

ARMENIAN DEPORTATIONS: A RE-APPRAISAL IN THE LIGHT OF NEW DOCUMENTS

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In the weekly magazine *History of the First World War*¹, of September, 1970, published in London, an article appeared under the sensational title of *Genocide in Turkey* by Dr. A. O. Sarkissian, an Armenian, who claims that approximately 500,000 Armenians were killed by the Turks in the last months of 1915, and that the majority of the remainder was deported to desert areas where they died of starvation or disease, at the lowest estimate 1,500,000 having died as a "direct result of a carefully-laid plan". The writer then audaciously suggests that *Adolf Hitler* took the treatment accorded to the Armenians as an example in ordering, on 22nd August, 1939, "the extermination of the Polish-speaking race".

Dr. Sarkissian, who apparently prefers sensationalism to scholarly research, and who, being a party to the case undoubtedly has an axe to grind, has given an absolutely biased account of Armenian deportations and massacres. He has failed to carry out further research connected with the subject and to consult some of the most recent publications, based on British, French, Russian, Turkish and even Armenian sources, and on the inexhaustible documents in the British Foreign Office Archives in London which throw more light on the subject. He has preferred to write a propaganda account, rather than to produce a scholarly work, based on *facts* and *figures*, which would have been more appreciated. But then he seems to be one of the typical vociferous Armenian propagandists, some of whom, recent documents prove beyond any doubt, were themselves directly responsible for the misfortunes of the Armenian people.

That there have been some deportations and mutual Turko-Armenian massacres in Anatolia no one can deny, but contrary to

¹ *History of the First World War*, Vol. 3, No. 16, September, 1970, London, BPC Publishing Ltd. in cooperation with the Imperial War Museum, pp. 1321-1327.

the allegations of *Dr. Sarkissian*, these took place in the first half of 1915, mostly in the Eastern Provinces, near the Turko-Russian frontier, and for reasons which will be presently explained. The extent of these reciprocal excesses is not definitely known as no statistics are available, and estimates are based on conjecture. Nevertheless, *Dr Sarkissian's* allegation that about two million Armenians perished is a complete distortion of facts and figures. His hypothesis pre-supposes a pre-war (1914) Armenian population in Turkey of over two millions out of which 1,500,000 have perished. Yet, even the most lavish estimates put the Armenian population in Turkey at 1,500,000². (See Document No. 1). *M. Zarczeski*, the French Consul at Van, offered the more realistic figure of 1,300,000³. In the Eastern Provinces, where the Armenians were supposed to be in the majority, their total number was 913,875 or 15 % of the population, as against 4,453,250 or 74 % Muslims/Turks⁴. The American Professor *Maggie* gave the number of Armenians living in the Eastern Provinces in 1914 as 847,000, including 55,000 for Maraş, a town in the south-east of Turkey⁵. These figures were prepared by him, on the outbreak of the war, for the use of the American Peace Delegation⁶. The Armenians officially recorded in Turkish population registers for 1907 numbered 980,000⁷. With generous allowances, the total Armenian population in Turkey, before the deportations, did not exceed

² General Zalenyi, *Zapiski*, Vol. XVIII, Tiflis, 1896, quoted by Ahmed Emin *Turkey in the World War*, New Haven, 1930, p. 213; PRO., FO. 371/4229/86552, PRO standing for *Public Record Office*, and FO. 371 for *Foreign Office Archives* in the Political 371 class. These abbreviations will be used throughout the article.

³ *Revue de Paris*, 15.4.1914. According to Tournebize (1901), the Armenian population in Turkey was 1,158,000; Kevork Aslanian (1914) gave their number as 1,800,000; Dr. Lepsius as 1,600,000; the French Yellow Book for 1897 as 1,475,000; Francis de Pressence (1895) as 1,200,000; see also Sadi Koçuş, *Tarih Boyunca Ermeniler ve Türk-Ermeni İlişkileri*, Ankara, 1967, p. 257.

⁴ Ahmed Emin, *op. cit.*, p. 212; PRO., FO. 371/4229/86552, British High Commissioner Admiral Calthorpe to Acting British Secretary of State, Lord Curzon, Istanbul despatch No. 839/M. 1954, 24.5.1919; cp. *Livre Jaune*, 1897; Vital Guinet, *Turquie d'Asie*, Paris, 1892; *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, 1919; Sadi Koçuş, *op. cit.*, p. 258.

⁵ PRO., FO. 371/4162/E 13585.

⁶ PRO., FO. 371/4239/E 160318, Geographical Section of Political Intelligence Department, Report, 10.2.1920.

⁷ Ahmed Emin, *op. cit.*, pp. 212-213.

1,500,000. Therefore *Dr. Sarkissian's* claim that 1,500,000 Armenians (i.e. the total population) were killed is neither convincing nor realistic. He ought to look into these population statistics again, particularly in the light of recent archival material.

Turkish estimates put the number of Armenians, who perished during the deportations, between 200,000 and 300,000. A French investigation carried out in 1920 came to the conclusion that the Turkish people and soldiers behaved generally in a correct way towards the deported, but that some 500,000 perished as a result of their armed rebellion against the Ottoman State, of the war in which they took part, of privation caused by the war in primitive regions, of sickness, exhaustion following long marches, immediate changes of climate, and of attacks by marauders upon rich convoys⁸. But, as Admiral *Sir John de Robeck*, the British High Commissioner in Istanbul (1920), informed the British Foreign Secretary, *Lord Curzon*, the Muslims, too, paid a heavy toll of human life⁹. The Turks are estimated to have lost over one million people owing to similar causes.

The inability to produce any concrete figures about the Armenians, who had actually perished, has been a blessing both to the Armenian propagandists, who exaggerated these in order to play on the sympathy and philanthropy of the Western World, and to the Great Powers, especially to Britain, France and Tsarist Russia, who utilised these fabricated figures in order to induce the Arab Provinces of the Ottoman Empire to rise in rebellion against the Sultan-Caliph¹⁰. Nevertheless to compare the Armenian misfortune

⁸ Commandant M. Larcher, *La guerre turque dans la guerre mondiale*, Paris, 1926, p. 396; Ahmed Emin, op. cit., p. 221.

⁹ PRO., FO. 371/5044/E 2310, Admiral de Robeck to Curzon, Istanbul despatch, 17.3.1920. *Earl Curzon of Kedleston* was appointed Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs on 29.10.1919, see *Foreign Office List*, London, 1920; see also Sadi Koçuş, op. cit., p. 289.

¹⁰ See Hussein-McMahon correspondence; PRO., FO. 371/2768/76954, Foreign Office to Sir H. McMahon, London cypher telegram No. 339, 27.4.1916; *ibid.*, 83296, FO to same, cypher tel., 322, 2.5.1916; PRO., FO. 371/3384/183770, Political Intelligence Department secret memorandum, circa 5.11.1918; PRO., FO. 371/4185/153432. For Ibn Ali Hussein (1856-1931) see J. Morris, *The Hashemite Kings*, 1959. Hussein, King of Hedjaz (1916-1924) was the founder of the modern Arab Hashemite dynasty. He was the Emir of Mecca (1908-1916). He sided with the *Entente Powers* in 1916 against the Ottoman Empire, abdicated in 1924 as first King of the Hedjaz and was exiled to Cyprus. He died in Amman.

with German atrocities against the Jews, as *Dr. Sarkissian* does sensationally, is completely out of proportion and an unfortunate distortion of the truth.

New evidence has now come to light indicating more clearly the causes that led to the deportation of the Armenians. The Armenian revolutionaries, both inside and outside Turkey, were planning a general uprising in Anatolia, particularly in the north-east, near the Russian frontier, and in the south-east, in the region known as Cilicia, with a view to carving an Armenian Empire out of the Turkish Provinces where the Armenians constituted not more than 15 % of the total population. The British Foreign Office Archives provide ample evidence to prove this point, which was put forward by the Ottoman Government at the time as their main justification for the deportations, but which was regarded by their enemies as an excuse, or cover up. The Russian Embassy Archives in Paris, too, we are told by *M. Aharonian*, President of the Armenian Delegation to the Paris Peace Conference, shed ample light on the subject. On 26th February, 1919, *Aharonian* revealed the following:

“ At the very beginning of the war our nation, not only forgot all grievances against Tsarist rule and rallied wholeheartedly to the Russian flag in support of the Allied cause, but our kinsmen in Turkey and all over the world offered to the Government of the Tsar to establish and support Armenian legions, at their own expense, to fight side by side with the Russian troops under the command of Russian generals ”

Boghos Nubar, President of the Armenian National Delegation, was more revealing, when he added:

“ at the beginning of the war, the Turkish Government had offered to grant the Armenians a sort of autonomy, asking from them, in exchange, volunteers to rouse the Caucasus against Russia. The Armenians rejected this proposal, and placed themselves, without hesitation, on the side of the Entente Powers ¹¹ ”.

¹¹ PRO., FO. 371/4376/P.I.D. 206, Paris Meeting, 26.2.1919. The Entente Powers consisted mainly of Britain, France, Italy, and Russia, who fought against Germany, Austria-Hungary, Bulgaria and the Ottoman Empire.

Here are a few examples of what the Turks consider as Armenian treachery towards their mutual country. Long before the outbreak of the First World War, the Armenians, especially in the north-east of Turkey, were intriguing with Tsarist Russia, who, since the Treaty of San Stefano, had posed as the champion of the Armenians, and who had never failed to exploit the strained relations between the Armenians and the Kurds by making full use of local land disputes between the two races. (See Document No. 2). The Russians, at first, incited the Kurds to attack and massacre the Armenians in order to make their position precarious in the Empire, and to cause them to bring pressure to bear upon the Ottoman Government for Russian intervention in the internal affairs of the Empire¹². The Grand Vizier, reported *Sir Louis Mallet*, the British Ambassador in Istanbul, was of the view that the Russian Consul, *Charkoff*, at Khoi, was encouraging the Kurdish chiefs to rebel against the Ottoman Government. "The object of these intrigues", commented *Eyre Crowe*, Assistant Under-Secretary in the British Foreign Office, "is supposed to be to increase Armenian discontent whilst at the same time diminishing Turkish authority¹³". (See Document No. 3).

On 6th November, 1914, *Francis Blyth Kirby*, the former Acting Vice-Consul at Rostow-on-Don, wrote to the British Foreign Office that, before leaving Don, he had a conversation with a certain *David Tchernoff*, an Armenian Prince, who had said that the Armenians in Russia and Turkey were extremely anxious that war would break out between Russia and Turkey so that they would endeavour to avenge themselves on the Turks. He had stressed that a revolution would take place among the Armenians in Armenia and Turkey generally, if the Armenians thought there was any chance of their obtaining backing from Russia¹⁴. (See Documents Nos. 4 and 4A).

¹² PRO., FO. 371/2130/15735, German Ambassador to the British Foreign Office, received in London on 9.4.1914; Sadi Koçaş, op. cit., pp. 76 & 83-84.

¹³ PRO., FO. 371/2130/31341, Sir Louis Mallet to Sir Edward Grey, Therapia despatch No. 477, 2.7.1914. *Sir Louis Mallet* was the British Ambassador in Istanbul from 10.10.1913 until the outbreak of the First World War. See *Foreign Office List*, London, 1914. *Sir Eyre Crowe* was appointed Assistant Under-Secretary of State in the Foreign Office on 11.1.1912 and was promoted to be Permanent Under-Secretary of State on 27.11.1920. *Foreign Office List* 1913 and 1921.

¹⁴ PRO., FO. 371/2146/68443.

Six days later, *Boghos Nubar*, the leader of the Turkish Armenians, informed *Milne Cheetham*, British envoy in Cairo since 20th July, 1914, that the Armenians of Cilicia would be ready to volunteer in support of a possible embarkation at Iskenderun (Alexandretta), Mersin, or Adana. Valuable assistance could be provided by the Armenians of the mountainous district, who, if supplied with arms and ammunition, would rise against the Turks¹⁵. (See Documents Nos. 5, 5A and 5B).

On 24th February, 1915, *Count Benckendorff*¹⁶, the Russian Ambassador in London, communicated to the Foreign Office a request from *Sazonoff*¹⁷, the Russian Foreign Minister, that Britain should join with France in sending arms and ammunition to Iskenderun (Alexandretta) for the use by the Armenians against the Turks. He added that the Armenian Ottoman deputies for Zeitoun - *Mavino Huian*, *Michael Avardian* and *Gasparian* had informed the field staff of the Caucasian Army of Russia that the *Henchakists* had many admirers throughout Cilicia, particularly at Zeitoun, with committees at Adana, Hadjin, Sis, Furnuz, Maraş and Aleppo. At the head of the movement might be placed "the same persons who directed the movement of 1895 - *Tohadjian*, *Enidunian*, *Surenian*, *Tchakirian*, *Iagubian* and *Gasparian*". The people of Zeitoun were said to have asserted that they could bring together up to 15,000 combatants and be in a position to take in the greatest number of weapons without any descent on Iskenderun or its environs¹⁸. Although only the difficulty of transporting these from Iskenderun to the interior deterred the British Government from accepting the offer, nevertheless this did not prevent it from suggesting that, "if the Russian Government feel assured that Armenian insurgents would be of real value to the Allies, it might be more feasible for them to be supplied with these

¹⁵ PRO., FO. 371/2146/70404, Cheetham to Grey, Cairo cypher telegram No. 257, 12.11.1914. PRO., FO. 371 file No. 2485 is full of documents on Armenian plans for a general uprising in Turkey, especially in the most vulnerable strategic places.

¹⁶ *Count Alexander Benckendorff* 1849-1917, Russian Ambassador in London since 1903.

¹⁷ *Sergius Dmitrievitch Sazonoff* 1861-1927, Russian statesman and diplomat.

¹⁸ PRO., FO. 371/2484/46942, Russian Ambassador to the Foreign Office, London letter, 17.4.1915.

ammunitions by the Russian Government through the Black Sea littoral¹⁹". (See Documents Nos. 6 and 6A).

On 3rd March, 1915, *M. Varandian*, delegate of the Armenian Committee, requested the British Ambassador in Sofia, *Sir Bax Ironside*²⁰, for permission to utilise the services of 20,000 Armenian volunteers from America and the Balkans to operate a descent upon the coast of "Licia in Alexandretta²¹". (See Documents Nos. 7 and 7A), but the Foreign Office found the scheme impracticable²². Three weeks later, *Miran Seraslan*, Chairman, *M. D. Manuelian*, Treasurer, and *Y. Servart*, Secretary of the *Armenian National Defence Committee of America*, wrote to the British Foreign Secretary, *Sir Edward Grey*, that they were making preparations to send volunteers to Cilicia where "a large number of the population will unfurl the banner of insurrection against the Turkish rule", which would greatly help to disperse and to prevent the onward march of the Turks against Egypt. The insurrection would bear fruit, so they claimed, inasmuch as it would extend from the sea-shore, viz. from "Suedian and Tchokmarzavan through Giaouzdash to Marash and Fundijak and thence to Zeitoun, Furnuz, Hadjin and Sis, thus establishing a war zone extending from the Taurus to the sea". This scheme was found slightly more mature in the Foreign Office, but "equally impracticable²³". (See Documents Nos. 8 and 8A).

Encouraged by Russia, the Armenians began to make trouble behind the Turkish lines on the north-east front, where they attacked Turkish villages, including Karahisar, inhabited by Muslims, which was completely destroyed and burnt down. Even *Lancelot Oliphant*²⁴

¹⁹ PRO., FO. 371/2484/22083, Communication by Count Benckendorff, London, 24.2.1915.

²⁰ *Sir Bax Ironside* was appointed British envoy on 9.10.1907, see *Foreign Office List*, London, 1908.

²¹ PRO., FO. 371/2484/25167, *Sir H. Bax Ironside* to the Foreign Office, Sofia cypher telegram No. 75, 3.3.1915; *ibid.*, 37609, *Ironside* to *Grey*, Sofia confidential despatch No. 20, 6.3.1915.

²² PRO., FO. 371/2484/28172, Foreign Office to *Sir Bax Ironside*, London cypher telegram No. 52, 12.3.1915.

²³ PRO., FO. 371/2485/41444, *Armenian National Defence Committee* to *Sir Edward Grey*, Boston letter, 23.3.1915.

²⁴ *Sir Lancelot Oliphant* was appointed a junior clerk in the FO on 25.8.1915 and was promoted to be Deputy Under-Secretary of State on 1.3.1936; see *Foreign Office List*, 1937.

of the British Foreign Office found that "rumours of events at Karahissar", as privately notified to him by *Sir Charles Marling*, the British envoy in Persia, were "very ugly"²⁵. According to news furnished by the French Consulate in Salonica, massacres were not all on one side – the Armenians in the Van Province "disposed of a good many Turks"²⁶. Certain Turkish historians, relying on Turkish war documents, lay the blame for the great Turkish defeat by the Russians at Sarikamış, where 90,000 Turks perished, on the shoulders of local Armenians who had acted as informers. The possibility of widespread rebellions behind the Turkish lines, and of the danger of the Ottoman Army having to fight on two fronts, compelled the Ottoman Government, to pass the Deportations Law enabling it to remove the Armenians from vulnerable strategic points, where they could assist the enemy. This law did not precede, but was the result of, Armenian rebellions and guerrilla activities which threatened the very existence of the Ottoman Empire by bringing its total defeat at the hands of her enemies, let alone the fact that the unarmed Turkish population was subjected to many Armenian atrocities²⁷.

Secret Turkish documents captured in Palestine by the British Army in the autumn of 1918 indicate that the Turkish Government was not implicated in the massacres, although it had ordered the deportation of certain Armenian leaders. These documents are appended hereunder *verbatim* :

"Vali Jelal to Mutessarrif of Aintab (Antep), Aleppo telegram No. 50/627, Code No. 25, 28.4.1915. Confidential message to be deciphered by yourself.

"I herewith communicate to you a cypher message received from the Minister of the Interior. Please close down at once the branches of the Hinchak and Tashnak Committees. Arrest those who are dangerous or harmful among their active leaders and members, search them, investigate the documents which may be found on them and let me know the result.

²⁵ PRO., FO. 371/2488/127223, Marling to Grey, Gulahak Persia despatch No. 108, 13.8.1915.

²⁶ PRO., FO. 371/2488/58350, minute by A. N., 10.5.1915 on a note by M. Aime Jos. de Fleuriau, French Ambassador, (1870-1938).

²⁷ Sadi Koçaş, *op. cit.*, pp. 174 and 178.

As a thorough execution of this order is necessary, I advise you to provide a sufficient force before you start so that you might meet a probable counter action.

Vali Jelal”.

Annexed :

“Whereas the Armenian Committees have been trying to secure autonomy through their political and revolutionary formations; whereas the Tashnak Committee has, after the outbreak of war, passed a decision to raise the Armenians of Russia against us and that for the time being the Armenians of Turkey should await the exhaustion of the Turkish Army and then assume such an attitude which would affect the life and future of the country; whereas the above decision and the last revolutionary movements of Zeitoun, Bitlis, Sivas and Van, which took place at a moment when the country was engaged in war, re-confirmed their treacherous aspirations; whereas all the Armenian Committees, which have their bases in foreign countries and which, by efforts of their members, prepared a complete revolution, formed the opinion that autonomy, which is their objective, may be obtained only by fighting the Government; whereas the Armenian Committees, when stored bombs and revolvers (some of which were discovered at Caesaria and Sivas) who formed Volunteer Regiments composed chiefly of the inhabitants of Turkey, and invaded the country, aim at threatening the Turkish Army from behind, and this has been confirmed by their organisation and publications; whereas the Turkish Government cannot close its eyes and bear any longer the existence of such organisations which form for us a matter of life and death; whereas the existence of such Committees, which are source of unrest, cannot still be considered as legal and whereas an urgent necessity has been felt with regard to the abolition of all these political formations; we, in agreement with the Vice Commander-in-Chief of the Turkish Army, passed the following decision which you have to carry out immediately, and after you have made the necessary pre-

parations: the branches of the Hintchak, Tashnak and similar committees in the vilayets should be closed at once and all documents found in these branches should be confiscated without giving them a chance to destroy them. All active leaders and members of Committees who are considered as dangerous or harmful to the Government should be arrested at once and those whom you object remaining at their homes should be concentrated at a convenient place without giving them an opportunity to escape. Arms should be searched for in suspected places but before this is carried out an adequate force should be prepared through arrangement with the Officer in charge of troops as a precaution against any counter-action. Perfect arrangements in securing thorough execution of this order should be made. All documents found should be investigated and persons who shall be arrested as the result of these investigations should be brought before the Courts Martial. The numbers of persons arrested and details about the execution of this order should constantly be reported. *As this order is exclusively a measure against the extension of Committees, you should abstain from putting it into a form which might result in mutual massacre of Moslem and Armenian elements*'.

In the Foreign Office, this document was minuted on 16.1.1920 by *W. S. Edmonds*, Consular Officer of the Eastern Department, as follows: "There is not enough evidence here to bring home the charge of massacre any closer". *D. G. Osborne*, a Clerk of the Eastern Department, added the following: "On the contrary, the last paragraph of the order of the Minister of the Interior specifically warns against measures liable to lead to massacres²⁸".

Owing to the shortage of men, most of whom were fighting on the various fronts against the external enemies, the Ottoman Government entrusted the guarding of the convoys of Armenians, who were being deported, to non-combatants, usually to convicts released from prisons for the purpose, and to local Kurds, who had old scores

²⁸ PRO., FO. 371/4241/170751, Admiral de Robeck to Curzon, Istanbul despatch No. 2423/5035/A/76, 29.12.1919.

to settle with the Armenians²⁹. The deportations gave the Kurds the opportunity to deal severely with the Armenians³⁰ who had already lost the favour of the Ottoman Government owing to their treachery. There is no evidence that the Ottoman Government planned the massacres, although deportations were well-planned in order to be effective enough to diminish the great danger of a general Armenian uprising which was understandably haunting the Ottoman statesmen. In defending its attitude, in February, 1916, the Ottoman Government laid the blame for the bloodshed on the Armenians who provoked revolutionary uprisings. "The Turkish troops have been betrayed", it declared, "when the Russian offensive began. . . . The removal of the Armenians from certain regions to others was a measure dictated by imperative military necessity³¹". Nor could the Turkish people as a whole be held responsible for what has happened. The whole affair was spontaneous and the result of extreme provocation on the part of the Armenians.

The Armenian people, "a Christian and relatively prosperous minority in Turkey", to put it in *Dr. Sarkissian's* words³², were not an oppressed community within the Ottoman social system. On the contrary, they were a relatively prosperous minority which provided the Ottoman Government with at least one Foreign Minister, seven other Ministers and with numerous senators, deputies, ambassadors, judges and administrators³³. Nevertheless they had fallen victim to the territorial ambitions of the Great Powers, such as Tsarist Russia, France and Britain, to the lustful, short-sighted, ambitious Armenian political leaders, and to irresponsible terrorist organisations like the *Henchak*, *Armenagan Ramgavar* and the most blood-thirsty of them all, the *Dashnaksutium Society*, which, as revealed by the All-Armenia National Congress held in Tiflis in February, 1915, received over

²⁹ PRO., FO. 371/2130/11985, Ian M. Smith, British Vice-Consul in Van, to Sir Louis Mallet, British Ambassador in Istanbul, despatch, 14.2.1914.

³⁰ PRO., FO. 371/2488/108070, Viscount Bryce speech in the House of Lords, 28.7.1915; Sir Telford Waugh, *Turkey Yesterday, Today and Tomorrow*, London, 1930, p. 30.

³¹ PRO., FO. 371/2768/39517; *Sun*, New York, 16.2.1916.

³² See also Firuz Kazemzadeh, *The Struggle for Transcaucasia, 1917-1921*, New York, 1951, p. 8, and Sadi Koçuş, op. cit., pp. 58-59.

³³ Sadi Koçuş, op. cit., pp. 94-112.

200,000 roubles from the Russian Government in order to arm the Turkish Armenians, and to provoke their uprising at an opportune moment³⁴.

Lieutenant *Ian M. Smith*, British Vice-Consul in Van since 10.9.1913, reported that the influence of the Dashnakist Party far exceeded that of the other two, owing to the more active and extreme policy it pursued. The Vice-Consul added:

“It is well organised, has a regular and apparently considerable income from subscriptions, and has its agents throughout the Armenian villages in the vilayet who work for the party, and keep in touch with the Central Committee in Van. This party, during the past year, has actively concerned itself with the secret importation of arms and their distribution amongst its followers. . . . In Van it is said that the Armenians are now better armed than the Kurds. . . ., their policy being to put the Armenians in the province in a position to hold their own against the Mohammedans, should the necessity arise³⁵”.

This party, commented *R. McDonell*, a Clerk of the Eastern Department of the Foreign Office, “raised money by terror among its own people, and spent large sums on arms and ammunition. . . ., fomented hatred of the Mussulmans. . . . for the Dashnaks there can be no peace without conquest”; no decision would satisfy them, whose aspiration was an Armenia stretching from Erivan to the Mediterranean Sea³⁶. As a party, the Dashnaksutium bore a major portion of responsibility, for it was often the leading force in organising bands to perpetrate the massacres, often exterminating the inhabitants of entire Muslim villages³⁷.

³⁴ B. A. Borian, *Armenia mezhdunarodnaia diplomatiia i SSSR.*, Moscva, 1928, V. I, pp. 360-362, quoted by Firuz Kazemzadeh, *op. cit.*, p. 26; and by Sadi Koças, *op. cit.*, p. 189.

³⁵ PRO., FO. 371/2130/2130/5748, Ian M. Smith to Sir Louis Mallet, Van despatch, 10.1.1914.

³⁶ PRO., FO. 371/4162/E 13585, McDonell memorandum, 29.10.1920.

³⁷ I. I. Vorontsov-Dashkov, *Vsepaddonneishai zapiska po upravleniiu kavkazkim kraem general. . . . 1907*, pp. 13-14; *Zhizn Natsionalnostei*, No. 25 (33), 6.7.1919, quoted by Firuz Kazemzadeh, *op. cit.*, pp. 19 and 74.

Dr. Sarkissian fails to mention any of the causes that contributed directly to the deportations and resulting excesses against the Armenians. Powerful Armenian propaganda has veiled the true factors completely. This propaganda has been playing havoc in the West, particularly in the U. S. A., where Armenian organizations have indulged in a campaign of vilification, vituperation and slander against the whole Turkish nation, holding it responsible for what was mainly due to the myopic and unwise policy followed by the over zealous Armenian leaders themselves. These leaders, who were vociferous sensationalists, spending fortunes on propaganda³⁸, were not really interested in settling differences with Turkey. Even after 1919, they merely pursued the old policy of attracting Europe's attention just as they had done in 1896³⁹.

In February, 1920, they raised an outcry in Cilicia, where they claimed thousands of Armenians were being massacred by the Turks⁴⁰. But Admiral *A. L. Bristol* (1886-1942), the American High Commissioner in Istanbul, reported to Washington that these were exaggerated for political purposes in order to contribute to efforts to set up an independent Armenia as part of Allied plans to carve out Turkey⁴¹. *Bristol* was realistic for, in fact, those who were being massacred were the Turks, whose villages were ransacked and burnt down by Armenian punitive expeditions. As General *Gouraud*, the French Commander-in-Chief and High Commissioner for Syria, revealed in a report on 25th November, 1920, the Armenians conducted a campaign of revenge against the Turkish inhabitants in the form of massacres, pillage and incendiarism. This revelation prompted *R. McDonell* of the British Foreign Office to make the following comment: "It is a great pity that this statement was not made before". *D. G. Osborne* added the following: "Yes, it is too late to correct the other stories that have been spread abroad by Armenian sympathisers⁴²". But when the *Sublime Porte* suggested the formation of

³⁸ Loris Melikov, *La révolution russe...*, Paris, 1920, p. 160.

³⁹ Firuz Kazemzadeh, *op. cit.*, p. 214.

⁴⁰ PRO., FO. 371/5042/E 692.

⁴¹ Bristol telegram No. 122 from Istanbul, 10.1.1920 in Laurence Evans, *United States Policy and the Partition of Turkey*, Baltimore, 1965, p. 258.

⁴² PRO., FO. 371/5211/E 15253, General Gouraud report on French policy in Armenia, Paris, 25.11.1920; Bristol telegrams Nos. 167 to 170 from Istanbul, 4/6.3.1920, in Laurence Evans, *op. cit.*, p. 259.

a mixed commission to examine the Cilicia incidents, this suggestion the British Foreign Office did not approve, not without reason: the French would have come out of the inquiry so badly that they would "probably never consent" to an enquiry, although *D. G. Osborne* was interested to know more of the Armenian punitive expeditions that were sent by the French against several Turkish villages⁴³.

Meanwhile *O. Wardrop*, the British representative at Tiflis, transmitted a note from *M. Evangulov*, the diplomatic representative of Armenia in Georgia, enquiring about the measures taken by the British Government to guarantee the security of the Armenian population, and requesting that those "responsible for massacres" should be punished. This request prompted *D. G. Osborne*, Clerk of the Eastern Department of the Foreign Office, to make, on 7th April, 1920, the following comments.

"... I would instruct Mr. Wardrop to say that a more suitable subject for discussion between himself and M. Evangulov would appear to be the apparent decision of the Armenian Authorities to exterminate the Mussulman population of the Erivan Republic..."

Sir Eyre Crowe, then Deputy Under-Secretary of State in the Foreign Office, added the following observations on 8th April:

"... No doubt the Armenians are themselves largely to blame for the Turkish crusade against them... I should have thought that the only answer we need give to M. Evangulov is to... communicate to him a copy of the Mussulman petition of complaint (Wardrop despatch No. 89, E 2732) and point out how much the difficulties of the Allies in helping the Armenians are aggravated by Armenian persecution against the Moslems..."⁴⁴.

Armenian propaganda became so acute that, at the end of June, 1920, Admiral *Bristol* advised the United States Government to guard

⁴³ PRO., FO. 371/5045/E 2809, Robeck to Curzon, Istanbul despatch, No. 406/M/2418/2, 25.3.1920 and Foreign Office to Robeck, cypher telegram No. 316, London, 12.4.1920.

⁴⁴ PRO., FO. 371/5045/E 2736, Wardrop to Foreign Office, Tiflis despatch No. 94, 11.3.1920.

against it⁴⁵. On 9th November, the Foreign Office decided to warn *M. Aharonian*, the Armenian Dashnak leader, that Armenian propaganda was defeating its purpose. The perpetual appeal to the British Government as if it was a charity organisation irritated the British, who believed that, instead of continuous appeals for pity and assistance, the Armenians should show evidence of some self-reliance and political ability in Armenia. "We want to see now", commented *D. G. Osborne*, "concrete evidence of some constructive and administrative ability at home instead of purely external policy based on propaganda and mendicancy⁴⁶". Four days later, *Osborne* raised this subject with *Aharonian* to whom he pointed out that Armenian reports of the massacre of 10,000 Armenians at Hadjin had proved to be quite untrue. "I told him", relates *Osborne*, "that these constant appeals for assistance and sympathy, especially when based on exaggeration or distortion of fact, defeated their own object and I believe that they had so often cried wolf that now when disaster had really overtaken them, no great public interest or sympathy would be aroused. He professed to agree with me in deploring the zeal of the Armenian propagandists⁴⁷". (See Docs. Nos. 9 and 9A). *Aharonian* himself had written to the British ambassador at Paris, enclosing a letter from the Cilician Armenians, who claimed that 7,000 of them had been massacred by the Turks⁴⁸.

According to British Foreign Secretary, *Lord Curzon*, the leaders of the Erivan Armenians were "a worthless lot⁴⁹". (See also Docs. Nos. 10 and 10A). In reply to the claims put forward in the House of Lords on 11.3.1920 by *Lord Bryce*⁵⁰, the champion of the Armenians, that many Armenians had been massacred in Cilicia, *Lord Curzon* declared bluntly that the Armenians themselves were not "such innocent lambs" as some people might be ready to suppose. "I have", he remarked, "at the moment in my possession papers relating to

⁴⁵ Bristol telegram No. 388, Istanbul, 30.6.1920, in Laurence Evans, op. cit., p. 286.

⁴⁶ PRO., FO. 371/4962/E 14033, Osborne minute, 9.11.1920.

⁴⁷ PRO., FO. 371/4963/E 14103, Osborne minute, 13.11.1920.

⁴⁸ PRO., FO. 371/5041/E 357, Aharonian letter, 17.2.1920.

⁴⁹ PRO., FO. 371/4965/E 15131, Curzon minute, 5.12.1920.

⁵⁰ *First Viscount Bryce* (1838-1922), British statesman, lawyer, ambassador to USA (1907-1913).

a series of very savage and bloodthirsty attacks made by them, conceivably under provocation. . . .⁵¹". In July, 1918, over 8,000 Tartars were killed in Baku, and over 18,000 unarmed Tartars were "ruthlessly murdered" in Elisabetopol district, mainly by Armenian rebels, reported *Leslie Urquhart*⁵². (See also Document No. 11). In March, 1919, the President of the Kars Council (Shura) *Ibrahim*, sent a long telegram to the King of Britain in the name of "three million Muslims living in the south-west of Caucasus, in Kars, Ardahan, Olti, Kaghman, Batum, Eyindir, Kamarly, Nahjivan, Ordonabad and neighbourhood", complaining that the Armenians had "completely destroyed and ruined more than 1,000 Mohammedan villages" and "shed the blood of about 100,000 innocent Mohammedan women and children, leaving neither honour nor property unspoiled and untouched". This complaint prompted the Foreign Office to ask the Director of Military Intelligence for a detailed report on the subject⁵³. Six days later the D. M. I. replied: "That atrocities were committed by Armenians on their retreat before the Turks is very probably true. . . .⁵⁴"

In September, 1919, *Djafaroff*, the Azerbaijan Foreign Minister, complained to his counterpart in the Erivan Government that, from the beginning of January, 1918, until the arrival of the Turks, the Armenians in Erivan had devastated more than 300 Muslim villages the majority of whose populations they had massacred. The Armenian atrocities against the Muslim Tartars were too horrible to relate—"women were violated, and many children of the Shakhab village in the Erivan District were burnt in ovens". The following were the villages which had heavily suffered: Kadilou, Shagablou, Karakhack, Dckhnaz, Karabekliar, Agassibekli; the villages of the Millidarassi region, and of Bassargecharki region of Novobaiazetski district; Kizi-van, Soubatan, Zagalou, Shakhab; Echmiadzin and Sourmalin districts. These dreadful ferocities forced some members

⁵¹ PRO., FO. 371/5043/E 1714, House of Lords Debate, 11.3.1920.

⁵² PRO., FO. 371/3404/158226, Director of Military Intelligence to Foreign Office, despatch No. 495 (M. I. 2), 16.9.1918.

⁵³ PRO., FO. 371/3658/42884, Foreign Office to Director of Military Intelligence, letter, 22.3.1919.

⁵⁴ PRO., FO. 371/3658/50074, D. M. I. to Foreign Office, letter B-I/2819 (M. I. 2), 29.3.1919.

of the Armenian Parliament, notably those belonging to the Party of Socialist-Revolutionaries, to put questions to the Armenian Minister for Home Affairs on the massacre of Tartars in such villages as Pashakend, Takiarli, Kouroukh-Giune, Oulalikof, Taishouroukh, Djan-Fida, Kerim-Arch, Agdjar, Igdalou, Karkhoun, Kelani-Aroltkh of Echmiadzin district, and other villages, adding: "The local population not only did not prevent, but took part in these robberies and massacres". The Azerbaijan Government protested energetically against these excesses for which it held responsible the Armenian Government⁵⁵. (See Document No. 12). A similar protest was handed, on 21st October, 1919, to *Sir Percy Cox*⁵⁶, the British Minister at Teheran, by *Etela ül Mülk*, the Persian Foreign Minister, protesting against the Armenian massacres of the Muslims in the Erivan, Nakhichevan and Kars districts, and along the whole border with Armenia⁵⁷. (See Documents Nos. 13 and 13A). *Ismail Cenani*, the Secretary-General of the Ottoman Foreign Ministry, had already protested, on 4th September, against the Armenian attacks on the Muslims round Sarıkamış, Kızıl Hamam, Kağızman and other villages. These protests called forth, on 9th October, the following comment from *N. D. Peterson*, of the British Foreign Office:

"... (these reports) show the Armenians in a bad light and would make good reading for Miss Emily Robinson and others who regard them as martyred innocents⁵⁸".

The situation became so explosive that *O. Wardrop*, the British representative in Tiflis, wrote to *Lord Curzon* on 4th March, 1920, as follows:

"Without hesitation, I can say that, from the point of view of humanity, it seems to me inexpedient to entrust a Dashnak-

⁵⁵ PRO., FO. 371/3660/144753, Djafaroff note No. 3253, 22.9.1919.

⁵⁶ *Sir Percy Cox* (1864-1937), British Minister at Teheran, 1918-1920; see P. Graves, *Life of Sir Percy Cox*, 1941.

⁵⁷ PRO., FO. 371/3660/154951, Etela ül Mülk to Cox, Teheran note, 20.10.1919 see also *ibid.*, 157887, Wardrop to Foreign Office, Tiflis despatch No. 69, 2.11.1919, on Armenian atrocities against Muslims at Kars Province; and PRO., FO. 371/4954/E 2739, Captain G. F. Gracey to O. Wardrop, Erivan despatch No. 12, 8.3.1920, on Armenian excesses in the Caucasus.

⁵⁸ PRO., FO. 371/4159/137901, Robeck to Curzon, Istanbul despatch No. 1750/M/2136, 25.9.1919.

ist Armenian Government with power over the lives and property of Mussulmans, and I believe the Armenians would be much safer under Mussulman rule than Mussulmans would be under Armenian Dashnakist rule⁵⁹”.

Lord Curzon, who was much impressed by these reports, told bluntly an Armenian deputation consisting of *Nubar*, *Aharonian* and the Archbishop of Erivan that the conduct of their compatriots was “foolish and indefensible”. He warned them that nobody would look after Armenia if they showed “such complete instability and love of disorder⁶⁰”. The Armenian leaders tried unsuccessfully to turn the tables against the Tartars by denying the massacres⁶¹. (See also Documents Nos. 14, 14A and 14B).

In September, 1920, Major-General *W. Thwaites*, Director of Military Intelligence, wrote to *Lord Hardinge*, Permanent Under-Secretary of State in the Foreign Office:

“... it is useless to pretend that the Armenians are satisfactory allies, or deserving of all the sympathy to which they claim...⁶²”. (See Documents Nos. 15, 15A and 15B).

Major-General *James G. Harbord*, (1886-1947), after visiting Turkey and Armenia at the head of an American Military Mission, commented in his report to the American Senate as follows:

“The Armenian is not guiltless of blood himself. The Kurds claim that many of their people were massacred under most cruel circumstances by Armenian irregulars accompanying the Russian Bolsheviks when the Russian army went to pieces after the collapse of the Empire. Similar claim is made by the people of Erzurum, who point to burnt buildings in which hundreds of Turks perished⁶³”.

American experts like *Dr. Pratt* of the American Mission in Armenia, and *Colonel Haskell*, American High Commissioner in Erivan in charge

⁵⁹ PRO., FO. 371/4954/E 2775, Wardrop to Curzon, Tiflis despatch No. 81, strictly confidential, 4.3.1920.

⁶⁰ PRO., FO. 371/4954/E 3070, Curzon to Wardrop, cypher telegram No. 156, 11.4.1920.

⁶¹ PRO., FO. 371/4956/E 4673, Aharonian to Curzon, Paris letter, 8.5.1920.

⁶² PRO., FO. 371/3411/158228, Thwaites letter, 16.9.1920.

⁶³ PRO., FO. 371/5108/E 4203, Harbord Report, Senate Document No. 266, 26.10.1919.

of American relief work, had very low opinion of Armenian leaders and people, the former describing them as "robbers, deceivers and fools", and the latter as "professional beggars, thieves and liars... utterly debased, incapable of helping themselves, unwilling to help one another, and entirely lacking in gratitude"⁶⁴. (See Documents Nos. 16, 16A and 16B).

Despite the so many shortcomings of the Armenian people, when left alone without external instigation, the Armenians managed to coexist with the Turks in peace for many centuries⁶⁵. They had enjoyed the best fruits of Ottoman society until a minority of alien, self-seeking, sanguinary and adventurous terrorist leaders decided to convert them into pawns in the power game, by allowing their wires to be pulled by foreign powers for their own ulterior purposes, particularly by Britain, France and Tsarist Russia, who had endeavoured to dismember the Ottoman Empire. Nevertheless to hold all the Turkish nation responsible for the Armenian tragedy, and to overlook the irresponsible actions of these Powers, and of certain Armenian leaders, who were the chief culprits, is a travesty of justice.

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⁶⁴ PRO., FO. 371/4161/E 173267, Secret Intelligence Report No. 47, 18.12.1920 and FO. 371/4960/E 12174, Haskell conversation with Osborne, 29.9.1920, minuted by Lord Hardinge as follows: "Knowing the Armenian character, I am not in the least surprised by this account".

⁶⁵ PRO., FO. 371/5108/E 4203, Harbord Report, *op. cit.*, p. 10; Sadi Koçaş, *op. cit.*, p. 61.

