvement in the supply situation of ethnically Czech citizens in the cities, but also to the takeover of control over supplies by the Czech national movement at the time of disintegration of the Habsburg Empire and creation of the new Czechoslovak state in the autumn of 1918.<sup>81</sup> In February 1919 the Czechoslovak Red Cross (CSRC) was founded with President Tomáš Garrigue Masaryk’s daughter, Dr Alice Masaryková (1879-1966) as its chairwoman. CSRC replaced the former Czech and Slovak units of the Austrian and Hungarian Red Cross (these were two separate organisations, Austrian and Hungarian respectively) and soon became a mass organisation with hundreds of thousands of members. CSRC engaged in the spheres of public health, youth education, social and humanitarian work and the preparation of health workers in case of war.

In 1919 CSRC received considerable support - exceeding 100 million Czechoslovak crowns - for post-war renewal from foreign donors, the vast majority of whom were from the United States. Likewise, foreign humanitarian workers were sent to Czechoslovakia. Czechoslovakia not only had experience with the international humanitarian movement from the position of recipient, but in 1921 CSRC in collaboration with the Czechoslovak Ministry for Foreign Affairs organised aid for those afflicted by the famine in Russia. Local CSRC organizations initiated a nationwide collection, and provided financial and material aid worth 3 million Czechoslovak crowns in total. In the 1920s the CSRC and the Czech government supported numerous Russian emigrants in Czechoslovakia, including scholarships for several thousands of Ukrainian and Russian students. A further example is the active resettlement of 5,000 Russian immigrants from Constantinople to Czechoslovakia at the turn of 1921-1922.<sup>82</sup>

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77 Hansa, *Hrůzy východu*, 96.

78 Ibid., introduction lacking pagination and also closing appeal to reader for help, likewise without pagination. See also Hansa, *Z potulek Orientem*, 189, 289-290.

79 Hansa, *Hrůzy východu*, 97.

80 Rudolf Kučera, *Rationed Life: Science, Everyday Life, and Working Class Politics in the Bohemian Lands, 1914-1918* (Oxford and New York: Berghahn, 2016); Ota Konrád, Rudolf Kučera, *Cesty z apokalypsy* (Prague: Academia, 2018).

81 Renata Tyršová (ed.), *Pět let Českého srdce 1917-1922* (Prague: České srdce, 1922).

82 Radovan Lovčí, *Alice Masaryková* (Prague: Karlova Univerzita, 2007), 245-304; Otakar Dorazil, *Čs. červený kříž 1919-1929* (Prague: Československý Červený kříž, 1929); NA, collection Ministerstvo zahraničních věcí - Ruská pomocná akce, inv. no. 19, 20, 53, 70, 71, 107.

Hansa felt it crucial to build on the existing Czechoslovak infrastructure of humanitarian help. He had already received a promise of support from unnamed Czechoslovak officials during his stay in Syria.<sup>83</sup>

After his return to the homeland he met with the chairwoman of the CSRC, Dr. Alice Masarykova, on 9 March 1923 and asked her to donate medicine and other necessities for refugees in Syria and Lebanon. He was allegedly promised “a large consignment,”<sup>84</sup> but the archive of CSRC was lost during WWII and no further information on the matter can be found in Hansa’s writings. However, the establishment of the so-called “Hansa’s fund for Armenian orphans” at the CSRC is well documented. The greater part of the money was collected through public lectures. In addition, Hansa also asked for contributions in his books and promised to donate a small part of the sales income to the fund. For greater transparency, the money was sent directly by the organisers of the lectures and not by Hansa himself.<sup>85</sup> Hansa’s fund at CSRC raised approximately 5,000 Czechoslovak crowns (the equivalent to 150 U.S. dollars at that time), which roughly corresponded to the budget of one local organisation of the CSRC, a modest annual scholarship for one Armenian student or the amount required to provide for several orphans in Lebanon for a year.<sup>86</sup>

The next important figure to whom Hansa reached out was Dr Václav Girsá (1875-1954). Their meeting took place on 27 March 1923 at the Czechoslovak Ministry for Foreign Affairs. Girsá was one of the highest-ranking officials of the Ministry, and former head of the commission to support those afflicted by famine in Russia in the years 1921-1922. Thanks to Hansa’s mediation the ministry, much as in case of Russian and Ukrainian students, allowed 50 Armenian students to study at Czechoslovak universities and supported them with scholarships. Already in 1923 the first students applied, and in the next year the Armenian student association in Czechoslovakia was founded.<sup>87</sup> This was clearly one of Hansa’s biggest achievements. The former Armenian Prime Minister Alexander Khatisian (1874-1945) attended Hansa’s lecture during his stay in Prague on December 1923 and accompanied him to express his thanks to the Czechoslovak government for their support of Armenian students.<sup>88</sup>

At the international level, Hansa cooperated with the Armenian Catholic Congregation

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83 Hansa, *Z potulek Orientem*, 208-209.

84 Letter to Mekhitarists, April 15, 1-2. In his correspondence with the Mekhitarist Congregation in Vienna Hansa details his activities. We have in our possession digital copies of three German letters by Hansa dated April 15, May 27 and August 23, 1923 that were kindly provided to us by Haig Utidjian. Henceforth this correspondence will be cited as “Letters to Mekhitarists.” For more details on the letters see Utidjian, *The Art of the Armenian Book*, 210-213.

85 Ibid. *Jihočeské listy*, 28 April 1926, 3. Hansa, *Hrůzy východu*, 97, 155. Hansa, *Z potulek Orientem*, 289-290. Hansa pledged to give 1 Czechoslovak crown to the fund for every sold copy of his books (1923, 1925). The prices of his books were 20 and 35 crowns, respectively.

86 *Výroční zpráva Čs. červeného kříže* (Prague: Československý Červený kříž 1921-1925); NA, collection Ministerstvo zahraničních věcí - Ruská pomocná akce, inv. no. 70, 71. Hansa estimated that to support one orphan in Lebanon would cost 2-3 U.S. dollars monthly. Hansa, *Hrůzy východu*, 98.

87 Letters to Mekhitarists, April 15, May 27 and August 23, 1923. Jaroslav Vaculík, “Masarykův spolupracovník MUDr. Václav Girsá,” in *T. G. Masaryk, jeho spolupracovníci a vznik československého státu* (Hodonín: Masarykovo muzeum, 2009), 102-106; AHMP, collection Spolkový katastr, sign. X/0317, Arménský studentský svaz v ČSR (1924-1936).

88 *Lidové listy*, 11 December 1923. Manuscript (1949-1950), appendix “Poznávejte svět!,” 3-4.

of Mekhitarists in Vienna. The book *Horrors of the East* dedicates considerable space to the history of the Congregation, and Hansa's correspondence with the Mekhitarists shows that some of the photographs and illustrations in the books are from the Congregation.<sup>89</sup> Hansa also participated in the conference of the International Near East Association in Geneva at which he presented his photographs from Lebanon and Syria.<sup>90</sup>



**Figure 10.** Participants of the congress of the International Near East Association held 5-15 September 1923 in Geneva, chaired by President Auguste de Morsier [1864-1923] (1), General Secretary Gordon L. Berry [1884-1932] (2), and attended by delegates from around the world. The Czechoslovak delegate Karel Hansa, orientalist traveller and author of *Horrors of the East* (3). The President of the Armenian Republic Dr Alexandr Khatissian [sic. Former Prime Minister, April 1919 - May 1920] (4).

Source: *Světozor*, October 11, 1923, 33

The question of cooperation with various organizations and individuals, which key to the success of his activities, because the money he had collected could not be enough to build an orphanage, revealed the limits of Hansa's abilities as a humanitarian worker.

In the autumn of 1924, Hansa established contact with Armenag S. Baronigian (1890-?), director of the Armenian Committee for Medical Aid and Evangelization (Armenische Hilfskomitee zur Unterstützung ärztlicher Mission und Evangelisation). Baronigian offered Hansa a position in his organisation, and suggested that Hansa send him money from his own fund to Baronigian's organisation in Germany. To this end, he visited Hansa in Prague and invited him to Nuremberg. During the visit to Prague, however, there was a dispute between the two men. In his correspondence, Baronigian portrays Hansa as a man who constantly complains about his misery and the lack of support for his fund from prominent Armenians, but who acts non-transparently, spends time in pubs and is unreliable in financial matters. Baronigian even went so far as to ask Hansa openly if his activities were fraudulent. According to the German historian Uwe Feigel, Baronigian was involved in court proceed-

<sup>89</sup> Hansa, *Hrůzy východu*, 14-20. Letters to Mekhitarists, April 15, May 27 and August 23, 1923.

<sup>90</sup> Manuscript (1949-1950), appendix "Poznávejte svět!," 3. Hansa, *Hrůzy východu*, 147-149. Letter to Mekhitarists, 23 August 1923. *Jihočeské listy*, 28 April 1926, 3.

ings in Germany for embezzling money in a charity, but was eventually acquitted by the Imperial Court.<sup>91</sup> This experience could have also helped shape Baronigian's critical view of Hansa. As we know from the statement of the CSRC accountant Josef Kapr, Hansa's fund was not a fraud,<sup>92</sup> but Hansa's unbalanced nature and the resulting difficulties in cooperating with other people were real.

From 1923, Hansa tried to establish a Czech association in support of deprived Armenian orphans, but due to a lack of interest its inaugural meeting did not occur until October 8, 1924. After a few weeks, however, a trivial dispute escalated between Hansa - who was both the association's chairman and its secretary - and Karel Tunkl, who served as its vice-chairman. According to Tunkl, Hansa acted in too "lordly" a manner<sup>93</sup> when writing letters to Germany and Geneva. For example, in a draft letter to Geneva Hansa spoke of "his association," "his committee," instead of writing "our association," "our committee," as Tunkl would have preferred.<sup>94</sup> Hansa allegedly replied that he would not be lectured to, because the association only existed for 10 days and he had been working for Armenian orphans for two years. Hansa, who himself admits in his later lawsuit that he was "rather nervous" as a result of his military service and his stay in the Near East,<sup>95</sup> after another exchange of views tore up the letter and left the meeting. At further meetings of the association the dispute grew into a bitter struggle for control of the association.<sup>96</sup> Tunkl and his wife and friends, whom he brought to the association when it was founded, effectively controlled it, deprived Hansa of the offices he held and of his membership, and took further steps, including an unsuccessful attempt to take over Hansa's fund at the CSRC.<sup>97</sup>

Hansa decided in December 1924 to sue Tunkl et al. for defamation, at the Smíchov District Court. The dispute dragged on for almost a year and ended with an out-of-court settlement on 25 November 1925, in which the defendants stated that they had not made their statements about Hansa with malicious intent and "could not blame him for anything dishonest." The Czech traveller withdrew his lawsuit and both parties paid for their court costs themselves.<sup>98</sup> Records of the association's day-to-day activities with the new leadership without Hansa stopped in 1925.<sup>99</sup> Hansa's inability to lead the association by consensus with other members, along with Tunkl's reckless ambitions and determination to remove Hansa from the association's collective, led to the embarrassing failure of the association.

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91 Uwe Feigel, *Das evangelische Deutschland und Armenien* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck und Ruprecht, 1989), 288.

92 AHMP, collection Okresní civilní soud po Prahu-sever [Regional Court for Prague North], zn. 96, sign. T VI 1906/24, p. 45. Witness testimony of the accountant of CSRC Josefa Kapr, 24 November 1925.

93 Ibid., Hansa's complaint, 16 December 1924. The word "pánovitě" ("in a lordly manner") Hansa himself repeated in describing the incident in his complaint.

94 Ibid., 28, statement by the defendants, 28 January 1925.

95 Ibid., 2, Hansa's complaint, 16 December 1924.

96 Ibid., 27-29, statement by the defendants, 28 January 1925.

97 Ibid., 45, testimony by Kapr.

98 Ibid., 47.

99 AHMP, collection Spolkový katastr, box 78, sign. II/0635, Český spolek pro podporu strádajících arménských sirotků. The association was formally dissolved after a prolonged period of inaction, on 1 January 1928.

## Later years

Hansa's activity in connection with the Armenian question, as we know, ended in the year 1926. In later years, Hansa used his experience as a traveller and writer, lecturing and writing about his travels to the allied countries of interwar Czechoslovakia and the easternmost part of Czechoslovakia itself.

In May 1927 he went to France, where he travelled around Brittany, studied the language and worked.<sup>100</sup> In the summer of 1929, Hansa and his girlfriend travelled to Yugoslavia, a country that was a close ally of Czechoslovakia in the Little Entente and a popular tourist destination.<sup>101</sup>

Another of Hansa's travel destinations was Carpathian Ruthenia. This undeveloped "wild east" of Czechoslovakia, with which Prague in many respects had a repressive relationship shaped by the idea of a civilizational mission of the Republic, was an object of interest not only for Czech officials, police officers, soldiers, teachers, tourists, writers and adventurers, but also for social and humanitarian workers.<sup>102</sup> Hansa appears here not only as a traveller and writer, but also again as a philanthropist. In his first book on Carpathian Ruthenia he focused on the local history of the area,<sup>103</sup> and in his second he depicted distributing gifts to poor children there, which he organised for Orthodox Christmas Day in January 1937. Young schoolchildren were gifted 500 packages. The most valuable gifts consisted of 71 pairs of shoes, purchased with the permission of the CSRC for 2,000 crowns, originally raised for Armenian orphans through Hansa's fund, which in the meantime had grown.<sup>104</sup>



**Figure 11.** Extraordinary photograph of Hansa portraying his dual aspects as writer and motorist that characterise his more rounded identity as a travel writer. A caption reads: "The 'Aero' vehicle - an ever reliable friend, which in the evening May 20, 1941 came to an 'unusual' garage, namely my living room!"

*Source: Family collection*

100 Manuscript (1949-1950), 314-318.

101 Hansa, *Léto pod jihoslovanským nebem* (Prague: self-published, 1930), 324.

102 Konrád et al., *Cesty z apokalypsy*, 278-296. Dorazil, *Čs. červený kříž 1919-1929*, 128-142.

103 Hansa, *Stero črt a obrázků z Podkarpatské Rusi* (Prague: self-published, 1935), 530. The Slovak historian Michal Falat is currently conducting research on Hansa's texts about Carpathian Ruthenia.

104 Hansa, *Podkarpatoruská vánoční idyla* (Prague: self-published, 1937), 9-13, 43-44, 79-81, 97-108.

In 1925 Hansa outlined the possibility of handing over the fund to the International Near East Association,<sup>105</sup> but at least a substantial portion of the money was never used to help Armenian orphans, which may be attributed to Hansa's mismanagement of the fund. The rest of the money in the fund for the victims of the Armenian Genocide ended up in the hands of the Nazis, as a result of the occupation of Czechoslovakia by the German army in 1939. The Nazis abolished the CSRC, confiscated its property and persecuted many of its employees.<sup>106</sup>

The Nazi occupation prevented Hansa from travelling and lecturing. After the end of the war, Hansa set out in a two-seater open aero car made in 1931<sup>107</sup> with his travel lectures to various halls in Czechoslovakia. The ageing car and its driver were reminiscent of the period of the first Czechoslovak Republic and increasingly were out of place in the new post-war period. After the establishment of the communist dictatorship in February 1948, his lecturing activities gradually died down, and although he never stopped writing, none of his books were published. In the last years of his life he lived alone, in relative poverty, in the Smíchov, one of Prague's working class districts. Karel Hansa died on 4 June 1967 at the age of 76.<sup>108</sup> His apartment was subsequently robbed, before the arrival of his relatives. Hansa's papers, including the manuscript of his book *For Peace with Word and Image*, were lost.<sup>109</sup>

## **Conclusion**

Hansa's life was filled with contradictions, in numerous ways. His childhood was unstable, but he retained ties to his family, especially to his mother. Hansa was a mediocre pupil who became a writer as an adult. He understood children well and knew how to approach them in their world; at the same time, he never married and remained childless. He had ambitions to become a prominent humanitarian, but as he himself noted in 1937, his activities were limited by his humble background: "The poor mortal didn't have enough money to act with dignity in the role of the heavenly benefactor."<sup>110</sup> Hansa's qualities included purposefulness, diligence and ambition. At the same time, however, he was an unstable personality. On the one hand he was perceptive and sensitive, and on the other he was attention-seeking and petulant. His personality was also shaped by the trauma stemming from his war experiences, which had resulted in his serious disability. Despite all the contradictions, wandering from place to place and writing remained the constant in his life.

His book *Horrors of the East* became the first work in the Czech language systematically to address the Armenian Genocide and thus the hitherto unnamed phenomenon of modern genocide in general. In particular, Hansa's accounts of the lives of Armenian Genocide survivors and the activities of the humanitarian workers he met in Syria and Lebanon in 1922

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105 Police Directorate, Hansa's letter to the directorate, 19 January 1925, 2.

106 Manuscript (1949-1950), 334.

107 Police Directorate, application to the motor vehicle registry, 11 July 1946.

108 Cukr, "K dobrodružnému životu Karla Hansy," 60-61.

109 Interview with Jarmila Jedlinská, niece of Karel Hansa, conducted by the authors on 26 May 2019 in České Budějovice. Manuscript (1949-1950), appendix "Poznávejte svět!," 10.

110 Hansa, *Podkarpatoruská vánoční idyla*, 12.

are of significant historical value. Hansa brought about the extension of the scholarship program of the Czechoslovak Ministry of Foreign Affairs originally intended for Russian and Ukrainian emigrants to include 50 Armenian students. However, his attempt to establish a Czechoslovak association in support of deprived Armenian orphans ended in failure, mainly due to personal disputes. Hansa's three-year public lecturing activities together with his fundraising efforts were, sadly, far from successful in raising sufficient funds to establish a Czechoslovak orphanage in Lebanon, as Hansa's was in essence an isolated individual endeavour. Hansa's activities were further complicated by the fact that the Czechoslovak public was very poorly informed about the Armenian Genocide during WWI, due to censorship in Austria-Hungary. In addition, Czechoslovakia lacked any previous connection to the event through missionaries and diplomats, which was crucially important to humanitarian initiatives in the United States and various European countries.

Modern humanitarianism originated in the West in the shadow of the politics of the Great Powers, of nationalism and of colonialism as a "weak force"<sup>111</sup> in the international arena. Hansa's relationship with modern humanitarianism was formed through his contact with humanitarian workers and their institutions, as well as with Armenian Genocide survivors. Hansa attempted to mediate his experience with these two groups in Czechoslovakia. He presented humanitarian workers as a role model from foreign countries that were more developed than semi-peripheral Czechoslovakia. In line with the ideology of nationalism, then prevailing in Czechoslovakia, he depicted survivors as objects of solidarity between small nations striving for self-determination. Hansa's biography broadens our understanding of how the "weak force" of humanitarianism as a reaction to the catastrophe of the Armenian Genocide spread on a global scale, and at the same time acquired new meanings and reached its limits.

## **Acknowledgement**

Our thanks belong to our colleagues and friends Andran Abramjan, Tigran Abramjan, Hakob Asatryan, Ema Kovalčíková, Jan Štemberk and Anna Sochová who kindly helped us with our research in numerous ways. We would like to thank Hansa's relatives Jaroslava Vlachová and Jarmila Jedlinská. We are especially grateful for the friendly guidance and selfless help of Haig Utidjian.

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111 Chris Gratien (host), Keith D. Watenpaugh, "The Middle East in the Making of Modern Humanitarianism," *Ottoman History Podcast*, no. 238, 8 April 2016, 8:00-9:00. See also Watenpaugh, *Bread from Stones*, 4-29. Watenpaugh defined the term "weak force" in the podcast. He did not use it explicitly in his book on the subject, nevertheless, we find it useful here.

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# ARMENIAN GENOCIDE SURVIVORS: THE STRUNGA ORPHANAGE IN ROMANIA<sup>1</sup>

Lidia Prisac

Motto: *A child without parents is like a house without a roof*

Varujan Vosganian

This article examines the history of the 200 children rescued from massacres that took place during the Armenian Genocide, who found shelter in Greater Romania (1918-1940), in the Strunga orphanage, which was open for three years, from 1923 to 1926. The Strunga orphanage history approach reflects the dimensions of humanitarian assistance in the Kingdom of Romania on the issue of Armenian refugees, particularly on the fate of children after the genocide. The reconstruction of this orphanage history is based on historical sources, such the Album of Orphans (1923), archive documents and articles from the contemporary press published by the Armenian minority in interwar Romania. In general, the humanitarian dimensions of Armenian community support in Romania offered the orphans the possibility of rehabilitation after the genocide and adaptation to the new social environment that Romania represented.

*Key-words:* orphans, humanitarian assistance, rehabilitation, Armenian Genocide, Armenian community from Romania, Kingdom of Romania.

## Introduction

The Strunga orphanage was set up in the county of Roman in the Kingdom of Romania, for orphans of Armenian origin saved from genocide. This article draws attention to a subject practically unknown to the public but resonating with the sinister events succeeding one another over more than a century within the Ottoman Empire, where more than one and a half million Armenians were massacred.

The development of the study of the Armenian exodus after genocide and the Sovietization of Armenia represents an important step in reconstructing the picture of Armenian refugees in Romania.<sup>2</sup> The approach is part of the “more difficult stories” genre as it aims at studying one of the most vulnerable segments, namely, the life experience of children rescued from massacre.<sup>3</sup>

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1 The article was received on 03.05.2020 and accepted for publication on 20.06.2020.

Strunga is a commune in the north-east of Romania, Iași County. It is situated 55 km from Iași city.

2 Lidia Prisac, “Exodul armenilor după genocid și sovietizare în România regală (1915/1918-1924),” in *The 1st Annual Kurultai of the Endangered Cultural Heritage - AKECH 2018* (Constanța: Anticus Press, 2018), 85-99; Lidia Prisac, Ion Valer Xenofontov, “Genocidul, refugiații armeni și România Mare (1918-1940),” in *Akademios. Revistă de știință, inovare, cultură și artă* 46, no. 3 (2017): 103-112; Lidia Prisac, “Problema emigrării armenilor peste Nistru în România interbelică în documentele Arhivei Naționale a Republicii Moldova,” in *Istorie, Cultură și Cercetare*, Vol. II (Deva: Editura Cetatea de Scaun, 2017), 172-188.

3 Florence M. Soghoian, *Portrait of a Survivor* (Brand: Christopher Publishing House, 1997); *L'enfant et le génocide. Témoignages sur l'enfance pendant la Shoah* (Paris: Editions Robert Laffont, 2007); Suzanne Kaplan,

Initially, the study was intended to be based exclusively on articles in the contemporary press published by the Armenian minority in interwar Romania. But, after a research internship at the Armenian Genocide Museum-Institute in Yerevan, where I had the chance to study the *Album of Orphans from Strunga* (1923),<sup>4</sup> I decided to use this historical source as a guide in reconstructing the history of the orphanage. The research would not have been complete had I not used archived documents kept in the collections of the Armenian Archdiocese of Romania, which helped reveal the fate of orphaned children following the closure of that charity establishment. I also appealed for stories from orphans who had been housed in Strunga.<sup>5</sup>

Being part of the historiography concerning the consequences of the Armenian Genocide, my research started from two impulses - the first, the continuing interest and topicality of the subject of the Armenian Genocide, the second determined by the need to outline, at a historiographical discourse level, the subject of the charity work in Romania carried out for the care of Armenian orphans. An overview of the research about the Strunga orphanage story reveals that there are almost no studies to have approached the subject in a detailed way,<sup>6</sup> the main ones being more like types of review.<sup>7</sup> Yet, among the works published so far, my attention was drawn to a PhD thesis defended at “Babeş-Bolyai” University of Cluj-Napoca, the author of which, in a chapter on refugee aid organizations, also covers the issue of the establishment and closure of the Armenian orphanage in Strunga, which was open for three years, from 1923 to 1926.<sup>8</sup>

What I would like to do in this study is to understand and delve into the narrative of humanitarian assistance in the Kingdom of Romania concerning Armenian refugees, particularly the fate of the children moved there after the genocide. Although the Armenian community as a whole participated in the establishment of the orphanage and supported the children in Strunga, my attention has mainly focused on the contribution made by the Armenians in Bessarabia that officially formed a community of 1,509 people.<sup>9</sup>

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*Children in Genocide. Extreme Traumatization and Effect Regulation* (London: International Psychoanalytical Association, 2008).

4 *Centenar Genocid/Albumul Orfanilor de la Strunga*, at <https://www.araratonline.com/albumul-orfanilor-de-la-strunga/>, accessed 25.09.2019.

5 “Hairabed Bostangian: În Turcia era interzis să-ți faci semnul crucii,” in *Mărturii. Genocidul armenilor*, realizat de Mihai Stepan Cazazian și Eduard Antonian (București: Editura Ararat, 1998), 106-108; *Strunga*. Documentary made by Cadri Abdula, producer, Mihai Stepan Cazazian, at [https://www.youtube.com/watch?time\\_continue=12&v=\\_3v29CctW1Y&feature=emb\\_title&fbclid=IwAR0SJ6nZzy66CpqNTPdZ0xUsxm8OOdU81wu370jB93yuhmNrmJeeAIhFCcc%20](https://www.youtube.com/watch?time_continue=12&v=_3v29CctW1Y&feature=emb_title&fbclid=IwAR0SJ6nZzy66CpqNTPdZ0xUsxm8OOdU81wu370jB93yuhmNrmJeeAIhFCcc%20), accessed 30.05.2020.

6 In 1930 international public opinion knew practically nothing about the situation of Armenian refugees in the Kingdom of Romania, let alone orphans. *La situation des enfants des réfugiés russes et arméniens en 1930. Rapport du Sous-Comité pour l'étude de la Condition des enfants des réfugiés du Comité Consultative des organisations privées auprès du Haut-Commissaire pour des Réfugiés de la Société des Nations* (Genève: Union Internationale des secours aux enfants, 1930), 42.

7 Sergiu Selian, *Schiță istorică a comunității armene din România* (București: Editura Ararat, 1999), 111; Andreea Tănase, *Sfârșit de istorie la Strunga* (27.04.2010), at <http://www.araratonline.com/sfar%C8%99it-de-istorie-la-strunga/>, accessed 25.05.2019; Andreea Tănase, *Armenians in Romania. The Stories of the People Closet to Us* (Bucharest: Master Print Super Offset, 2015), 345-347.

8 Claudia Dărăban, *Impactul genocidului asupra evoluției comunității armene din România interbelică* (Teză de doctorat în Relații Internaționale și Studii de Securitate, Cluj-Napoca, 2018), 156-161.

9 *Recensământul general al populației României din 29 decembrie 1930*, Vol. II (București, 1938), XXIV.

## Contextualizing the Emergence of Charities for Orphans

The Armenian Genocide generated clear solidarity in international humanitarian assistance. Aid for the approximately 500,000<sup>10</sup> Armenian survivors - out of a population of about 2 million<sup>11</sup> - was carried out worldwide by organizations and individuals who were or weren't of Armenian origin.<sup>12</sup> Armenian refugee relief organizations were established immediately after the massacres, between 1916-1923, especially in Eastern Armenia,<sup>13</sup> on the territories bordering the Ottoman Empire, and later around the world.<sup>14</sup> When the International Society of the Middle East assembly took place in Geneva on 3 September 1926, 20 Armenian organizations from the USA, Scandinavia, Belgium, Switzerland, France, etc. also participated.<sup>15</sup>

The League of Nations set up a Commission of Inquiry to study the situation of deported women and children. The American missionary and nurse Emma Darling Cushman, one of its three members, prepared estimates of the numbers of Armenian orphans. In the context of the organized exterminations that took place in 1921, the number of Armenian orphans was found to be 12,480 in the unoccupied areas and 11,339 in the occupied territo-

10 Around 200,000 Armenians would have escaped forced deportations from Constantinople and Smyrna. Another 300,000 would have found refuge in the Caucasus and other territories of the Tsarist Empire. Hagop Asatryan, "Impactul Primului Război Mondial asupra formării diasporei armenice," in *Primul Război Mondial și influența sa asupra formării Diasporei Armenice*, Materialele conferinței internaționale, 26-28 septembrie 2014 (București: Zamca, 2015), 113.

11 In 1914 the number of Armenians in Western Armenia was estimated at 1,198,000 and in Cilicia at 205,050 (not considering the Armenians of the other regions of the Ottoman Empire). Later, by 1921, 75,000 had taken refuge from there in Syria (from Cilicia), in Palestine - 3,500; in Mesopotamia - 6,000; in Yerevan - 200,000; in the North Caucasus - 60,000; in the Black Sea region - 60,000; in Persia or America - 20,000, the total number making 464,000 refugees. Subsequently, due to the massacres of 1922, another 60,000 Armenians took refuge in Greece; in Bulgaria - 10,000; in Algeria, Tunisia and Egypt - 1,500; in France - 1,350; in Italy - 850. Hagob Turabian (ed.), *L'Arménie et la Question Arménienne avant, pendant et depuis la guerre* (Paris: Imp. Turabian, 1922), 9, 70-71. According to the modern research by the Armenian scholars, the number of Armenians living in the Ottoman Empire before WWI was 2,488,100, of whom 1, 675, 800 were living in the Western Armenia and Cilicia. See Հայոց Պատմություն: Հ. 3, Նոր ժամանակաշրջան (XVII դարի երկրորդ կես - 1918 թ.): Գիրք II (1901-1918 թթ., հայ գաղթափախերը, պարբերական մամուլը և վշակույթը XIX դ. և XX դ. սկզբին) [The History of Armenia, vol. III. Modern Era (Second half of the XVII century - 1918), book 2 (1901-1918, Armenian settlements, periodical press and culture in the XIX century and the beginning of the XX century)], eds. Ashot Melkonyan et al. (Yerevan: NAS RA, Institute of History, 2015), 64.

12 Dzovinar Kévonian, *Réfugiés et diplomatie humanitaire. Les acteurs européens et la scène proche-orientale pendant l'entre-deux-guerres* (Paris: Sorbonne, 2014), 541.

13 Положение беженцев в Александропольском районе [The situation of Refugees in Alexandropol Region], (Baku: Типография Pervogo Типографического Товарищества, 1915); Prist S. Aslanyan, Среди беженцев (Личные впечатления). Перепечатка из "Астраханского вестника" [Among the Refugees (Personal Impressions). Reprint from "Astrakhan Vestnik"] (Astrakhan: Типография А.А. Shtyl'ko, 1915) Grigor Chalkhush'yan, Красная книга [The Red Book], (Rostov on Don: Типография Ashkhatank, 1919).

14 See the newspaper collection *Армяне и Война* [Armenians and War] (Odessa), 1916, 1917, 1918, or *Армянский Вестник* [The Armenian Bulletin] (Moscow), 1916, 1917, 1918; *Armenian Red Cross and Refugee Fund*. First Annual Report (London: np, 1915); Second Annual Report (London: np, 1916); Third Annual Report (London: np, 1917); Fourth Annual Report (London: np, 1918); Fifth Annual Report (London: np, 1919); Sixth Annual Report (London: np., 1920). See also: Eduard Narcis Antonian, "Armenii din Imperiul Otoman la începutul secolului XX," in *Mărturii. Genocidul armenilor*, 80-84.

15 "Chestiunea orfanilor armeni la Geneva," in *Ararat* (Bucharest), October 1926, no. 28, 5.

ries. The approximate or unofficial total number of orphans living in the unoccupied areas was estimated at 60,750 and in the occupied territories 12,600.

In order to save them from Islamisation and provide them with places of safety as a large part of them were in Turkish locations, the premise of the Commission for the Protection of Women and Children of the Middle East became the “House of the League of Nations,” thus allowing the transfer of children to other places, institutions or charities, or to their relatives or families who had managed to survive. From Constantinople, now Istanbul, the children were sent abroad.<sup>16</sup>

### **Armenian Orphans in Romania**

After completing the necessary formalities and a medical examination 200 orphaned children arrived by ship in Romania on 12 April 1923.<sup>17</sup> Transporting them to the Romanian coast, on a stormy sea, took one day, the children being accompanied by Khachadour N. Vosdanigian, secretary of the Union of Armenians in Romania (UAR),<sup>18</sup> in charge of bringing the orphans to the country.<sup>19</sup>

According to contemporary testimonies, the children who disembarked in Constanța “had been gathered up from the sides of roads” or “taken from under carts transporting dead people...,” “some had been taken from the breasts of their dying mothers..., others had been entrusted to authorities or charity institutions by the parents themselves...” They “had lived in orphanages run by scattered groups from Adana to Beirut or used as labor in the weaving mills of Aleppo and Damascus. Each child was wearing a cardboard placard around his neck with his Armenian name on it.”<sup>20</sup>

Hairabed Bostanjian stated that when they landed in Constanța, “A mass of people, both men and women, Armenians and Romanians, were there” to meet them, “waving handkerchiefs, some with tears in their eyes, others making the sign of the cross.”<sup>21</sup>

If we examine the data from the *Album* with reference to the orphaned children (which, in some places, are incomplete), despite the fact that the information concerning eight out of 150 boys has been removed, that the profile photos are missing of 18 children (10 girls and 8 boys) and only 174 of the 200 children were photographed, we can still conclude that the orphans were born between 1906 and 1918. The majority went through the ordeal of genocide; most were born in 1911 (35 in number), followed by those born in 1913 (32); 1909 (25); 1910 (23); 1912 (20); 1914 (18); 1908 (16) etc. The youngest was 5 years old, and the oldest was 17.

Among the orphans were those who, at the beginning of the massacres, were only a

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16 Kévonian, *Réfugiés et diplomatie humanitaire*, 145-146, 151-152.

17 In some sources there were 198 children, in others 400 children. Varujan Vosganian, *Cartea șoaptelor* (Ediția a II-a, Iași: Polirom, 2012), 399-400.

18 Established in early 1919, the organization had the mission of taking on and assisting Armenian refugees. *Archive of the Armenian Archdiocese of Romania (AAAR)*, D. 471, 12; D. 161, 1-99.

19 Edvard Jeamgocian, *U.A.R. 100 /Khaciadur N.Vosdanighian [1864(?)]-feb. 1942*, *primul secretar al Uniunii Armenilor din România: 1919-1922*, at <http://www.araratonline.com/u-a-r-100-khaciadur-n-vosdanighian-1864-feb-1942-primul-secretar-al-uniunii-armenilor-din-romania-1919-1922/>, accessed 05.01.2020.

20 Vosganian, *Cartea șoaptelor*, 401.

21 AAAR, D. 260, 161-168; Bostangian, *În Turcia era*, 106.

few days old; others were from one to a few months old, others being between one and nine years old.<sup>22</sup> Most of the children, 34, came from Ordu, followed by Stanoz (17 children), Chankere (13), Ankara (11), Kapan Maden (11 children), Erzerum (8), Amasia (8), Constantinople (7), Kesaria (6), Adabazar (6), Brusa (5), Kastemuni (4), Sebastia (3), Eskishehir (3) and one-two orphans from other localities in the Ottoman Empire.

The data entered shows that there were children who bore the same surname, which leads me to believe that they were brothers, sisters or relatives. For example, the three Karaoghlanian boys: Norair, 9, Haikazun, 10, and Haik, 13, were all born in Changra; or the Kahvegian girls: 10-year-old Vergin, 11-year-old Araxi and 12-year-old Azaduhi, who were born in Stanoci.

Examining the photos of the children, who seem, in some pictures, to be scared and disorientated, it can be seen that they wore modest clothing of a uniform style. Many boys displayed the tip of a white handkerchief protruding from the pockets of their shirts. The girls had short haircuts (probably for hygienic reasons) and almost all of them had bows in their hair and wore a beaded pendant with a medallion or cross around their necks.

Regarding the children's physical and mental condition when they arrived in Strungă, we can conclude from the reports in the magazine *Ararat* that they were facing certain health problems, having been witnesses to the horrors of genocide. If some did seem healthy, others were affected by skin diseases (possibly as a result of neuro-psychiatric disorders or malnutrition).<sup>23</sup> During the massacres, some children became infected with tuberculosis, which was a fatal disease in the early 20th century. The orphan Azaduhi Somanjian, who had nobody - her parents having died during the deportations, a sister being abducted by the Kurds and an older brother killed in front of her - brought the disease from Asia Minor, where she came from. After a life of wandering from village to village, the girl reached Brusa, from where she was sent to Constantinople and, later, to Strungă in Romania, together with the other orphans. Living with Anton Ștefănescu's family in Bacău for two years, where, together with four other orphans, she enjoyed that adoptive family's care. She died at the age of 17 of galloping tuberculosis in the Bârnova sanatorium, mourned by orphanage friends and the Ștefănescu family.<sup>24</sup>

### **Foundation of the Orphanage in Moldova<sup>25</sup>**

As early as the summer of 1921, the National Council of the Patriarchate of Constantinople established, in Bucharest, a branch of the Fundraising Committee for Orphans, one of whose representatives was Khachadour N. Vosdanigian. Later, in November 1921, the

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22 In 1915, Hayrabad Bostangian, reached the age of 6... and in 1915-1920 he had lost all connection with the rest of the family... Borrowing a Turkish name, he was admitted to a Turkish orphanage, with about 4,000 Turkish, Greek and Armenian children. Bostangian, *În Turcia era*, 106.

23 "Locale," *Ararat*, June 1925, no. 12, 7; December 1926, no. 30, 8; July 1927, no. 37, 8.

24 "Locale," *Ararat*, July 1925, no. 13, 7.

25 Moldova was one of the 10 provinces of the Great Romania (Muntenia, Oltenia, Dobrogea, Transilvania, Banat, Crișana, Maramureș, Bucovina and Bessarabia), located in the East of the country, between the Carpathian Mountains and the Prut River. Is not to be confused with actual Moldova (Republic), successor of RSSM/Bessarabia.

Committee was renamed as the Orphanage Committee, which was at the basis of the Armenian orphanage establishment in Strunga.<sup>26</sup>

The Armenian community in Romania worked very hard to open the orphanage. Many people, led by Armenag Manisalian as well as Khachadour N. Vosdanigian made numerous tours around the country and to Constantinople, activities which took more than a year.

With the approval of King Ferdinand I, the orphanage received the 200 children, with the authorization of the Romanian Government and a collective passport endorsed by the Romanian Ministry of the Interior dated 18 November 1922, on 1 April 1923.<sup>27</sup>

Hairabed Bostangian remembers that before arriving at the orphanage, the orphans, "... while waiting to leave for Strunga were hosted by Armenian families from Constanța and Bucharest."<sup>28</sup>

According to the *Album*, the children entered the orphanage on 1 May 1923, arriving by carts at their destination. Although there is nothing in Strunga to recall the existence of the former orphanage, it is certain that it was founded, almost a century ago, by the generosity of the Manolescu-Strunga family, the humanitarian aid being provided by the UAR in the person of its president, Armenag Manisalian<sup>29</sup> (who had also become the chairman of the central committee of the orphanage), as well as with the support of the Armenian community of Romania.

Located in an area with sulfurous mineral waters, the orphanage was housed in a building meant for spa baths. Founded in 1880 at the initiative of the landowner and Dr. Nicolae Manolescu-Strunga (1850-1910), the baths had gone into decline during WWI.

The orphanage building had over 30 rooms and an infirmary, laundry, bathroom, kitchen (where Sofia Agop, a widow with two children, cooked),<sup>30</sup> a living room, cloakroom, workshops, etc. plus housing for educators, caregivers, seamstresses and service people. The landscape around the orphanage seemed to be soothing, as anyone could spend their time "in the midst of the fir trees."<sup>31</sup> Manush Mardirosian (born on 15 August 1915 in a locality in Persia), who arrived in Strunga with her father who was a teacher, remembers that the orphans were housed in some beautiful buildings, behind which was a hill with a small church on it, the walls of which had carved Armenian inscriptions. A forest and a field full of flowers that were like a carpet of violets was in front of the buildings.<sup>32</sup> The orphanage also had large orchards with fruit trees and gardens which were cultivated by the orphans themselves to provide the vegetables needed for their daily food. According to Hairabed Bostangian's testimony, the orphanage also had a sports field and children's' playgrounds.<sup>33</sup> Even though the area offered a feeling of safety, the children were not exempt from bad

26 Jeamgocian, *U.A.R.* 100.

27 *AAAR*, D. 177, 33; D. 260, 62.

28 *Bostangian*, În *Turcia*, 107.

29 "Statutele Orfelinatului Armean din România," *Ararat*, 1 August 1924, no. 2, 2.

30 *AAAR*, D. 260, 162.

31 "În jurul Orfelinatului," *Ararat*, April 1925 no. 10, 3; "Serbarea Orfelinatului," *Ararat*, September 1925, no. 15, 5.

32 See min. 27 in *Strunga* Documentary.

33 "Informațiuni," *Ararat*, July 1, 1924, no. 1, 7; "Transferarea Orfelinatului," *Ararat*, April 1926, no. 22, 5; *Bostangian*, În *Turcia*, 107.

weather. The orphanage was affected by an unusually heavy hail storm, which caused damage estimated at 15,000 lei<sup>34</sup>, in June 1924. Later, in the spring of 1926, Strunga was covered with a vast amount of snow.<sup>35</sup>

### **Orphanage Administration and Management**

The Council of the Armenian Diocese of Romania appointed a central committee for a period of five years for the administration of the institution, composed of a chairman, vice-chairman, secretary and three advisers, their positions being honorary. The central committee was later completed with three new members: K. Eksergian, Hazarian and A. Acikgheozian. The vice-chairman, K. Eksergian, had the task of managing things at Strunga in Armenag Manisalian's absence.<sup>36</sup>

The orphanage central committee was in Bucharest, on Calea Victoriei Street. It was responsible for administering funds, appointing and replacing the principal and the entire staff of the orphanage, setting salaries, vetting and approving members of the orphanage management and organizing regional committees (initially 18, later, starting in 1924, 22). If comparison is made of the number of regional committees by province, it can be seen that the most numerous were in Vechiul Regat (Old Kingdom), followed by those in Bessarabia, Cetatea Albă (Akkerman), Chişinău, Bălţi and Hânceşti. The regional committees were responsible for covering orphanage expenses with the minimum amounts set by the general assembly, made up of all the orphanage's great and small benefactors.<sup>37</sup>

### **Education and Other Activities at the Orphanage**

A four-grade primary school based on a three-year curriculum was opened in Strunga for the orphans' education, including an elementary vocational school. In order to train the orphans for a profession, the orphanage also set up two workshops for boys (one for shoemaking and another for wood turning) and a workshop for girls (for making oriental carpets). Thanks to the Nefian brothers, merchants in Bucharest, the carpet workshop was equipped with 12 weaving looms.<sup>38</sup>

Education at the orphanage was compulsory and was conducted in accordance with the curriculum of Armenian schools in Romania as approved by the Ministry of Public Instruction, the school courses being conducted in Romanian and Armenian. Although children were on vacation in summer, Romanian language lessons continued uninterrupted so that by the end of August, the children would be able to pass their examinations. In actual fact, the orphans made significant progress in the second year, especially in learning the language of their host country.<sup>39</sup> Recalling past events, Hairabed Bostangian said that some

34 The Romanian leu (plural lei) is the currency of Romania.

35 "Ştiri de la Orfelinat," *Ararat*, 1 August 1924, no. 2, 5; "Locale," *Ararat*, April 1926, no. 22, 8.

36 "Orfelinatul," *Ararat*, April 1925 no. 10, 7; "Locale," *Ararat*, July 1925, no. 13, 8.

37 "Statutele Orfelinatului Armean din România," *Ararat*, 1 August 1924, no. 2, 2; "Orfelinatul," *Ararat*, July 1926, no. 25, 5.

38 "Transferarea Orfelinatului," in *Ararat*, April 1926, no. 22, 5; "Adunare Generală anuală a Orfelinatului Armean din România," in *Ararat*, 1 July 1924, no. 1, 6; "Locale," *Ararat*, January 1925, no. 7, 8.

39 "Ştiri de la Orfelinat," *Ararat*, August 1, 1924, no. 2, 5; "Adunare Generală anuală a Orfelinatului Armean

of the children could neither read nor write. As for the teachers: “We were surrounded by staff filled with unimaginable love and we felt very good, as if forgetting the ‘fire’ we had gone through...”<sup>40</sup>

Among the orphanage mentors and teachers were the principal, deputy principal and teachers of the institution. For three years, until June 1926, “showing diligence, honor, and invaluable features as an organizer and educator,” Sarkis Srintz was the principal: “an eminent teacher and diplomatist of the Nancy Normal School”. He helped in reorganizing some incomplete committees and visited Bessarabia, Moldova and Bukovina to raise money for the orphans. Following the closure of the orphanage, Sarkis Srintz was appointed as a teacher at the Armenian school in Bucharest. On his initiative a circle of former orphanage students from Strunga was formed - “Casa noastră” (Our House), where single young people gathered, eating together and “...after leaving the workshops, keeping busy with useful reading.”<sup>41</sup>

Eliza Srintz, the principal’s daughter, a graduate of the English College in Constantinople, also worked at Strunga by the autumn of 1925.<sup>42</sup> Nshan Maganian, Armenian language teacher, who settled in Romania in 1922, taught history and geography at the orphanage.<sup>43</sup>

Thanks to their teachers, the children learned both school subjects and to recite verses in Armenian and Romanian and to sing and dance. Various celebrations or commemorations in which children were involved tell us of the skills learnt by the orphans. Under the leadership of the principal and the teachers, April 24 was commemorated with both a religious service and a memorial one, held in the orphanage’s chapel.<sup>44</sup> On May 10 (Romanian royal day), the principal would give a patriotic speech, and a religious service would be held in the orphanage’s chapel. On May 13, the orphans would attend the solemn commemoration of the *Unknown Hero*, which would take place in the local cemetery. Another celebration was related to the creation of the Armenian alphabet on St. Mesrob’s Day.<sup>45</sup>

The orphanage’s anniversary was another important event that was held every year and a program was prepared with the utmost care. A detailed description of the second anniversary celebration may be read in *Ararat* magazine. It began on Sunday, September 7, 1924, and lasted for two days in superb weather. The arrival of the guests was facilitated by a special car service, which brought them from Tg. Frumos station to Strunga. Guests arrived from Bucharest, Constanța, Cernăuți, Galați, Brăila, Iași, Suceava, Botoșani, Roman, Bacău, Tg. Ocna, Brădulești and Tg. Frumos.<sup>46</sup>

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din România,” *Ararat*, 1 July 1924, no. 1, 6.

40 Bostangian, *În Turcia*, 107.

41 “De la Orfelinat,” *Ararat*, January 1925, no. 7, 8; “Locale,” *Ararat*, November 1925, no. 17, 8; October 1926, no. 28, 7; October 1928 no. 52, 8; March 1930, no. 4 (60), 8.

42 The principal had three daughters: Annig, Eliza and Armine. The latter was soon lost, and the former left for Greece in 1924 to marry the Armenian professor Nerses Balian, who later, both, returned to Romania. *AAAR*, D. 260, 125; “De la Orfelinat,” *Ararat*, August 1926, no. 26, 7; “Locale,” *Ararat*, October 1926, no. 28, 7; Vosganian, *Cartea șoaptelor*, 400.

43 “Nășan Maganian (1891-1978),” at <http://personalitati.araratonline.com/maganian-nasan-1891-1978/>, accessed 01.06.2020; see min. 21 in *Strunga* Documentary.

44 “De la Orfelinat,” *Ararat*, May 1925, No.11, 7.

45 “Locale,” *Ararat*, June 1926, no. 24, 8; “Informațiuni,” *Ararat*, 1 July 1924, no. 1, 7; “Locale,” *Ararat*, June 1926, no. 24, 8; “Știri de la Orfelinat,” *Ararat*, 1 August 1924, no. 2, 5.

46 “Știri de la Orfelinat,” *Ararat*, 1 August 1924, no. 2, 5.



Although physically absent, representatives of Bessarabia's regional committees also joined the anniversary through several written messages. For example, the chairman of the committee from Hâncești, Tosunianțș, sent a greeting: "...regretting not being able to take part in the celebration, we send you our joyful and warm greetings and congratulations... Long live His Majesty the King and the dynasty. Long live great Romania." From Chișinău, the following telegram came from the priest Rev. Zadigian: "I congratulate you and I hope you continue the work begun with the same wonderful ardor ..."<sup>47</sup>

The celebratory religious service began at 10 o'clock, led by the priest Rev. Leon Papazian,<sup>48</sup> in the presence of Bishop Husig Zohrabian, accompanied by the choir of orphans conducted by Stepan Sagheldian. After the service, the guests, led by orphans, visited the orphanage gardens. At 12 o'clock a table, set on the orphanage terrace and adorned with wildflowers awaited the guests. The series of toasts was begun by Armenag Manisalian, who praised the principal and the entire staff for their work for the good of the children. At the end, he wished good health for the king and queen, the glory and greatness of Romania, the hospitable country where a handful of children had found shelter.

Later, at 2 pm, the school celebration began in the large orphanage hall, adorned with garlands of flowers, greenery and flags, which was opened with the royal anthem sung by the school choir. Dozens of children ascended the improvised tribune, reciting in Romanian and Armenian. Armenian national dances aroused admiration among the spectators.

The final part of the program, which included gymnastics and various games, held on the field in front of the main pavilion, took place later in the evening, the boys being led by masters Maganian and Mardiros, and the girls by Miss Eliza Srintz.<sup>49</sup>

The New Year celebration was marked by children through various songs. In general, children were educated in the spirit of the adoptive country's identity, being taught to cherish and love Romania's royal family. Both during and after the celebrations, the orphans were visited by different people, either to contribute to their material support, a subject I will return to below, or to encourage them through communication with them.<sup>50</sup> Regarding the visits to the orphanage, Hairabed Bostangian remembers that between 1923 and 1924 conditions were unforgettable. Many Armenians ... visited them very often, always providing the children with food, clothing and other necessary things.<sup>51</sup>

Another custom established at the orphanage was the organization of excursions. To visit the Olympic Games on 19 July 1925, a group of 24 orphans met Father Măgărdici Bodurian for tea.<sup>52</sup> It became a real artistic celebration lasting for three hours.

In addition to the stated activities, the orphanage also focused on the development of physical culture and the sports movement. The boys played football and participated in various matches. Hairabed Bostangian fondly remembers these activities: "One day... I

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47 "Serbarea aniversară a Orfelinatlui," *Ararat*, 1 October 1924, no. 4, 5-6.

48 Priest from the town of Roman, awarded with numerous decorations, including the "French Medal of Honor," at <http://personalitati.araratonline.com/papazian-leon-1872-1928/>, accessed 01.06.2019.

49 "Serbarea aniversară a Orfelinatlui," *Ararat*, 1 October 1924, no. 4, 5.

50 "De la Orfelinat," *Ararat*, January 1925, no. 7, 8; "Locale," *Ararat*, May 1925, no.11, 8.

51 Bostangian, *În Turcia*, 107.

52 Armenian vicar-priest of the Catholic rite (1881-1959), scholar and preacher of Armenian culture, at <http://personalitati.araratonline.com/bodurian-magardici-1881-1959/>, accessed 07.11.2019.

was playing football, having sandals on that were tied with string ... Armenag Manisalian, seeing us, got very upset and ordered football boots and special T-shirts for all the boys... In another case, the orphanage was visited by an Armenian from the USA, who endowed it with baseball equipment...<sup>53</sup>

Two football teams were set up at the orphanage: "Ararat 1" and "Ararat 2." In the summer of 1924, the "Ararat 2" team had a match against one from Tg. Frumos. At the beginning, the orphanage team was hesitant against the opposing one, but in the second half, it won the match with a score of 2 to 0.<sup>54</sup> Practicing sports, excursions, walks and visits was a way for children to shape their personalities.

### **Reduction of the Number of Orphans in Strunga**

During the three years of its existence, the number of children in the orphanage steadily decreased. The *Album* highlights the fact that a few months after its establishment, between July and November 1923, 14 children (9 boys and 5 girls) left it. In 1924, from May to December, 40 children left (34 boys and 6 girls), and from February to October 1925, another seven children left (4 boys and 3 girls).

The names of the children in Strunga had been published in many countries with Armenian populations in Europe. That way some children found their relatives, while others were adopted by Armenian families from France, Bulgaria, Greece, etc. Some of them, through happy circumstances, were reunited with their mothers, fathers, uncles and aunts settled in different parts of the world, such as the towns in Romania (Bucharest, Constanța, Roman, Botoșani), Bulgaria, Greece, France and the USA. In the summer of 1924, two of the children were called to Paris by an elder brother. Both embarked on the ship *Robert Bella* at the port of Brăila, to leave for Marseilles, from where they were to continue their journey to Paris.<sup>55</sup>

*Ararat* magazine reported in early 1926 that several children from the orphanage went to their close relatives who made a living in different countries - 12 left for Constantinople being called there by relatives. According to the records, the number of orphans decreased, "especially in the second year" from 200 at the beginning to 125.<sup>56</sup>

During the first general assembly that took place on 25 May 1924, a year after its opening, it was decided not to accept any more orphans except for those who were to be adopted through legal means. Subsequently, only children of adolescent age were entrusted to individuals, provided that they assumed the responsibility of taking care of them like parents and taught them a trade. Orphans could only be removed from the institution if a favorable opinion from the regional committee was obtained.<sup>57</sup> The Armenians in Romania were informed that there were, in 1925, several boys between the ages of 15 and 17 at the

53 Bostangian, *În Turcia*, 107.

54 "Informațiuni," *Ararat*, 1 July 1924, no.1, 7; "De la Orfelinat," *Ararat*, May 1925, no. 11, 3.

55 "Informațiuni," *Ararat*, 1 July 1924, no. 1, 7.

56 "Transferarea Orfelinatului," *Ararat*, April 1926, no. 22, 5; "Locale," *Ararat*, February 1926, no. 20, 8; "Orfelinatul," *Ararat*, August 1925, no. 14, 4.

57 "Adunare Generală anuală a Orfelinatului Armean din România," *Ararat*, 1 July 1924, no. 1, 6; "Statutele Orfelinatului Armean din România," *Ararat*, 1 August 1924, no. 2, 2.

orphanage who had finished primary school and had learnt a trade. They were well brought up, obedient and healthy and would be useful to those who wanted them to teach others the craft they were engaged in.<sup>58</sup>

It appears from the *Album* that several orphans were taken for adoption by the same person. Ardashes Bardisbanian of Bucharest had taken 5 orphans and Hagop Baclagian 4. A. Ștefănescu of Bacău adopted 3 orphans. Hairabed Bostangian reveals that he and many others like him were employed as apprentices to various Armenian merchants or craftsmen, jewelers, watchmakers, etc. "...Among my orphanage colleagues I remember Kalust Hazarian (I know he died in 1993 in Constanța), Stepan Meldonian, Antranig Marcarian, Edvard Gearbinian... The latter was adopted by an Armenian merchant and became an aviator..."<sup>59</sup> If we analyze the number of orphans taken by individuals by gender (even if the proportion was different, from 75 to 25 percent), we can see that boys were more often asked for than girls.

### Orphanage Subsidy and Supply

The existence of the establishment was due to various donations and grants that facilitated the care of the orphans. This aspect deserves special attention when dealing with the problem. The funds the orphanage had at its disposal consisted of various taxes (around 7,000 lei per year from patrons) paid in two half-yearly installments, subscriptions (collected monthly by regional committees), voluntary donations, benefits from balls and celebrations organized by the regional committees, as well as the subsidy granted by the Romanian Ministry of Health and Social Welfare. The orphanage received an annual subsidy of 60,000 lei from the ministry, including various amounts from Banca Comercială Română (the National Bank of Romania) and many other banking and commercial institutions in Bucharest such as Banca Românească, Contin-Export, Creditul Român, Marmorosh Blank, Moara Assan, Moara Comercială, Societatea generală de Export, Societatea Intercontinentală și Societatea Leonida (General Export Society, Intercontinental Society and Leonida Society).<sup>60</sup> The establishment of the UAR office significantly eased the collection of monthly subscriptions. Taking 1925 alone, about 400,000 Romanian lei was paid into the orphanage's account solely from Bucharest. The orphanage's material situation could only improve with the intervention of the head of the establishment.<sup>61</sup>

In order to support and supply the orphanage, a food collection campaign or "collection of offerings in kind" was started at the initiative of the central committee. Starting in November 1924, "an ad-hoc commission composed of several people roamed Armenian merchants' shops in Calea Griviței Street and received various quantities of sugar, tea and

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58 "Locale," *Ararat*, June 1925, no. 12, 7.

59 Bostangian, *În Turcia*, 107-108.

60 "Statutele Orfelinatului Armean din România," *Ararat*, 1 August 1924, no. 2, 2; "Adunare generală anuală a Orfelinatului Armean din România," *Ararat*, 1 July 1924, no. 1, 6; "Orfelinatul," *Ararat*, August 1925, no. 14, 4; "Știri de la Orfelinat," *Ararat*, 1 August 1924, no. 2, 5.

61 "Pentru orfani," *Ararat*, December 1925, no. 18, 5; "Locale," *Ararat*, September 1925, no. 15, 8; October, November 1925, no. 16, No.17, 8; November 1926, no. 29, 8; April 1925, no. 10, 8; January 1925, no. 7, 8.

pasta...<sup>62</sup> The Bucharest regional committee sent a first consignment of snacks weighing about 1,000 kg for the holidays at the end of 1924, followed by two more in the first month of 1925. Various products arrived at the orphanage from the “sugar king” of Romania, Harutiun Frengian, who would donate 30 kg of halva at holiday time.<sup>63</sup>

Children were also offered a range of basic necessities during orphanage celebrations. For example, on the second anniversary, several benefactors - the brothers Galustian and Ohanes from Bacău, Mrs. A. Baragian, A. Bardizbanian, B. Ohanes, Messrs. Bercovici, Zakarian, Melikset, K. Măgărdician, Frimovici and others - donated flour (200 kg), sugar (30 kg), fat (112 kg), cheese (10 kg), confectionery (10 kg), chocolate (9.5 kg), biscuits (5 kg), candies (3 kg), melons (100), eggs (100), vinegar (8 bottles), noodles (two boxes), cream (12 boxes), chicory (5 boxes), socks (36 pairs), handkerchiefs (36), soap (5 kg) and toilet soap (36 tablets).<sup>64</sup>

Several people committed themselves, in 1925, to provide fabric and sewed clothes for orphans. A. Acikgeozian sent linen cloth worth 12,000 lei. Later, a group of ladies from Bucharest made 150 suits using the donated fabric.<sup>65</sup> Armenian children themselves took part in charitable activities aimed at helping the orphans. At New Year, the students of the school in Bucharest, collecting money among them, sent their schoolmates in Strunga school supplies valued at 2,258 lei.<sup>66</sup> Another form of orphan support was cash donations. The orphanage received various amounts, large and small, depending on the donors' means. Adina Take Ionescu, wife of the brilliant lawyer and prime minister of Romania and lady-in-waiting to Queen Maria, donated 5,000 lei; Evanghel Mataranga from Turnu Măgurele, 1,500 lei etc.<sup>67</sup> D.A. Yughaperian, president of the Prevederea Insurance Company, donated 1,000 lei for the support of orphans when he visited the orphanage in summer 1924. Other donations of 1,000; 500; 200; 100; 80; 75; 60 and 50 lei came from Armenians from Gherla. The lawyer Anton Melic offered 4,000 lei during the winter holidays in 1925.<sup>68</sup>

Among the donors there were philanthropists who did not want to divulge their identities. For example, on several occasions 50,000 and 30,000 lei were sent to the orphanage by an anonymous local benefactor from Galați, through Aram Ghiumlushian. There were also cases of bequests made to the orphanage through wills.<sup>69</sup>

Significant sums were also raised by the Armenian regional committees for the benefit

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62 “Locale,” *Ararat*, December 1, 1924, no. 6, 8.

63 “Harutiun Frengian,” at <http://personalitati.araratonline.com/frengian-harutiun-franghian-sau-frenkian-1873-1959/>, accessed 14.11.2019; “Donațiuni,” *Ararat*, January 1925, no. 7, 3; “De la Orfelinat,” *Ararat*, January 1925, no. 7, 8; “Orfelinatul,” *Ararat*, April 1925, no. 10, 7; “Locale,” *Ararat*, April 1926, no. 22, 8.

64 “Serbarea aniversară a Orfelinatului,” *Ararat*, 1 1924, no. 4, 6; “Locale,” *Ararat*, August 1926, no. 26, 8.

65 “Orfelinatul,” *Ararat*, April 1925, no.10, 7; “Locale,” *Ararat*, May 1925, no. 11, 8; July 1925, no. 13, 8.

66 “Locale,” *Ararat*, February 1925, no. 8, 8; “De la Orfelinat,” *Ararat*, January 1925, no. 7, 8; “Locale,” *Ararat*, October 1925, no. 16, 8.

67 “Ea ...femeia din elita politică românească: Adina Take Ionescu,” at <http://www.rador.ro/2015/03/01/ea-femeia-din-elita-politica-romaneasca-adina-take-ionescu/>, accessed 08.11.2019; “Pentru Orfelinat,” *Ararat*, May 1926, no. 23, 6.

68 “Știri de la Orfelinat,” *Ararat*, 1 August 1924, no. 2, 5; “Donațiuni pentru Orfelinat,” *Ararat*, May 1925, no. 11, 3; “Locale,” June 1925, no. 12, 8; “Donațiuni,” in *Ararat*, January 1925, No.7, 3.

69 “Locale,” *Ararat*, October 1925, no.16, 8; December 1925, no. 18, 6; “Donații,” *Ararat*, June 1925, no. 12, 4; “Locale,” *Ararat*, January 1926, no. 19, 7.

of the orphanage. According to the budget for 1924-1925, the revenues from the 18 committees amounted to 870,000 lei and from the committees in Bessarabia 70,000 lei.<sup>70</sup>

Although the orphans in Strunga had many well-wishers in Bessarabia, such as the chairmen of the committees in Chisinau and Balti - V. Acicov, and Iacob Marcarov, respectively, the material contribution made by Armenians from these regions was sporadic and uneven, Armenian charity work suffering largely from expropriation and the lawsuit filed in the case of Ograda Armenească (the Armenian Courtyard).<sup>71</sup> According to *Ararat* magazine, an important donation came from Hâncești to Strunga from D. Tosunian, who offered 1,300 lei on its second anniversary.<sup>72</sup> Compared to the Armenians from Hâncești, whose numbers were significant, the community from Cetatea Albă, which was quite numerous and rich, “did not contribute any money... and did not appear in the list of donors during 1924.”<sup>73</sup>

A few years later, O.I. Marcarov expressed his regret that the town of Balti could not provide an annual contribution of 7,000 lei to support the orphanage until 1926 giving, as a comparison, the small community of Suceava that had offered 27,000 lei. In order to raise a certain amount of money in support of the orphans, a committee led by Marcarov organised a charity event where the amount of 9,800 lei was collected, with another 1,000 lei being added by H. Marcarov himself. Another 12,140 lei arrived at the orphanage from the committee about a month after that event.<sup>74</sup>

Significant donations reached the orphanage from abroad. Thus, the Armenian community in Belgrade sent 10,000 lei in March 1925. In September 1926 5,000 lei arrived on behalf of Dr. Stepanian, a former doctor in Strunga, from Tehran.<sup>75</sup>

A charity tradition was the *Oriental Ball* held for the benefit of the orphanage. The first of these, with the enchanting appearance of *A thousand and one nights* took place on February 28, 1925 (a Saturday), in Liedertafel.<sup>76</sup> Hundreds of valuable carpets and curtains, which adorned the halls, had been made available to the organizing committee free of charge by several merchants in the capital, representing a value of tens of millions of lei. There were a great number of assistants and the presence of several personalities from the elite of Bucharest was remarkable. Numerous splendid masks and costumes were to be seen and musical compositions and dances were performed by first class artists. The buffet was very grand. The ball lasted until the following morning... with the net benefit/income

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70 “Locale,” *Ararat*, May 1925, no. 11, 8; August, no. 14, 8; February, no. 8, 8; January 1926, no.19, 7; “Bugetul orfelinatlui armean din România pe anul 1924-1925,” *Ararat*, July 1924, no. 1, 7.

71 “Prietenii orfanilor,” *Ararat*, January 1925, no.7, 5; Lidia Prisac, “Ograda armenească din Chișinău (1813-1922),” in *Identitățile Chișinăului. Materialele conferinței științifice (19-20 octombrie 2017, Ediția a IV-a)* (Chișinău: Arc, 2018), 161-171; Lidia Prisac, “Exproprierea Ogrăzii Armenești din Chișinău (1922-1932),” in *Identitățile Chișinăului. Materialele conferinței științifice (1-2 noiembrie 2018, Ediția a V-a)* (Chișinău: Arc, 2019), 230-240.

72 “Serbarea aniversară a Orfelinatlui,” *Ararat*, 1 October 1924, no. 4, 6.

73 In 1928 there were 22 Armenian families, with 76 souls, of which some were very poor. *AAAR*, D. 221, 5; D. 351; “Orfelinatlul,” *Ararat*, August 1925, no. 14, 4.

74 “Corespondențe,” *Ararat*, April 1926, no. 22, 7; “Pentru Orfelinat,” *Ararat*, May 1926, no. 23, 6.

75 “Orfelinatlul,” *Ararat*, April 1925, no.10, 7; “Locale,” *Ararat*, October 1926, no. 28, 7.

76 Song society, founded in Bucharest in 1852, at <https://dexonline.ro/definitie/liebertafel/540913>, accessed 03.06. 2019; “Știri diverse,” *Ararat*, 1 December 1924, no. 6, 8; “Locale,” *Ararat*, February 1925, no. 8, 8; November 1925, no.17, 8.

totaling over 200,000 lei.<sup>77</sup> Money was collected during charity balls even after the closure of the orphanage.<sup>78</sup>

## **General Meetings and the Closure of the Orphanage**

The first annual general assembly of patrons and donors was held at Strunga on 25 May 1924, under the chairmanship of Armenag Manisalian. The auditor's report for 1923-1924 was heard and the general budget detailing revenue and expenditure was set. The minimum amount which each regional committee was to contribute to the orphanage's expenditure was also fixed. Although a new general assembly was planned for the second year, it was never convened.<sup>79</sup> The third was to have been held during the third year, but as a significant number of branch delegates in the country did not respond to their invitations, the meeting was postponed indefinitely. Things seemed to be generally unchanged at the orphanage, especially in terms of health... However, the idea that the orphanage would no longer be profitable because of the declining number of children began to be circulated as early as the spring of 1925.<sup>80</sup>

According to reports in *Ararat* magazine, there were several voices in the community that spoke about the orphanage's unprofitability.<sup>81</sup> In this sense, there were several solutions proposed regarding the institution. The first was to send the orphans to Armenia, which was not feasible because of the difficulties that the children would be subjected to on such a journey. Meanwhile Armenia had been sovietized. Another solution was to transfer the orphanage to Bucharest - a situation that would have been more difficult due to the rents payable which would have been greater than that paid in Strunga.<sup>82</sup>

The uncertain situation around the orphanage and the misunderstanding between the members of the establishment's central committee, made Armenag Manisalian resign from the position of central committee chairman in the summer of 1926. In the new circumstances and lack of funds, although there were still 70 orphans in the orphanage, it became necessary to create a commission elected from the executive committee to close it. Armenag Manisalian's resignation led to a series of other resignations - those of the teacher Srintz, accountant Şantarzian, deputy director Gulbenkian, as well as the principal of the orphanage, Sarkis Srintz, remaining at Strunga with only one assistant and a single teacher.<sup>83</sup> In the autumn of 1926, another communiqué stated that at Strunga "...there were only five children

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77 "Balul Orfelinatului," *Ararat*, March 1925, no. 9, 8.

78 "Locale," *Ararat*, March 1926, no. 21, 8; January 1927, no. 31, 8; March 1927, no. 33, 8; "Balul Oriental," *Ararat*, December 1927, no. 42, 8.

79 "Adunare Generală anuală a Orfelinatului Armean din România," *Ararat*, 1 June 1924, no. 1, 6; "Locale," *Ararat*, December 1925, no.18, 7.

80 "Locale," *Ararat*, September 1925, no.15, 8; February 1926, no. 20, 8; "Orfelinatul," *Ararat*, July 1926, no. 25, 5.

81 "În jurul Orfelinatului," *Ararat*, April 1925, no.10, 3-4.

82 "Transferarea Orfelinatului," *Ararat*, April 1926, no. 22, 5; "Locale," *Ararat*, May 1926, no. 23, 8.

83 "Orfelinatul," *Ararat*, July 1926, no. 25, 5; "Locale," *Ararat*, August 1926, no. 26, 8; September 1926, no. 27, 8.

left who, like the others, were to be handed over to a master.” Through these actions, it was finally decided that the orphanage should be closed.<sup>84</sup>

When informed of the resignations, the diocesan committee took into account that there were the orphans left - both boys and girls, without supervision - about 45 in all. It appointed a governing body to deal with the children’s fate. The committee held several meetings and compiled a list of orphans from Bucharest. Stating that “...most of them had been directed to masters, without any commitment by the latter,” the committee took steps to conclude the apprenticeship contracts provided for in labor law as soon as possible. As a result of these changes, although placed with craftsmen, many orphans actually remained on the streets. The few short reports gleaned from *Ararat* show the need for children to be helped, especially in cases of illness or the lack of housing.<sup>85</sup> From archive pages referring to the former orphans from Strunga who had settled in Bucharest with some of the craftsmen there, it can be seen that UAR had intervened countless times with the Romanian Ministry of Interior in order to facilitate the issuing of identity certificates, free pass tickets, Nansen passports or extending of residence permits/tickets in Romania.<sup>86</sup>

## Conclusion

The orphanage’s creation and its existence in Strunga showed the place and role of the Armenian community in Romania in the process of helping refugees after the genocide. These two landmarks are important in revealing the situation the Armenian community in interwar Romania was in. The dynamic measures taken in relation to the Armenian orphans accepted by the Romanian authorities mark the efforts of the Armenians in Romania through charity actions aimed at solving the pressing problems faced by thousands of orphaned children scattered by the effects of genocide. However, the situation the orphanage was in highlights the failures that existed within the Armenian community in Romania. Caught in a broad process of adjustment to the new political-administrative framework developed after WWI, Armenians in Greater Romania found it difficult to develop a coherent line (even concerning orphans) and to stick to it in a context in which points of view in the Vechiul Regat (Romanian Old Kingdom, from 1881 till 1918) and in the rest of the provinces were clearly different. Speaking of the Armenians from Bessarabia,<sup>87</sup> it can be stated, that they joined the centralization that was emerging from Bucharest quite late; in this sense, we distinguish, at

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84 “Locale,” *Ararat*, November 1926, no. 29, 8; April 1927, no. 34, 8; “Statutele Orfelinatlui Armean din România,” *Ararat*, 1 August 1924, no. 2, 2.

85 “Locale,” *Ararat*, December 1926, no. 30, 8; January 1927, no. 31, 8; May 1927, no. 35, 7; June 1927, no. 36, 8; September 1928, no. 51, 8.

86 *AAAR*, D. 177, 33; D. 260, 15, 39, 57, 62, 68, 70, 72, 90, 109, 120, 126, 133, 136-138.

87 Lidia Prisac, Ion Gumenăi, “Armenii din Basarabia în contextul Marii Uniri,” in *Historia est Magistra Vitae: Valori, paradigme, personalități. În onoare profesor Ion Eremia* (Chișinău, Tipografia Centrală, 2019), 547-561; Ion Gumenăi, Lidia Prisac, “Between Separation and Unity in the Context of the Great Union. Armenians from Bessarabia,” in *World War and the Birth of a New World Order: the End of an Era*, ed. by Ioan Bolovan and Oana Mihaela Tămaș (Newcastle upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2020), 184-203; Lidia Prisac, “Prezențe armenesti în Sfatul Țării: Petre Bajbeuc-Melicov,” in *Centenar Sfatul Țării: 1917-2017. Materialele conferinței științifice internaționale* (Chișinău, 21 noiembrie 2017) (Chișinău: Lexon Prim, 2017), 443-458.

the country level, a heterogeneous rather than a homogeneous Armenian community.

Some of the orphans who reached Romania were lucky, managing to find their relatives and to be reunited with their lost families. The massacres, exodus and their rescue had deeply marked the lives of the Armenian orphans who arrived in Strunga. In their eyes, the Armenian community in Romania looked as being well entrenched in a country where Christian values were the norm.

Despite existing dissensions within the Armenian community in Romania and the declining support for orphans in Strunga, it can be stated that the humanitarian aspect meant nothing more than offering the possibility of rehabilitation after the genocide and adaptation to the new social environment that Romania represented.

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## **Photos of Children of the Strunga Orphanage**













*Armenian Genocide Survivors*



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# WWI ARMENIAN REFUGEES CENSUS DATA AS A SOURCE FOR OTTOMAN ARMENIAN POPULATION NUMBERS ON THE EVE OF THE ARMENIAN GENOCIDE<sup>1</sup>

Robert Tatoyan

This paper aims to present and analyze data provided by censuses of the Ottoman Armenians from Van, Erzeroum and Bitlis provinces, who, fleeing the threat of massacre during WWI, found refuge in the territory of the Russian Empire, particularly in the Russian Transcaucasia. By comparing data on the Armenian refugees with information provided by other statistical sources, particularly the Armenian patriarchate and the Ottoman government, it is possible to enrich our knowledge of the numbers of Armenian population in Western Armenia and the Ottoman Empire in general on the eve of WWI and the Armenian Genocide. It is shown that the number of refugees is about 70% higher than the number of the Armenian population for the same areas before WWI mentioned in the official Ottoman statistics and corresponds approximately to the figures of the Armenian patriarchate. If account is taken that some people were already dead by the time the refugee censuses were carried out and also that the populations of some settlements within the administrative units in question were not evacuated at all but massacred, then the actual number of the Armenian population in these areas was even higher.

*Key-words:* Armenian question, WWI, Armenian Genocide, Armenian refugees, census, statistics, demography, Van province, Bitlis province, Erzeroum province.

## Introduction

According to article 61 of the Berlin Treaty (1878), the Ottoman government undertook the obligation “to carry out, without further delay, the improvements and reforms demanded by local requirements in the provinces inhabited by Armenians.”<sup>2</sup> Almost immediately after making this commitment, the Ottoman Sultan Abdul Hamid II and the successor Young Turk government tried to demonstrate to the great powers, the guarantors of the implementation of the Armenian reforms, that there were no “Armenian-inhabited provinces” in the Ottoman Empire and the Armenians in “the six eastern vilayets”<sup>3</sup> or “Eastern Anatolia,” as the Ottoman authorities began to call historical Armenian territories under the Ottoman rule, were a minority. This was achieved by issuing more and more government statistical data. In its

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1 The article was received on 21.12.2019 and accepted for publication on 20.09.2020.

2 The full text of article LXI is as follows: “The Sublime Porte undertakes to carry out, without further delay, the improvements and reforms demanded by local requirements in the provinces inhabited by the Armenians, and to guarantee their security against the Circassians and Kurds. It will periodically make known the steps taken to this effect to the Powers, who will superintend their application.” See: “Treaty between Great Britain, Germany, Austria, France, Italy, Russia, and Turkey for the Settlement of Affairs in the East: Signed at Berlin, July 13, 1878,” *The American Journal of International Law* 2, no. 4, *Supplement: Official Documents* (1908): 422.

3 The Ottoman Empire was divided using the following administrative-territorial entities (from major to minor): vilayet (province), sanjak (district), kaza (sub-district), and nahiye (village group). In this article both Ottoman and their English equivalents are used.

turn, the Armenian Patriarchate of Constantinople, body responsible for internal governance of the Ottoman Armenian community (millet), opposed these claims by presenting its own estimates of the number of Ottoman Armenians and the ethnic composition of the vilayets of “Turkish Armenia.”

By comparing the Ottoman Armenian population figures provided by the Ottoman government (1914) and those issued by Armenian Patriarchate (1912) prior to WWI, it can be seen that the Armenian patriarchate statistics, compared to that of Ottoman data were about 1.57 times higher. As for the six Armenian provinces (Van, Bitlis, Erzeroum, Kharberd, Diyarbekir and Sebastia) the discrepancy between two sets of data was about 1.83 (see Table 1).

**Table 1.** The Ottoman Armenian population figures provided by the Ottoman government (1914) and the Armenian Patriarchate (1913-1914).

Administrative unit	1914 Ottoman government <sup>4</sup>	1913-1914 Armenian Patriarchate <sup>5</sup>
<b>Six Armenian provinces</b>	-	-
Van	67,792	197,000
Bitlis	119,132	198,000
Erzeroum	136,618	215,000
Kharberd	87,864	204,000
Diyarbekir	73,226	124,000
Sebastia	151,674	225,000
<b>Total Six Armenian provinces</b>	<b>636,306</b>	<b>1,163,000</b>
<b>Other parts of the Ottoman Empire</b>	<b>658,545</b>	<b>863,700</b>
<b>Grand total</b>	<b>1,294,851</b>	<b>2,026,700</b>

4 Kemal Karpat, *Ottoman population 1830-1914: Demographic and Social Characteristics* (Wisconsin: The University of Wisconsin Press, 1985), 188-189 (it included Armenian Catholic and Protestant population figures).

5 T'eodik, *Ull'ānūl Suptāgnqñ, ԺԶ. unuph, 1922* [Everybody's Almanac, 16<sup>th</sup> year, 1922] (Constantinople, 1922), 261-263. This census of the Patriarchate was elaborated with the help of the provincial dioceses and parishes to which the Armenian populations were attached, and it is presented in the form of parish by parish tables. The original documents of this census, which were kept at the Armenian Patriarchate of Constantinople, were deposited at the Nubarian Library in Paris in 1928. 1913-1914 census data were used in French-Armenian scholars Raymond H. Kevorkian's and Paul B. Paboudjian's detailed study of the pre-WWI Ottoman Armenian population (Raymond H. Kévorkian, Paul B. Paboudjian, *Les Arméniens dans l'Empire Ottoman à la veille du génocide* (Paris: Editions d'Art et d'Histoire ARHIS, 1992).



In general, there are two ways of checking the reliability of historical statistical information. One is to analyze the data itself, reveal its internal shortcomings, define an adjustment factor and adjust the data in accordance on that basis. In case of Ottoman statistics, this method was used by historian Justin McCarthy, who based his estimates of the population of the Anatolian provinces on Ottoman data.<sup>6</sup> The second method is to compare existing statistical information with data from other sources for the approximately same period and for conclusions to be reached through such a comparison. In the case of the Ottoman Armenian population prior to the Armenian Genocide, four kinds of such sources may be identified:

1. Data provided by censuses of the Armenians who, fleeing the threat of massacre during WWI, found refuge on the territory of the Russian Empire, particularly in Russian Transcaucasia (the Caucasus);
2. Data gathered by questioning Armenian refugees about their native settlements;
3. Data contained in Armenian Genocide survivors' memoirs and testimonies concerning their native settlements;
4. Estimates of the Ottoman Armenian population made by diplomats of various states: the allies of the Ottoman Empire (Germany and Austria-Hungary) as well as those that were neutral (USA) and that were present at the places in question.

Of these four sources, the first - the data provided by censuses of the Western Armenian refugees - is more reliable and generally more trustworthy, based on the following interconnected arguments. First, Western Armenians had no reason to hide their numbers as was the case before the deportations - there is widespread evidence of such a practice in Western Armenia with the aim of avoiding taxation.<sup>7</sup> On the contrary, they were interested in showing their numbers as accurately as possible in order to receive humanitarian assistance. Second, the bodies which carried out censuses also needed the most accurate number of Armenian refugees possible to organize aid. Third, the organizers adopted accurate methods of collating these censuses: in particular, they counted refugees in different refugee concentration areas simultaneously, on one specific day, to avoid double counting (registration).

The data from the first source is presented below and is compared to that of the Armenian Patriarchate and Ottoman government. Thus, by comparison of Armenian refugees' data with information provided by other statistical sources it is possible to enrich our knowledge of Armenian population numbers in Western Armenia and the Ottoman Empire in general on the eve of WWI and the Armenian Genocide.

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6 Justin McCarthy, *Muslims and Minorities. The Population of Ottoman Anatolia and the End of the Empire* (New York: N.Y. University Press, 1983).

7 The Ottoman Armenians' incentive to avoid registration in order not to be taxed is widely attested to in various sources and was common knowledge for researchers that specialized in Ottoman Armenian demographic studies. For recent studies in English where this issue is touched upon see particularly: Levon Marashlian, *Politics and Demography. Armenians, Turks, and Kurds in the Ottoman Empire* (Cambridge, MA-Paris-Toronto: Zoryan Institute, 1991), 48; Vahakn N. Dadrian, *Warrant for Genocide: Key Elements of the Turko-Armenian Conflict* (New Brunswick, N.J.: Transaction Publishers, 1999), 176; for Diyarbekir province see: Hilmar Kaiser, *The Extermination of Armenians in the Diyarbekir Region* (Istanbul: Bilgi University Press, 2014), 20-21.

The administrative units of Western Armenia should be defined at the outset. The Armenian population of those areas, being in the majority or being a considerable percentage of the total resident population, could escape massacre by finding refuge in the Caucasus in 1914-1915. Those regions were:

1. Van province;
2. Basen sub-district of the Erzeroum district of Erzeroum province;
3. Bayazet, Diadin, Karakilise, and Alashkert sub-districts of the Bayazet district of Erzeroum province;
4. Boulanykh and Manazkert sub-districts of the Mush district of Bitlis province.

The Armenian refugees from those regions were mainly enumerated during the so-called “one-day” censuses that took place in 1915-1916. The Russian government had ordered two censuses taken of refugees in Transcaucasia during this period. The first was carried out on 30 January 1915 (12 February, new style), the second one on 14 January 1916 (27 January 1916 new style). They were carried out by the Yerevan Statistical Bureau.<sup>8</sup>

Armenian refugee statistics should be presented and analyzed separately for each of the administrative units mentioned and compared with the data provided by the Ottoman government and the Armenian Patriarchate of Constantinople.

## **Van Province**

Most of the Armenian population of Van province managed to avoid massacres and deportations by resorting to self-defense. Turkish troops withdrew with the Russian army advance in April-May 1915. The tactical retreat of the Russian army in July 1915, however, forced the entire Armenian population of Van province to follow it to the Caucasus to avoid imminent retaliatory action by the Turkish government. Not all the Armenians of Van province, however, were able to overcome the difficulties of the journey, many perishing on the way.

The Armenian population of Van province, which found refuge in Transcaucasia, was counted during the “one-day census” carried out on 14 January 1916 (27 January 1916 new style). According to the data provided by this census, 18,586 Armenian families or about

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<sup>8</sup> Summary results of “One-day census” of 30 January 1915 were published in 1915 in *Однoднeвнaя пeрeпись бeжeнцeв изъ Турции, Персии и изъ мeсть пoгpаничнoв съ Турцией (армянь, айсорoвъ, грековъ и пр.) 1914-1915г.* [One-day Census of Refugees from Turkey, Persia and from Places Adjacent to the Border of Turkey, 1914-1915] (Yerevan: Luys, 1915); Summary data of the “One-day census” of 14 January 1916 can be found in Eduard Danielyan, «Անդրկովկասում ապաստանած արևմտահայ գաղթականության թվաքանակի հարցի շուրջ (1914-1917թթ.)» [On Western Armenian Refugee Figure, who Found Refuge in Transcaucasia (1914-1917)], *Herald of the Social Sciences* 2 (2002): 116. Another primary source for Western Armenian refugee numbers by the place of origin is the report prepared by Aleksander Sharafyan, the commissioner for refugee aid of the Caucasus Armenian Charitable Society, published in *Hambavaber* weekly journal in January, 1916. See: Aleksander Sharafyan, «Համառոտ տեսություն գաղթականության ծագման, արդի կացության, Կ.Հ. Ընկերության եւ Հայկ. Կենտ. Կոմիտեի գործունեության» [A Brief Survey on the Origins of Refugees, their Present Condition, and the Activities of the Caucasus Armenian Society and the Armenian Central Commission], *Hambavaber* (Tiflis), 1916, no. 2, 45-47.

81,800 persons from Van province were registered (the number of persons per family was 4.4).<sup>9</sup> Additionally, according to information collected during the “One-day census” from the Armenian refugees from Van province, at the actual time the census was held, one third of the members of the registered families had already died as a result of massacre, shortage of food and diseases after the beginning of WWI. The number of dead was about 36,500.<sup>10</sup> Of this figure, about 20,000 had perished during the evacuation in July 1915, both on the journey and in refugee camps in Etchmiadzin, Igdır, Yerevan and other areas.<sup>11</sup>

It should also be noted that about 12,000 Armenians from Van province returned to their former homes before January 1916. (Following defeats suffered at the Caucasus front, the Ottoman Army left the city of Van on 29 September 1915, thus allowing recapture of the province by the Russian troops and the subsequent return of some of the Armenians to Van.) These people were not counted during the so-called “one-day census” of January 14, 1916. In addition, the Armenians from Van vilayet who found refuge in Persian territory were not counted. These numbered approximately 10,000 individuals and, additionally, 3,500 orphans.<sup>12</sup> By summing up all the above-mentioned figures, we can conclude that at least 144,000 Armenians lived in Van province on the eve of the Armenian Genocide.<sup>13</sup>

Other sources contemporary to the events largely confirm this data. Thus, according to the *Memorandum on the Condition of Armenian Refugees*, compiled by the British Foreign Office from information furnished by Mr. Stevens, the British Consul at Batum, as of December 1915 there were 105,000 Armenian refugees from the province of Van in the Caucasus.<sup>14</sup> The Armenian journalist Bakhshi Ishkhanian, in his series of articles about the condition of the Armenian refugees published in 1915, gives the range of numbers of Armenian refugees from Van province as being between 120,000-140,000.<sup>15</sup>

The figure of 144,000 quoted for the Armenian population of pre-genocide Van province is a conservative estimate. Researchers who have attempted to correct Van province Armenian population numbers by using Armenian refugee statistical data give even higher figures. The Armenian researcher John Kirakosyan, for example, counts the number of Armenian refugees evacuated from Van was more than 150,000 (unfortunately he does not provide any factors or mentions any sources in reaching this figure).<sup>16</sup> Gegham

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9 Danielyan, «Անդրկովկասում ապաստանած արևմտահայ գաղթականության», 116.

10 This number is obtained by calculating the percentage from the total number of both the dead and survivors.

11 Sharafyan, «Համառոտ տեսություն», 46.

12 Ibid.

13 For my detailed estimate of Van province Armenian population number see: Robert Tatoyan, «Վիճակագրական տվյալները Վանի նահանգի հայ բնակչության թվաքանակի վերաբերյալ 1878-1914 (աղբյուրների համադրության և վերլուծության փորձ)» [Statistics of the Armenian Population of Van Vilayet 1878-1914 (Attempt of Comparison and Analysis of Sources)], *The Issues of the History and Historiography of the Armenian Genocide* 7 (2003): 65-78.

14 James Bryce and Arnold Toynbee, *The Treatment of Armenians in the Ottoman Empire, 1915-1916. Documents Presented to Viscount Grey of Falloden by Viscount Bryce*, Uncensored Edition, edited and with an introduction by Ara Sarafian (Priceton, New Jersey: Gomidas Institute, 2000), 237.

15 Bakhshi Ishkhanian, «Աղէտի եւ տառապանքի աշխարհից (Այց թիրքահայ փախստականներին) III» [From the World of Disaster and Suffering (A Visit to the Turkish Armenian Refugees) III], *Arev* (Alexandria), 5 November 1915, 1.

16 John S. Kirakosyan, *Առաջին համաշխարհային պատերազմը և արևմտահայությունը* [The First World War and the Western Armenians] (Yerevan: Hayastan, 1967), 43.

Badalyan, another Armenian scholar, took the Armenian refugee statistical data collected in July-September 1917 into account. He thus ascertained that the number of refugee families from Van was 24,127 and, fixing the number of adult members in a family as 8 or 8.8, concluded that about 210,000-212,000 Armenians lived in Van province in 1914.<sup>17</sup>

It should also be noted that the information contained in a memorandum, submitted by the Armenian National delegation to the Paris Peace Conference in 1919, stated that the number of Van province Armenians who had found refuge in Russian Transcaucasia was more than 220,000.<sup>18</sup>

For comparison - according to statistical data based on settlement census returns of the Armenian Patriarchate of Constantinople - there were 19,222 Armenian households or 121,377 Armenians in Van province on the eve of WWI.<sup>19</sup> The data of the Ottoman government is 65% less: about 68,000 (67,792) Armenians.<sup>20</sup>

### **Erzeroum Province: Basen Sub-District of the Erzeroum District of Erzeroum Province**

Basen sub-district had 57 Armenian-populated villages where, according to the Ottoman government data, 10,046 Armenians lived on the eve of WWI.<sup>21</sup> According to the Armenian Patriarchate data the figure for the Armenian population in Basen was 16,740.<sup>22</sup> Basen sub-district was divided in two areas - Upper Basen and Lower Basen.

Of these two areas only the population of Lower Basen was able to take refuge in the Transcaucasia at the beginning of November 1914. Basen sub-district's Armenians were registered during the so-called "one-day census" of 30 January 1915 (12 February new style).<sup>23</sup> According to this registration data, Armenian population from the 23 villages of Lower Basen that found refuge in Transcaucasia totaled 1,551 families or 12,914 individuals.<sup>24</sup> The comparison of refugee population data by village with corresponding statistics provided by the Armenian patriarchate of Constantinople shows that the statistics

17 Gegham Badalyan, «Արևմտահայության թվաքանակի նշգրտման ժողովրդագրական որոշ սկզբունքներ (Էրզրումի և Վանի վիլայեթների օրինակով)» [Some Principles of Adjusting the Number of Western Armenians (by the Example of Erzurum and Van Vilayets)] in *The Current State of Armenology and Development Perspectives, International Conference Proceedings* (Yerevan, 2003), 140. See also: Gegham Badalyan, «Վ. Պոլսի Հայոց պատրիարքության 1912 թ. վիճակագրության տվյալների քննությունը (Վանի սանջակի օրինակով)» [Analysis of Constantinople Armenian Patriarchate Statistical Data of 1912 (On the Example of Van Province)] in *Capitals of Armenia, Book 1, Van, Proceedings of the International Conference, Dedicated to the 2865<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the First Record about City of Van, (October 7-9, 2010)*, ed. Harutyun Marutyan (Yerevan: Gitutyun, 2013), 157.

18 *The Armenian Question before the Peace Conference, 1919: A Memorandum Presented Officially by the Representatives of Armenia to the Peace Conference at Versailles, on February 26th, 1919* (New York: Press Bureau, The Armenian National Union of America, 1919), 21.

19 A-Do, *Մեծ դեպքերը Վասպուրականում 1914-1915 թվականներին* [The Big Events in Vaspourakan in 1914-1915], (Yerevan, 1917), 30.

20 Karpat, *Ottoman Population 1830-1914*, 188-189.

21 Ibid., 170.

22 Kevorkian, Paboudjian, *Les Arméniens dans l'Empire ottoman*, 59.

23 *Однодневная перепись*.

24 Ibid., 44-45.

for refugees are about 26% higher. In some cases, the refugee registration data is 1.5-1.7 times higher.

**Table 2.** Armenian population numbers for several settlements in the Basen sub-district according to the Armenian Patriarchate 1913-1914 census and 1915 refugee “one-day census” returns.

	Settlement	1913-14 Armenian Patriarchate <sup>25</sup>	1915 “one-day census” <sup>26</sup>	Difference
		<b>Persons</b>	<b>persons</b>	
1	Aruchagrak [Արուճագրակ]	1,075	1,434	33 %
2	Eghan [Եղան]	1,298	1,308	1 %
3	Egepat [Էգեպատ]	978	1,149	17 %
4	Khydyrelyagh [Խիդրըրէլլաղ]	29	35	21 %
5	Kamurdj [Կամուրջ]	810	1,076	33 %
6	Kirdabaz [Կիրդաբազ]	312	480	54 %
7	Harsnekar [Հարսնէքար]	390	446	14 %
8	Yuzveran [Յուզվերան]	608	777	28 %
9	Tchrasun [Շռասուն]	456	815	79 %
10	Toti [Տոտի]	540	680	26 %
	<b>Total</b>	<b>6,496</b>	<b>8,200</b>	<b>26%</b>

By the end of 1915 the Armenian populations of both Upper and Lower Basen had been able to find refuge in the Caucasus. There were, according to the report made by Alexander Sharafian, 18,910 Armenians from the Basen sub-district there as at January 1916.<sup>27</sup>

The Armenian researcher Gegham Badalyan, by using refugee statistical data, adding data from other sources and projecting the undercounting fixing pattern on all the settlements

25 Kevorkian, Paboudjian, *Les Armeniens dans l'Empire ottoman*, 451.

26 *Однодневная перепись*, 44-45.

27 Sharafyan, «Համառոտ տեղութիւն», 45.

in the Basen district, arrived at the conclusion that, on the eve of WWI, the Armenian population of the Basen sub-district was about 21,000 persons - a figure that was double that of the Ottoman government data and about 25% higher than that of the Constantinople Armenian Patriarchate.<sup>28</sup>

### **Erzeroum Province: Bayazet, Diadin, Karakilisa and Alashkert Sub-Districts of the Bayazet District**

Almost the entire population of the four sub-districts of the Bayazet district of Erzeroum province (these sub-districts were Bayazet, Alashkert, Diadin and Karakilisa) took refuge in the Russian Transcaucasia at the end of 1914. According to the Ottoman government data published on the eve of WWI, the Armenian population of these territories numbered 10,920.<sup>29</sup> The figure provided by the Armenian patriarchate for the same territories was about double or 24,627 persons.<sup>30</sup>

The Armenian refugees from the Bayazet district were counted during the “one-day census” of 30 January 1915 (12 February 1915 new style). According to that data, 16,612 Armenians who had left those territories were registered. As can be seen, although the refugee statistics didn’t present the complete picture of the Armenian population of these areas prior to the beginning of the war - not all Armenians managed to escape the massacres and overcome the difficulties of the journey - but even though this data is incomplete, the number of Bayazet district Armenian refugees was about 52% higher than the official Ottoman figures for the total Armenian population of that administrative unit (see also Table 3).

**Table 3.** Armenian population numbers for the Bayazet district on the eve of the Armenian Genocide according to data from different sources.

	Administrative unit	Armenian Patriarchate 1913-1914 census	Ottoman statistics of 1914	Refugee “one-day census” of January 1915
1.	Bayazet sub-district	4,884	2,619	1,735
2.	Diadin sub-district	1,649	904	1,111
3.	Karakilise sub-district	8,180	3,195	6,034
4.	Alashkert sub-district	9,914	4,202	7,732

It is worth mentioning that in the months after the “one-day census” of 30 January 1915 (12 February 1915 new style), Bayazet district Armenian refugee data were corrected and, according to information published in spring 1915, the number of Armenian refugees from

28 Badalyan, «Արևմտահայության թվաքանակի նշգրտման», 138.

29 Karpat, *Ottoman Population 1830-1914*, 170.

30 Kevorkian, Paboudjian, *Les Arméniens dans l'Empire ottoman*, 59.

this area was 23,850 persons (or 3,245 households) including those who perished during the evacuation.<sup>31</sup> This figure is close to that of the Armenian Patriarchate (24,627 individuals), and if account is taken of the fact that some people didn't take refuge in Russia and therefore were not registered during the censuses, then we can estimate the Armenian population of Bayazet district prior to WWI as about 26,000.<sup>32</sup>

### **Bitlis Province: Boulanykh and Manazkert Sub-Districts of Mush District**

The Armenian populations of the Boulanykh and Manazkert sub-districts of the Mush district of Bitlis province were also evacuated along with Van province Armenian population in July 1915. Boulanykh and Manazkert Armenian refugee statistical data confirms the reliability of the Armenian Patriarchate figures. According to these data, about 34,000 Armenians from Boulanykh and Manazkert found refuge in the Russian Transcaucasia in July 1915 (see Table 4).<sup>33</sup> 8,965 Armenian families from these and other areas of Bitlis province were registered during the Armenian refugee “one-day” census of 16 January 1916 (29 January 1916, new style). One third of the members of the registered families had perished during the evacuation as a result of diseases or food shortages.<sup>34</sup> According to Karo Sasuni, the Armenian public figure who was a member of Russian administration of portions of Bitlis vilayet occupied by Russian troops in 1916-1917, about 67,000 Armenian refugees from this province were counted in February 1916, of which 45,000 were from the Boulanykh, Manazkert and their adjacent areas, 8,400 were from the Mush valley (of which 400 were from the city of Mush itself), 1,000 were from Bitlis and Khlat sub-districts, 700 were from Varto and 12,000 were from Sasun.<sup>35</sup>

According to the Ottoman government statistics provided prior to WWI, only 19,100 Armenians lived in these two sub-districts; of this figure 14,662 lived in Boulanykh and 4,438 in Manazkert.<sup>36</sup> The statistics published by the Armenian Patriarchate provided the figure of 36,984 for these areas, of which 25,053 was for Boulanykh and 11,931 for Manazkert.<sup>37</sup>

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31 Badalyan, «Արևմտահայության թվաքանակի ճշգրտման», 139.

32 For the estimates of Gegham Badalyan see: Gegham Badalyan, «Էրզրումի վիլայեթի որոշ կազաների հայ բնակչության թվաքանակի ճշտումն ըստ Արևելյան Հայաստանում ապաստանած արևմտահայ գաղթականների 1914-1915 թթ. կազմված վիճակագրական ցուցակների» [Quantities of the Armenian population in some of the kazas of the province of Erzeroum (1914-1915)], *The Issues Of the History And Historiography Of the Armenian Genocide* 4 (2001): 122-124. See also our survey for Bayazet Armenian population number: Robert Tatoyan, «Էրզրումի նահանգի հայ բնակչության թվաքանակը Մեծ Եղեռնի նախօրյակին (աղբյուրների համեմատական վերլուծության փորձ)» [The Number of Armenian Population of the Erzurum Province of the Ottoman Empire on the Eve of the Armenian Genocide (An Attempt at Comparative Analysis of Sources)], *Journal of Genocide Studies* 2 no. 1 (2014): 52-54.

33 Karo Sasuni, *Տանկսահայաստանը ռուսական տիրապետության տակ (1914-1918)* [Turkish Armenia under the Russian Rule] (Boston, 1927), 68, 75.

34 Danielyan, «Անդրկովկասում ապաստանած արևմտահայ գաղթականության», 116.

35 Karo Sasuni, «Մուշէն եւ Սասունէն ազատուածները» [Rescued From Mush And Sasoun], *Tchakatamart, daily newspaper* (Constantinople), 22 May 1919, no. 161, 2.

36 Karpas, *Ottoman population 1830-1914*, 174.

37 Kevorkian, Paboudjian, *Les Arméniens dans l'Empire Ottoman*, 59.

**Table 4.** The Armenian population of Boulanykh and Manazkert sub-districts prior to WWI.

	Administrative unit	Armenian Patriarchate 1913-1914 census	Ottoman statistics of 1914	Refugee statistical data of 1915
1	Boulanykh sub-district	25,053	14,662	-
2	Manazkert sub-district	11,931	4,438	-
	<b>Total</b>	<b>36,984</b>	<b>19,100</b>	<b>34,000</b>

## **Conclusion**

To summarize, the number of refugees from 1) Van province, 2) Basen sub-district and Bayazet district (Bayazet sub-district, Diadin sub-district, Karakilise sub-district, Alashkert sub-district) of Erzeroum province, 3) Boulanykh and Manazkert sub-districts of Bitlis province, who were registered during the so-called “one-day censuses” carried out on 30 January 1915 (12 February 1915 new style) and 14 January, 1916 (27 January, 1916 new style) is about 70% higher than the number of the Armenian population before WWI as enumerated for the same areas in official the Ottoman statistics and corresponds approximately to the Armenian Patriarchate figures as shown in Table 5. If account is taken that some people were already deceased by the time the refugee censuses were carried out and also that the populations of some settlements within the administrative units in question were not evacuated at all but were massacred, then the actual Armenian population figures in these areas was even higher. By the most conservative estimates the actual Armenian population of these areas prior to the genocide was about 234,000. This estimate is approximately twice that of the figure provided by the Ottoman government.



**Table 5.** Comparative Summary Statistics.

	Administrative unit	Ottoman government, 1914	Armenian Patriarchate, 1913-1914	Armenian refugees in the Caucasus, 1915-1916	Armenian population number, 1914 (approximate estimate, based on refugee counting data)
1	Van province	67,792	121,377	120,000	150,000 <sup>38</sup>
2	Erzeroum province				
2.1	Basen sub-district of Erzeroum district	10,046	16,740	18,910	21,000
2.2	Bayazet sub-district of Bayazet district	2,619	4,884	1,735	5,000
2.3	Diadin sub-district of Bayazet district	904	1,649	1,111	2,000
2.4	Karakilise sub-district of Bayazet district	3,195	8,180	6,034	8,000
2.5	Alashkert sub-district of Bayazet district	4,202	9,914	7,732	10,000
3	Bitlis province				
3.1	Boulanykh sub-district of Mush District	19,100	36,984	34,000	38,000
3.2	Manazkert sub-district of Mush District				
	<b>Total</b>	<b>107,858</b>	<b>199,728</b>	<b>189,522</b>	<b>234,000</b>

The refugee registration data are incomplete and haven't covered all the areas of the Ottoman Empire, but even in their present state they show that the Ottoman government undercounted the Armenian population. Therefore, in order to determine the Armenian population figures for Western Armenia and of the Ottoman Empire in general prior to the Armenian Genocide which corresponds to reality, account should be taken of the numbers provided by the Armenian Patriarchate of Constantinople as a basis for calculation, settlement by settlement and comparison and adjustments should be made of those figures with data provided by refugee registration data and other available primary sources.

<sup>38</sup> Conservative estimate.

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# **A HUNDRED YEARS AGO: THE ASSASSINATION OF MEHMET TALAAT (15 MARCH 1921) AND THE BERLIN CRIMINAL PROCEEDINGS AGAINST SOGHOMON TEHLIRIAN (2/3 JUNE 1921): BACKGROUND, CONTEXT, EFFECT<sup>1</sup>**

Tessa Hofmann

A hundred years ago, on the late morning of March 15, 1921, the Armenian Soghomon Tehlirian (Soğomon T'ehlirean - Սողոմոն Թեհլիրեան; also: Soghomon Tehlirian; Soğomon T'ehlirean - Սողոմոն Թեհլիրեան (1897-1960)) shot the former Ottoman Minister of the Interior (21 January 1913 to 4 February 1917), Minister of Finance (November 1914 to 4 February 1917) and head of government (Grand Vizier; 4 February 1917 to 8 October 1918), Mehmet Talaat (1874-1921) on Berlin's Hardenbergstrasse. In an unusually short time by today's standards, after two and a half months, the assassin was put on trial on 2 and 3 June of the same year at the jury court of Berlin District Court III (Landgericht Berlin III) in Berlin-Moabit. The trial lasted one and a half days, which was also unusually short. Obviously, the German or Prussian judiciary wanted to get rid of the accused and with him the subject of German-Turkish relations as quickly as possible. Tehlirian was acquitted on 3 June 1920, on the grounds of incapacity of guilt and was immediately deported from Germany. This article explains the background, context and lasting effects of his crime.

*Key-words:* Soghomon Tehlirian, Mehmet Tala(a)t, Armenian Genocide, Armenian Question, Operation Nemesis.

## **Political Background: the Armenian Question**

The killing of Talaat has its origin in the genocidally answered Armenian Question. This in turn originated in Article 61 of the Berlin Treaty (1878), which contained the obligation for immediate reforms in the “provinces inhabited by Armenians” and Ottoman accountability to the six major European Powers - France, Great Britain, Austria, Russia, Germany and Italy - of the time. The Ottoman government, however, dragged out the reforms for a quarter of a century, until the then sole governing nationalist Committee for Union and Progress (Ittihat ve Terakki Cemiyeti) had no choice but to reluctantly agree in 1913 to a reform project mediated by Germany and Russia. However, it was never realized.

On 5 September 1916, Count Wolff-Metternich, the German ambassador to Constantinople, announced that the Ottoman foreign minister was on his way to Berlin to declare the international treaties “by which political shackles were imposed on Turkey as no longer binding.”<sup>1</sup> In particular, said Ambassador Metternich, Articles 61 and 62 of the Berlin Trea-

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<sup>1</sup> The article was received on 06.06.2020 and was accepted for publication on 03.09.2020.

The Ambassador on an Extraordinary Mission in Constantinople (Wolff-Metternich) to the German Foreign Office; Political Archives of the Federal Foreign Office (Politisches Archiv des Auswärtigen Amtes-PA/AA), DE/PA-AA/R14093, at [http://www.armenocide.net/armenocide/armgende.nsf/\\$\\$AllDocs/1916-09-05-DE-002](http://www.armenocide.net/armenocide/armgende.nsf/$$AllDocs/1916-09-05-DE-002),

ty should be repealed. At that time there were almost no Armenians left in the six Armenian provinces (Vilâyat-ı Sitte) in question.

In his comprehensive testimony as an expert witness in the criminal proceedings against Tehlirian, the German theologian Dr. Johannes Lepsius (1858-1926) emphasized the direct connection between the reform plan of 1913 and the extermination of the Armenians by the Young Turkish regime in WWI:

I was in Constantinople in 1913. During the negotiations, the Young Turks were extremely upset that the Armenian reform issue was again occupying the powers and doubly bitter when, as a result of the understanding between Germany and Russia, it was settled in a manner desirable for the Armenians. At that time, the Young Turks said: "If you Armenians do not keep your hands off the reforms, something will happen, whereas the massacres of Abdul Hamid were child's play."<sup>2</sup>

### **Punishment of Crimes against Humanity**

Reports of massacres of Armenians, which had been increasing since mid-April 1915 and the Ottoman government's actions against the "inoffensive Armenian population" in the Ottoman capital Constantinople, prompted the governments of the USA, Russia and France to issue a joint protest note on 24 May 1915. It ended with the words:

In view of those new crimes of Turkey against humanity and civilization, the Allied governments announce publicly to the Sublime-Porte that they will hold personally responsible [for] these crimes all members of the Ottoman government and those of their agents who are implicated in such massacres.<sup>3</sup>

For the first time in legal history, state and mass crimes were qualified here as a crime against humanity<sup>4</sup> and an international tribunal was announced. But this did not materialize. After the end of the war, the Allies lacked unanimity and experience in the legal handling of such crimes.

Mustafa Arif Deymer, then Minister of the Interior and Talaat's successor in office said in his speech before the Ottoman Parliament on 21 December 1918:

Unfortunately, our wartime leaders, imbued with a spirit of brigandage, carried out the law of deportation in a manner that could surpass the proclivities of the most bloodthirsty bandits. They decided to exterminate the Armenians and they did exterminate them. This decision was taken by the Central Committee of the

accessed 24.12.2019.

2 Der Völkermord an den Armeniern vor Gericht: Der Prozess Talaat Pascha. Neuaufl. Hg. und eingeleitet von Tessa Hofmann im Auftrag der Gesellschaft für bedrohte Völker. 2. ergänzte Aufl (Göttingen, Wien, 1980), 60.

3 Quoted from [https://www.armenian-genocide.org/Affirmation.160/current\\_category.7/offset.50/affirmation\\_detail.html](https://www.armenian-genocide.org/Affirmation.160/current_category.7/offset.50/affirmation_detail.html), accessed 18.06.2019.

4 Genocidal acts are considered crimes against humanity. The term goes back to the first Geneva Convention (1864), which in turn was a reaction to the atrocities committed during the Crimean War of 1853-1855. In the Geneva Conventions and the Hague Convention on the Law of War on Land (1899), crimes against peace, war crimes and crimes against humanity are seen in close connection with each other. The preamble of the Hague Land Warfare Convention with the so-called Martens clause contains a ban on expulsion. Expulsion and deportation are classified as crimes against humanity under the Rome Statute (1998).

Young Turks and was implemented by the Government... The atrocities committed against the Armenians reduced our country to a gigantic slaughterhouse<sup>5</sup>.

Arif established a governmental commission that examined the massacres for two months. On 18 March 1919 the oppositional daily *Alemdar*, basing on figures compiled by the bureau of Minister Ahmet Cemal, published as the result a figure of 800,000 Armenians who had perished between 1915 and 1917-18; these figures were repeated in the official Ottoman gazette on 21 July 1920.<sup>6</sup>

Half-heartedly and hesitantly, the Ottoman authorities did not begin arrests until April 1919, after most of the accused or suspects had already fled abroad. In 1919 and 1920, the Constantinople court martials sentenced a total of 17 party officials to death as war criminals, although only three verdicts were executed because the remaining 14 convicts had managed to escape.<sup>7</sup> Cemal Azmi (1868-1922) and Yenibahçeli Nail (d. 1926), both condemned to death in the Trabzon trial, managed to escape; the latter was the secretary of the Young Turkish Party responsible for the Vilayet Trabzon (Trebizond, Trapezounta) and head of the armed forces of *Teşkilat-i Mahsusa*, or *Special Organization* in this province. In the trial in Mamuret-ül-Aziz (Harput), Dr. Bahattin (Behaeddin, Bahaddin) Şakir (1874-1922) was sentenced to death in January 1920. In the Erzincan trial, five persons (Hafız Abdullah Avin, Halet Efendi, Krimo Yusuf, the Kurdish tribal leader Keko, the gendarmerie sergeant Arslan) were convicted and in the Bayburt trial, Lieutenant Mehmet Necati was condemned to death.

Among the mass murderers who were sentenced to death in 1919 but escaped, were the members of the Young Turkish Triumvirate (1913-1918): Mehmet Talaat, Ismail Enver<sup>8</sup> and Ahmet Cemal<sup>9</sup>. Their execution and that of some of the leading executors of the genocide against the Armenians was carried out by Armenian avengers in 1920-22. But it was not only the failure of international justice or the Ottoman judiciary that drove Armenians to “hit and run” actions. The Sovietization of Armenia, and thus the loss of sovereignty, prevented Armenians from kidnapping genocide perpetrators from abroad and bringing them to justice in a sovereign state, just as Israeli intelligence officers did with Adolf Eichmann in May 1960.

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5 Vartkes S. Dolabjian, “Even Turkish sources point to 1915 genocide,” *The Gazette* (Montreal), 11 January 1999, B2, at <https://dev.anccanada.org/turkish-acknowledgments-of-the-armenian-genocide>, accessed 24.12.2019.

6 Ottoman Gazette *Takvimi Vekâyi* no. 3909, 21 July 1920, 3-4 cited in *Alemdar* (Istanbul), 15 March 1919.

7 Taner Akçam, *Armenien und der Völkermord: Die Istanbul Prozesse und die türkische Nationalbewegung* (Hamburg: Hamburger Edition, 1996), 157.

8 Enver was captured in Tajikistan, where he had joined pan-Islamic insurgents against the Soviets, by Hakob Melkumian's brigade. Melkumian was an Armenian from Karabakh.

9 Minister of the War Fleet 1914-1918. As commander-in-chief of the 4th Ottoman Army stationed in Syria, Djemal was directly responsible not only for the fate of the Armenians deported there, for the suppression of the uprising in the Armenian quarter of Urfa and the siege of the Armenians on Musa Dag, but also for the brutal suppression of Arab liberation movements in Syria, Lebanon and Palestine. “His order to also exterminate the 85,000 Jews of Palestine was only carried out on one third of the total because of the invasion of the British Army in November 1917. The number of Jews fell below 60,000 and about 2,500 Jewish children became orphans.” Quoted from Gunnar Heinsohn, *Lexikon der Völkermorde* (Reinbek bei Hamburg: Rowohlt-Taschenbuch-Verl., 1998), 219.

The Ottoman government's attempt to establish justice by means of national jurisdiction failed primarily because of political calculations. The Ottoman courts martial, which were held in 1919 and 1920 against members of the War Cabinet and middle-ranking government officials, were intended not only to prevent the threatened tribunal of the Allied victors, but above all to ensure the preservation of Ottoman territorial holdings - a deal that was doomed to failure. When the Allies stuck to their partition plans, armed resistance against the Allied occupation began to form from May 1919 under the leadership of the Turkish war hero Mustafa Kemal. One day after the signing of the peace treaty of Sèvres, the nationalist counter-government of Ankara abolished the courts martial to investigate the genocide crimes on 11 August 1920. After the capture of Constantinople by the nationalist, i.e. Kemalist government on 6 November 1922, the government decree of 11 August 1920 officially came into force there as well. On 31 March 1923 a general amnesty was declared, which also ensured the release of those imprisoned by the courts of war.

The three people already executed and those shot by Armenian avengers in 1921 and 1922 have since been venerated as Turkey's national martyrs. The government of the Republic of Turkey provided the relatives of the executed with generous pensions. A draft law of 29 May 1926 stipulated that the relatives of leading Turkish politicians who had been made "martyr" by Armenians "for political reasons" should receive "*property from the mobile and immobile property holdings left behind by Armenians.*"<sup>10</sup>

In 1921, the British Minister of War, Winston Churchill, decided to close the Allied proceedings against the suspects interned in Malta. He thus obtained the release of British hostages, whom Mustafa Kemal had threatened to shoot in the event of criminal proceedings.<sup>11</sup>

Three months after the Ottoman court martial in Constantinople on 5 July 1919 sentenced the members of the Young Turkish War Cabinet to death in absentia, the 9th Party Congress of *Dashnaktsutiun* (Armenian Revolutionary Federation - ARF), the party then ruling alone in the Republic of Armenia (1918-1920), dealt with the question of retaliation in the fall of 1919. There are various accounts of the outcome. According to one variant, the 9th ARF World Congress at Yerevan passed a secret resolution called *The Special Mission* (Hatuk Gorts; Հատուկ գործ) to punish those mainly responsible for the Armenian genocide: "*Between 1920-1922 the perpetrators were located and felled by the Armenian avengers.*"<sup>12</sup> The Shahan Natalie Family Foundation, on the other hand, presents the establishment of *Operation Nemesis* [Armenian: *vrej, վրեժ*] as an initiative of a minority faction within the ARF, caused by the hesitant attitude of the majority:

In view of the impotence of the Ottoman justice system, the issue of retribution against the principal organizers of the Armenian Genocide was included in the agenda of the month-long Ninth General Congress of the Armenian Revolutionary

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<sup>10</sup> At <http://www.aga-online.org/worship/miscellaneous.php?locale=de>, accessed 04.10.2019.

<sup>11</sup> Akçam, *Armenien und der Völkermord*, 118-119. According to Rolf Hosfeld, Talaat obtained his release from his Berlin exile through the Italian Foreign Minister Sforza. Rolf Hosfeld, *Operation Nemesis: Die Türkei, Deutschland und der Völkermord an den Armeniern* (Köln: Kiepenheuer & Witsch, 2005), 18.

<sup>12</sup> Arshavir Shiragian, "*Gomideh: Operation Nemesis*," at <http://www.arfarshavirshiragian.org/ArmenianHistory/Nemesis/Nemesis.htm>, accessed 12.12.2019.

Federation (ARF), launched on September 27, 1919, in Yerevan. Having helped the same Young Turks come to power, the leadership of the ARF, the ruling party of the fledgling Armenian Republic, refused to take any action. Concerned by the advance of the Red Army, the ARF was, in fact, then considering aligning itself with the new Turkish authorities to stave off the Bolsheviks. As a result, the issue was tabled, to be revisited during the ARF Eleventh General Congress in 1923, after Armenia's loss of independence.

Shahan Natalie, who had vowed to punish the Genocide perpetrators upon receiving the first news of the massacres, was now concerned that failure to do so might result in more losses for the Armenian people and its newly independent republic. Angered by the party's resistance to act, Natalie led a task force with other deeply disenchanted ARF founding members, such as Grigor Merjanov [1880-?] and Armen Garo, to mete out justice to the people responsible for the Armenian Genocide. Two hundred individuals were blacklisted. Mehmed Talaat Pasha topped the blacklist. Shahan Natalie referred to him as "Number One."<sup>13</sup>

The ARF dissidents' intent on retaliation created a secret network named after the ancient Greek goddess of revenge, which was to implement the retaliation logistically and operationally. "*Our organization had no extermination plan,*" wrote the avenger Arshavir Shirakian in retrospect. "*It inflicted punishment on individuals who had been tried in absentia and found guilty of mass murder. Armenian traitors topped our list.*"<sup>14</sup>

The leadership committee of Operation Nemesis was initially headed by the former Ottoman Member of Parliament (1908-13) for Erzurum, Armen Garo (Garegin Pastermadjian - Գարեգին Փաստրմաճեան (1872-1923)), who became Ambassador of the Republic of Armenia to the USA in 1919. The planning and coordination of the *Special Mission* was the responsibility of the revolutionary and publicist Shahan Natali (also Natalie; i.e. Hakob Ter-Hakobian; 1884-1983).<sup>15</sup> Funding was provided by Aaron Sachaklian (1879-1964), the "financial wizard" of *Nemesis*: "*... It can be said that Garo was the soul, Natalie the heart, and Sachaklian the head of Operation Nemesis.*"<sup>16</sup> At the end of 1922, when the ARF had to move its headquarters to Bucharest after the Kemalists took the Ottoman capital, Operation Nemesis apparently ended.<sup>17</sup> Shahan Natali was removed from his leadership position at the 11<sup>th</sup> World Congress of the ARF in 1929.<sup>18</sup>

Tehlirian's assassination of Talaat, the "Number One," was followed on 18 July 1921 in Constantinople by the assassination of Behbud (also: Bihbud, Pipit) Jivanshir Khan, the leader of the Musavat Party and Minister of the Interior of Azerbaijan, when up to 30,000 Armenians were slaughtered in September 1918 after Baku was captured by Turkish troops. Misak Torlakian (1889/90-1968), Jivanshir's executioner, was arrested and beaten up by

<sup>13</sup> *Memoirs of a Stranger*, at <https://snff.org/bookstore/memoirs-stranger/>, accessed 14.05.2019.

<sup>14</sup> Jacques Derogy, *Resistance and Revenge: Armenian Assassination of Turkish Leaders Responsible for the 1915 Massacres and Deportations* (London, New York: Routledge, 2016), XXVII.

<sup>15</sup> Shahan Natalie, *A Biography*, at <https://snff.org/about/shahan-natalie/>, accessed 24.12.2019.

<sup>16</sup> Marian Mesrobian MacCurdy, *Sacred Justice: The Voices and Legacy of the Armenian Operation Nemesis* (New Brunswick, London: Transaction Publishers, 2015), 45, 122.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*, 128.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*

French security forces, but was later handed over to the British occupying forces, whose court acquitted him in November 1921,<sup>19</sup> as in the case of Tehlirian before, because of Torlakian's disability of guilt.

Shortly afterwards, on 5 December 1921, the former Ottoman Grand Vizier (head of government) Sait (Said) Halim was shot dead in Rome by the young Arshavir Shirakian (1902-1973). Together with Aram Yerkanian (Yerganian; 1890-1934), Shirakian subsequently shot Cemal Azmi, the "Butcher of Trebizond," and Bahattin Şakir, who as a member of the C.U.P.'s Central Committee and a leading member of the *Special organization* was responsible for the extermination of Armenians in the Eastern provinces in Berlin-Charlottenburg on 17 April 1922. The group's plan was actually to eliminate the entire Ittihad leadership, which at the time had found shelter in Berlin. To this end, Hra(t)ch Papazian, disguised as a wealthy Turkish student, had already infiltrated Turkish circles in Berlin and informed his companions Natali and Shirakian daily.<sup>20</sup>

On 25 July 1922, Ahmet Djemal was gunned down in the Georgian capital Tbilisi directly in front of the headquarters of the Soviet intelligence service Cheka by the Armenian avengers Petros Ter-Poghosian, Artashes Gevorkian, and Stepan Tsaghikian.

### **Mehmet Talaat: A Genocide Perpetrator**

Talaat, like many leaders of the Young Turkish Union and Progress Party, originated from the Balkans,<sup>21</sup> more precisely from the small town of Karcali (today Bulgaria) in the former Thracian province of Alexandroupolis (Turkish: Edirne).

Here the coexistence of the ethno-religious communities had already become precarious in the late 19th century. Edirne itself was temporarily lost to Ottoman rule in the Russian-Turkish wars of 1828-1829 and 1877-1878 and during the Balkan wars of 1912-1913. In 1877, the family temporarily fled Edirne with Talaat, who was barely three years old, from the Russian army.<sup>22</sup>

At 18, Talaat lost his father, who had been a low-ranking civil servant. Without a high school diploma, Talaat was taken into the civil service and began a career as a telegraph official. He earned an additional income as a Turkish teacher at the modern school of the Alliance Israélite Universelle in Edirne. The principal's daughter gave him French lessons. "*This seems to be the only background for the speculation that Talaat was a dönme, i.e. a Jew converted to Islam.*"<sup>23</sup>

19 Vartkes Yeghiayan, Ara Arabyan, *The Case of Misak Torlakian* (Glendale, CA: Center for Armenian Remembrance, 2006).

20 "The Punishment of those responsible for the Armenian Genocide," at <https://www.hayastan.com/armenia/genocide/punishment/index.html>, accessed 05.05.2019.

21 Erik Jan Zürcher, "The Young Turks - Children of the Borderlands?" at [https://www.academia.edu/847449/The\\_Young\\_Turks\\_Children\\_of\\_the\\_Borderlands](https://www.academia.edu/847449/The_Young_Turks_Children_of_the_Borderlands), accessed 11.05.2019.

22 Hans-Lukas Kieser, *Mehmet Talaat - eine Identifikationsfigur? Eine biografische Skizze; leicht gekürztes Manuskript eines Vortrags im Rahmen der Veranstaltung "Schwierigkeiten des Erinnerns - Der Völkermord an den Armeniern*," slightly abridged manuscript of a lecture given at the event "Difficulties of Memory - The Armenian Genocide" in Berlin, University of the Arts, 18 March 2006, 2. Kieser is also the author of the first biography of Talaat; cf. Hans-Lukas Kieser, *Talaat Pasha: Father of Modern Turkey, Architect of Genocide*, trans. by Tessa Hofmann (Princeton, NJ; Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2018).

23 Kieser, *Mehmet Talaat*, 2.



Although of Pomak<sup>24</sup> origin, Talaat, in his memoirs<sup>25</sup> written in Berlin in 1919/20, i.e., shortly before his death, “*made an almost embarrassingly touching effort to prove his descent only from ‘old and genuine’ Turks - testimony to a zeitgeist that made mischief with ethnic descent, namely human appreciation and devaluation.*”<sup>26</sup>

In 1895 Talaat was arrested for opposition against the Sultan, pardoned in 1897 and assigned to the postal service in Selanik (Thessaloniki), in what is now northern Greece. The cosmopolitan garrison city became the center of the Young Turks’ movement, because it was possible to bring together civil and military opponents who believed in Western progress and to create an organizational unification with the Young Turks in European exile. Talaat’s position in the Union and Progress Party was excellent when the party partially seized power in July 1908 through an army insurrection, had the Ottoman constitution restored and deposed the autocratic Sultan Abdül-Hamid in 1909. Talaat was elected to the Ottoman Parliament as a representative for Edirne and became Minister of the Interior in 1909, at the age of 35.

In the turbulent period from 1911 to early 1913, when Italy invaded Libya and the united Balkan states attacked the Ottoman Empire, Talaat temporarily lost his post. However, after his party’s coup in January 1913 against the government of liberal forces that had just been installed, he became more influential than ever. In early 1913, the dictatorial one-party rule of the Young Turks, which lasted until October 1918, began. Talaat was again Minister of the Interior and from February 1917 he was head of government with the title Pasha.

During the war years Talaat was the main responsible for the deportation of the Armenian population almost throughout the Ottoman Empire and for the deportations and expulsions of the Greek Orthodox population in the Pontus area<sup>27</sup> and Western Anatolia during the First World War. According to a survey-based projection by the German Embassy in Constantinople on 4 October 1916, one and a half of 2.5 million Armenian citizens of the Ottoman Empire died of hunger, exhaustion and epidemics, in massacres or on death marches.<sup>28</sup> These crimes, planned and directed by the state, were already judged as annihilation by contemporary German observers, including the Imperial German Ambassador himself.<sup>29</sup>

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24 The ethnic affiliation of the Pomaks is disputed between Bulgaria and Greece; for Bulgaria the Pomaks are Slavs, for the Greeks, Thracians. Their membership in the Indo-European language family is undisputed. Pomaks are Bulgarian-speaking Muslims.

25 Hülya Adak, “Identifying the ‘Internal Tumors’ of World War I: Talat Paşa’nın Hatıraları; or, the Travels of a Unionist Apologia into History,” in *Räume des Selbst: Selbstzeugnisforschung*, ed. by Andreas Bähr, Peter Burschel, Gabriele Jancke (Köln, Weimar, Wien: Böhlau, 2007), 151-172.

26 Kieser, *Mehmet Talaat*, 2.

27 84,000 was the average number used by Rudolph Rummel, and 91,000 Greek victims was the highest figure. Greek authors assume a total of 353,000 Greek victims in the Pontus area alone in 1916-1922. Cf. Rudolph Rummel, *Statistics of Democide: Genocide and Mass Murder since 1900* (Münster: LIT, 1998), 96.

28 Letter from Ambassador Radowitz to the Chancellor Bethmann Hollweg; Political Archives of the German Foreign Office, PA/AA, R14093, at

[http://www.armenocide.net/armenocide/armgende.nsf/\\$\\$AllDocs/1916-10-04-DE-002](http://www.armenocide.net/armenocide/armgende.nsf/$$AllDocs/1916-10-04-DE-002), accessed 02.09.2019.

29 Report by Ambassador Wangenheim to Chancellor Bethmann Hollweg, 7 July 1915: “The expulsion and relocation of the Armenian people was limited until 14 days ago to the provinces nearest to the eastern theatre of war and to certain areas in the province of Adana; since then the Porte has resolved to extend these measures also to the provinces of Trebizond, Mamuret-ul-Aziz and Sivas and has begun with these measures even though these parts of the country are not threatened by any enemy invasion for the time being. This situation and the way in

Moreover, as his own records show, Talaat was an accurate accountant of the extermination:

Throughout 1915-16, Talaat, the Ottoman Minister of Interior, supervised the destruction of Armenians in the Ottoman Empire. Masking this process as a security measure, he ordered the general deportation of Armenians and oversaw the break-up of communities, the systematic confiscation of property, forced conversions, the disappearance of hundreds of thousands of people, and the dispersion of survivors across the empire. Talaat received progress reports from different provinces and, at the end of 1916, ordered a general assessment of his work. On 24 August 1916, he sent a cipher telegram to 34 provinces (vilayets and mutasarrifliks) asking for detailed information about the presence of Armenians in different parts of the empire. (...) According to Talaat's adjusted figures, around 1,150,000 Ottoman Armenians (or 77 percent) had disappeared between 1914 and 1917.<sup>30</sup>

With his appointment as head of government on 4 February 1917, Talaat was at the height of his career:

Two months earlier, he had made an inspection tour of the Anatolian provinces and, in a telegram to the sheriff, the religious dignitary, from Mecca, he had proudly stated that Armenian houses and businesses had passed into Muslim hands. In this telegram, one hears the voice of a social technologist, but also the voice of a Balkan Turkic champion who sees himself collectively as a victim and who believes that he has finally gained a territorial foothold in Anatolia and this time has triumphed successfully over Christians.

As late as spring 1918 (...) (Talaat) received congratulatory telegrams for his 'services to Turkishness.' (...) Talaat's decline was all the more rapid in the second half of the year, when Bulgaria withdrew from the war alliance and Germany's defeat became clear. On October 8, 1918, he resigned as grand vizier. On November 1, just a few hours before he fled to Germany, he admitted his political defeat in a farewell speech at the last party congress sought to mitigate his complicity in the war and justified his failure to fight against abusers and war profiteers by saying that unity was a priority in the world war.<sup>31</sup>

With German help, Talaat, together with other high-ranking leaders of the Young Turkish Committee, had left the country shortly before the Ottoman war capitulation (Mudros, 30 October 1918) and escaped Ottoman or Allied jurisdiction. On 2 November 1918, he was transferred from the Ukrainian seaport of Sevastopol, together with other high-ranking Young Turks - the former ministers Enver and Cemal and the Young Turkish Party secretary Dr. Nazım (1872-1926). Talaat was evacuated by a German torpedo boat and arrived in Berlin in December 1918, where he moved into a nine-room apartment in Berlin-Char-

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which the relocation is being carried out shows that the government is indeed pursuing its purpose of eradicating the Armenian race from the Turkish Empire." PA/AA, R14086, at [http://www.armenocide.net/armenocide/armgende.nsf/\\$\\$AllDocs/1915-07-07-DE-001](http://www.armenocide.net/armenocide/armgende.nsf/$$AllDocs/1915-07-07-DE-001), accessed 26.11.2019.

30 Ara Sarafian, *Talaat Pasha's Report on the Armenian Genocide, 1917* (London: Gomidas Institute, 2011), 5.

31 Kieser, *Mehmet Talaat*, 6.

lottenburg under the alias Aly Saly Bey (Mehmet Sait Bey) at Hardenbergstrasse 4 with his wife Hayriye and initially, Dr. Nazım as well. As early as 1918 and 1919, respectively, the Ottoman government requested the German government to extradite Talaat, but the German Foreign Minister Wilhelm Solf rejected both requests with, among other reasons: “*Talaat has been loyal to us, and our country remains open to him.*”<sup>32</sup> In absentia, Talaat was sentenced to death on 5 July 1919 by an Ottoman court martial in Constantinople for war crimes and the “*massacre and annihilation of the Armenian population of the Empire.*” However, the victorious Turkish nationalists under the leadership of Mustafa Kemal immediately overturned the verdicts of the Ottoman court martials after they had come to power in full.<sup>33</sup>

Until his death, Talaat understood the annihilation of the Armenians in the Ottoman Empire, for which he was mainly responsible, as a necessary evil to save Turkey. The US ambassador Henry Morgenthau quoted Talaat in 1918 with the admission:

It is no use for you to argue, Talaat answered, we have already disposed of three quarters of the Armenians; there are none at all left in Bitlis, Van, and Erzerum. The hatred between the Turks and the Armenians is now so intense that we have got to finish with them. If we don't, they will plan their revenge.<sup>34</sup>

The German Foreign Office therefore assumed that Talaat was particularly endangered by Armenian avengers in Berlin and proposed a remote Mecklenburg estate as his residence. Talaat declined because it was easier for him to maintain his intense international political contacts from Berlin.<sup>35</sup> The Young Turkish leaders who had fled abroad sought

to promote the Turkish national struggle in the European metropolises (...) with propaganda, relationship work and as organizers of the Turkish elite diaspora. They were planning an early return home and renewed participation in power. For this reason, they corresponded with Mustafa Kemal, who was the head of the Anatolian resistance from the spring of 1919. Entirely in keeping with the ideological conglomerate of the party during the World War, Talaat proposed, in a letter to Kemal, that the struggle be led primarily to victory in the homeland of Anatolia, but also that the card of Pan-Turkish and pan-Islamic solidarity be played. He also asked him for money, by the way. In his reply, in which he addressed him in good party tradition as “my brother,” Kemal himself complained about lack of money. All the more important then was Soviet support for Turkish nationalism.

It is remarkable how Talaat made Soviet Russian, German nationalist and pro-fascist Italian contacts. What united him with some socialists, despite his Turkishness, was his hatred of tsarist Russia and a revolutionary self-image.<sup>36</sup>

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32 Vahakn N. Dadrian, *German Responsibility in the Armenian Genocide: A Review of the Historical Evidence of German Complicity* (Cambridge: MA., 1996), 217.

33 Akçam, *Armenien und der Völkermord*, 114-119.

34 Henry Morgenthau, *Ambassador Morgenthau's Story. Eighth Article* [The World's Work, December 1918], at <http://jfredmacdonald.com/worldwarone1914-1918/armenian-18ambassador-morgenthau-8th.html>, accessed 05.06.2020.

35 Hosfeld, *Operation Nemesis*, 13.

36 Kieser, *Mehmet Talaat*, 7.

In the judgment of European and North American contemporaries Talaat is described as a power-hungry, dictatorial, energetic, unscrupulous and irreligious person. In a dispatch to Chancellor Theobald von Bethmann Hollweg, the German extraordinary ambassador Wolff-Metternich described Talaat as the cold-blooded “*soul of the Armenian persecutions*.”<sup>37</sup> Talaat was convinced that his deportation orders were justified from the standpoint of national Turkish-Muslim interests. The Turkish nationalist and feminist Halide Edip Adıvar (1884-1964) quoted Talaat on the “Armenian Question” in her event-close published memoirs:

Look here, Halidé Hanum. I have a heart as good as yours, and it keeps me awake at night to think of the human suffering. But that is a personal thing, and I am here on this earth to think of my people and of my sensibilities. If a Macedonian or Armenian leader gets the chance and excuse he never neglects it. There was an equal number of Turks and Moslems massacred during the Balkan war, yet the world kept a criminal silence. I have the conviction that as long as a nation does the best for its own interests and succeeds, the world admires it and thinks it moral. I am ready to die for what I have done, and I know that I shall die for it.<sup>38</sup>

On the orders of Adolf Hitler, Talaat’s remains were exhumed in March 1943 from the Turkish Cemetery in Berlin-Neukölln and buried in a grave of honor on Liberty Hill in Istanbul in the presence of the then German ambassador Franz von Papen. Hitler hoped in vain that this would make the neutral Turkish Republic a German ally.<sup>39</sup> To this day Talaat is revered as a patriotic martyr in his homeland and in the Turkish diaspora. Three mosques in Ankara and Istanbul bear his name.<sup>40</sup> Seven city districts, three boulevards and 21 streets of various large cities also bear Talaat’s name.<sup>41</sup>

### **Soghomon Tehlirian, the Avenger**

Born on 2 April 1896 in the village of Nerkin (Inner) Bagarj (Բալազնիհ) in Erzurum Province, Tehlirian was raised in nearby Yerznka (Erzincan) since 1905, after his father was arrested and sentenced to six months imprisonment. During this time, the Tehlirian family moved to Erzincan, where Tehlirian received his initial education at the Protestant elementary school. After graduation at the Armenian Central Lyceum (*Getronagan*) of Constantinople, he went to study engineering in Serbia. “*He was in Serbia, having moved there quite*

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37 Hosfeld, *Operation Nemesis*, 16

38 Halidé Edib Adıvar, *The Memoirs of Halidé Edib* (Piscataway, NJ: Gorgias Press, 2005), 387.

39 Tessa Hofmann, “Der Prozeß Talaat Pascha: Vorwort zur Neuauflage,” In: *Der Völkermord an den Armeniern vor Gericht: Der Prozeß Talaat Pascha*. Neuauflage; hrsg. u. eingeleitet von Tessa Hofmann im Auftrag der Gesellschaft für bedrohte Völker (Göttingen, Wien: Reihe pogrom, 1980); Robert Fisk, “My conversation with the son of Soghomon Tehlirian, the man who assassinated the organizer of the Armenian genocide,” *Independent*, 20 June 2016, at <https://www.independent.co.uk/voices/robert-fisk-armenian-genocide-conversation-son-soghomon-tehlirian-mehmet-talaat-pasha-assassination-a7091951.html>, accessed 21.06.2016.

40 “Talaatpaşa Camii”: 1) Ankara-Dikmen, Gökkuşluğu Mahallesi, 8. Sokak, No. 9; 2) İstanbul-Kağıthane, Talaatpaşa Mahallesi, Aslangazi Caddesi, No. 22; 3) İstanbul-Maltepe, Cevizli Mahallesi, Talaatpaşa Caddesi, No. 22, at <http://www.aga-online.org/worship/Talaat-pasha.php?locale=de>, accessed 21.06.2019.

41 See at <http://www.aga-online.org/worship/Talaat-pasha.php?locale=de>, accessed 21.06.2019.

*by chance on the very day in June 1914 that Gavrillo Principe shot the Archduke Ferdinand in Sarajevo, setting off the First World War.”*<sup>42</sup>

During the Bolshevik Revolution of 1917, Tehlirian went to Russia and joined General Antranig Ozanian’s Armenian volunteer force, fighting alongside the regular Imperial Russian army against the Ottomans, while those family members who had stayed in Erzincan were deported in June 1915.

After the World War, Tehlirian learned in Constantinople at a lecture by Dr. Melkon Gülistanian that the original list of the Armenian elite arrested in the Ottoman capital on 24 April 1919, had been compiled by a Harutyun Mkrtychyan for Bedri Bey, the president of the capital’s police force. Gülistanian was one of the few survivors of those arrested at the time.<sup>43</sup> In March 1919, Tehlirian shot Mkrtychyan in Constantinople. This first assassination drew the attention of the *Nemesis* network to Tehlirian, who was invited to Boston and put on Talaat as the “number one” on Shahan Natali’s hit list.

Nevertheless, as Tehlirian’s biographer Edward Alexander points out, Tehlirian was neither a murderer nor a mere tool of the secret organization *Nemesis*. He was also not a terrorist, because he was not driven by any nationalist or other ideology. He was driven by an obsession to take revenge on the man he considered to be mainly responsible for the destruction of his family:

Once that was done, the torment in his soul subsided and Tehlirian never killed again. The ARF’s motive in having Talaat killed was political. Tehlirian’s motive was vengeance. He was not a soldier in an ideological cause, nor fighting for territorial integrity, nor was he the agent of a political faction. Although a loyal member of the ARF, under whose auspices he carried out the assassination, he was a member in name only, executing the deed for his own sake rather than for any political program.<sup>44</sup>

Marian Mesrobian MacCurdy rightly points out that revenge was the motive for all those involved in the planning of the attack on Talaat, as they all lamented the loss of relatives “*and therefore felt compelled, once it was clear that the Allies would not hold the Turks accountable, to mete out justice themselves.*”<sup>45</sup>

After his deportation from Germany in 1921, Tehlirian returned to Serbia, where he lived with his wife in Belgrade until 1950. From there the couple moved to Casablanca. “*Having been told by the ARF that Turkish agents were closing on him in 1956 he moved to the United States.*”<sup>46</sup>

In San Francisco Tehlirian worked as a postal employee under the alias Saro Melikian. His younger son characterized him as follows:

He was the most gentle, mild man you could ever meet, almost naïve. Me and my

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42 Fisk, “My conversation with the son of Soghomon Tehlirian.”

43 Edward Alexander, *A Crime of Vengeance: An Armenian Struggle for Justice* (NY etc: The Free Press / Collier Macmillan, 1991), 43.

44 *Ibid.*, 200.

45 Mesrobian MacCurdy, *Sacred Justice*, 123.

46 Shiragian, *Gomideh*.

older brother had to force him to tell us what happened. He never liked to talk about it. He was a man of very few words. He used to write poetry and draw very well.<sup>47</sup>

### **The Court Case against Tehlirian**

In 1985, when I was able to view the preliminary investigation file of the criminal case and other documents in the archives of the German Democratic Republic at that time, the “depoliticization” of the proceedings by the German Foreign Office and the Prussian Ministry of Justice became clear to me.<sup>48</sup> Among other things, the German authorities feared that the criminal trial against Tehlirian might be used to discuss German-Turkish relations during WWI and especially German complicity in the extermination of the Armenians. Therefore, the trial should be conducted as swiftly as possible. Instead of the three trial days requested by the defense, the trial was conducted in only one and a half days and only nine of the 15 witnesses requested by the defense were heard.

The preliminary investigation had already ended on 21 March 1921, just seven days after Talaat’s assassination. The court case itself began on 18 April 1921; on 29 March, the district attorney’s office brought the charges before a jury. Even though the district attorney’s office expected Tehlirian to be charged, it had him sent for a medical examination. Dr. Stoermer, the medical officer, in his diagnosis of 11 April 1921, stated that Tehlirian was “malnourished” and “inconspicuous,” with scars on his skull, upper left arm, and knee, dating presumably back to the massacres. The doctor noted Tehlirian’s precise description of his own medical state as follows:

Tehlirian undoubtedly suffers from epilepsy, but only in its nerve-related form, and not as a psychological disturbance... The diagnosis results from Tehlirian’s own vivid descriptions. I was amazed at Tehlirian’s ability to describe his illness in precise medical terms.<sup>49</sup>

The prosecution’s prime question referred to whether the nervous condition he suffered would call for the application of section 51 of the Imperial Criminal Code, which would qualify Tehlirian for a plea of insanity.<sup>50</sup>

Talaat’s assassination caused German judicial circles considerable embarrassment. On 25 May 1921, Gollnick, the Chief Public Prosecutor, addressed the Prussian Ministry of Justice in order to explain his reservations about the legal strategy:

It is to be feared that the (forthcoming) trial by jury (...) will escalate into a mammoth political case. (...) First of all, we are sure to expect that the defense will argue on behalf of the accused that his was an act of heroism freeing Christian Armenians suffering under the Turkish yoke. (...) Perhaps the defense will even

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47 Fisk, “My conversation with the son of Soghomon Tehlirian.”

48 Tessa Hofmann, “New Aspects of the Talaat Pasha Court Case: Unknown Archival Documents on the Background and Procedure of an Unintended Political Trial,” *Armenian Review* 42, no. 4/168, (1989): 41-53.

49 Record Rep. 30 Bln C, Tit. 198 B, Nr. 1182, p. 182 in the State Archives in Potsdam; Hofmann, “New Aspects of the Talaat Pasha Court Case,” 43.

50 Ibid.

try to investigate the stance of the German government on the Armenian atrocities. (...) Comparing the Polish insurrection with the Turkish (action), especially (at this time), and in England, where (politics) lends a friendly ear to the Armenians, would be (most) undesirable, as long as the Upper Silesian problem (remains unsolved).

Of even greater concern from the political point of view is a line of inquiry during the trial, which would consider (Talaat) Pasha's general political role and his German connections. Talaat was known to be the most reckless of all (representatives) with pro-German inclinations in Turkey, (and) actually not only in (Turkish) regions, but also beyond (Turkish) borders in all parts of the Islamic world. The (eyes) of the entire Islamic world will be focused on (this) trial. Public discussions about the trial would have multiple and significant political repercussions in Asia, (especially) on political relations between (Germany) and Ankara's newly-formed government. (...)<sup>51</sup>

However, Gollnick did not prevail against the Foreign Office with his proposal to conduct the proceedings in camera. From the files, we deduce that personal contacts existed between the Chief Public Prosecutor's office and the German Foreign Office, both before and after the trial.

On 1 June 1921, a day prior to the trial, in a meeting with Baron von Thermann and Count Friedrich Wilhelm von Schulenburg as representatives of the German Foreign Office, the Foreign Office representatives, clearly deviating from earlier requests, announced that a request for public exclusion by the prosecutors would be less than desirable as it could not only fail but could make a bad impression on the public. The advocates of a flexible attitude which was intended to impress the Allied powers seemed to have convinced the conservative hardliners.<sup>52</sup>

Tehlirian was represented by three lawyers: the privy judicial authority, Dr. Adolf von Gordon (Berlin; 1850-1925), whom Natali described as "*conservative, but very influential.*"<sup>53</sup> Gordon's partner, Justice Counsel Dr. Johannes Werthauer (1866-1938), was one of the most prominent lawyers of the Weimar Republic, whose citizenship was revoked by the National Socialists in August 1933 on their first list.<sup>54</sup> Tehlirian's third criminal defense attorney was the Privy Counselor Dr. Theodor Hugo Edwin Niemeyer (1857-1939), "*a man of European reputation, co-founder of the International Law Association and member of the Institut de Droit Internationale, which was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize in 1904. In 1915 he founded the Journal of International Law. In 1917, on Niemeyer's initiative, the German Society for International Law was founded, which was forced to dissolve in 1933.*"<sup>55</sup>

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51 Ibid., 44.

52 Ibid., 45.

53 Rolf Hosfeld, Gurgun Petrossian, "Der Prozess gegen Soghomon Tehlirian, Deutschland 1919-1921," in: Groenewold/ Ignor / Koch (Hrsg.), *Lexikon der Politischen Strafprozesse*, at <https://www.lexikon-der-politischen-strafprozesse.de/glossar/tehlirian-soghomon/>, accessed 15.09.2020.

54 Ibid.

55 Ibid.

The defense requested “at least three days adjournment.”<sup>56</sup> The second and third days were planned for gathering evidence on the “massacres in Armenia.” The defense wanted to subpoena fifteen experts and witnesses, five of whom were missionaries or had served in the German medical services in the Ottoman Empire and were eyewitnesses; two were former German consuls (Dr. Erwin von Scheubner-Richter from Erzurum, and Walter Rössler from Aleppo), and one was a member of the German imperial military mission (Lt. Col. Ernst Paraquin). Only nine of the fifteen expert witnesses were subpoenaed; five of these were medical experts on the question of Tehlirian’s mental responsibility. Instead of E. Paraquin, the former Field Marshall Otto Liman von Sanders was summoned prior to the trial at the prosecutor’s request. This was clearly to counteract the comprehensive testimony by Dr. Johannes Lepsius, who was generally considered an Armenophile. There was no evidence heard on Talaat’s blame as author of the genocide. When von Gordon wanted to file a petition, Gollnick supplied the following counterclaim:

I request that this petition be denied. A detailed discussion on whether Talaat was responsible for the Armenian atrocities has already been permitted. The question is entirely irrelevant. In my opinion, there is no doubt that the accused was convinced that Talaat was indeed that person who could be held responsible for the atrocities. Thereby, the motive becomes very obvious. I am of the opinion that it is not the duty of this court to question Talaat’s guilt. For the judgment would be a historical one, requiring evidence of a very different nature from what is present here.<sup>57</sup>

Nevertheless, thanks to the intervention of the presiding judge and District Court director Dr. Lehmburg, the prehistory of Tehlirian’s deed was discussed in detail during the trial, when the defendant reported on the massacre of his family and his own survival:

This was unusual, but Lehmburg - who was very familiar with Lepsius’ collection of documents on Germany and Armenia - apparently wanted to strike a major chord that gave Tehlirian’s “I was not a murderer” a certain credibility right from the start. The core of Tehlirian’s statements about the annihilation of his family was known to Lehmburg, who repeatedly asked for details, through Lepsius’ collection of documents,<sup>58</sup> which contained comparable descriptions of the course of the massacres.<sup>59</sup>

The statements of the two Armenian witnesses and genocide survivors Christine Terzibashian (born Eftian, ca. 1894-1969) and Rev. Grigoris Palagian (Balakian; 1873-1934) supported Tehlirian’s statements. Terzibashian and her family were deported from Erzurum in July 1915 and were among the remaining survivors. The cleric Palagian was one of the few Armenians who survived, having been arrested in Constantinople on 24 April 1915, and then deported to Çankırı or Ayaş. After his training in Erzurum, Rev. Palagian had pre-

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56 Hofmann, “New Aspects of the Talaat Pasha Court Case,” 46.

57 *Ibid.*, 47.

58 *Deutschland und Armenien 1914-1918: Sammlung diplomatischer Aktenstücke*; hrsg. u. eingeleitet von Dr. Johannes Lepsius. Potsdam 1919 (Neuaufgabe Bremen: Donat Verlag, 1986, mit einem Vorw. zur Neuausgabe von Tessa Hofmann und einem Nachw. Von M. Rainer Lepsius), LXXX, 549.

59 Hosfeld and Petrossian, “Der Prozess gegen Soghomon Tehlirian.”



viously studied architecture in Germany and had written a paper on the monuments of Ani, the former capital of the Armenian kingdom of Shirak. He then became a member of the clerical council in Constantinople and its secretary and proved to be an important “leader and organizer” in times of persecution of the Armenians. In March 1915, he was put on the denunciation list of Harutyun Mkrtychyan, sentenced to death but escaped execution. Rev. Palagian was 42 years old and prelate in Manchester at the time of the criminal trial against Soghomon Tehlirian. He has described his experiences not only as a witness during the trial, but also in his two-volume memoir *The Armenian Golgotha*.<sup>60</sup>

On 3 June 1921, after one and a half hours of deliberation, the twelve members of the jury acquitted Tehlirian. The spokesman did not give any contextual reason for the decision. In a letter to the Ministry of Justice, dated 5 June 1921, Gollnick surmised the following:

Since two medical expert witnesses confirmed the prerequisites of section 51 of the Imperial Criminal Code, we assume that the verdict of not guilty is determined based on this stipulation. The warrant was withdrawn, and Tehlirian was set free. I have sent a request to the police headquarters to have Tehlirian deported as soon as possible on the grounds of being a troublesome foreigner.<sup>61</sup>

By removing Tehlirian, the German authorities rid themselves of the cause of any further investigations. The acquittal of Tehlirian came as a surprise. In the eyes of many, especially Armenians, justice and truth triumphed. In particular, the expectations of the media-experienced *Vrej* organizer Shahan Natali, who, according to his own account in the newspaper *Nairi* (Beirut), had instructed Tehlirian as follows, were fulfilled:

You blow up the skull of the Number One nation-murderer and you don't try to flee. You stand there, your foot on the corpse and surrender to the police, who will come and handcuff you.” Shahan Natalie's purpose was to turn Soghomon Tehlirian's trial into the political trial of those responsible for the great tragedy, which was realized in part. However, there were those in the ARF leadership, Simon Vratsian in particular, who had two chapters, which dealt with Shahan Natalie's leadership role in the assassination of Talaat, deleted from Tehlirian's memoirs before their printing.<sup>62</sup>

Not only the German ministries of justice and foreign affairs, but also the *Vrej* organizers influenced the Berlin criminal proceedings against Tehlirian, presumably through Vahan Zakariants (Zakariantz; also Zakarian) and Libarit Nazariants (Liparit Nasariantz), both members of the ARF and close collaborators of Johannes Lepsius. Nazariants was also a founding member of the *German-Armenian Society* (Deutsch-Armenische Gesellschaft) founded by Lepsius in June 1914. In the spring of 1915, Zakariants “with the support of the

60 Grigoris Palagian, Հայ Գողգոթան [The Armenian Golgotha], Vol. 1 (Vienna: Mechitaristen-Kongregation, 1922); Vol. 2 (Paris: Imprimerie Araxes, 1959). French edition: *Le Golgotha Arménien* (La Ferté-Sous-Jouarre: Le cercle d'écrits Caucasiens, Vol. 1, 2002; Vol. 2, 2004 (Band 2); American Edition: *Armenian Golgotha: A Memoir of The Armenian Genocide, 1915-1918*, trans. by Peter Balakian and Aris Sevag (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2009).

61 Hosfeld and Petrossian, “Der Prozess gegen Soghomon Tehlirian.”

62 Natalie, *A Biography*.

*[German] Foreign Office and under a false name, had investigated the incipient massacres in Turkey and served [1921] as Vice Consul of the Republic of Armenia in Berlin.*”<sup>63</sup>

The ARF is said to have risen between 100,000 and 300,000 marks for the defense of Tehlirian. Rolf Hosfeld and Gurgen Petrossian in their recently published encyclopedia article describe Johannes Lepsius as the “*actual backstage promoter of Tehlirian’s defence.*”<sup>64</sup> But it remains an open and unresearched question to what extent Lepsius himself became aware of this role. Just as open remains in view of his humanitarian oeuvre as a whole the question of the general influence of the ARF on Lepsius.

In Tehlirian’s criminal case, neither the existence of the secret organization *Vrej*, nor Tehlirian’s affiliation to it, nor his membership of General A. Ozanian’s voluntary units were mentioned. In his memoirs, published in 1956, Tehlirian mentioned the loss of 85 members of his extended family during the genocide,<sup>65</sup> but in contradiction to his testimony in the Berlin criminal proceedings, he was not an eyewitness to the deportation and murder of his relatives. Tehlirian’s younger son remembered in 2016: “*My father never had a sister (...). He and two of his brothers were in Serbia [at the time of the genocide; T.H.]. It was his mother - my grandmother - who was killed in the genocide, along with his oldest brother Vazken, who would have been my uncle and who had been a medical student in Beirut.*”<sup>66</sup>

The autobiographical narrative that Tehlirian offered when questioned by Judge Lehmberg in Berlin was thus a construct, but one that contains extremely typical and essential elements of the collective fate of his compatriots.

## **Legal and Historical Significance**

Not only Armenian trial observers, but also the liberal and social democratic press of Germany celebrated the acquittal by the Berlin jury as a triumph of higher justice. The Jewish legal expert Robert Max Wassili Kempner (1899-1993), who had attended the trial as a young assessor, wrote in retrospect on the occasion of the 60th anniversary of the criminal trial:

The general deportation of the Armenians was decided by the Young Turk Committee during the First World War, ordered by the Minister of Interior Talaat Pasha and carried out with the help of the Young Turk Committee until the Armenians were massacred. More than two thirds of the Armenian people became victims of this holocaust. As a student at the law faculty of the Friedrich-Wilhelm-University in Berlin, I became aware of the terrible human, political and legal tragedy of this genocide, when three years after the end of the war, the Armenian student Solomon Teilirian shot the former Turkish Minister of the Interior Talaat Pasha, who also lived there, in Berlin. The ensuing murder trial before the jury court of the Berlin district court III, which took place on June 2 and 3, 1921, under the chairmanship of district court director Dr. Lehmberg, shook up the whole world. There were still

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63 Hosfeld and Petrossian, “Der Prozess gegen Soghomon Tehlirian.”

64 Ibid.

65 Soghomon Tehlirian, *Վերջին հիշումներ* [Recollections] (Cairo: Husaper, 1953), 8.

66 Fisk, “My conversation with the son of Soghomon Tehlirian.”

jurors in Berlin: Teilirian was acquitted, the twelve jurors coming to the conclusion in a one-hour secret deliberation that the deed was an act of passion by a mentally unstable young man who was under the terrible trauma of the Armenian extermination.<sup>67</sup>

In summary, Kempner concluded: “*It was a fair and just trial. Its objective conduct was particularly commendable because Turkey was allied with the central powers during the First World War.*”<sup>68</sup>

In the Nuremberg war crimes trials in 1945/6, Kempner appeared as the main US prosecutor Robert Jackson’s deputy. In 1947 Kempner detected the so-called Wannsee Protocol.

The criminal trial of 1921 also left a deep impression on the Polish Jewish jurist Raphael Lemkin (1899-1959), who was born in what is now Belarus, even though Lemkin, as a student in Lemberg (Lvów, Lviv, Lvov) only learned of its course from the press. Lemkin wrote about this key experience in his autobiography:

The court in Berlin acquitted Tehlirian. It decided that he had acted under “psychological compulsion.” Tehlirian, who upheld the moral order of mankind, was classified as insane, incapable of discerning the moral nature of his act. He had acted as the self-appointed legal officer for the conscience of mankind. But can a man appoint himself to mete out justice? Will not passion sway away such a form of justice and make a travesty of it? At that moment my worries about the murder of the innocent became more meaningful for me. I did not know all the answers, but I felt that a law against this type of racial or religious murder must be adopted by the world.<sup>69</sup>

In the dilemma between impunity and lynch law, Lemkin’s lasting and outstanding achievement was to have recognized the legislative gap that prevented state and major crimes such as that committed against Armenians and other Christians in the Ottoman Empire from being punished or even prevented. He heard from his Heidelberg law professor that there was no law to prevent crimes committed by a state against its citizens. Lemkin pointed out the legal inconsistencies: “*It is a crime for Tehlirian to kill a man, but it is not a crime for his oppressor to kill more than a million men? This is most inconsistent.*”<sup>70</sup>

On 25 May 1926, the Jewish tailor, poet and anarchist Shalom Schwarzbart (also Schwarzbard; 1886-1938), shot the Ukrainian military commander (chief ataman) Symon Petlyura dead in Paris. As the chairman of the board of directors of the Ukrainian National Republic Petliura was responsible for the massacre of Jews in 1918, in which Schwarzbart’s parents had perished. Petliura’s executioner Schwarzbart was declared insane after a criminal trial in 1927, just like Tehlirian six years before him. Lemkin felt confirmed by

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67 Robert M. W. Kempner, “Vor sechzig Jahren vor einem deutschen Schwurgericht: Der Völkermord an den Armeniern,” *Recht und Politik* 3 (1980): 167.

68 Ibid.

69 Donna-Lee Frieze (ed.), *Totally Unofficial: The Autobiography of Raphael Lemkin* (London: Yale University Press, 2013), 20.

70 Samantha Power, “*A Problem from Hell*”: *America and the Age of Genocide* (New York, NY: Perennial, 2002), 17; *Totally Unofficial*, 20.

the Berlin and Paris jury's decisions: "*The perpetrator is insane and therefore must go free. [...] Gradually, the decision was maturing in me that I had to act.*"<sup>71</sup>

Lemkin's life's work became the drafting and implementation of an international treaty on the prevention and punishment of genocide. The first attempts to introduce such a convention into the League of Nations failed in 1933<sup>72</sup>, and it was only after another world war and genocide on an even larger scale that the United Nations adopted the Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide in 1948, the essential parts of which were prepared by Lemkin. The definition of genocide contained therein is empirically based on the historical examples of the extermination of the Armenians in 1915/16, the so-called Simele massacre of Arameans and Assyrians in Iraq in 1933, and the extermination of European Jewry (Shoah) in WWII. As early as 1943, Lemkin had introduced the term genocide, which has been in international use ever since, into historical and legal literature. Until then, French publicists and British politicians such as Winston Churchill<sup>73</sup> or Lloyd George called the mass extermination of the Armenians in the late Ottoman Empire a holocaust<sup>74</sup> (Greek: "whole-burn sacrifice").

### **Media, Scientific and Cultural Processing**

The fact that the German judiciary had to face the crimes of Germany's previous ally Ottoman Turkey on account of the case against Tehlirian, brought the proceeding from the very beginning into the center of public attention,<sup>75</sup> even though the prosecution had been trying to take the political element out of the trial. Despite such efforts, the trial received international media attention from the following newspapers and news agencies: The New York Times, The Chicago Daily News, Philadelphia Public Ledger, The Daily Telegraph (London) and the Agency for International Coverage, NZ: Nachrichten-und Artikel-Zentrale für Zeitungen.<sup>76</sup>

<sup>71</sup> Ibid.

<sup>72</sup> Heinsohn, *Lexikon der Völkermorde*, 236.

<sup>73</sup> Winston Churchill, *The World Crisis, Vol. 5, A Aftermath 1918-1928* (New York: C. Scribner's sons, 1929), 157.

<sup>74</sup> The frequent use of fire in the destruction of the Ottoman Christians is noteworthy. The term "holocaust" as a synonym for genocidal destruction was applied by the American missionary Corinna Shattuck, who witnessed the "great holocaust" in Urfa, when three-thousand Armenians were burnt alive in their cathedral in late 1895. The term was then continuously used by Europeans to describe the annihilation of Ottoman Christians. In 1898 the French-Jewish journalist Bernard Lazare called the nationwide slaughter of Armenians and other Christians during 1895 and 1896 a holocaust, while the Englishman Frederick Zacheus Duckett Ferriman (1856-1934) titled his book on the Adana slaughter *The Young Turks and the Truth About the Holocaust at Adana in Asia Minor During April 1909* (London, 1913). With the disappearance of the Christian population in Asia Minor, the historic context of "holocaust" as a synonym for anti-Christian destructive events sank into oblivion. During and after WWII, it was increasingly applied to the destruction of the European Jews, although Elie Wiesel believed, that he had invented it in 1958. Cf. Heinsohn, *Lexikon der Völkermorde*, 17.

<sup>75</sup> Stefan Ihrig, "Genocide Denied, Accepted, and Justified: The Assassination of Talât Pasha and the Subsequent Trial as a Media Event in the Early Weimar Republic," *Journal of the Society for Armenian Studies* 22 (2013):153-177.

<sup>76</sup> An online press review created by Heinz Böke contains German and foreign press reports on the assassination, burial and transfer of Talaat's mortal remains to Istanbul in December 1942, the state funeral on February 25, 1943 and the criminal proceedings against Soghomon Tehlirian in 1921: at [https://3759d405-a-62cb3a1a-s-sites.googlegroups.com/site/nichtichbindermoerder/literatur-tip-1/pressespiegel1921/Pressespiegel\\_1921\\_Der\\_Mord\\_an\\_Talaat\\_Pascha.pdf?attachauth=ANoY7co-bxRLkEtoztkh6Am2ObX6TBO8076b-](https://3759d405-a-62cb3a1a-s-sites.googlegroups.com/site/nichtichbindermoerder/literatur-tip-1/pressespiegel1921/Pressespiegel_1921_Der_Mord_an_Talaat_Pascha.pdf?attachauth=ANoY7co-bxRLkEtoztkh6Am2ObX6TBO8076b-)

The court case caused a feud between German social-democratic and bourgeois (nationalistic) newspapers, especially between *Vorwärts* and *Deutsche Allgemeine Zeitung* (*DAZ*). Adopting Turkish criticism of the verdict, the *DAZ* called it a “judicial scandal.” *DAZ*, which was a kind of semi-official government gazette during the First World War and was under the leadership of the former naval attaché in Constantinople, Hans Humann, “ignited a real anti-Armenian campaign after the assassination. A blinded cowardly assassin is Tehlirian, a ‘murder jack’ who shot an old man in the back.”<sup>77</sup>

However, in spite of all the controversial viewpoints, all German papers focused their critics on the conspicuously apolitical nature of the trial:

The judge and the prosecutor ardently tried to treat the case as a non-political case. Their efforts were unilaterally focused upon the inner aspects of the crime. The fear of the murder gaining political attention rendered them relatively powerless in the face of the accordingly one-sided defense which capitalized successfully both on itself and the assassin.<sup>78</sup>

Comparing this trial with the German war criminal trials in Leipzig (1921-1927), the social-democratic press called it the “first real war criminal case,” even though questions on Talaat’s personal responsibility for the extermination of the Armenians, or that of German involvement<sup>79</sup> had not been sufficiently answered.<sup>80</sup>

Five years later, after the assassination of Symon Petliura, the National Socialist ideologist Alfred Rosenberg drew a parallel with the assassination of Talaat in the magazine *Der Weltkampf*, which he directed. Rosenberg praised Talaat for his pro-German attitude and, like other commentators before him, lamented the alleged role model effect of the acquittal of the avenger:

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NGIdc0lWMg3xQWV2DsvlAdjXKhVOzBCVypbdGk7XKEPia26KvCs0VEhkixDNYJ9t4WMCZUfEBBC-5q2NLsIl6vvNF90BHBwOk-Pu641uyBPaB6B52MRhwjBDtMcrgtvylnwUh\_ulPg57n\_7JYrWrNmjgs0RqN-b2hHx\_QzpjRitpeK6U7fkWjhhWnbvGsUH-LCFG8oDbfQZ1wwkAHZWXb1xU3qagxhM7R4vFs4XRDIB-coQSTS9FE\_PfU7rwQLU1H6bpXWwdYrinwIUUyfan3CGgw2v--EucFjA0yNgWzLm&attredirects=0.

77 Hosfeld, *Operation Nemesis*, 13.

78 *Deutsche Allgemeine Zeitung* (Berlin) 9 Juli 1921.

79 To date, the question of collective or individual German culpability has not been dealt with comprehensively in scientific terms. Ottoman contemporaries, Christians as well as Muslims, were largely convinced that the German state was to blame for the genocide against the Armenians. But Vahagn N. Dadrian’s theses in this regard have been rejected by critics as extreme. Two investigative German journalists, Wolfgang Gust and Jürgen Gottschlich, failed to provide sufficient evidence of a general German state responsibility. I myself assume that the responsibility of the German Empire consisted in the knowledge and largely tacit, tolerating acceptance of the state crimes committed during WWI by the allied Young Turk regime against the Christian and especially the Armenian population in the Ottoman Empire and in the Ottoman-occupied territories of northwestern Iran. Cf. Vahagn Dadrian, *German Responsibility in the Armenian Genocide: A Review of the Historical Evidence of German Complicity* (Watertown, MA: Blue Crane Books, 1996); Jürgen Gottschlich, *Beihilfe zum Völkermord. Deutschlands Rolle bei der Vernichtung der Armenier* (Berlin: Links, 2015); Tessa Hofmann, “Le génocide arménien vu d’Allemagne: La mise en place d’une tradition d’indifférenceLa mise en place d’une tradition d’indifférence,” *Politique Internationale - La Revue*, Supplément au no 147 (2015), at

[https://archives.politiqueinternationale.com/revue/read2.php?id\\_revue=147&id=1397&content=texte](https://archives.politiqueinternationale.com/revue/read2.php?id_revue=147&id=1397&content=texte)  
(English version at

[https://www.academia.edu/13681412/Le\\_g%C3%A9nocide\\_Arm%C3%A9nien\\_vu\\_dAllemagne\\_La\\_mise\\_en\\_place\\_dun\\_tradition\\_dindiff%C3%A9rence](https://www.academia.edu/13681412/Le_g%C3%A9nocide_Arm%C3%A9nien_vu_dAllemagne_La_mise_en_place_dun_tradition_dindiff%C3%A9rence)); Stefan Ihrig, *Justifying Genocide: Germany and the Armenians from Bismarck to Hitler* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2016).

80 *Vorwärts* (Berlin) 4 July 1921.

Even during the First World War the Armenians led the espionage against the Turks, similar to the Jews against Germany. This forced the loyal ally of the German Reich, Talaat Pasha, to sharply intervene, although some hardships could not be avoided. (...) After the collapse of 1918, Talaat now lived in the capital of the country to which he had remained loyal and was murdered here. The major press of this country, however, insulted him even after his death,<sup>81</sup> stood protectively before his murderer and demanded his acquittal. And indeed, the Berlin court acquitted the Armenian Teilerian [sic!]. The Jewish press of all shades rejoiced and called the acquittal the “only possible” verdict.”<sup>82</sup>

As early as 1921, the German writer Armin T. Wegner published the stenographic protocol of the proceedings of the Berlin trial with appendices, which included some of Talaat’s telegraphic orders provided by the journalist Aram Antonian (Andonian; 1875-1951).<sup>83</sup>

But the medial and public attention was short-lived.<sup>84</sup> Even before the Nazis came to power in 1933, the coverage of the Armenian genocide and related issues had disappeared from German media and subsequently fell into a long-lasting oblivion. Only in the late 1970s and early 1980s was the Ottoman genocide against the Armenians reintroduced through a series of publications. Among the “early” post-WWII book publications were the new editions<sup>85</sup> of the stenographic protocol by the German human and minority rights NGO *Geellschaft für bedrohte Völker* (Society for Threatened Peoples), whose publications brought the issue of the international recognition of this case of genocide to the forefront in post-war German society. In 2003, the courageous Istanbul based *Belge* publishing house had this edition published into Turkish, after the Turkey born writer Doğan Akhanlı translated the proceedings into Turkish<sup>86</sup>; in the same year, a second volume followed with comments and articles, again translated by D. Akhanlı.<sup>87</sup>

The numerous attacks on Turkish and non-Turkish institutions and diplomats by the *Armenian Secret Army for the Liberation of Armenia* (ASALA), which was active primarily in

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81 This assertion is exaggerated. In the upper middle-class daily *Deutsche Allgemeine Zeitung*, for example, Lieutenant General (ret.) Bronsart von Schellendorf took the floor for Talaat, justifying the deadly forced resettlement of the Armenians or trivializing its consequences: “Talaat has become a victim of his love for his country!” Bronsart v. Schellenberg was chief of the general staff of the Ottoman field army. Cf. the above “Ein Zeugnis für Talaat Pascha,” *Deutsche Allgemeine Zeitung* (Berlin) no. 342, Beiblatt Morgenausgabe, 24. Juli 1921.

82 Alfred Rosenberg, “Mörder und Mörderschutz,” *Der Weltkampf*, Juli 1926, reprinted in Alfred Rosenberg, *Kampf um die Macht: Aufsätze von 1921-1932* (München: Zentralverlag der NSDAP, 1938), 435-436.

83 *Der Völkermord an den Armeniern vor Gericht: Der Prozess Talaat Pascha. 2. Aufl. d. Ausg. Berlin 1921*, hrsg. u. eingel. von Tessa Hofmann (Göttingen, Wien: Gesellschaft für bedrohte Völker, 1980), XI, 136. A selection of Talaat’s orders in German translation was published on pages 133-136; *The Memoirs of Naim Bey: Turkish Official Documents Relating to the Deportation and the Massacres of Armenians*, compiled by Aram Andonian (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1920).

84 Tessa Hofmann, “From Silence to Re-Remembrance: The Response of German Media to Massacres and Genocide against the Ottoman Armenians,” in *Mass Media and the Genocide of the Armenians: One Hundred Years of Uncertain Representation*, ed. by S. Kappler, S. Kasparian, R. Godin, J. Chabot (Basingstoke, Hampshire: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016), 94-96.

85 Under the title “Der Völkermord an den Armeniern vor Gericht” (1980, 1985).

86 *Talaat Paşa Davası - I (2 - 3 Haziran 1921)*, çev. ve yay. haz. Doğan Akhanlı (Istanbul: Belge Yayınları, 2003).

87 *Talaat Paşa davası-II (2 ve 3 Haziran 1921): bilinmeyen belgeler yorumla*, çev. ve yay. haz. Tessa Hofmann ve Doğan Akhanlı (Istanbul: Belge Yayınları, Aralık 2003).

the 1970s-1980s, and by three other lesser-known Armenian “Justice” commands drew the attention of the public media and journalists to *Operation Nemesis* as the supposed origin of Armenian terrorism. The 95<sup>th</sup> and 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Ottoman genocide against the Armenians offered further occasions for such publications. Beginning with *Les vengeurs arméniens* by the French investigative journalist Jacques Derogy (d.i. Jacques Weitzman, 1925-1997), seven monographs have been published in France, the USA, and Germany to date, dealing with the assassination by Tehlirian, the Berlin criminal trial, and the clandestine Nemesis organization; four of the seven authors are of Armenian origin.<sup>88</sup> Derogy was the first to reveal the connection between the assassination of Talaat and *Vrej*. However, it was not until 2019 that Armenian historians took notice of his groundbreaking monograph.<sup>89</sup>

No less stimulating were the events of 1921 in the artistic field. Even before the book publications, two documentary films and a feature film were produced since 1982. The 1982 American film *Assignment Berlin*, directed by the Beirut born producer Hrayr Toukhanian, chronicles Talaat’s assassination. The semi-autobiographical French film *Mayrig* (1991) with Claudia Cardinale and Omar Sharif by Henri Verneuil depicts Talaat’s assassination and Tehlirian’s trial. The 2015 documentary film *Execution on the Open Street* by Bernard George was broadcast on the Franco-German television channel ARTE on 28 April 2015 on the occasion of the 100th anniversary of the genocide commemoration.<sup>90</sup>

The story of Talaat’s assassination and Tehlirian’s acquittal, as revealed by the trial’s proceedings, is one of a double paradox: the assassination victim proves to be responsible for mass murder, whereas the perpetrator belongs to the group of victims. This is what the title *Murderer’s Murder* (Mördermord) in the historical novel (2002, 2012) by the German authors Günther Fuchs and Hans-Ulrich Lüdemann allude to. It was followed in 2005 by the play *History Tilt* by the German author and theatre director Hans-Werner Kroesinger,<sup>91</sup> which was performed on several Berlin stages. A civil society initiative was the scenic performance *Nicht ich bin der Mörder!* (I am not the murderer!), in which German, Armenian and Turkish actors and actresses, together with a French pianist, read from the minutes of the trial under the direction of Heinz Böke between February 2010 and 2016, not just in Berlin.<sup>92</sup> A resumption of the reading is planned for the 100th anniversary of the criminal trial

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88 In chronological order these are the following monographs - Jacques Derogy, *Les vengeurs arméniens*; Edward Alexander, *A Crime of Vengeance*; Jonathan Bass, *Stay the Hand of Vengeance: The Politics of War Crimes Tribunals* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2001); Hosfeld, *Operation Nemesis*; Vartkes Yeghiayan, *The Case of Soghomon Tehlirian* (Glendale, CA: Center for Armenian Remembrance; 2nd edition, 2006); Eric Bogosian, *Operation Nemesis: The Assassination Plot that Avenged the Armenian Genocide* (New York: Little, Brown & Company, 2015); Mesrobian, *Sacred Justice*.

89 Gohar Khanumyan, «Սողոմոն Թեհիրյանը և «Նեմեսիս» գործողությունը. Հասուկ գործի մասին ՀՅԴ 9-րդ Ընդհանուր ժողովի որոշման 100-ամյակի առթիվ» [Soghomon Tehlirian and the “Nemesis” Operation: To the 100th Anniversary of the 9th General Assembly Resolution of ARF Dashnaksutyun on the Special Project], *VEM Pan-Armenian Journal* 68, no. 4(2019): 67-84.

90 “Ausstrahlung am 28. April um 21.45 Uhr,” at <https://info.arte.tv/de/hinrichtung-auf-offener-strasse>, accessed 24.11.2019.

91 “DAS BÜROKRATISIERTE GRAUEN, Hans-Werner Kroesinger: History Tilt, Hebbel am Ufer (HAU3), Berlin / Maxim Gorki Theater (Studio Я), Berlin (Regie: Hans-Werner Kroesinger),” at <https://stagescreen.wordpress.com/2015/03/14/das-burokratisierte-grauen/>, accessed 24.11.2019.

92 “Der Prozess Talaat Pascha,” at <https://sites.google.com/site/nichtichbindermoerder/>, accessed 12.02.2019.

in June 2021. The district court (Landgericht) Berlin gave permission to stage the reading from the court proceedings protocol in the premises of the district court itself, presumably in the same courtroom No. 700 where the court case against Tehlirian took place a hundred years ago.

### **Berlin-Charlottenburg as a Crime Scene and a Place of Memory and Learning**

Berlin is currently a city with an ambivalent culture of remembrance with regard to WWI and the reappraisal of the German - Ottoman - Young Turk alliance during that period. In its district of Charlottenburg, Germany's capital city has an ecumenical memorial in a semi-public space for the victims of the Ottoman genocide(s) by the Young Turks and Kemalists against about three million indigenous Christians in Ottoman territories and Ottoman-occupied northwestern Iran. At the same time, the Turkish cemetery at the Şehitlik mosque in the district of Neukölln honours the genocide perpetrators Cemal Azmi and Bahaddin Şakir shot by *Vrej* members in 1922 as patriotic 'martyrs'. There were also initiatives after 2005, within Berlin's Turkish community, to erect a memorial plaque on Hardenbergstrasse in memory of Talaat as a victim of "Armenian terrorism." The socialist Kurdish-born delegate to Berlin's state parliament, Giyasettin Sayan, asked the government in the Berlin Senate, in his Minor Interpellation<sup>93</sup> of 29 March 2005, about its knowledge of the "graves of honour" for Cemal Azmi and Bahattin Şakir at the Şehitlik (Martyrs') Mosque ending with the question:

What initiatives and measures does the senate want to take in order to counteract the historical revisionism, both regarding the German role in the genocide against the Armenians, and the role of the young Turks at that time, but also the participation of the population in the genocide against the Armenians?<sup>94</sup>

The answer of the Berlin state government of 4 April 2005, which was given even before the adoption of the first Bundestag resolution on the Ottoman Genocide (June 2005), was pleasingly clear:

The Senate is aware of the events surrounding the Armenian genocide, especially since the German Reich was also involved in the matter and Berlin was the scene of various actions in connection with that genocide. The graves at the Turkish Cemetery that have been mentioned are not graves of honour of the state of Berlin.<sup>95</sup> (...)

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93 In German parliamentarianism, a Minor Interpellation by a member of parliament to the government must obligatorily be answered by the government.

94 "Armeniergenozid," at [http://www.aga-online.org/news/attachments/kleine\\_anfrage\\_sayan.pdf](http://www.aga-online.org/news/attachments/kleine_anfrage_sayan.pdf), accessed 22.03.2019.

95 This means that the Islamic (Turkish) cemetery and the Şehitlik mosque are located on extraterritorial grounds. The foundation of the cemetery at Columbiadamm in the Berlin district of Neukölln dates back to 1866, when Emperor Wilhelm I permanently ceded the area as a burial place to the Turkish community in Berlin; the inauguration took place on 29 December 1866. See at <https://www.berlin.de/sehenswuerdigkeiten/3560303-3558930-islamischer-friedhof-am-columbiadamm.html>, accessed 22.03.2019. However, and in contrast to the previously quoted information by the Land Berlin, the mosque association states that the area was bought from the Prussian King Friedrich Wilhelm III for 40 Taler. Among the "many important and



The Senate supports initiatives and measures to comprehensively process even uncomfortable chapters of history and to disseminate knowledge about them. Against this background, the representative of the Senate for Integration and Migration has commissioned a publication by the expert on Armenian affairs, Dr. Tessa Hofmann, in which the history and present state of the Armenian diaspora in Berlin is presented. This brochure<sup>96</sup> includes the genocide of the Armenians. The work also picks up on the increasing number of voices from Turkey, that are calling for an open approach to this topic, which has been taboo in Turkish historiography until now. The Senate hopes that this publication will contribute to objective and unprejudiced information and processing of these chapters of Armenian-German-Turkish history.<sup>97</sup>

However, the worship of perpetrators within the diaspora of Turkish origin, which still persists 15 years later, must continue to be countered with educational information offers. Further civil society activities are therefore planned for 2021, including lectures and city tours in Berlin-Charlottenburg.

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*well-known personalities*” who are buried here, the mosque association explicitly counts Cemal Azmi and Dr. Bahattin Şakir Bey as well as Talaat. The Şehitlik Mosque is under the control of the Turkish state authority for religion DITIB, at <http://sehitlik-moschee.de/?p=355>, accessed 22.03.2019.

<sup>96</sup> Tessa Hofmann, *Armenier in Berlin - Berlin und Armenien* (Mit Beiträgen von Doğan Akhanlı und Yelda. Berlin: Der Beauftragte des Senats für Integration und Migration, 2005), 104.

<sup>97</sup> “Armeniergenozid.”

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# ECtHR RETROACTIVE JURISDICTION AND THE POSSIBILITY OF COMPENSATIONS FOR THE ARMENIAN PROPERTIES CONFISCATED DURING AND AFTER THE ARMENIAN GENOCIDE: A BRIEF ANALYSIS<sup>1</sup>

Hasmik Tigranyan  
Edita Gzoyan

This article examines retroactive jurisdiction of the European Court of Human Rights (ECtHR) for the possibility to litigate compensations for the Armenian properties confiscated during and after the Armenian Genocide. The study considers ECtHR platform for the Armenian Genocide reparations, as ECtHR is the most effective human rights regional Court to compel Turkey to protect human rights and remedy for violations. The paper considers only European Convention on Human Rights (Convention) Article 1 Protocol 1 to avoid as much as possible politicizing this study. Considering the fact that long time has passed since the confiscations, this study considers *ratione temporis* jurisdiction of the ECtHR.

*Key words:* reparations, compensations, European Court of Human Rights (ECtHR), European Convention on Human Rights (Convention), confiscation, abandoned property.

## Introduction

In 1915 the Ottoman Empire implemented the most heinous plan of annihilation of its Armenian population. Alongside with systematic and organized massacres, deportations and assimilations Armenians were being deprived of their properties. Dispossession of the Armenian community was a part of government policy to change the ethnic composition of the Ottoman Empire.<sup>2</sup> The government enacted a series of laws and decrees to deal with the issue of abandoned property known as the Abandoned Properties Laws. The laws legalized the liquidation of the Armenian properties and the settlement of Muslim migrants on those properties. Meanwhile, it should be mentioned that the Abandoned Properties Law (also the Deportation law) was enacted retroactively, intended to justify the illegal actions of the Ottoman government in view of possible future demands for retribution.<sup>3</sup>

Initially Armenians were assured by the Turkish government that they would be provided with equivalent values of their seized properties and measures would be taken to safeguard their property rights. However, situation was completely different on the ground: Armenian properties were sold, auctioned and/or transferred to others, while the government continued to assure that it was administering the properties in the name of its original owners.<sup>4</sup>

1 The article was received on 10.01.2020 and accepted for publication on 01.10.2020.

2 Hilmar Kaiser's "Armenian Property, Ottoman Law and Nationality Policies during the Armenian Genocide, 1915-1916," in Olaf Farschid et al, *The World War I as Remembered in the Countries of the Eastern Mediterranean* (Beirut: Orient-Institute Beirut, 2006), 64.

3 Ibid., 70.

4 On the issue of the confiscation see: Gözel Durmaz, "The Distribution of the Armenian Abandoned Proper-

The situation continued also during the Turkish Republic - the continuing state of the Ottoman Empire.<sup>5</sup> Although after WWI the new Turkish government rejected and reversed the Abandoned Properties Laws, however, the new nationalistic government of Turkey led by Mustafa Kemal abolished those laws, reinstating the old ones. The Kemalist Government seized all the Armenian properties and rejected the return of Armenians and reclamation of their properties.<sup>6</sup>

A general principle of international law stipulates that wrongful acts and injuries caused by those acts made by the state put responsibility to provide reparation. The principle was reiterated by Permanent Court of International Justice stating that “It is a principle of international law that the breach of an engagement involves an obligation to make reparation in an adequate form.”<sup>7</sup> Though approximately a century has passed from those notorious events this issue is still urgent. Nowadays descendants of the Armenian Genocide survivors, as their legal successors, are still trying to seek appropriate remedies for restoration of their violated rights.

Today the Republic of Turkey is an active member of the international community and party to different international treaties, under which it takes some obligations to implement. The Republic ratified the European Convention on Human Rights (hereinafter Convention) in 1954,<sup>8</sup> although recognized the compulsory jurisdiction of the European Court of Human Rights (hereinafter ECtHR) in 1990.<sup>9</sup>

The right of individual petition is accurately considered as the greatest achievement of individuals who consider their human rights have been violated to lodge a complaint before the ECtHR. There are, however, important admissibility requirements (admissibility criteria) set out in the ECtHR that must be satisfied for the case examination.

The ECtHR standing and admissibility criteria are set in Article 34 and Article 35 of the Convention. One of these criteria is compatibility *ratione temporis* for admissibility relating to ECtHR’s jurisdiction. Because the actual confiscations have occurred nearly 100 years

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ties in an Ottoman Locality: Kayseri (1915-18),” *Middle Eastern Studies* 51, no. 5 (2015): 838-885; Bedross Der Matossian, “The Taboo within the Taboo: The Fate of ‘Armenian Capital’ at the End of the Ottoman Empire,” *European Journal of Turkish Studies*, Complete List (2011), at <http://journals.openedition.org/ejts/4411>, accessed 20.11.2019; Uğur Ümit Üngör and Mehmet Polatel, *Confiscation and Colonization: The Young Turk Seizure of Armenian Property* (London, New York: Continuum, 2011); Levon Marashlian, “Finishing the Genocide: Cleansing Turkey of Armenian Survivors, 1920-1923,” in *Remembrance and Denial: The Case of the Armenian Genocide*, ed. Richard Hovannisian (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1999): 113-145; Kévork Baghdjian, *La Confiscation, par le gouvernement turc, des biens arméniens...dits «abandonnés»*, (Montreal: s. n., 1987); Levon Vartan, Հայկական տասնհինգրիցը և հայերու լքեալ գոյքերը [քննական ակնարկ դատ թրքական վավերագրերում] [The Armenian 15 and the Abandoned Properties of the Armenians: Critical Commentary according to the Turkish Documents] (Beirut: Atlas, 1970), etc.

5 On the issue of the state secession see e.g. Emre Ökmen, “Turkey: Successor or Continuing State of the Ottoman Empire?” *Leiden Journal of International Law* 24, no. 1 (2011): 561-583; Patrick Dumberry, “The Consequences of Turkey Being the ‘Continuing’ State of the Ottoman Empire in Terms of International Responsibility for Internationally Wrongful Acts,” *International Criminal Law Review* 14 (2014): 261-273.

6 Üngör and Polatel, *Confiscation and Colonization*, 49-59.

7 *Factory at Chorzow (Germ. v. Pol.)*, 1927 P.C.I.J. (ser. A) No. 9 (July 26), para. 55.

8 See e.g. at [https://www.convention.coe.int/Documents/CP\\_Turkey\\_ENG.pdf](https://www.convention.coe.int/Documents/CP_Turkey_ENG.pdf), accessed 21.11.2019.

9 Frédéric Mégret, “The Notion of ‘Continuous Violations’, Expropriated Armenian Properties, and the European Court of Human Rights,” *International Criminal Law Review* 14 (2014): 317-331.

ago, and *ratione temporis* criteria seem to be the most problematic in the Armenian case, the article considers only *ratione temporis* jurisdiction issue.

As is the case in most court proceedings, time is a crucial element for anyone who wants to apply to ECtHR. Time factor poses restrictions on the possibility to bring a claim to ECtHR, in respect of the admissibility of the claim as well as the jurisdiction of ECtHR. In both cases the concept of continuing violations/continuing situations can have a softening effect on the established strict procedural limitations. The birth of the concept of “continuing violations” was connected with the human disappearance cases considered by the Inter-American Court of Human Rights despite the lack of *ratione temporis* jurisdiction.<sup>10</sup> This approach was also taken by the ECtHR, which for the first time recognized the existence of continuing situation in the case of *De Becker v Belgium* in 1958.<sup>11</sup> Another instance when the concept was used was connected with the expropriation cases. Despite a general approach by the ECtHR that expropriation cases are predominantly instantaneous acts,<sup>12</sup> in certain cases they can be viewed as continuing violation when deprivation “manifest itself in some specific fashion.”<sup>13</sup>

The article will firstly examine compatibility *ratione temporis* for the jurisdiction of the ECtHR and analyze cases on court’s retroactive jurisdiction. Then the article will examine Turkish laws, decrees and orders related to the Armenian properties. Finally, the article will apply ECtHR case law on the Armenian properties confiscations case to find whether the continuing situation/continuing violation can be applied.

## **ECtHR *Ratione Temporis* Admissibility Criteria**

In accordance with a general principle of non-retroactivity of treaties, the provisions of the Convention “do not bind a Contracting Party in relation to any act or fact which took place or any situation which ceased to exist before the date of the entry into force of the Convention in respect of that Party.”<sup>14</sup>

Jurisdiction *ratione temporis* covers only a period after the ratification of the Convention or its Protocols<sup>15</sup> and imposes no specific obligation on member states to provide redress for wrongs or damage caused prior to that date.<sup>16</sup> However, after the ratification date,

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10 The reasoning was that disappearances were assessed as continuing violation before discovering circumstances of the disappeared person. For more on this see Mégret, “The Notion of Continuous Violations.”

11 *De Becker v. Belgium*, App. No. 214/56, [1958-59] Y.B.

12 Case of *Posti and Rahko v. Finland*, no. 27824/95, Judgement, 21.05.2003, paras. 39, 40, 46; *Kotov v. Russia*, no. 54522/00, Judgement, 03.04.2012, paras. 63, 66, 67.

13 Mégret, “The Notion of Continuous Violations,” 321.

14 European Court of Human Rights, Practical Guide on Admissibility Criteria (Updated on 30 April 2020), p. 46, at [http://www.Convention.coe.int/Documents/Admissibility\\_guide\\_ENG.pdf](http://www.Convention.coe.int/Documents/Admissibility_guide_ENG.pdf), 47, accessed 02.11.2019; see also *Blečić v. Croatia*, no. 59532/00, Judgement, 08.03.2006, para. 70; *Varnava and Others v. Turkey*, nos. 16 064/90, 16065/90, 16066/90, 16068/90, 16069/90, 16070/90, 16071/90, 16072/90 and 16073/90, Judgement, 18.09.2009, para. 130.

15 Since its adoption in 1950 the Convention has been amended a number of times and supplemented with many rights in addition to those set forth in the original text. As of now there are 16 Protocols.

16 *Practical Guide on Admissibility Criteria*, 59; see also *Kopecký v. Slovakia*, no. 44912/98, Judgement, 28.06.2004, para. 38.

all the acts and omissions of the contracting states must be in accordance to the Convention and its Protocols and, consequently, all following facts fall within the jurisdiction of the ECtHR even if they are “merely extensions of an already existing situation.”<sup>17</sup> ECtHR may, however, consider facts prior to the ratification date “inasmuch as they could be considered to have created a situation extending beyond that date or may be relevant for the understanding of facts occurring after that date.”<sup>18</sup> Moreover, the ECtHR has an obligation on its own motion to examine its *ratione temporis* jurisdiction at any stage of the proceedings.<sup>19</sup>

The European Commission on Human Rights (hereinafter Commission) and the ECtHR have accepted the extension of their jurisdiction *ratione temporis* to situations involving a *continuing violation*. As already mentioned the concept arose with regard to human disappearances. According to the ECtHR disappearance is not an “instantaneous” act or event but a “distinct phenomenon,” marked by uncertainty and unaccountability, where there is a lack of information or a willful concealment of what has happened to a person. The failure to provide about the whereabouts and fate of the missing person gives rise to a continuing situation. Consequently, the obligation to investigate into the happening will remain as long as the fate of the disappeared person remains unknown and the failure for such investigation will be regarded as a continuing violation.<sup>20</sup> In another instance the concept was used with regard to the right of property. In some cases the ECtHR has recognized continuing violations of the right to property when “*the deprivation could be said to have manifested itself in some specific fashion.*” The jurisprudence of the ECtHR on the issue began in the mid-1990s relating to Greece and Turkey, and later included cases against the states of the former Eastern Bloc.<sup>21</sup> Particularly, ECtHR has stated having temporal jurisdiction in the following cases:

- denial of access to the applicant’s property in Northern Cyprus;<sup>22</sup>
- continuing unlawful occupation without compensation by the navy of land that belong to the applicants;<sup>23</sup>
- continuing impossibility to regain possession of the property and receive an adequate level of rent because of the Polish laws in force before and after ratification of Protocol 1 by Poland;<sup>24</sup>
- failure to pay final compensation for the property that was nationalized;<sup>25</sup>
- continued non-enforcement of a domestic decision in the applicant’s favor against the State.<sup>26</sup>

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17 *Practical Guide on Admissibility Criteria*, 59; see also *Almeida Garrett, Mascarenhas Falcão and Others v. Portugal*, nos. 29813/96 and 30229/96, Judgement, 11.01.2000, para. 43.

18 *Practical Guide on Admissibility Criteria*; see e.g. *Hutten-Czapska v. Poland*, no. 35014/97, Judgement, 19.06.2006, paras. 147-153.

19 *Practical Guide on Admissibility Criteria*, 59.

20 *Varnava and Others v. Turkey*, paras.148-149.

21 Mégret, “The Notion of Continuous Violations,” 321.

22 *Loizidou v. Turkey*, no. 15318/89, Judgement, 18.12.1996, paras. 46-47.

23 *Papamichalopoulos and Others v. Greece*, no. 14556/89, Judgement, 24.06.1993, para. 40.

24 *Hutten-Czapska v. Poland*, no. 35014/97, Judgement, 19.06.2006, paras. 152-153.

25 *Almeida Garrett, Mascarenhas Falcão and Others v. Portugal*, nos. 29813/96 and 30229/96, Judgement, 11.01.2000.

26 *Krstić v. Serbia*, no. 45394/06, Judgement, 10.03.2014, paras. 63-69.

Meanwhile it should be noted that the mere deprivation of a property is considered to be an “instantaneous act” without producing a continuing situation.

Thus, the ECtHR can apply retroactive jurisdiction if continuing situation/violation is established. In order to deeply understand the nature of continuing violation and apply it to Armenian properties case, this article below will present a deep analysis of continuing situations regarding property confiscation generally and the ECtHR practice in this regard.

### **Continuing Situation/Violation Analysis: Expropriation**

In its Commentary on the Articles on the Origin of State Responsibility the International Law Commission of the United Nations (I.L.C.) described a “continuing act” as “one which is a single act extending over period of time and of a lasting nature.”<sup>27</sup> Also the I.L.C. has defined a “continuing act” as one “which proceeds unchanged over period of time: in other words an act which, after it occurs continues to exist as such and not merely in its effects and consequences.” While an instantaneous act is “an act that does not extend in time, i.e. act that ends as soon as committed; where the breach have occurred also automatically ceases to exist.”<sup>28</sup>

According to the Articles on State Responsibility of I.L.C’s, “*acts that constitute continuing violations of international law, distinguishable from instantaneous acts, are not only “acts which continue in time” but also composite acts which consists of sequence of separate courses of conduct, actions or omissions adopted in separate cases, but all contributing to the commission of the aggregate act in question.*”<sup>29</sup>

In more details the following are three categories of alleged breaches by the state of its international obligations that differ from instantaneous acts:

- Situations that are act with a continuing character;
- Composite acts, those “composed of a series of actions or omissions in respect of separate cases”;
- Complex acts, constituted by actions or omissions by the same or different organs of the state in respect of the same case.<sup>30</sup>

The ECtHR and the Commission has accepted this line and have acknowledged continuing situations in the same three categories.<sup>31</sup> Under the first category are simple continuing situations that usually started at an identifiable date and continued until the situation ceases to exist (e.g. detentions and legislative provisions that remain in force). Second are complex acts which are composed of a series of consecutive acts. The third one is composite acts (concerning the “reasonable time” of proceedings before civil courts). Here ECtHR concluded:

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27 Document A/33/10, Report of the International Law Commission on the work of its Thirtieth session, 8 May - 28 July 1978, Official Records of the General Assembly, Thirty-third Session, Supplement No. 10, p. 90-97 at [https://legal.un.org/ilc/documentation/english/reports/a\\_33\\_10.pdf](https://legal.un.org/ilc/documentation/english/reports/a_33_10.pdf), accessed 30.11.2019.

28 Ibid., 88, 90-97.

29 Ibid., 92.

30 Draft Articles on State Responsibility with Commentaries Thereto Adopted by the International Law Commission on First Reading (1997), 97-98.

31 Andy Van Pachtenbeke and Yves Haecck, “From De Becker to Varnava: the state of continuing situations in the Strasbourg case law,” *European Human Rights Law Review* 1 (2010): 47-59.

The frequency with which violations are found shows that there is an accumulation of identical breaches which are sufficiently numerous to amount not merely to isolated incidents. Such breaches reflect a continuing situation that has not yet been remedied and in respect of which litigants have no domestic remedy. This accumulation of breaches accordingly constitutes a practice that is incompatible with the Convention.<sup>32</sup>

Moreover, according to the Commission continuing nature of violations of human rights is considered to be an aggravating factor.<sup>33</sup> In other international instruments and resolutions continuing nature of human rights violations is qualified as “systematic,” “constant,” “gross” or “fragrant.”<sup>34</sup>

Thus, there may be continuing violations through a series of actions or omissions by a state related to the same case which taken as a whole represent the position of a state in that particular case. In *Agrotexim and Others v. Greece* case the ECtHR accepted that a series of events may constitute a continuing breach of the Convention considering the successive actions of Athens Municipal Council amounting to a continuing violation,<sup>35</sup> even though the actions had been initiated before Greece ratified Protocol 1. The argument was based also on the fact that the expropriation was not an instantaneous act but rather consisted of a series of steps that continued until the protocol’s entry into force.<sup>36</sup> Similarly, in *Phocas v France* case the applicant was unable to formally use his property under a threat of expropriation of his land during a period of about 15 years which was recognized as a factual situation having continuing nature.<sup>37</sup>

Thus, there are instances when continuing violations of human rights is apparent (the continuing illegal prevention to possess and enjoy property or join families, not enforce a person’s right to see his/her child, execute a judgment in the applicant’s favor, etc.). Similarly, instantaneous acts can also be easily detectable when violations are executed immediately and are not accompanied with lasting effects (e.g. killing, destruction of moveable property, killing). Problem arises in respect of cases with continuing negative consequences. In this case, if negative consequences by themselves, without reference to the causing act, do not qualify as breaches of the Convention (e.g. pain resulting from a single act of assault) then there is no “continuing violations.” However, in cases when the lasting consequences or effects of an instantaneous act are themselves contrary to the Convention, such cases can be considered as continuing situations/violations (e.g. unlawful detention which is a result of unlawful arrest; unlawful possession of someone’s property which is a result of unlawful confiscation).<sup>38</sup>

Consequently, if an act of confiscation is unlawful and incompatible with the rights

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32 *Bottazzi v. Italy*, no.34884/97, Judgement, 28 July1999, para. 22.

33 See the Report of the Commission in the case of *Cyprus v Turkey*, appl. no. 80007/77, DR72, p. 6.

34 Loukis Loucaides, *The European Convention on Human Rights. Collected Essays*, Nijhoff Law Specials, Vol. 70 (Leiden, Boston: Brill/Nijhoff, 2007), 17.

35 *Agrotexim and Others v. Greece*, no. 14807/89, Judgement, 24.10.1995, para.58.

36 *Ibid.*; Loucaides, *The European Convention on Human Rights*, 20.

37 *Phocas v. France*, no. 17869/91, Judgement, 23.04.1996.

38 Loucaides, *The European Convention on Human Rights*, 19-20.



protected by the Convention, the future deprivation can be considered as a continuing breach of the right of peaceful enjoyment of property. Similarly, if the original act of “deprivation” of a property was illegal the keeping of the property by the State by virtue of such an act amounts to a continuing interference or unlawful keeping of confiscated property. In such circumstances the government should be accountable during all the period which has elapsed since the original act of deprivation. The ECtHR case law demonstrates that the time element is not a deterrent in such cases.

The test of whether violations are continuing in cases that originate from an initial instantaneous act are composed of the following factors:

- the nature of the complaint (the particular act or conduct that is alleged to be a violation);
- the effects of the complained conduct or act on the applicant’s right;
- the duration of abovementioned effects;
- the prolongation of the operation of the relevant conduct or act or the maintenance of the effects via the conduct or involvement of the State.<sup>39</sup>

### **Armenian Confiscated Properties: A Brief Analysis of Turkish Laws**

The overall process of confiscation of the Armenian properties and their legitimization began in 1915 and continued to the present being a direct consequence of the Armenian Genocide. A long sequence of laws, orders and decrees has been passed to initiate, manage and resume the process, starting with the Temporary law of deportation of Armenians on 27 May 1915, a secret order informing the local government about the management of the Armenian properties immediately after the deportation decision on 10 June 1915; 13 September 1915, the Ottoman parliament passed the “Temporary Law of Expropriation and Confiscation, “Temporary law” of 27 September 1915 titled “The law about the abandoned properties, debts and credits of the population who were sent elsewhere”; 8 November 1915 Regulation regarding the practice of the items of the 27 September law and modification of the Armenian Constitution of 1863 by the on 11 August 1916.<sup>40</sup> This was the first phase of initiation and implementation of confiscation process. After the defeat of the Ottoman Turkey in WWI, the new government and parliament have rejected the laws on deportation and abandoned properties as violating the Ottoman Constitution. Moreover, by 8 January 1920 decree, the Istanbul government protected the rights of original owners of the confiscated properties.<sup>41</sup>

This course was soon reverted by the Ankara government established by nationalistic forces and on 7 June 1920 the Grand National Assembly of Turkey adopted a law invalidating the political and commercial treaties of the Istanbul government thus legalizing and legitimizing the liquidation of the Armenian properties. This was followed by series of laws and decrees that reach till 2011 (Law of 20 April 1922; decree of 12 March 1922; Law of 15 April 1923; decree issued on 28 June 1923; Law on the abandoned properties

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39 Loucaides, *The European Convention on Human Rights*, 33.

40 Üngör and Polatel, *Confiscation and Colonization*, 41-47.

41 Ibid., 48-49.

of 13 March 1924; the decree of 15 July 1925 on abolishing bank account deposit (bakiye) of the missing persons; the government ordinance of 13 June 1926 on necessity to seize the abandoned properties; the governmental decree of 17 July 1927; the Assembly decision on 2 June 1929; Governmental law of exclusion of Turkish nationality from those who had not taken part in the War of Independence, had remained abroad between 1923- 1927; the 1935 Law on Religious Foundations and its amendments made in 2002, 2003, and 2008;<sup>42</sup> the Constitution of Turkey; the General Directorate of Land Registry and Cadaster's circular order on confiscation by the state of the abandoned properties on 29 June 2001 and Prime Minister's Decree of 27 August 2011.

Thus, there is a clear pattern of consequent actions aimed at legalizing the unlawful confiscations.

The analysis of Turkish laws and administrative practice by Taner Akcam,<sup>43</sup> Uğur Ümit Üngör and Mehmet Polatel,<sup>44</sup> as well as Sait Çetinoğlu<sup>45</sup> clearly demonstrated that confiscation of the Armenian properties, later refusal to provide remedy, to return them to their real owners or pay compensation, accepted administrative practice and obstacle to apply to the Turkish Courts, hindering and not allowing details about confiscated properties deeds and other information is an example of mix of complex acts and composite acts (like Italian cases) with aggravating effects.

Particularly, since the adoption of first decrees, laws and decisions regarding Armenians confiscated properties, Ottoman Empire, and later the Turkish Republic has created all the possible difficulties for Armenians to return to get their properties back or to get compensation.

At first, before deportation Armenians were not allowed to sell their properties and take money from the banks. Then the properties of those people, who managed to escape from genocide were abandoned.<sup>46</sup> After 1924 those people who were absent from Turkey for different reasons, were deprived of Turkish citizenship and thus could not any more return and get their properties back.<sup>47</sup> Several people managed with the difficulties with international passport to return to Turkey in 1920's to get their properties back or to get compensation; however they were arrested and expelled.<sup>48</sup> Those people who stayed in Turkey were forced to refuse from their rights to claim their properties, to claim to protect their right under Lausanne Treaty. Later on in September 1923 the return of those Armenians who left Turkey during the war was banned.<sup>49</sup>

Even those Armenians, who were escaped to Syria and Lebanon, tried to get their prop-

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42 <http://ncwarmenians.org/LawsDecrees>, accessed 12.05.2018; Üngör and Polatel, *Confiscation and Destruction*, 41- 59.

43 Taner Akçam, "The Spirit of the Law: Following the Traces of Genocide in the Law of Abandoned Property," *International Criminal Law Review* 14 (2014) 377-395

44 Üngör and Polatel, *Confiscation and Destruction*, 41- 59

45 Sait Çetinoğlu, "Foundations of Non-Muslim Communities: The Last Object of Confiscation," *International Criminal Law Review* 14 (2014): 396-406.

46 <http://ncwarmenians.org/LawsDecrees>.

47 Ibid.

48 Çetinoğlu, "Foundations of Non-Muslim Communities," 398-399.

49 Ibid., 399.

erties back or to get compensation through the French government as a mandatory of Syria and Lebanon. In 1924 the French government began negotiations with Turkey for compensation of Lebanese and Syrian Rum-Orthodox people, and Armenian tried to include their properties issue, too. Despite the agreement from the French side, Turkey refused including the Armenian reparation issue, threatened France to stop negotiations, and finally French-Turkey agreement was concluded without a mention to the Armenians properties issue.<sup>50</sup>

The abandoned property laws were abolished only 73 years later, on 11 June 1986. The abolishment of the law, however, does not mean that the liquidation process has stopped. The General Directorate of Land Registry and Cadaster on 29 June 2001 published a circular order about the abandoned properties, according to which all abandoned properties had transferred to the state. Also, it was made impossible to give any title deed, information or document to anyone. This indicates that Armenian property had ultimately been transferred to the state.<sup>51</sup> For the real owners or their heirs it was nearly impossible to claim any rights to their properties according to Turkish law.

Furthermore, the 1935 Law on Religious Foundations was amended several times (in 2002, 2003, and 2008), allowing religious foundations in very limited circumstances and only with the approval of the General Directorate of Foundations to gain property and apply for the return of confiscated property. The effect of these amendments was limited, and the vast majority of such applications were denied.

On 27 August 2011, the then Prime Minister of Turkey Recep Tayyip Erdoğan announced a new decree (the Decree) that “*communities whose properties had been expropriated by the state could apply for the properties to be returned, or to receive compensation for properties that had been sold to third parties. The Decree also permitted the formation of new religious community foundations to account for oversights in the 1935 foundations law and the reopening of foundations that previously had been closed and administered by the GDF.*”<sup>52</sup> The Decree covered “(i) properties surveyed and registered in 1936 and subsequently confiscated from the religious foundations by various administrations of the Republic of Turkey; (ii) cemeteries belonging to non-Muslim foundations which had been improperly placed under the control and management of various towns and municipalities; and (iii) undefined deeded property (such as monasteries, parishes, and schools), which were never recognized as legal entities by the Turkish Republic.”<sup>53</sup>

In its review of the Decree of 2011 the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) concluded that the process has been challenging, flawed, and at times illusory, identifying the following problems:

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50 For more on this issue see Vahé Tachjian, “An Attempt to Recover Armenian Properties in Turkey through the French Authorities in Syria and Lebanon in the 1920s,” *International Criminal Law Review* 14 (2014): 396-406, 350-355, Üngör and Polatel, *Confiscation and Destruction*, 41- 59.

51 <http://ncwarmenians.org/LawsDecreases>.

52 Tolerance and Non-Discrimination II Combating Discrimination against Christians,” at <http://www.osce.org/odihr/124651?download=true>, accessed 15.06.2019.

53 Ibid.

- The Decree covered only very limited number of properties, omitting several thousands;
- One year time limit for the submission of the applications was not sufficient;
- The Decree was intended only for foundation;
- The application process was also flawed, as was being administered by the GDF, the same office that seized those property;
- The majority of cases were rejected without any explanation;
- The process of appeal was also flawed as was heard by the same officials who had already denied the applications;
- The Ministry of Finance Ministry was the only body to decide the size of compensation, which as a state institution was interested in reducing the amounts;
- There were also problems with the management of the foundations caused by the Turkish Government putting the ability of foundations to sustain the returned properties under a risk.<sup>54</sup>

In his paper on “Foundations of Non-Muslim Communities: The Last Object of Confiscation” Sait Çetinođlu concludes that “*while on the surface there might appear to be some positive movement regarding properties confiscated from non-Muslim foundations in Turkey, this is undermined by the reality of the difficulty of pursuing recovery cases and the many exclusions from the laws appearing to allow for recovery. It is further possible to say that confiscation has been legally normalized and continues to be acceptable, as part of a long-term property expropriation process targeting non-Muslim minorities in Turkey and contributing to their communities dissolution.*”<sup>55</sup>

Thus, there is a clear series of composite acts first by the Ottoman Empire than by the Republic of Turkey that aimed at confiscating and legalizing the Armenian properties. Meanwhile, it is also obvious that there was and is a really serious administrative practice and obstacle for getting effective remedy for Armenian properties.

## **Conclusion**

Thus, *ratione temporis* jurisdiction of ECtHR covers only the period after the ratification of Convention or its Protocols by States. However, Convention institutions have accepted the extension of their jurisdiction *ratione temporis* to situations involving a continuing violation which originated before the entry into force of the Convention but persisted after that date. The analysis provided in this article demonstrates that it must be shown continuing violation/situation, in order to apply retroactive jurisdiction of ECtHR.

The application of the continuing violation/situation test provided in this article to the Armenian properties case confiscated during the Armenian Genocide shows that ECtHR could accept the possible cases from the heirs of Armenian genocide survivors and consider those cases admissible *ratione temporis*.

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54 “Tolerance and Non-Discrimination II Combating Discrimination against Christians.”

55 Çetinođlu, “Foundations of Non-Muslim Communities,” 406.

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## BOOK REVIEW

Heghar Zeitlian Watenpaugh, *The Missing Pages: The Modern Life of a Medieval Manuscript from Genocide to Justice*, Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 2019, 436 pp.

Reviewed by Sato Moughalian, Writer and Musician, New York, USA

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On 15 December 2005 the Prelate of Northern Iran's Armenian Church received an emergency alert from a border guard and hastened to the bank of the river Araxes. Across the river, in Nakhichevan, Azerbaijani troops wielded sledgehammers as they demolished a vast field of ornately carved medieval Armenian cross-stones, the irreplaceable legacy of historic Armenian Djulfa. Bishop Nshan Topouzian videotaped the atrocity in order to bear witness to the world.<sup>1</sup> Even before Raphael Lemkin's neologism *genocide* was legitimated in the 1948 *Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide*,<sup>2</sup> the Polish-Jewish jurist understood the mass destruction of humanity as encompassing both "acts of barbarism" and "acts of vandalism." Lemkin's early formulations of "offenses against the law of nations" recognized works of art as defining elements of a people and identified the "systematic destruction of works of cultural heritage" as an international crime and a grievous loss to all humanity.<sup>3</sup> His cultural genocide framework, "vandalism," was ultimately excluded from the ratified 1948 UN Convention, but the need for legal and reparative frameworks remains urgent.<sup>4</sup> In *The Missing Pages: The Modern Life of a Medieval Manuscript from Genocide to Justice*, Heghnar Zeitlian Watenpaugh advances a new approach to reconsidering that omission, mobilizing Toros Roslin's lavishly illuminated thirteenth-century Zeytun Gospels as the subject of a biography and the nexus of a web of social relations and ethical perspectives. In narrating the life story of the Gospels Book from its creation in

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1 Simon Maghakyan and Sarah Pickman, "A Regime Conceals Its Erasure of Indigenous Armenian Culture," Hyperallergic blog, 18 February 2019, at <https://hyperallergic.com/482353/a-regime-conceals-its-erasure-of-indigenous-armenian-culture/>, accessed 18.06.2020; Geospatial Technologies and Human Rights Project, *High-Resolution Satellite Imagery and the Destruction of Cultural Artifacts in Nakhchivan, Azerbaijan* (Washington: American Association for the Advancement of Science, 2010), at [https://www.aaas.org/sites/default/files/s3fs-public/reports/Azerbaijan\\_Report.pdf](https://www.aaas.org/sites/default/files/s3fs-public/reports/Azerbaijan_Report.pdf), accessed 12.07.2020.

2 Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide (Genocide Convention) 1948, in *United Nations Treaty Collection* 78, 277, at <https://treaties.un.org/doc/publication/unts/volume%2078/volume-78-i-1021-english.pdf>, accessed 12.07.2020..

3 Raphael Lemkin, "Acts Constituting a General (Transnational) Danger Considered as Offences against the Law of Nations," Additional Explications to the Special Report presented to the *5th Conference for the Unification of Penal Law in Madrid* (14-20 October 1933), at [www.preventgenocide.org/lemkin/madrid1933-english.htm](http://www.preventgenocide.org/lemkin/madrid1933-english.htm), accessed 10.07.2020.

4 For two thoughtful analyses of Lemkin on the subject of cultural destruction, see Peter Balakian, "Raphael Lemkin, Cultural Destruction, and the Armenian Genocide," *Holocaust and Genocide Studies* 27, no. 1 (2013): 57-89; Leora Bilsky and Rachel Klagsbrun, "The Return of Cultural Genocide?" *European Journal of International Law* 29, no. 2 (2018): 373-396.

1256 through its current state - sundered between two continents - Watenpaugh revivifies the historic Armenian communities that commissioned and venerated it and interrogates broader issues of patrimony, art trafficking, and the place of purposeful cultural destruction in contemporary definitions of genocide.

Watenpaugh begins her account of the Zeytun Gospels with a lawsuit from 2010, *Western Prelacy of the Armenian Apostolic Church of America v. J. Paul Getty Museum*. That litigation, brought by the Armenian Church in Los Angeles, sought restitution of the eight missing pages of the Gospels' Canon Tables, severed from the manuscript during the mayhem of the Armenian Genocide and sold privately to the Getty in 1994. Media reports brought the case to her attention. A professor of art and architectural history at the University of California, Davis, specializing in the urban history of the medieval Middle East, Watenpaugh steeped herself in the arguments. While the case was in progress, she published an op-ed in the *Los Angeles Times* proposing a solution that recognized the Canon Tables as both the precious liturgical object of a dispossessed people and an exquisite work of art worthy of study by a wide audience.<sup>5</sup> Watenpaugh analogized the case to other legal settlements of looted art and argued that the Canon Tables could be displayed in a way that honored both its religious and aesthetic functions. She suggested that the museum's provenance statement and didactic materials should reflect the history of violence and mutilation the pages endured.

Watenpaugh is herself a descendant of Armenian Genocide survivors, some of whose ancestors hailed from or passed through regions she describes. In the "Prologue," she recounts a research trip to eastern Turkey to the site where Toros Roslin's manuscript had been created and notes the deliberate effacement of crosses and other symbols of the Armenian Christians who had once thrived there. It is in the intersection of these roles - historian, documentarian, and descendant - that Watenpaugh introduces into her discourse novel terms such as "mother manuscript" and "orphaned fragment," which personalize the reader's connection to the holy book. In her telling, the manuscript continues to be a living entity with agency, as it was during the long centuries of its sacred function. Watenpaugh also reflects on the responses of individuals under calamitous assault, noting that many Armenian survivors not only struggled to preserve themselves, but instinctively carried family Bibles, house keys, and photographs into flight - relics that would bind them to place and heritage. Offering this context for the book, she layers her narrative around the idea of the Zeytun Gospels as a "survivor object," a rescued material trace that endured the attempted extermination of the culture that produced it. Balancing art historical and ethnographic detail, Watenpaugh recreates for the reader the lost Armenian worlds that were the homelands of her biographical subject.

*The Missing Pages* also enters into a welcome dialogue with the currently flourishing "history of the book" and "biography of things" subfields and their vibrant convergences. Alongside Beatrice Greundler's *History of the Arabic Book* (Harvard University Press, 2020), Seth Jacobowitz's *Writing Technology in Meiji Japan: A Media History of Modern*

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5 Heghnar Zeitlian Watenpaugh, "When Art and Religion Collide," *Los Angeles Times*, 19 July 2010, at <https://www.latimes.com/archives/la-xpm-2010-jul-19-la-oe-watenpaugh-bible-20100719-story.html>, accessed 02.10.2019.

*Japanese Literature and Visual Culture* (Harvard University Press, 2020), Marina Rustow's *The Lost Archive: Traces of a Caliphate in a Cairo Synagogue* (Princeton University Press, 2020), and Edgar Garcia's *The Signs of the Americas: A Poetics of Pictography* (Chicago University Press, 2020), *The Missing Pages*, like these other multimodal studies, broadens the literature of non-European book and cultural production and object mobility.

Chapter 2 begins in Hromkla (currently Rumkale), in the scriptorium of the “God-protected castle,” at the moment of the Gospels Book's creation. Once perched above the Euphrates River, the ruins of the Hromkla fortress and monastery are now half-submerged - the consequence of a Turkish dam project. This once militarily important stronghold, strategically poised at the intersection of international trade routes, sheltered the seat of the Armenian Catholicos for the Kingdom of Cilicia from the mid-twelfth century. Watenpaugh chronicles the history of Cilician Armenians in cooperation and conflict with Crusaders, Seljuks, and Mamluks. Armenian nobles formed networks of alliances through diplomacy, mastery of languages, and marriages with Crusaders, Byzantine royalty, Mongols, and even sultans of Aleppo. Stretched across the fertile northern Mediterranean coast, the Armenian Kingdom of Cilicia suffered frequent invasions, punctuated by brief periods of stability and prosperity. Watenpaugh observes that Hromkla's location also enabled aesthetic interchange, especially with Europe.

Armenian artists played an honored role in Hromkla's religious sphere. Under generous royal and religious patronage, scribes and craftspeople produced luxurious liturgical objects, Bibles, and Gospel Books, which commanded exceptional reverence as materializations of the holy word. Elaborate colophons recorded the genealogy of patrons and circumstances of the commissions. Subsequent marginalia noted lineage of ownership, invasions and earthquakes, as well as anathemas and exhortations. Roslin's 1256 Gospels Book, the subject of *The Missing Pages*, was commissioned by Catholicos Constantine of Partzrper. The resplendent pages were filled with Toros Roslin's beautifully executed calligraphy, with portraits of saints, angels, palm trees, peacocks, and roosters rendered in lush, color-saturated mineral pigments, silver, and gold. A dazzling crucifix and precious ornaments adorned its binding. As custom dictated, the Canon Tables's concordance lists nestled columns of numbers within architectural forms. Somewhat unusually for the period, the Canon Tables also featured some of the manuscript's most exuberant ornamentation. The Zeytun Gospels represents Roslin's earliest signed manuscript -one of only seven affirmed extant examples of his work.

The Mamluk sack of Hromkla in 1292 devastated Armenian monastic life, but by then, Toros Roslin's glittering pages had already begun their long peregrination. During a sojourn in the monastery of Furnus, it was rebound and adorned with sacred relics, before that city too, was overrun. The Furnus priests, devastated and impoverished, sold the manuscript to one Mahdesi Hagop. By his hand and perhaps others, the holy book eventually reached Zeytun sometime in the sixteenth or seventeenth centuries. In Chapter 3, Watenpaugh resurrects with vivid specificity the distinctive urban fabric, religious traditions, and intercommunal tensions of the once-thriving Ottoman Armenian world of Zeytun (currently Süleymanı). Perched high on a crag and dubbed the “Eagle's nest,” the overwhelmingly Christian city



had boasted some eight Armenian churches, a monastery, and as many as 20,000 Armenian residents on the eve of WWI. During the manuscript's life in Zeytun, the Gospels Book, along with other surviving relics of medieval Armenian Cilicia, was closely guarded, removed from its hiding place only on ceremonial occasions. Priests and parishioners believed it possessed protective powers of its own. However, not even the sanctified Gospels Book, it seemed, could protect Zeytun from the first waves of violent Ottoman mass expulsions in early April of 1915.

Watenpaugh underlines this pivotal moment for the Gospels, as it was removed for the last time from its religious function and began a long transformation from sacred talisman to fragmented masterpiece of medieval art. In the fourth and fifth chapters, she traces the movement of the holy book through the bloody Battle of Marash. The Gospels Book, wrapped in a paisley shawl, was dropped in a wrenching moment of flight. By the time the book reappeared in Armenian hands, the chain of learned custody - the succession of Armenian notables, intellectuals, and humanitarians who understood the priceless nature of the medieval volume - had been broken. Precious ornaments had been stripped from the binding, the eight pages of the Canon Tables amputated from the mother manuscript. From here forward, Watenpaugh's meticulous reporting follows each appearance of the mutilated holy book - in testimonies, articles, archives, and interviews - as it winds its way through Aleppo, Istanbul, and ultimately to Yerevan and the United States. As she charts the book's passage from hand to hand, she portrays the figures who interacted with it and ushered it into the art historical record. She pays particular homage to art historian Sirarpie Der Nersessian, a seminal figure in the establishment of Armenian art history as a discipline, and the scholar who discerned the connection between Toros Roslin's fractured Canon Tables and the mother manuscript.

In Chapter 5, "Aleppo," Watenpaugh details the legal processes of Armenian deportation as well as the seizure and destruction of moveable and immovable properties. She emphasizes that the arrest and deportation of church leaders in the early waves of the genocidal process ensured religious institutions and their congregations would be shorn of leadership. Then, churches were often destroyed or repurposed by the state; the sight of a church engulfed in flames signified conquest as well as brutal cultural destruction. The Ottoman Young Turk "Abandoned Properties" laws of 1915 required that liturgical objects, paintings, and holy books, icons, and furniture be recorded and safeguarded; in reality, precious treasures of the Armenian church were never seen again. Watenpaugh estimates that as many as thirty thousand religious manuscripts might have been lost in this period - maimed, used as wrapping materials, or sold on the black market. Much of the material heritage of the medieval Armenian Kingdom of Cilicia was destroyed in this manner. The rare remaining objects, such as the Zeytun Gospels, thus became even more powerful repositories of memory - simply by virtue of their survival. Watenpaugh recounts other "survivor objects," such as the Mush Homiliarium, rescued through heroic feats of ordinary Armenians who recognized that in saving the heirlooms of their culture and religions, even while under unimaginable duress, they would also be saving themselves.

Although *The Missing Pages* gives primacy to the Zeytun Gospels as the central "survi-

vor object,” in the narrative, Watenpaugh unspools multiple storylines in this ambitious and multifaceted book. In the closing chapters, she pays tribute to many Armenian individuals who recognized the urgency of salvaging all possible traces of Armenian intellectual, spiritual, and artistic life as they fled. Asadur Surenian-Basilosian, a descendant of one of the Zeytun’s princely clans, spirited the manuscript to Marash. Artin Der Ghazarian secreted it from Turkish troops and then deputized his sister to deliver it from Marash, even as his own family faced barbaric violence. Later, leaders such as Boghos Nubar and Avedis Aharonian pressed for reparations at the Paris Peace Conference. Other intellectuals, Archbishop Artavazd Surmeyan among them, rescued dispersed fragments of Armenian legacy, publishing a magisterial, three-volume account, *The History of the Armenians of Aleppo*.<sup>6</sup> Notably, a number of American missionaries, scholars, and humanitarians also aided in the effort - James Lyman, Ernest Partridge, Frances W. Kelsey, Mabel Elliott - rescuing valuables and bearing witness. Watenpaugh’s closing chapters movingly recount stories of individuals, often survivors of depredations themselves, who exhibited tremendous fortitude in saving Gospels, prayer books, icons, and other artifacts. By memorializing the actions of these Armenians to rescue their national cultural heritage, under conditions of horrific violence, she forges her own work of memory and witness and introduces a new model for art historical monographs as social histories and material studies. In reconstituting Toros Roslin’s Zeytun Gospels as a living entity with spiritual power and agency, she compels us to consider this “survivor object” not only as artistic masterpiece, but also as surrogate for countless other works - lost, disfigured, stabbed, vandalized - all of them the patrimony of humankind and all worthy of an internationally recognized system of norms.

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<sup>6</sup> Artavazd Surmeyan, Պատմություն Հալեպի Հայոց [History of the Armenian Aleppo] (Paris: Éditions Araks, 1950).

Carolyn J. Dean, *The Moral Witness: Trials and Testimony after Genocide*, Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2019, 198 pp.

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How did genocide, from a cultural point of view, become differentiated in the public mind from other forms of violence? How did we come to understand the kind of suffering that genocide entails? Emerging in the interwar period, the “moral witness,” according to Carolyn Dean, made the crime of genocide legible (2). In her book, Dean analyzes the genealogy of the witness figure over the last one hundred years and claims that “the icon of the witness to genocide is one key to the development of contemporary Western moral culture” (25).

*The Moral Witness* investigates five trials in the interwar and postwar periods that shaped the narrative about witnessing and then examines the shift in this narrative in the postcolonial era, “when witnessing became the obligation of all responsible citizens” (7). Dean suggests four iterations of a “moral witness” or the witness to genocide, presenting them chronologically: the “righteous avenger” (1921-1950), the “concentration camp survivor” (1950-1961), “the Holocaust survivor” in the 1960s-1970s, and the “global victim and the counterwitness” from the 1990s to the present (6, 176-177).

As Dean explains in the Introduction, when no international courts existed to try the perpetrators of such crimes as crimes against humanity and genocide, the trials discussed in this book led to the recognition of victims of mass atrocities in court. Chapter 1, “The Righteous Avengers,” focuses on the trials of Soghomon Tehlirian and Scholem Schwarzbard, “the first major trials in Western Europe featuring victims of interethnic violence and state-sponsored mass atrocities seeking justice” (28). Tehlirian had assassinated Talaat Pasha in 1921 in Berlin for his responsibility in orchestrating the Armenian Genocide; Schwarzbard shot and killed Simon Petliura in Paris in 1926 for commandeering Ukrainian pogroms against Jews (1918-1921). Despite clear evidence of their culpability as assassins, Tehlirian and Schwarzbard were acquitted of murder since they established themselves as witnesses to unfathomable crimes committed against Armenians and Jews. According to Dean, these trials formulated the archetype of the “moral witness” as a “righteous man of honor, a humanitarian,” and “a locus of human conscience” (39). They “imagined a new kind of crime,” and formed a novel witness figure, one “who demands not pity or empathy, but justice” (60).

In chapter 2, Dean recounts the two public libel trials of the late 1940s and early 1950s in France by Victor Kravchenko, a Ukrainian émigré, and David Rousset, French Resistance member and a writer. Kravchenko and Rousset brought suits against the French Communist literary magazine *Les Lettres françaises* over the existence of the Soviet or Gulag camps. Both used the public trials to call former Gulag detainees to testify about their experiences in the concentration camps and condemn their existence in the Soviet Union.

While Kravchenko “won his battle” (70), it was Rousset’s trial that not only proved the camp survivors to be “credible,” but also “above all partisanship” (63). In Dean’s words, “Rousset’s trial stressed the distinctiveness of Nazi and Stalinist camps from all other experiences of atrocity” (88) and “made the concentration camp survivor an authoritative source of knowledge about an ostensibly new form of inhumanity” (90).

Analyzing these trials and their outcomes, Dean emphasizes that they had no significant impact on the existing legal system and the international criminal law. Moreover, the vocabulary of all the trials was highly politicized. For instance, Tehlirian’s trial lasted only two days, since German foreign office was profoundly concerned about the evidence that could have been presented to the court, exposing the extent of German complicity in the Armenian Genocide (40). And yet, during these trials the “witnesses’ suffering took central stage” (8), and the crimes that had no name and had not been distinguished from other forms of violence and atrocity were acknowledged and condemned as such.

Dean focuses on “the Holocaust witness” in chapter 3, examining the trial of Adolf Eichmann in Jerusalem in 1961. Her analysis aims to understand how in the 1960s and 1970s Jewish Holocaust survivors “became Western stand-ins for all of human suffering” (21) and “quintessential witnesses to genocide” (98). Focusing on the survivor testimonies that did not involve the defendant directly, Dean shows how survivors were treated as “oracles from another world” (16), bearer of “dark knowledge,” (99) and “symbols of human conscience” (131). The Eichmann trial “refocused public attention on the Jewish dimension of the Holocaust” (93) and “victim testimony led to increased empathy” for the survivors (106). Dean asserts that Jewish witnesses of the Nazi crimes became “a reminder of Western murderousness and at the same time an image of Western soul-searching” (130). They were no longer condemned as passive victims or collaborators and, according to Dean, they demonstrated the need to dignify the weak.

Chapter 4 analyses the shift in the meaning of witnessing that, according to Dean, transpired in the late 1990s, after the creation of the International Criminal Court (ICC), when the unimaginable and unfathomable crime of genocide had become part of our geopolitical landscape. Dean discusses the figures of the “global victim and the counterwitness” explaining that “the global stands in for victims of genocidal crimes but is no longer attached to specific victims and the experience they had undergone” (177). She argues that “the global victim is a rhetorical figure with no distinctive features, characterized by a generic helplessness” (177). And even though the chapter focuses on the period when the institutionalization of humanitarianism and the prosecution of genocide have become a reality, Dean considers it necessary to “move out of the courtroom in order to address the cultural role accorded to victim testimony” (135). Reflecting on debates around and the critique of the ICC, the humanitarian government, and atrocity photography, Dean holds that the failures of these new institutions and systems gave rise to “the counterwitness” as “a symbol of frustration with uneven global justice” (137).

Investigating the transformation of the “moral witness” from the 1920s to the present, Dean seems to indicate certain gendered aspects of witnessing without, however, expanding or elaborating on those further. Tehlirian and Schwarzbard “were recast as righteous aveng-

ers and humanitarian warriors” (58), the “camp survivor” was a “combatant” since survival was conceived “as a form of heroism shared by an international and exclusive ‘brotherhood’ who continue their work as soldiers by other means” (87). The trial of Adolf Eichmann “revised such constructions of heroism” (108) and led to emergence of non-conventional, more “feminized forms” (107) of heroism or the “new heroism” (127). The discourse on heroism, masculinity and agency is also present in Dean’s analysis of Didier Fassin’s “portrayal of dignified victims” and “the counterwitness” (152). Hence, *The Moral Witness* not only offers a thorough examination of the genealogy of the witness to genocide in the 20th century, but it also invites future studies on rhetoric of masculinity and heroism that have accompanied witnessing throughout the time.

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