

# HOW TO CREATE A PROBLEM OF REFUGEES: THE EVACUATION OF CILICIA BY FRANCE AND THE FLOW OF ARMENIAN CIVILIANS (1921-1922)

(MÜLTECİ SORUNU NASIL YARATILIR? FRANSA'NIN KİLİKYA'YI  
TAHLİYESİ VE SİVİL ERMENİLERİN AYRILMASI 1921-1922)

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**Abstract:** *Examining the historical, political, and geographical context of the French evacuation of Cilicia, this article examines the different explanations for the flow of Armenian refugees which accompanied this withdrawal. Relying mostly on the French archives, it concludes that both the French and the Kemalist authorities did their best to prevent the flow of refugees and provided real guarantees to the Christian populations. The movement of refugees is largely due to the anti-Turkish policy followed by the Armenian committees and the Greek government.*

**Keywords:** *Armenian Revolutionary Federation-Dashnak; Aristide Briand; Robert de Caix; Boghos Nubar Pasha; Cilicia; Henry Franklin-Bouillon; Hunchak Party; Kemal Atatürk; Ramkavar Party.*

**Öz:** *Bu makale Fransızların Kilikya'dan çekilmesinin tarihi, siyasi ve coğrafi şartlarını incelerken, bu çekilmeye katılmış olan Ermeni mültecilerin durumuna ilişkin farklı açıklamaları değerlendirmektedir. Makale, Fransız arşivlerine dayanarak hem Fransız hem de Kemalist otoritelerin Ermenilerin göçmesine engel olmak için ciddi çaba gösterdiğini ve Hristyan nüfusa hakiki taahhütler sundukları sonucuna varmaktadır. Mültecilerin hareketi Ermeni komiteleri ve Yunan hükümetinin Türk-karşıtı politikalarından kaynaklanmaktadır.*

**Anahtar Kelimeler:** *Ermeni Devrimci Federasyonu – Taşnak, Aristide Briand, Robert de Caix, Bogos Nubar Paşa, Kilikya, Henry Franklin-Bouillon, Hınçak Partisi, Kemal Atatürk, Ramvakar Partisi*

The evacuation of Cilicia and neighboring regions by France (November 1921-January 1922) and its most dramatic consequence, the flow of Armenian refugees to other places—namely Hatay, Syria, Lebanon, Cyprus, İstanbul, İzmir—received too little attention in scholarly literature, and is frequently used for a political agenda.

During the time of ASALA and JCAG/ARA terrorism, the ASALA newspaper *Hay Baykar* charged France for the “betrayal” of Armenians in Cilicia. Some Armenian propagandists, like Seta Papazian<sup>1</sup> and Patrick Devedjian,<sup>2</sup> even alleged that the evacuation was caused by the “massacre” of the Armenian population of Cilicia at the end of 1921—a purely imaginary “massacre” in this precise case, as it will be recalled in this paper. Since Ms. Papazian’s association was created at the instigation of Jean-Marc “Ara” Toranian, spokesman of the ASALA from 1976 to 1983 and editor-in-chief of *Hay Baykar* from its beginning (1976) to its end (1988), and since Mr. Devedjian was a defense lawyer of ASALA terrorists from 1981 to 1984, such an argument from them is not a surprise, but a continuity.<sup>3</sup>

In another category of authors, Donald Bloxham, who has no experience in Ottoman and Turkish history, alleges without any footnote to justify his affirmation that “Turkish nationalist forces were driving the French occupying force out of Cilicia, and were only too happy to see tens of thousands of Armenians depart with them.”<sup>4</sup>

On the other side of the historiography, Robert F. Zeidner produced a very detailed account of the French occupation of Cilicia and its vicinity, but his presentation of the evacuation is surprisingly short.<sup>5</sup> Stanford J. Shaw gave an interesting indication of the role of Armenian propaganda in his multi-volume study of the war of independence<sup>6</sup>, but he did not develop this point

1 Génocide arménien: le dérapage de Pierre Nora –II Par Seta Papazian | L’Arche | 23/06/2011 <http://larchemag.fr/2011/11/18/184/genocide-armenien-le-derapage-de-pierre-nora-ii/>

2 La Chaîne parlementaire (LCP), January 24, 2012.

3 On the misuse of history to defend the Armenian terrorism: Maxime Gauin, “Remembering the Orly Attack,” *Review of International Law and Politics*, VII-27, 2011, pp. 113-139.

4 Donald Bloxham, *The Great Game of Genocide*, New York-Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005, p. 5. This is unfortunate that some great university press allow the publication of books written by non-specialists, without even a serious checking. On other shortcomings and inaccuracies of Donald Bloxham’s book, see Yücel Güçlü, “Review of *The Great Game of Genocide*,” *The Middle East Quarterly*, Spring 2006, pp. 67-68, <http://www.meforum.org/969/the-great-game-of-genocide> ; Serdar Palabıyık, “A Literature between Scientificity and Subjectivity: A Comparative Analysis of the Books Written on the Armenian Issue,” *Review of Armenian Studies*, IV-11/12, 2007, <http://www.eraren.org/index.php?Lisan=en&Page=DergiIcerik&IcerikNo=476> ; and Jeremy Salt, “Forging the Past: OUP and the Armenian Question,” *Eurasia Critic*, January 2010, <http://eurasiacritic.co.uk/articles/forging-past-oup-and-armenian-question>

5 Robert F. Zeidner, *The Tricolor over the Taurus. The French in Cilicia and Vicinity, 1918-1922*, Ankara: TTK, 2005, pp. 290-291.

6 Stanford J. Shaw, *From Empire to Republic. The Turkish War of National Liberation, 1918-1923. A Documentary Study*, tome III-1, pp. 1420-1421.

in his article, dealing this time only with the war crimes of the Armenian Legion and the panic of 1921.<sup>7</sup> Yücel Güçlü offers a significant quantity of data on the French army's withdrawal and the emigration of Armenians, but no definitive conclusions, and this a prudent choice since he uses so little French sources for this part of his book.<sup>8</sup>

The most detailed scholarly analysis of the reasons for the flow of Armenian refugees is the one of Dzovinar Kévonian.<sup>9</sup> However, if Dr. Kévonian presents arguments in favor of a different thesis before concluding, and if she avoids the pathos and the polemical tone too frequently present in the writings of Armenian scholars, her development of this precise point is not the most convincing part in her book and cannot be regarded as the last word on the subject, as it will be seen below.

In short, the explanations for the quick movement of refugees from Cilicia to Syria and Lebanon can be classified as follows:

- The Kemalists, or both French and Kemalists, were chiefly responsible;
- Most of the refugees were driven by a virtually inevitable movement of panic;
- The Armenian committees were mainly responsible, possibly with foreign complicities.

This paper analyzes these various explanations.

## **Background (1862-1920)**

### *The Armenian Revolutionary Movement and Rebellions (1862-1918)*

The most famous place of Armenian revolutionary activities in the Ottoman Empire was Van,<sup>10</sup> but the Armenian revolutionaries were also very active in Cilicia and its vicinity. The first really nationalist Armenian insurrection took place in Zeytun in 1862.<sup>11</sup> There was another uprising in 1878,<sup>12</sup> and

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7 Stanford J. Shaw, "The Armenian Legion and its Destruction of the Armenian Community of Cilicia," in Türkkaya Ataöv (ed.), *The Armenians in the Late Ottoman Period*, Ankara: TTK/TBMM, 2001, pp. 158-164.

8 Yücel Güçlü, *Armenians and the Allies in Cilicia. 1914-1923*, Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press, 2010.

9 Dzovinar Kévonian, *Réfugiés et diplomatie humanitaire*, Paris, Publications de la Sorbonne, 2004.

10 Justin McCarthy and alii, *The Armenian Rebellion at Van*, Salt Lake City, University of Utah Press, 2006.

11 Louise Nalbandian, *The Armenian Revolutionary Movement*, Berkeley-Los Angeles-London, University of California Press, 1963, pp. 67-78.

12 Yusuf Sarıncay (ed.), *Osmanlı Belgelerinde Ermeni İsyanları*, Ankara, 2008, volume I, pp. 3-14.

again in 1895-96. Despite the numerous crimes of the insurgents, there were no counter-massacres against Armenians in Zeytun in 1895-96.<sup>13</sup>

A letter of the common secretariat of the London and Marseille committees to the Armenian archbishop of Adana, on August 9, 1892, explained in advance the strategy of the revolutionaries: to use “hypocrisy,” and when the right time would come, to destroy the telegraph lines, to “kill the high civil servants,” to “spoil the Public Treasury,” and to take the weapons of military depots.<sup>14</sup> As early as 1890s, Armenian revolutionaries, especially the Hunchak party, deployed intense activities in the Çukurova plains.<sup>15</sup>

Regardless, as Robert F. Zeidner remarks:

*On the other hand, it was thanks to prompt action of local Turkish authorities, so often maligned for incompetence, corruption and bad faith by Western travelers and diplomats, that Cilicia proper and Elazig-Harput were spared from slaughter during the massacres of 1894-1896. During the episode of April 1909, Mersin and areas outside Cilicia proper were similarly spared, with the one notable exception of Latakia on the northern Syrian coast.<sup>16</sup>*

The “episode of April 1909” was more a violent, bloody, interethnic conflict (around 17,000 Armenians and 1,850 Muslims, mostly Turks, were killed) rather than an unprovoked and one-sided massacre.<sup>17</sup>

In continuity with the revolutionary activities of the previous years and decades, the Armenian committees organized uprisings in Zeytun and Cilicia, with the hope of obtaining an Anglo-French landing. These projects eventually failed, with London and Paris preferring to focus on the Dardanelles (Çanakale) operation.<sup>18</sup>

13 Aghassi (Garabet Toursakissian), *Zeitoun, depuis les origines jusqu'à l'insurrection de 1895*, Paris, Mercure de France, 1897, pp. 193 and sqq. (reference to the massacres of Turks p. 289); Kamuran Gürün, *The Armenian File. The Myth of Innocence Exposed*, Istanbul, Türkiye İş Bankası, 2007 (1st edition in English, Nicosia-London, 1985, 1st edition in Turkish, Ankara, 1983) pp. 191-196; Jeremy Salt, *Imperialism, Evangelism and the Ottoman Armenians. 1878-1896*, London-Portland: Frank Cass, 1993, pp. 105-106.

14 Yusuf Sarıncay (ed.), *Osmanlı Belgelerinde Ermeni-Fransız İlişileri*, Ankara, 2002, volume I, 1879-1918, pp. 19-22 (Turkish version) and 294-299 (French version), <http://www.devletarsivleri.gov.tr/Forms/belge/993/8.PDF><http://www.devletarsivleri.gov.tr/Forms/resim/993/8.PDF>

15 Yücel Güçlü, *Armenians and the Allies...*, pp. 38-39.

16 Robert F. Zeidner, *The Tricolor...*, p. 45.

17 Nejla Günay, “1909 Adana Olaylarının Maraş'taki Yansımaları ve Maraş Divan-ı Harbi Orfisinin Yargılamaları,” *Ermeni Araştırmaları*, 29, 2008, pp. 87-118; Kamuran Gürün, *The Armenian File*, pp. 212-217; Yücel Güçlü, *Armenians and the Allies...*, pp. 39-50; Salâhi R. Sonyel, “The Turco-Armenian ‘Adana Incidents’ in the Light of British Secret Documents,” *Belleten*, LI, December 1987, pp. 1291-1338, [http://www.ttk.org.tr/templates/resimler/File/fulltext/Belleten\\_Makale/bel201-1291\\_1338.pdf](http://www.ttk.org.tr/templates/resimler/File/fulltext/Belleten_Makale/bel201-1291_1338.pdf)

18 Edward J. Erickson, “Captain Larkin and the Turks: The Strategic Impact of the Operations of HMS Doris in Early 1915,” *Middle Eastern Studies*, XLVI-1, January 2010, pp. 151-162, <http://www.ic->

However, Guenter Lewy observes: “in the absence of a large Kurdish population, no massacre took place in Cilicia, and a substantial part of the Armenian exiles sent to southern Syria and Palestine survived.” A part of Adana’s Armenians escaped the forced displacement, as well as most of the Armenians of Maraş. Another 6,000 of the Armenians of Urfa were allowed to come back as early as 1917.<sup>19</sup> “Elizabeth Webb, who had been teaching in Adana since 1886, testified as an eyewitness that the Armenians exiled from the Adana district fared much better than most others in the Ottoman Empire.”<sup>20</sup> Even Arnold Toynbee conceded, in the Blue Book, that “the respectable Moslem townspeople seldom desired the extermination of their Armenian neighbors, sometimes openly deplored it, and in several instances even set themselves to hinder it from taking effect. We have evidence of this from various places,” especially in Cilicia.<sup>21</sup> In 1922, Toynbee came forward, concluding that “During the deportation of the Armenians in 1915, the Turkish civil population displayed more human feeling in Cilicia (as far as the evidence goes) than in any other province.”<sup>22</sup>

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### *Armenian War Crimes, 1918-1920*

Several French officials, including Jules Hamelin and Robert de Caix, opposed the use of the Armenian legionnaires in Anatolia.<sup>23</sup> Perhaps they were aware of the serious problems of discipline during the previous months.<sup>24</sup>

Even before the arrival of the Légion d’Orient in Cilicia, several of its

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[america.org/media/Ericson\\_LarkinandtheTurks.pdf](http://america.org/media/Ericson_LarkinandtheTurks.pdf); Yücel Güçlü, *Armenians and the Allies...*, pp. 51-77; Yusuf Halaçoğlu, *Facts on the Relocation of Armenians (1914-1918)*, Ankara: TTK, 2002, pp. 47-48 and 58-60; Guenter Lewy, *The Armenian Massacres...*, pp. 103-106; Salâhi R. Sonyel, *Minorities and the Destruction of the Ottoman Empire*, Ankara: TTK, 1993, pp. 402-405 and 410-412.

19 Guenter Lewy, *The Armenian Massacres...*, pp. 186-187, 202-203, 218-220 and 252 (quotation p. 252).

20 Yücel Güçlü, *Armenians and the Allies...*, p. 82.

21 *The Treatment of Armenians in the Ottoman Empire*, London-New York-Toronto: Hodder & Stoughton, 1916, p. 652.

22 Arnold J. Toynbee, *The Western Question in Greece and Turkey*, London-Bombay-Sidney: Constable & C<sup>o</sup>, 1922, p. 312, n. 1, <http://www.archive.org/download/cu31924027921778/cu31924027921778.pdf> See also Yücel Güçlü, *The Holocaust and the Armenian Case in Comparative Perspective*, Lanham-Boulder-New York-Toronto-Plymouth, University Press of America, 2012, pp. 68-79.

23 Dzovinar Kévonian, *Réfugiés et diplomatie...*, p. 58.

24 Punitions, juillet 1917-février 1919, SHDN, 4 H 34, dossier 1 ; SHDN, 4 H 34, dossier 2, « Mutinerie au camp des réfugiés du Djébel Moussa ».

members committed serious crimes. The exactions against Muslims of Syria are the main reasons for the forward advance toward Anatolia and the separation between the Armenian Legion and the Syrian Legion, as early as November 1918.<sup>25</sup> The crimes continued during the last weeks of 1918 and the beginning of 1919.<sup>26</sup> In February, the 4<sup>th</sup> battalion of the Armenian Legion attacked *without provocation* the Muslims, including North African soldiers of the French army, burned two houses, plundered several shops and had to be disarmed under the threats of the “cannons and machineguns” of the French Navy.<sup>27</sup> As a result, the battalion was dissolved: About fifty Armenians were sent to martial-courts, 400 to a disciplinary battalion in Egypt, and the 400 remaining, who were “non-suspect,” were dispatched to other units.<sup>28</sup> This solution (to simply just fire legionnaires) was increasingly used during 1919, since the ordinary punishments were not sufficient to stop their violence.<sup>29</sup>

As a result, the Armenian Legion was reduced during 1919 to a “small unit,” and the French authorities stressed, as early as November 1919, that its presence has “no political character.”<sup>30</sup> Regardless, the remaining legionnaires continued to raise more and more disciplinary problems<sup>31</sup>—problems which are conveniently erased in the account published in 1921 by Colonel Édouard Brémont, probably less because of his staunchly pro-Armenian stance than to show a better image of himself after he was recalled in France, in September 1920.<sup>32</sup> As a result of this chronic and criminal indiscipline, the French government decided to simply dissolve the Armenian Legion itself, in June-July 1920<sup>33</sup> (the dissolution was completely effective in September).

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25 Télégramme du général Hamelin au ministre de la Guerre et au ministre des Affaires étrangères, 2 février 1919, AMAE, P 1426 ; Robert F. Zeidner, *The Tricolor over...*, p. 70.

26 Lettre du général Hamelin au ministre de la guerre, 15 février 1919, AMAE, P 1426 (annexe) ; Gustave Gautherot, *La France en Syrie et en Cilicie*, Courbevoie : Librairie indépendante, 1920, pp. 148-150 ; Robert F. Zeidner, *The Tricolor over...*, pp. 78-79.

27 Télégrammes de l’amiral Cassard au ministre de la Marine, 18 février et 1er mars 1919 ; télégramme de François Georges-Picot au ministère des Affaires étrangères, 19 février 1919 ; télégrammes chiffrés du général Gouraud au ministère des Affaires étrangères, 23 et 26 février 1919, AMAE, P 1426 ; Gustave Gautherot, *La France en...*, pp. 153-157 ; Robert F. Zeidner, *The Tricolor...*, p. 80.

28 Télégramme chiffré du général Hamelin au ministère de la Guerre, 6 mars 1919, AMAE, P 1426 ; Robert F. Zeidner, *The Tricolor over...*, pp. 78-83.

29 Gustave Gautherot, *La France en...*, p. 148. Seealso Général Hamelin au ministre de la Guerre, 27 juin 1919, AMAE, P 16672.

30 Le ministre des Affaires étrangères au représentant français à Izmir, 15 novembre 1919, AMAE, P 17784.

31 Rapport du capitaine Josse, 20 avril 1920 ; Avis du général Dufieux n° 3382/1, 27 avril 1920, SHDN, 4 H 42, dossier 6 ; Maxime Bergès, *La Colonne de Marach et quelques autres récits de l’armée du Levant*, Paris, La Renaissance du livre, 1924, pp. 56, 81-82, 89 et 142-143.

32 Édouard Brémont, *La Cilicie en 1919-1920*, Paris, Imprimerie nationale, 1921. Regardless, Brémont’s account contains interesting parts; some of them are used in this article.

33 Lettre du ministre de la Guerre au ministre des Affaires étrangères, 20 mai 1920 ; réponse du ministre des Affaires étrangères, 18 juin ; ministre de la Guerre au ministre des Affaires étrangères, 12 juillet, AMAE, P 1426.

It was not yet sufficient. The French authorities had to dissolve new groups of volunteers, which provoked more complaints (because of burnings, massacres, and other violence) than congratulations for their military capacities.<sup>34</sup> Even more seriously, in July 1920, various Armenians of Adana committed “every day isolated murders [and] pillages,” threatening to kill the Turks and the Arabs, expelling them from the city; eventually, Armenian arsonists set fire to the city, in several places.<sup>35</sup> As a result, under the orders of Colonel Brémont, six Christians (five Armenians and one Assyrian) were sentenced to death and hanged.<sup>36</sup>

General Gouraud, High Commissioner in Beirut, summarized the situation as follows, in a note of November 25, 1920:

*Previously arms had been indeed distributed to the Armenians, either to defend their villages or so that they could form auxiliary units attached to the French columns operating in Cilicia. In each instance, the Armenians have taken advantage of this retreat to treat the Turks exactly as the Armenians claim they have themselves been treated, looting and burning villages and massacring unarmed Muslims.*<sup>37</sup>

This violence was far from being spontaneous. The consensus of the French officers and observers was that the Armenian committees, especially the Ramkavar party and its affiliated groups, like the Union nationale arménienne, incited both Armenian legionnaires and civilians against Turks, and even created an underground hierarchy against the one of the French army.<sup>38</sup> The implication of Armenian committees in the troubles and war crimes is corroborated by the numerous letters seized by the French army, “preaching rebellion” (especially the letters sent by the Ramkavar committee of Cairo) and more generally the anti-French propaganda of

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34 Rapport du général Gouraud à Alexandre Millerand, 21 juillet 1920, AMAE, P 16674 ; Paul Bernard, *Six mois en*, pp. 91-92 ; Édouard Brémont, *La Cilicie en...*, p. 67 ; Rapport hebdomadaire, 22-29 septembre 1920, SHDN, 4 H 58, dossier 2.

35 Paul Bernard, *Six mois en Cilicie*, Aix-en-Provence, Éditions du Feu, 1929, pp. 59-78 (quotation pp. 59-60) ; Robert F. Zeidner, *The Tricolor Over...*, p. 250. For a Turkish first-hand account : AbdülğaniGirici, *Adana Ermeni Mezalimi Hatıraları*, Ankara, TTK, 2011.

36 Édouard Brémont, *La Cilicie en...*, p. 62 ; Paul Bernard, *Six mois en...*, pp. 63, 71-72 et 85.

37 Justin McCarthy, *Death and Exile. The Ethnic Cleansing of Ottoman Muslims, 1821-1922*, Princeton: Darwin Press, 1995, p. 207. The behavior of the Armenian Legion was not very different of the one of other Armenian volunteers units in this period: Maxime Gauin, “The Convergent Analysis of Russian, British, French and American Officials Regarding the Armenian Volunteers (1914-1922).” *International Review of Turkish Studies*, 1.4, Winter 2011-2012, pp. 18-34, <http://armenians-1915.blogspot.com/2012/03/3341-convergent-analysis-of-russian.html>

38 SHDN, 4 H 42, dossier 6 (documents too numerous to be all mentioned here); Général Hamelin au ministre de la Guerre, 27 juin 1919, AMAE, P 16672; Gustave Gautherot, *La France en...*, pp. 135-136 ; Roger de Gontaut-Biron, *Comment la France s'est installée en Syrie (1918-1919)*, Paris : Plon, 1922, pp. 54-55, <http://www.archive.org/download/commentlafrances00gontuoft/commentlafrances00gontuoft.pdf>

1919-1920, caused by the repression of the offenses perpetrated by Armenians.<sup>39</sup>

### “Armenian Propaganda Service” at Work (1920-1921)

#### *Armenian Nationalist Propaganda: Allegations of “Massacres”*

On January 9, 1920, British Member of Parliament Ancurin Williams asked, in a letter, what the government of His Majesty wanted to do against the threats of “massacres” of Armenians by Kemalists. On January 14, W. S. Edmonds of the Eastern Department of the Foreign Office dismissed the claims: “The Armenians have naturally been full of the most alarmist rumors, but this particularly one is probably meant to influence Paris.”<sup>40</sup> It does not seem that the French authorities of Beirut, İstanbul, and Paris took these kinds of allegations seriously. After having received a copy of a new protest of the Armenian religious leaders against “massacres,” General Gouraud replied that “the attitude of the Armenians hardly justifies” this protest: Quite the contrary, Armenians “burned Turkish villages” and killed Turkish civilians in Gaziantep, using the building of an American Protestant mission for this purpose.<sup>41</sup>

This is not an isolated case. In a report of June 25, 1920, Commander Labonne, chief of the French army’s intelligence service in Turkey from 1918 to 1920, wrote that “nowhere [in the Kemalists-dominated regions] is the Christian population threatened.”<sup>42</sup> It can be incidentally noted that Labonne did not like the Kemalists, and that the Kemalists did not like him.<sup>43</sup>

Correspondingly, the intelligence service of the French Navy warned several times Paris against the “Armeno-Greek provocations”, especially the “so-called massacres in Cilicia” of March 1920, “at least very exaggerated”.<sup>44</sup> After a careful verification, U.S. Admiral Bristol, High

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39 Télégramme de l’amiral Cassard au ministre de la Marine, 10 mars 1919, AMAE, P 1426 ; Année 1919 — Dossier relatif à l’influence des comités arméniens [et] aux réclamations et mauvais esprit des légionnaires, SHDN, 4 H 42, dossier 6 ; *Les Armées françaises au Levant*, tome I, Vincennes : Service historique de l’armée de terre, 1979, p. 123 ; Télégramme du général Gouraud au ministère des Affaires étrangères, 23 octobre 1920 ; télégramme du consul Laporte au ministère, 3 novembre 1920 ; télégramme de Robert de Caix au ministère, 13 décembre 1920 ; télégramme de Gaillard au ministère, 14 décembre 1920, AMAE, P 16674.

40 Salâhi R. Sonyel, “How Armenian Propaganda Nurtured a Gullible Christian World In Connection With the Deportation and ‘Massacres,’” *Belleten*, January 1977, p. 167.

41 Télégramme du général Gouraud au ministre des Affaires étrangères, 23 avril 1920, AMAE, P 17784.

42 SHDN, 7 N 3210, dossier 2. See also « Le mouvement nationaliste » (1919), 7 N 3210, dossier 1.

43 Rapport du général Franchet d’Esperey au ministre de la Guerre, 28 juin 1920, SHDN, 7 N 3210.

44 Lieutenant de Vaisseau Rollin, chef du S.R. Marine, 19 octobre 1920, AMAE, P 16674.



Commissioner in İstanbul—who was not “pro-Turkish,” at least at that time—also came to the conclusion about the allegations that the rumors propagated by some Armenians on “massacres” by Kemalists in Kars during and after the capture of this city were baseless.<sup>45</sup>

Not only did the Kemalist command avoid ordering any “massacre,” but they also attempted to gain the support of Armenians in Cilicia and its vicinity.<sup>46</sup> Even the irregulars, in general, “do not molest the peasants who rally them, even if Christians,” and the difference in treatment being given was based on political stances, not religion or ethnicity—with the “avowed aim to associate Christians and Muslims in a common effort to expel the aliens [the French troops].”<sup>47</sup> In this perspective, it is absolutely remarkable that Talat Pasha himself recommended to Kemal the reconciliation with “all the Armenians”.<sup>48</sup>

*In this perspective, it is absolutely remarkable that Talat Pasha himself recommended to Kemal the reconciliation with “all the Armenians”.*

All these facts deny the poorly substantiated allegations of Levon Marashlian, who for instance relies only, for the end of 1921, on an anonymous “French” report forwarded by the Armenian delegation. The very existence of the author cannot even be proven.<sup>49</sup>

Similarly, it is simple to show his ignorance and his bias to allege, like Mr. Bloxham, who relies for his affirmation only on Brémond—or more precisely one of the less convincing pages of Brémond’s book—that

*The level of violence thus encouraged or permitted by the legionnaires, if not directly perpetrated by them, can only be a matter of speculation [sic], but the nature and scale of the other incidents are by no means remarkable, given the wartime experiences of the Armenians in the Legion and attacks on individual legionnaires, and given too that assaults by Muslim irregulars on the Christian population had continued right up to the armistice and beyond.<sup>50</sup>*

45 Heath Lowry, “American Observers in Anatolia circa 1920: The Bristol Papers,” in *Armenians in the Late Ottoman Empire and Turkish Republic (1912-1926)*, İstanbul, 1984, pp. 42-58, <http://www.tallarmeniantale.com/BristolPapers.htm>

46 Rapport hebdomadaire, 9-15 mars 1920, SHDN, 4 H 58, dossier 1.

47 Rapport hebdomadaire, 16-22 mars 1920, SHDN, 4 H 58, dossier 1.

48 Fiche n° 4.389/2, 7 juillet 1920, SHDN, 7 N 3210, dossier 3, sous-dossier 5.

49 Levon Marashlian, “Finishing the Genocide,” in Richard G. Hovannisian (ed.), *Remembrance and Denial. The Case of the Armenian Genocide*, Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1999, pp. 122-124 (reference to the spurious “report” p. 124).

50 Donald Bloxham, *The Great Game...*, p. 152.

*Repeated Blackmail to Secure an Occupation of Cilicia (1920-1921)*

The decision of the San Remo conference, confirmed by the Sèvres treaty, to leave most of Cilicia to Turks did not please the Armenian committees. They quickly reacted.

In the beginning of July 1920, Zabel Essayan, a representative of the Delegation of Integral Armenia,<sup>51</sup> visited Albert Defrance, the High Commissioner in Istanbul. She stated very frankly that “the Armenians must provoke troubles and incidents with the Muslims, to force the French to remain or to intervene.” In addition, Defrance learnt that “the Armenian notabilities of Smyrna contributed 100,000 liras to support or create fighting organizations, with the goal to provoke troubles and to force the French to intervene.”<sup>52</sup> This is corroborated by a report of the military intelligence service in Cilicia, explaining that an Armenian volunteer unit created in July 1920, which also included recruits from America and İzmir, was dissolved as early as September because of the threat which this unit represented to the security of the local inhabitants.<sup>53</sup> Similarly, in commenting on the general attack of Armenians against Muslims in Adana, in July 1920, Paul Bernard wrote that “there is certainly an intrigue of the Armenians to force our hand in the Peace Conference, and in any case, to remain the masters of the city.”<sup>54</sup>

There were other attempts to prevent, as early as 1920, any restitution of Cilicia to the Turks. On August 5, 1920, Mihran Damadian, the accredited representative in Cilicia of the Delegation of Integral Armenia, the four Armenian parties present in this region, as well as the chief of the three Armenian religious communities, proclaimed an “Armenian Republic of Cilicia.” In less than one hour, Colonel Brémont stopped by force what he called in his book a “ridicule comedy” and a “lamentable manifestation,” orchestrated by “delinquents.”<sup>55</sup> In September, a new Armenian Republic of Cilicia was proclaimed by the revolutionary parties. The “army” (around 400 men) of this “republic” was encircled by the French troops and immediately surrounded. The political leaders were deported out of Cilicia.<sup>56</sup>

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51 İbrahim Ethem Atnur, *Türkiye’de Ermeni Kadınlar ve Çocukları Meselesi (1915-1923)*, Ankara, Babil, 2005, p. 266.

52 Télégramme d’Albert de France au ministère des Affaires étrangères, 4 juillet 1920, AMAE, P 16674.

53 Rapport hebdomadaire, 22-29 septembre 1920, SHDN, 4 H 58, dossier 2.

54 Paul Bernard, *Six mois en...*, pp. 59-60.

55 Paul Bernard, *Six mois en...*, pp. 87-89 ; Édouard Brémont, *La Cilicie en...*, pp. 66-67.

56 Paul Bernard, *Six mois en...*, pp. 107-108 ; Rapport hebdomadaire, 22-29 septembre 1920, SHDN, 4 H 58, dossier 2.

The paradoxical fight of the Armenian nationalists against the Sèvres treaty, or more exactly its clauses regarding Cilicia, continued in Fall 1920. D. G. Osborne of the Eastern Department of the Foreign Office wrote in November that:

*This [agitation in Cilicia] is, no doubt, quite true and fully accords with the Dashnak propaganda methods. Thus Hadjin falls at the psychological moment and exaggerated reports of massacres are inserted in the press of the whole world thanks to the highly developed Armenian propaganda service.<sup>57</sup>*

Not surprisingly, there was a new wave of Armenian agitation against the first agreement signed between the Kemalists and France, in London, March 1921 (it was finally not ratified, Kemal Atatürk being dissatisfied, but in practice it became the first version of the Ankara agreement). The Ligue internationale philarménienne wrote to the League of Nations on June 20, 1921, not only to ask for a Wilsonian Armenia, but also to advocate the maintenance of the French troops in Cilicia.<sup>58</sup> Daring to use as arguments the “services which they [the Armenians] provided to the French army in 1920-1921” and the fears of “extermination” (it is not difficult to guess what the reaction in the Quai d’Orsay was), the Armenian Gregorian Patriarchate, the Armenian Catholic Patriarchate, and the Armenian Protestant community wrote to the French authorities to express their opposition to the London agreement of March 1921.<sup>59</sup>

Gabriel Noradounkian, interim president of the Délégation nationale arménienne (DNA), asserted in summer 1921 that the evacuation of Cilicia by the French army “would have the effect to obligate the 150,000 Christians of Cilicia, who currently form the majority [sic] to leave or to remain with a great anguish and under a permanent threat.”<sup>60</sup> This document shows that the DNA did not even pay attention to the counter-productive effect its propaganda may have had on the likelihood of others believing it: The Christians were in fact a minority in Cilicia, and the French authorities knew that. : The Christians were in fact a minority in Cilicia, and the French authorities knew that.<sup>61</sup> This letter of blackmail is also important in understanding the responsibilities of the DNA in the final flow of Armenian refugees, which is discussed in detail below. For the moment, let’s simply note that it is hardly imaginable that the DNA was

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57 Salâhi R. Sonyel, “How Armenian Propaganda...”, p. 168.

58 Lettre de la Ligue internationale philarménienne au secrétaire général de la Société des nations, 20 juin 1921, AMAE, P 16676.

59 Lettre du général Pellé à Aristide Briand, 22 juillet 1921, AMAE, P 16676.

60 Lettre de Gabriel Noradounkian à Aristide Briand, 1921, 9 août 1921, AMAE, P 16676.

61 Rapport de Georges-Picot, 2 janvier 1919, AMAE, P 17784 ; Rapport du colonel Mougin, 8 décembre 1919, SHDN, 7 N 3120, dossier 1 ; Bulletin périodique n° 39, 5 décembre-5 janvier 1922, SHDN, 4 H 59, dossier 1.

less alarmist in speaking with the Armenians of Cilicia than in its letter to the French government. It is even harder to imagine that when considering how the legend of the “Turkish barbarian” is a recurrent, central dimension of Armenian nationalist propaganda, and has been since its origins.<sup>62</sup> This propaganda is full of affirmations like:

*The Turk is not a member of the best human race—the Indo-European or Aryan, like the Armenians. The Turk does not even belong to the next best races, the Semitic, like the Jews and the Arabs. He is a branch of the Mongolian race, and, as such, incapable of assimilating complex ideas and higher forms of civilization.*

*The mental inferiority of the Turk, unfortunately matched with a religion of a very low order, has made him what he is, worse than savages.*<sup>63</sup>

And:

*One need only turn the pages of his history—a veritable chamber of horrors—to convince oneself that massacre, outrage, and devastation have always been congenial to the Turk.*<sup>64</sup>

Such quotations cannot be attributed to only isolated extremists: the Dashnak ideologue Mikael Varandian,<sup>65</sup> as well as the Dashnak and Ramkavar delegations to the peace conferences, assumed an openly racist, and even “Aryan,” perspective.<sup>66</sup>

As a result, it does not make any sense to allege that the whole movement of Armenian refugees after the Ankara agreement was due to supposedly weaker guarantees in this text than in the Sèvres treaty and in the first draft of the agreement signed in London, in March 1921.<sup>67</sup> Regardless, these guarantees will now be examined.

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62 Justin McCarthy, *The Turk in America. The Creation of an Enduring Prejudice*, Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press, 2010.

63 Augustus W. Williams and Mgrditch Simbad Gabriel, *Bleeding Armenia: Its History and Horrors*, Chicago, Publishers' Union, 1896, p. 425.

64 Avetoon Pesak Hacobian, *Armenia and the War*, New York: G. Doran & C<sup>o</sup>, ca 1917-1918, pp. 38-39. See also pp. 44-47 and 56-61.

65 Mikael Varandian, *L'Arménie et la question arménienne*, Laval: G. Kavanagh & Cie, 1917, pp. 23-30.

66 Lettre de la Délégation de la République arménienne à Raymond Poincaré, 9 février 1922, AMAE, P 16676 ; Aide-mémoire des Délégations arméniennes réunies aux Puissances, 20 décembre 1922, AMAE, P 16677. See also Compte-rendu de la visite d'Avétis Aharonian à M. de Peretti, 28 mars 1922, AMAE, P 16676. For the posterity of the “Aryan race” obsession in the 1920s: Jordi Tejel Gorgas, *Le Mouvement kurde de Turquie en exil : continuités et discontinuités du nationalisme kurde sous le mandat français en Syrie et au Liban (1925-1946)*, Berne : Peter Lang, 2007, pp. 227-228.

67 Such misleading allegations are typified by Michel Paillarès, *Le Kémalisme devant les Alliés*, Paris-Istanbul, éditions du Bosphore, 1922, pp. 382-386.

## The Franco-Kemalist Efforts and Guarantees

Even the catholicos of Cilicia acknowledged that there were no Kemalist attempts to expel Armenians, quite the contrary:

*The Kemalists hardly expected this big movement of emigration. Immediately, they did their best to stop it. They wrote from Pozanti, and by their agents, they expressed their desire to have a meeting with the leaders of the Christian communities.*<sup>68</sup>

Indeed, as reported the intelligence service of the French army, “the Turks understood quite well that this mass emigration could become an economic disaster for Cilicia.”<sup>69</sup>

As early as the beginning of November, both General Gouraud and Kemal Atatürk diffused public statements to relieve the Christian populations, stressing the amnesty, the legal equality, and the punishment of any violation of the Ankara agreement; it is the interest of the Turkish authorities, explained Gouraud, to maintain order.<sup>70</sup> As explained by a military report, a mass emigration of Christians “cannot be admitted by the French authorities.”<sup>71</sup> Several times, the local French authorities reiterated their efforts, and the official reports clearly show that the situation was “quiet” without “incident”: There was no Turkish provocation; quite the contrary, the Catholic Church of Adana was inaugurated in November 1921, in the presence of Admiral Grandclément, representing the High Commissioner in Beirut, and the Turkish authorities always cooperated with the French ones to give a feeling of safety.<sup>72</sup>

*As early as the beginning of November, both General Gouraud and Kemal Atatürk diffused public statements to relieve the Christian populations, stressing the amnesty, the legal equality, and the punishment of any violation of the Ankara agreement.*

Then, H. Franklin-Bouillon, the chief negotiator, himself went to the Çukurova plain, and explained repeatedly, in full collaboration with the Turkish authorities, that:

68 Michel Paillarès, *Le Kémalisme devant...*, p. 381.

69 Bulletin périodique n° 39, 5 décembre 1921-5 janvier 1922, 4 H 59, dossier 1.

70 Bulletin périodique n° 36, 20 octobre-5 novembre 1921, 4 H 59, dossier 1 ; Yücel Güçlü, *Armenians and the...*, pp. 211-212.

71 Bulletin de renseignements n° 274, 3-5 novembre 1921, 4 H 61, dossier 3.

72 Bulletins de renseignements n° 279, 17-21 novembre 1921, and 280, 21-26 novembre 1921, 4 H 61, dossier 3 ; Rapport d'ensemble sur les opérations la commission d'évacuation, mars 1922, AMAE, P 17787.

- The laissez-passer signed by France allowed for departure, and also for return in Anatolia, in a timeframe of one year;
- The Turkish laws on military requisitions and military duty were postponed;
- The amnesty is full and all the questions would be solved by the joint commission (see below).

It was not until December 8 that Franklin-Bouillon lost any hope to stop and reverse the emigration movement.<sup>73</sup> He had some reasons to insist, since the promises which he gave were close to the demands presented in November 1921 by Catholic bishop Jean Naslian, “in the name of all the Armenian communities” (namely Gregorian, Catholic, and Protestant).<sup>74</sup> Indeed, the Christians feared “even more [than reprisals] the military duty”<sup>75</sup>: They were exempted from that for at least three months. In October 1921, “the Armenians of Maraş were not deported, but had to pay heavy taxes of [military duty’s] exemption.”<sup>76</sup> Risk did not exist for the Armenians of Cilicia and other territories evacuated by the French army.

Another guarantee given to the Christian population was the nomination of moderate civil servants, highly appreciated by the French authorities for their competence and their democratic ideas; the few administrators who did not please the French authorities were changed immediately after the demand of Franklin-Bouillon.<sup>77</sup> Similarly, the American missionary William Nesbit Chambers praised the military administrator Muhittin Paşa and the civil governor Hamit Bey.<sup>78</sup> Even the catholicos of Cilicia wrote that he personally knew Hamit Bey, “a good and loyal man” who, as a governor, never allowed any crime against the Christians.<sup>79</sup>

In such a context, the guarantee of the commissions for the properties of emigrants was very strong.

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73 Commandement supérieur, Levant — Journal des marches et des opérations, 22 novembre, pp. 456-457, 24 novembre, pp. 458-459, 28 novembre, p. 460, 8 décembre, p. 465, SHDN, 4 H 47, dossier 1 ; Yücel Güçlü, *Armenians and the Allies...*, pp. 213-216.

74 Télégramme du général Pellé au ministère des Affaires étrangères, AMAE, P 16676.

75 Bulletin périodique n° 36, 20 octobre-5 novembre 1921, SHDN, 4 H 59, dossier 1.

76 Bulletin de renseignements n° 271, 18-19 octobre 1921, SHDN, 4 H 61, dossier 3.

77 Bulletins de renseignements n° 284, 8-10 décembre 1921, and n° 286, 14-16 décembre 1921, SHDN, 4 H 61, dossier 3 ; Commandement supérieur, Levant — Journal des marches et des opérations, 14 décembre, p. 468, 18 décembre, p. 469, SHDN, 4 H 47, dossier 1 ; Télégramme chiffré de l'état-major à Beyrouth pour le ministère de la Guerre, 11 décembre 1921, AMAE, P 17786 ; Télégramme du consul général Laporte à Raymond Poincaré, 1er mars 1922 ; Robert de Caix à Raymond Poincaré, 5 mars 1922, AMAE, P 17787.

78 Yücel Güçlü, *Armenians and the...*, pp. 142-143.

79 Michel Paillarès, *Le Kémalisme devant...*, p. 385.

*A commission for the properties of emigrants was established in Adana on November 28. The head of this commission is the mayor and includes two French officers or civil servants, representing the joint commission of evacuation, the mudir of the police, [and] a Christian notability of every community, named by the chief of the community. The mission of this commission is the following:*

- a) *Identify the abandoned quarters, deny access to them, to ensure the conservation of the buildings;*
- b) *Safeguard the properties of the emigrants in the partially abandoned quarters;*
- c) *Concentrate the Christians in the central quarters of the city;*
- d) *Determinate by quarter and by community the present Christian population.*

*Police, gendarmerie, and, if the president of the commission asks for this, the military, helps the execution of the commission's mission.*

*Analogous commissions are organized for the protection of the emigrants' properties by the administrative controllers and counselors in their cities. The conservation of the emigrants' properties has a capital importance, since it can decide to return to Cilicia a part of the Christians who, by fear, left or want to leave Cilicia, which is again Turkish.<sup>80</sup>*

As a result, the Armenian committees practiced a systematic sabotage of these efforts, at least until December 1921, with the help of the Greek government.

### **The Armenian Nationalists' Policy and the Greek Complicity**

Several French documents clearly accuse Armenian committees of having provoked the Christian population to exile, by propaganda, and even by force. As early as October 1921, a "Cilician Union" was formed in Paris, and the third point of its program was to "make propaganda [...] in Cilicia, in France and other countries."<sup>81</sup>

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80 Bulletin de renseignements n° 285, 11-13 décembre 1921, SHDN, 4H 61, dossier 3.

81 Bulletin de renseignements n° 268, 9-12 octobre 1921, SHDN, 4 H 61, dossier 3.

The official diary of the High Command in the Near East observes that, according to General Bordeaux and Colonel Sarrou, the exodus “seems to have been organized in following an order (*semble avoir été organisé sur un mot d’ordre*).”<sup>82</sup> Franklin-Bouillon reported to the ministry of foreign affairs that he had “through the statements of the chiefs of the [Christian] communities, the evidence of the constant pressure and threats exerted by the agents of the [Armenian] committees.”<sup>83</sup> This is corroborated and made clear by the correspondent of *Le Temps* in Hatay who noted, at the end of December 1921, that

*Systematic propaganda continues to be exerted to maintain concerns, to obstruct the work of appeasement by the authorities, and to incite emigration. This action goes to prevent the Armenians, by the most serious threats, from joining the commissions established by the French authorities for the safeguarding of the properties owned by absent persons.*<sup>84</sup>

In considering the strong tradition of political assassinations and harassment by the Armenian Revolutionary Federation (especially active in the time of the Nemesis Operation) and the Hunchak Party,<sup>85</sup> this accusation is very credible. More particularly, inter-Armenian terror took place in Cilicia in September 1920; the same month, the house of the vali (governor) of Adana was damaged by explosives and two other houses were destroyed by incendiary bombs.<sup>86</sup>

82 Commandement supérieur, Levant — Journal des marches et des opérations, 22 novembre 1921, pp. 456-457.

83 Télégramme du consul général Laporte au ministère des Affaires étrangères, « De la part de M. Franklin-Bouillon, pour M. Briand », 6 décembre 1921, AMAE, P 17786.

84 « L’émigration des Arméniens », *Le Temps*, 30 décembre 1921, p. 2.

85 Louis Nettement, consul de France à Tiflis, L’Arménie. Notes de voyage, 6 octobre 1920, AMAE, P 16674 ; Directeur de la Sûreté générale au ministre de l’Intérieur et au ministre des Affaires étrangères, président du Conseil, 23 mai 1922, AMAE, P 16676; Hratch Dasnabedian, *The History of the Armenian Revolutionary Federation, 1890-1924*, Milan: Oemme, 1989, pp. 47-48, 62-63, 71 and 76-77; Jacques Derogy, *Opération Némésis*, Paris, Fayard, 1986 (English translation: *Resistance & Revenge: The Armenian Assassination of the Turkish Leaders Responsible for the 1915 Massacres and Deportations*, New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction, 1990); Kâmurân Gürin, *The Armenian File*, p. 188; H. M. Knadjian, *The Eternal Struggle*, Fresno: Republican Printing House, ca 1918, reprint 2010, pp. 13-30; Heath Lowry, “Nineteenth and Twentieth Century Armenian Terrorism: ‘Threads of Continuity’,” in *International Terrorism and the Drug Connection*, Ankara: Ankara University Press, 1984, pp. 71-83; Justin McCarthy and alii, *The Armenian Rebellion...*, pp. 90-91 and 110-115; Hasan Oktay, “On the Assassination of Van Mayor Kapamacıyan by the Tashnak Committee,” *Review of Armenian Studies*, 1-1, 2002, pp. 79-89, <http://www.eraren.org/index.php?Lisan=en&Page=Dergilcerik&IcerikNo=94> ; Louise Nalbandian, *The Armenian Revolutionary...*, pp. 110-114 and 171; Hikmet Özdemir, *Üç Jöntürkklü Ötümü: Talat, Cemal, Enver*, İstanbul, Remzi Kitabevi, 2007; Kapriel Seropé Papazian, *Patriotism Perverted*, Boston: Baïkar Press, 1934, pp. 13-18, 28, 32-37, 40-41 and 57-73; Rapport présenté au congrès socialiste international de Copenhague par le parti arménien « Dachanktzioutioun », Geneva, 1910, pp. 9 and 15-17; Arshavir Shirakian, *The Legacy: Memoirs of an Armenian Patriot*, Boston: Hairenik Press, 1976; “Claim Trust of Murder,” *The Lake County Time* (Chicago), July 24, 1907 ; “Assassin is Put to Death — Armenian Revolutionist Dies for the Murder of Countryman,” *The Fort Wayne Sentinel*, December 6, 1909.

86 Paul Bernard, *Six mois en...*, pp. 109-110 ; Édouard Brémond, *La Cilicie en...*



The intelligence service (SR) of the French army alleged that the Christians who left “obeyed the orders of the [Armenian] committees.”<sup>87</sup> In another report, the SR relied on the statements of the “moderate Christian milieu”: “The attitude of the American and English missions, of the chiefs of [Christian] communities, and of the Armenian bishop of Izmir, only encouraged emigration.”<sup>88</sup> *Le Temps* remarked that immediately after the alarmist appeal of the Armenian archbishop of Izmir, the Greek government sent three ships, without making any difference between the Greek citizens and the Ottoman citizens. The daily suspected the Greek comments to be motivated by the goal to create problems between Paris and London.<sup>89</sup>

On December 16, 1921, Aristide Briand, minister of foreign affairs and president of the ministers’ council, met Avetis Aharonian and Gabriel Noradounkian; he assumed the charges made by the French representatives:

*According to my information, the exodus of the Armenian population from Cilicia is largely the result of the zealous propaganda which unknown individuals and Gomidehs [committees] have made on the spot. For what earthly reason I do not know. But this propaganda is doubly embarrassing for France. On the one hand, the Armenians are fleeing from Cilicia, a fact which discredits France for having failed to give refugee Armenians the needed protection, and on the other hand, the refugees have found no other protector outside of France, and once again, we have been forced to give them asylum and to care for their needs. Now I ask you, how long shall this abnormal situation continue to last?*<sup>90</sup>

Using diplomatic language, Briand said “unknown individuals and committees,” but his question to the Armenian delegates clearly shows that he considered that they had at least a share of responsibility in the situation. Briand repeated these accusations in front of the Senate, on December 29.<sup>91</sup>

Even more seriously, Robert de Caix, general secretary of the high commissioner in the Levant, wrote in a report to Raymond Poincaré that Colonel Pettelat “prevented, by his strong and quick decisions, the Armenians of Dörtyol from committing violence, prepared in advance, with

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87 Bulletin périodique n° 39, 5 décembre 1921-5 janvier 1922, SHDN, 4 H 59, dossier 1.

88 Bulletin de renseignements n° 285, 11-13 décembre 1921, SHDN, 4H 61, dossier 3.

89 « La question des chrétiens de Cilicie », *Le Temps*, 18 novembre 1921, p. 2.

90 Avetis Aharonian, « From Sardarapat to Sèvres and Lausanne (A Political Diary) », quoted in Yücel Güçlü, *Armenians and the Allies...*, p. 151.

91 « Bulletin du jour — Qui fixe les paiements de l’Allemagne ? Vers la paix de l’Orient », *Le Temps*, 31 décembre 1921, p. 1.

the goal to prevent the withdrawal of our troops and to provoke new hostilities between us and the Turks.”<sup>92</sup> Similarly, the correspondent of *Le Temps* in Hatay explained that “the extremist elements wish that the conflict obligate the French troops to again occupy the region, and to lead to the rupture of the Ankara agreement.”<sup>93</sup> This cannot be considered a minor affair: The French army seized one machinegun, 2,000 rifles, and 300,000 cartridges.<sup>94</sup> Less serious, but not negligible, events took place elsewhere: On the night of December 18, Armenians of Gaziantep opened fire on a French patrol; other Armenians, in the same city and during the same evening, hurled empty bottles at soldiers of the colonial infantry, even after the soldiers had identified themselves.<sup>95</sup>

All these findings are in perfect accordance with the threats of Madame Essayan in July 1920. They are also in remarkable coherence with the diplomatic attempts to prevent the implementation of the Ankara agreement.<sup>96</sup> For instance, following the demands of the Armenian organizations, the Belgian government asked for the inscription of the Christian minorities issue on the agenda, including the maintaining of French troops in Cilicia, “wished by the Armenians.” The French reaction was: “We have the right to be surprised,” since the Belgian ambassador previously received a negative response to such a demand.<sup>97</sup> This intervention is in continuity with the attempts against the agreement of London, mentioned before.

At the end of December, the office of the military intelligence service in İstanbul alleged that the “propaganda activity” took place to “justify a British intervention” with a Greek complicity.<sup>98</sup> It is not possible to make a case, relying on this single document, against the British government itself, even in considering that this government was deeply discontent with the Ankara agreement<sup>99</sup> and that at least one British MP, T. P. O’Connor, assumed false rumors which alleged that the agreement included a clause to

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92 Robert de Caix à Raymond Poincaré, 5 mars 1922, AMAE, P 17787.

93 « L’émigration des Arméniens », *Le Temps*, 30 décembre 1921.

94 « Commandement supérieur, Levant — Journal des marches et des opérations, 1921 », 25 novembre, p. 459, 26 décembre, p. 473, 29 décembre, p. 474 ; SHDN, 4 H 47, dossier 1 ; Bulletin périodique n° 39, 5 décembre 1921-5 janvier 1922, SHDN, 4 H 59, dossier 1 ; Bulletin de renseignements n° 288, 21-24 décembre 1921, SHDN, 4 H 61, dossier 3.

95 « Commandement supérieur, Levant — Journal des marches et des opérations, 1921 », 18 décembre 1921, p. 459.

96 *Osmanlı Belgelerinde Ermeni-Fransiz...*, volume III, pp. 239-241 and 574-576,

<http://www.devletarsivleri.gov.tr/Forms/resim/995/104.PDF>

97 L’ambassadeur français à Bruxelles à Aristide Briand, 11 décembre 1921, AMAE, P 17786.

98 Dzovinar Kévonian, *Réfugiés et diplomatie...*, pp. 89-90.

99 « L’accord franco-turc », *Le Temps*, 4 novembre 1921, p. 1 ; « Bulletin du jour — L’Angleterre et l’accord franco-turc », *Le Temps*, 9 novembre 1921, p. 1 ; « Bulletin du jour — Une note britannique à la presse française », *Le Temps*, 13 novembre 1921, p. 1.

expel Christians were true, and as a result, openly advocated for actions against the implementation of the Franco-Turkish diplomatic text.<sup>100</sup> It is only safe to notice, however, that as late as 1923, a member of an Armenian nationalist organization, probably the ARF-Dashnak, proudly said to an Armenian working for the French intelligence service in Istanbul, that Armenian nationalists are working “with the English” against the Turks to create “if not an independent Kurdistan, at least a permanent foyer of potential agitation.”<sup>101</sup> In these conditions, and in considering that in 1921 the fanatic turcophobe David Lloyd George was still the Prime Minister of the UK, it is not an extrapolation to consider that Armenian and Greek nationalists could sincerely *believe* in the possibility of a British intervention—rightly or wrongly, that is irrelevant for this study.

Actually, it seems that archbishop Bedros Sarajian believed in this possibility, since in a telegraph to *The Times* (London), he “appealed to Britain, as the personification of justice [...] to permit the Armenians to find a home under a Christian flag where they might exist in peace.”<sup>102</sup> The mention of a “Christian flag” is additional proof of the fanaticism of the Armenian leadership, unable to accept any Turkish rule, in any condition. The appeal to Great Britain follows a long tradition to create trouble in Anatolia with the goal to provoke a British (or Russian) intervention.<sup>103</sup> Regardless, there was no “massacre” and the evacuation was carried out quietly.<sup>104</sup>

*The mention of a “Christian flag” is additional proof of the fanaticism of the Armenian leadership, unable to accept any Turkish rule, in any condition. The appeal to Great Britain follows a long tradition to create trouble in Anatolia with the goal to provoke a British (or Russian) intervention.*

The most scholarly contestation of this view was developed by Dzovinar Kévonian. However, despite the seriousness of Ms. Kévonian’s work, she fails to convince in this case. She asserts that the allegations against the Armenian organizations started “with the arrival of Franklin-Bouillon in Adana on November 23, and after the departure, the next day, of General

100 « L'accord d'Angora aux Communes », *Le Temps*, 12 novembre 1921, p. 2.

101 Rapport du général Pellé à Raymond Poincaré, 1er mai 1923, AMAE, P 16677.

102 Yücel Güçlü, *Armenians and the...*, p. 143.

103 Joseph L. Grabill, *Protestant Diplomacy and the Near East: Missionary Influence on American Policy, 1810-1927*, Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1971, p. 263; William L. Langer, *The Diplomacy of Imperialism. 1890-1902*, New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1960, pp. 150-160, 204-210 and 349-350; Guenter Lewy, *The Armenian Massacres...*, pp. 11-29; Kapriel Seropé Papazian, *Patriotism Perverted...*, pp. 21-23; G. Pasdermadjian, *Bank Ottoman: Memoirs of Armen Garo*, Detroit: Armen Topouzian, 1990.

104 Bulletin périodique n° 39, 5 décembre-5 janvier 1922, SHDN, 4 H 59, dossier 1; Rapport d'ensemble sur les opérations la commission d'évacuation, mars 1922, AMAE, P 17787; Yücel Güçlü, *Armenians and the...*, p. 152.

Dufieux”]; this was a kind of self-justification, against the accusations developed in London and Paris, against the French government.<sup>105</sup> However, as it was said before, the official diary of the French army noted an apparent “order” as early as November 22. *Le Temps* warned against the misuse of the question of Cilician Christians in America and the UK in its issue of November 19. And the accusation was not specifically French: Kemal Atatürk publicly denounced the “rumors” propagated against Turks.<sup>106</sup>

Even more strikingly, Ms. Kévonian herself quotes, on page 89 of her book, a military intelligence report dated November 5-20, 1921. So, this accusation actually emerged *before* the efforts of Franklin-Bouillon to maintain the Christian populations in place, and their final failure; as a result, such an accusation can hardly be dismissed as a simple self-justification by the French chief negotiator.

Dr. Kévonian presents an apparently stronger argument in quoting a letter sent by the Ramkavar-dominated Armenian National Delegation (DNA) to its representative in Beirut. Indeed, there is no kind of direct call for mass emigration in this letter. Dzovinar Kévonian concludes that the document refutes the accusations of Franklin-Bouillon. There are at least three big problems with this way of reasoning:

- a) At first, Ms. Kévonian assumes, without any evidence, that Franklin-Bouillon charged only the DNA for incitation to flee Cilicia. Quite the contrary, the plural form in his telegram of December 1921 (“the committees”) and the complete absence of precise references to the DNA show that Franklin-Bouillon did not specifically accuse this organization. As seen before, French documents also put the blame on Armenian religious leaders. As a result, even shaping the most irrefutable case for the innocence of the DNA would leave intact the question of whether other Armenian committees, especially the ARF, and Armenian churchmen were guilty or not of propaganda campaigns to provoke an unneeded exile of Cilician Christians.
- b) This letter was sent from Paris to Beirut. As explained before, the French authorities had lost their trust in the DNA and Ramkavar committee because of letters “preaching rebellion” sent as early as the first half of 1919. The “ridicule comedy” of August 5, 1920 did not improve the image of the Armenian organization in the eyes of the French administration. It is quite obvious that the DNA in Paris was

105 Dzovinar Kévonian, *Réfugiés et diplomatie...*, pp. 89-91.

106 « Dans le Proche-Orient — Proclamation de Moustapha Kemal », *Le Temps*, 13 décembre 1921, p. 2.

under the surveillance of the police (*Renseignements généraux*) and the office of Beirut under the surveillance of the military intelligence service. As a result, to send an explicit letter preaching propaganda, from Paris to Beirut, would have been the final suicide for the Ramkavars, who would have risked being simply expelled from the French territories. Even in 1919, the letters “preaching rebellion” were sent from Cairo, not Paris.

- c) Dr. Kévonian herself writes (p. 92) that the DNA wanted to concentrate Armenian immigrants around Hatay, “on both sides of the boundary, in the perspective of the constitution of a national home.” Since the Turkish side did not want an Armenian home in the Turkish territory,<sup>107</sup> how was it possible without preventing the full application of the Ankara agreement?<sup>108</sup> Dr. Kévonian continues in writing that this idea of the DNA for a national home could explain the “agitation” in Dörtyol—and we saw before that the goal of the agitators was to provoke a new Turko-French conflict.

### **Elements of Comparison: The Situation of the Armenians Who Remained in Turkey**

To conclude an evaluation of the causes of the Armenian refugee flow, it is necessary to see the immediate context of this emigration movement, i.e., to compare it with the situation of the Armenians who remained in Turkey.

The intelligence service of the French army, very sensitive to the difficulties of the Armenians, regardless acknowledged that “in the territories restituted to Turkey, the Christians suffered only small vexations, due to the fanaticism of few individuals,” a generally satisfactory situation prevailed because of “the high civil servants, particularly well chosen,” and who managed a “strict application” of the Ankara agreement. If “elsewhere” the situation may have been less good, it was because of bad local administrators and “despite the efforts of the central government.”<sup>109</sup> The calm in Adana province was confirmed in February 1922 by Julian Gillespie, U.S. assistant trade commissioner in İstanbul.<sup>110</sup>

There is concrete evidence of the determination of the Turkish authorities.

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107 Télégramme du général Pellé au ministère des Affaires étrangères, 31 octobre 1921, AMAE, P 16676.

108 On this impossibility: Courrier d'un diplomate français (non signé) à Paul Bargeton, membre de la délégation française à Lausanne, 4 janvier 1923, AMAE, P 16677.

109 Bulletin de renseignements n° 306, 10-12 février 1922, SHDN, 4 H 62, dossier 1.

110 Yücel Güçlü, *Armenians and the...*, p. 153.

In the end of January 1922, “a caravan, composed in majority by Armenians, coming from Maraş to Gaziantep, has been attacked en route by about sixty bandits, who robbed the travelers and took their weapons to two gendarmes of the escort”<sup>111</sup>—which means that the authorities provided an escort. About two weeks later, the chief of the gang was arrested, sentenced to death, and hanged.<sup>112</sup> Even for less serious affairs, the Turkish justice was without indulgence: In January 1922, “two Turks who had spanked an Armenian have been sentenced to three months in jail.”<sup>113</sup> A French Consul remained in Adana, and another in Gaziantep. When the one of Gaziantep raised concerns due to the temporary absence of the *mutessarif*, his protests were seriously listened to.<sup>114</sup> In addition to security measures, sheikh Senoussi “preach[ed] every Friday in the mosque the tolerance vis-à-vis the Christians and the obedience to the laws.”<sup>115</sup>

The comparison between Cilicia proper on one side, the region of Gaziantep on the other side is especially illuminating. The mutessarif of Gaziantep

*seems to have produced an excellent impression on the Christian population. He met on December 6 [1921] the religious leaders and the notabilities of the city, and assured them that he was ready to take strong measures against the Muslims who would try to threaten or commit reprisals against Christians. These affirmations apparently relieved the Armenians, who remain quiet and do not abandon their work.*<sup>116</sup>

In Gaziantep, there was no mass emigration, no general movement, but individual and familial emigration, mostly of Armenians who served the French; in March 1922, around 5,000 Armenians remained in this city.<sup>117</sup>

The reference to the Christians of Pontus, made by Dzonivar Kévonian and many others, is surely interesting in itself, but irrelevant for a direct comparison with Cilicia and vicinity: In Pontus, the Turkish authorities were confronted by an insurrectional movement, launched by separatist Greeks, with a nationalist Armenian complicity.<sup>118</sup>

More relevant is the Greek scorched earth policy in western Anatolia during

111 Bulletin de renseignements n° 300, 23-25 janvier 1922, SHDN, 4 H 62, dossier 1.

112 Bulletin de renseignements n° 304, 4-6 février 1922, SHDN, 4 H 62, dossier 1.

113 Bulletin de renseignements n° 295, 11-12 janvier 1922, SHDN, 4 H 62, dossier 1.

114 Télégramme du consul de France à Gaziantep, 22 mai 1922, AMAE, P 16676.

115 Bulletin de renseignements n° 298, 17-19 janvier 1922, SHDN, 4 H 62, dossier 1.

116 Bulletin de renseignements n° 284, 8-10 décembre 1921, 4 H 61, dossier 3.

117 Rapport d'ensemble sur les opérations la commission d'évacuation, mars 1922, AMAE, P 17787.

118 Turkish General Staff, *Romaic Activities in the Archive Documents. 1918-1922*, Ankara: ATASE, 2009; Justin

the retreat of summer 1922—a policy carried out with the complicity of Armenian extremists—and the systematic exile of Christians imposed by the *Greek* army.<sup>119</sup> Avétis Aharonian expressed very frankly the views of the Armenian Revolutionary Federation to the French administration, at the end of March 1922: “this is a death struggle which will continue between the Turkish people and the Armenian people.”<sup>120</sup> Not surprisingly, the ARF-Dashnak and the other Armenian nationalist parties were hostile to the Society of Turco-Armenian Friendship, created in 1923 by Berç Keresteciyan, general director of the Ottoman Bank (Keresteciyan was eventually deputy of Afyon from 1935 to 1946).<sup>121</sup>

## Conclusion

There was no “French betrayal” and no “Kemalist ethnic cleansing,” but a coherent, continuous policy of Christian nationalists to prevent, in Cilicia and elsewhere, the cohabitation of the communities in a post-Ottoman Turkey. The Kemalist leadership was not “happy to see tens of thousands of Armenians depart.” The myths regarding both the French and Kemalists were propagated with an obvious political agenda: to blackmail the Turks and to hide the responsibilities of the Armenian committees.

*There was no “French betrayal” and no “Kemalist ethnic cleansing,” but a coherent, continuous policy of Christian nationalists to prevent, in Cilicia and elsewhere, the cohabitation of the communities in a post-Ottoman Turkey.*

These heavy responsibilities exist in three timeframes:

- a) They created, before and during WWI, an inter-ethnic conflict for political reasons (the dream of “Greater” or “Integral Armenia”);
- b) They exacerbated the conflict in 1918-1920;
- c) They fiercely fought the projects to keep an important Christian population in Cilicia, and more generally in Turkey.

Further researches in other archives would provide more detailed

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McCarthy, *Death and Exile...*, pp. 287-289 and 325-326; Yusuf Sarımay, Hamit Pehlivanlı and Abdullah Saydam, *The Pontus Issue and the Policy of Greece*, Ankara: Atatürk Research Center, 2000; Salâhi R. Sonyel, *Minorities and the...*, pp. 346-348, 352-353, 359-367, 372-376, 421.

119 AMAE, P 1380 (documents too numerous to be all mentioned here); Rapport du général Gouraud à Raymond Poincaré, 19 août 1922, AMAE, P 16677.

120 Compte-rendu de la visite d’Avétis Aharonian à M. de Peretti, 28 mars 1922, AMAE, P 16676.

121 Rapports du général Pellé à Raymond Poincaré, 17 avril et 1er mai 1923, AMAE, P 16677.

information, but unfortunately, some of the most pertinent sources, namely the archives of the Armenian Revolutionary Federation and those of the Armenian Patriarchate, are closed to independent researchers, even Armenian ones.<sup>122</sup> The possibility remains, however, to work in the Boghos Nubar Library, in the British, U.S., and Turkish National Archives as well as in the Hoover Institution, and of course, to continue the work in the French archives.

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122 “Study the Armenian Genocide With Confidence, AraSarafian Suggests,” *The Armenian Reporter*, December 18, 2008. <http://www.reporter.am/go/article/2008-12-18-study-the-armenian-genocide-with-confidence-ara-sarafian-suggests>; Yücel Güçlü, “Will Untapped Ottoman Archives Reshape the Armenian Debate?,” *The Middle East Quarterly*, XVI-2, Spring 2009, pp. 25-42, <http://www.meforum.org/2114/ottoman-archives-reshape-armenian-debate>



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2. — LE TEMPS. — 30 décembre 1921.

### L'émigration des Arméniens

De notre correspondant d'Alexandrette :

Le départ des émigrants arméniens se poursuit très régulièrement, en même temps que le retrait des troupes françaises. Tandis qu'à Mersine les derniers réfugiés s'embarquent sur les navires venus de Syrie à Alexandrette, d'autres arrivent par chemin de fer, emportant avec eux leurs meubles et des matériaux de construction de toute sorte.

A Deartyol, un comité a tenté de se constituer, avec le concours des montagnards. Ce comité doit résister par la force à l'installation des autorités turques après le départ des troupes françaises. Les éléments extrêmes souhaitent que le conflit oblige les troupes françaises à réoccuper la région et conduise à une rupture de l'accord d'Angora. Les éléments raisonnables, beaucoup plus nombreux, craignant d'ailleurs d'intervention des brigands qui infestent les montagnes voisines, ont demandé aux autorités françaises de s'opposer à la réalisation de ce plan.

Une propagande systématique continue de s'exercer pour entretenir l'inquiétude, entraver l'œuvre d'apaisement des autorités et pousser à l'émigration. Cette action va jusqu'à interdire aux Arméniens, sous les menaces les plus graves, de faire partie des commissions organisées par les autorités françaises pour la sauvegarde des biens des absents.

