

# MKRTICH PORTUKALIAN AND THE “ARMENIA” JOURNAL (FROM TERRORISM TO SKEPTICAL MODESTY)

(MIGIRDİÇ PORTUKALYAN VE “ARMENIA” GAZETESİ  
(TERÖRİZMDEN ŞÜPHELİ BİR İLİMLİĞA))

Prof. Dr. Jean-Louis MATTEI

**Abstract:** *Mkrtich Portukalian is one of the most significant figures in the Armenian revolutionary movement, but there is a general lack of knowledge about his activities and work. This applies to the famous journal of “Armenia” published in Marseille from 1885 to 1923 by Portukalian in Armenian. In this paper, the period under research especially entails the years 1914, 1918, 1919, 1921, 1922 and 1923. We will try to convey Portukalian’s personality by referring to various sources. In the second and third section, we will address the “Armenia” journal by frequently reminding that the revolutionist’s personality identifies with his journal.*

**Keywords:** *Mkrtich Portukalian, “Armenia”, Armenian Revolutionary Movement*

**Öz:** *Mıgırdıç Portukalyan Ermeni devrimci hareketindeki en önemli kişilerden birisidir, ancak faaliyetleri ve çalışmaları konusunda genel bir bilgi eksikliği dikkat çekmektedir. Nitekim bu eksiklik Marsilya’da 1885’den 1923’e kadar Porukalyan tarafından Ermenice yayınlanan “Armenia” dergisi konusunda da görülmektedir. Bu makalede söz konusu araştırma özellikle 1914, 1918, 1918, 1921, 1922 ve 1923 yıllarını kapsamaktadır. Portukalyan’ın kişiliği çeşitli kaynaklara dayanarak anlaşılmaya çalışılacaktır. İkinci ve üçüncü bölümlerde ise, sıkça devrimcinin kişiliğinin dergi ile özdeşleştiği hatırlatılarak “Armenia” dergisi incelenecektir.*

**Anahtar Kelimeler:** *Mıgırdıç Portukalyan, “Armenia”, Ermeni Devrimci Hareketi*

Almost everyone could come to an agreement on the great significance of Mkrtich Portukalian in the Armenian revolutionary movement, but

even the Armenians do not know much regarding his personality and what he has done.

This applies to the famous journal of “Armenia” published in Marseille from 1885 to 1923 by Portukalian in Armenian.

Both the journal and its creator are famous, but why are they like that? It is not quite known. In other words, original documents are rarely provided as reference. Therefore, we are highly grateful for our beloved friend Maxime Gainin for being able to provide us the photocopies of 20 editions of “Armenia”.

The period under research especially entails the years 1914, 1918, 1919, 1921, 1922 and 1923. Of course, the numbers of the journal, which encompass a longer time frame, would have helped us to acquire a more identical view. But under these conditions, we tried to fill in this gap with some texts of more previous issues and a picture emerged which was able to be completed by other readings and research.

Firstly, we will try to convey what we know concerning Portukalian’s personality by referring to various sources. In the second and third section, we will address the “Armenia” journal by frequently reminding that the revolutionist’s personality identifies with his journal.

## **I) MKRTICH PORTUKALIAN UNTIL 1885**

Before everything else, let us say this: The spelling of Portukalian’s name was also suspicious.

Despite expressing a very short, but a very useful life story of himself in his book entitled “La Question Arménienne (The Armenian Question)”<sup>1</sup>, even Dashnak author Anahide Ter Minassian called him Portugalian/Portugalian<sup>2</sup>.

However, a single look at the “Armenia” journal is enough to show us that the revolutionist actually referred to himself as Portoukalian/Portukalian.

Anyhow, the following significant points become clearer with his life story: Portukalian, who was a teacher, had established a teacher’s training school in Van.

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1 Editions Parenthèses, Marseille, 1983.

2 Ibid, p.153. We must confess that as Ter Minassian’s liar and by appealing to other writers, for a long time we also referred to Portukalian as Portugalian.

Portukalian, who was exiled in 1885 for defending Armenia’s independence and opposing the Ottoman Empire’s integrity, immediately founded in Marseille the “Armenia” journal in Armenian.

This “immediately” coming from our keyboard could actually seem odd, because how could a person living in exile in a foreign country create a journal (which is also not a small task) in the same year?

We will return to this important point later on. For now, let us look at his life story again.

Regarding Portukalian’s youth, Anahide Ter Minassian only indicates that he was born in 1848 in Istanbul.

Therefore, we must refer to the “Armenia” journal in order to obtain other details. In fact, in the 9-10th copy published in 5 October 1921, there is an announcement of his death with his picture and the caption “I believe in the future” (Abakayin gi havadam). Moreover, the last page contains an outline (gensakragan kidzer) of his life story.

*Portukalian, who was exiled in 1885 for defending Armenia’s independence and opposing the Ottoman Empire’s integrity, immediately founded in Marseille the “Armenia” journal in Armenian.*

His life story indicates that he was born in 1848 in Yalnız Bakkal Street in the Kumkapı neighborhood of Istanbul in his family home. His father was Raphael Portukalian. Personality wise, this individual was elegant (pareparoy) and favored science (usumnaser).

Raphael Portukalian was a banker (seğanavor). At the same time, he owned a rather comprehensive library (krataran) and his son was to highly utilize it (urge medzabes bidi okdver zavagı).

Young Portukalian had been trained by the best teachers of that period. As a student at the “Mayr” High School in Kumkapı, he attended the courses of Y. Malezyan (Armenian), Hagop Voskan (French) and Heretik (Turkish).

According to the journal, the developments of that period did not leave him “impassive”. The environment he lived in was of an impulsive struggle for justice.

The French Revolution of 1848<sup>3</sup> had actually deeply affected the Armenian

3 The French Revolution of 1848 which overthrew King Louis-Philippe gave the idea of independence to other nations.

community in Istanbul. The Armenian intellectuals in France had passed on the revolution's "noble principles" to the community.

From 1853 to 1860 N. Rusinyan, N. Balyan, K. Odyan<sup>4</sup> etc. attempted to constitute the "National Constitution"; in other words, the Armenian regulations (Azkayin Sahmanatrutiyun).

Most of the "Amiras" only did not doubt the elimination of their influences and rulings in this Constitution directed towards the Armenian people.

Also, they perceived this reform as the end of the Church and community.

Through this, we witness an interesting forming of clique, at least in high levels, within the Armenian community of Turkey of that period.

On the one side there is "Lusavoryalner", while on the other there is "Khavaryalner". In other words, the "advocates of Light" and the "advocates of the Dark" are the issue.

In his book entitled "The Armenian Issue in Questions"<sup>5</sup>, the following is stated (p.125): "In this period, disagreements of "intellectuals and reactionaries" emerged between Armenians. Amiras (bankers) and advocates of the government were classified as reactionaries, while those pursuing national goals were classified as intellectuals. The intellectuals wanted to bring someone to the Armenian Patriarchate in Istanbul who would pursue national goals and act under their administration.

Eventually, after many disputes and struggles, the idea of independence within the Armenian Patriarchate of Istanbul reached a climax in 1869 with the influence of the intellectuals. In this situation which developed later on, well-known Khrimian became the Patriarch who was to play a significant role, especially during the Berlin Conference (1878), in granting sovereignty to the Armenian community<sup>6</sup>.

For embracing the philosophy of "Tebi Yergir" (Towards the Homeland/Return to the Homeland), Khrimian's significance is clear after Portukalian's idea.

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4 Nahabed Rusinyan was writing a book on the Armenian language. Krikor Odyan (1834-1887) was a magister and uncle of writer Yervant Oydan. He was going abroad frequently and was to defend the theses of Portukalian. Nikoğos Balyan was also with them in . All three of them wrote the Armenian Constitution.

5 Prof. Dr.Ahmed Akgündüz, Doç.Dr.Said Öztürk, Dr.Recep Kara (OSAV.Ottoman Research Institute), Istanbul 2008.

6 Ibid, Armenian National Constitution, the Ottoman original document, p.123.

However, let us continue scanning the “Armenia” journal:

While the “Masis” journal became the “champion” of the Armenian youth in 1857, Deroyentz’s<sup>7</sup> “Yerevak” (Night) journal will become the organ of the conservatives.

In 1861, advocates and opponents of the “National Constitution” held a session at “Mayr” High School in order to discuss it and the students were transferred to the neighboring Saint Cross Church (the Holy Cross). Young Portukalian would become an “eavesdropper” by secretly watching these noisy (aǰmgali) meetings from a corner.

Bloody conflicts occurred even inside churches to elect a new patriarch in replace of the patriarch who died in 1860.

As a matter of fact, the “intellectuals” supported the election of the patriarch both from the inside and outside.

In the very end, the “advocates of the Dark” captured both the Mayr High School and the Mayr Church and the conservative priest Der Kevork was appointed as inspector of education.

In 1862, we assume that by not tolerating his school’s new tendency, Mkrtich Portukalian left his high school and transferred to Sahagyan High School in the neighborhood of Samatya. “Everyday he had to walk (hedisan) from his neighborhood to the Samatya Sahagyan High School” because “he had no other choice” back then.

Researcher Antranik Celebyan also mentions the Sahagyan High School. According to this researcher, by graduating in 1863, Portukalian opened a “bookstore” in that very period.

According to our journal, after graduating, Portukalian worked for the bookseller Pierre Troy. Pierre Troy was a friend of the Armenians (hayaser) and published a magazine entitled “La question arménienne”.

Concerning Louise Nalbandian’s book entitled “The Armenian Revolutionary Movement”, it could be seen that the author has not provided the name of this “French publisher” which he refers to and that he has not addressed “La question arménienne”.

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7 Deroyentz (1801-1888) originally from , knew quite a number of languages and did translations especially from French to Armenian and Ottoman Turkish.

In regards to the bookstore, this detail is written in Nalbandian's book in the following way (p.90-91):

“Portukalian established a broadcasting company and for that, translated Alexander Dumas's “La Dame de Monsoreau” into Armenian. But this fact is much more important: We could think that without doubt, his first idea on the “Armenia” journal developed from all these. Portukalian had lost his father in 1859. It was followed by the death of his mother in 1865.

The life story provided by the journal ends with this and “to be continued” (şarunageli) is written.

Unfortunately, since we do not have the following edition of “Armenia”, we have to refer to various authors and documents in order to complete his story life.

Anahide Ter Minassian, who does not mention at all the details we provided, indicates that Portukalian was a teacher in an Armenian school in Tokat in the beginning of the 70's<sup>8</sup>.

In his teachings, Portukalian was “democratic and liberal” by denouncing the selfishness of the Armenian chiefs.

Celebyan writes that in the following years, Portukalian published a journal called “Asia”, but that the so-called journal was immediately prohibited. Ter Minassian states that Portukalian had first been captured and exiled to Sivas and that he founded the “Asia” journal after that.

By becoming a member of the Ararat Community (Araratyan Ingerutyun) in 1877, Portukalian is sent to the Caucasus and there he meets the manager of the famous “Mshak” (Rençber) Krikor Ardzruni. According to a website connected to the Armenakan-Ramgavar Party, Portukalian had written an article in this magazine with the nickname “Hrant”.

I presume that a small reminder must be made here: Krikor Ardzruni was a horrible racist who despised the Turks and all the Muslims in general. Of course, neither Celebyan nor Ter Minassian mentions this concrete fact.

With the aid provided by Krikor Ardzruni, Portukalian returns to Van and establishes a Teacher's Training School there. This way, Portukalian attempts to apply the “Tebi Yergir” (towards the homeland) theory taught by Hayrig Khrimian.

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8 Ibid, p.153 note 13.

However, the following “detail” exists, which has not even once been mentioned by Celebyan or Ter Minassian:

Portukalian is among the active and influential founders of the “Black Cross” (Sev Khach) organization in 1878.

We are not the ones saying this. It is “Armenakan”; in other words, the Armenian official website of “Ramgavar Azadakan Kusaktsutyun”: <http://www.armenakan.am>

The “Black Cross” is actually a terrorist organization. This time, it is obviously not the website indicating this, but it is us. On the website the following is stated: “The “Black Cross”, which plays an active role in the revolutionary task under the severe conditions of autocracy, was established in Van upon Portukalian’s suggestion and direct (anmidşakan) participation”<sup>9</sup>.

As far as we know, since neither Celebyan nor Ter Minassian has mentioned the “Black Cross”, we have to refer to other sources. On the 167<sup>th</sup> page of Kamuran Gürün’s book entitled “The Armenian File”, this organization is shortly mentioned and is compared to the Ku-Klux Klan.

Bilal N. Şimşir writes on the 278<sup>th</sup> page of his book entitled “The Armenian Issue” the following: “1878 – The secret “Black Cross” society was established in Van. This terrorist organization founded by Armenian youngsters marked a “black cross” on the foreheads of the Muslims and Armenians killed in the region”.

M. Yavuz Elbirler<sup>10</sup> writes the following: The name “Black Cross” emerges from a black cross being drawn through and announcing the names of those revealing secrets and not conforming to the principles of the society.

Regarding the “Sev Khach” article on the Armenian Wikipedia, the following interesting details could be found: “the members had to work personally and extremely confidential” and the “Black Cross” had strong ties with the “Defenders of the Fatherland” (Başdıban Hayrenyatz) established in 1881 in Erzurum. It continued until 1885.

Let us recall that 1885 was the year Portukalian was exiled.

In fact, the Armenian Wikipedia even provides the name of a member of the “Black Cross”.

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9 <http://www.armenakan.am>

10 Elbirler, Yavuz (2011) “Ermeniler Meselesinin Arka Planı ve Üç şehidimiz (The Background of the Armenian Question and Our Three Martyrs)” *Manisa’da Gündem*

Karekin Srvandtzian (1840-1892) is that person. This Armenian militant, born in Van, was both a priest and an author. He was deeply devoted to Hayrig Khrimian. Khrimian used him as a preacher. Antranik Celebyan writes that in the printing of the newspaper entitled “The Eagle of Vaspurakan” published by Hayrig (Priest) Khrimian, Priest Karekin Srvandtzian was his assistant (“Antranik Pasha” p.46).

Thus, if we consider “The Eagle of Vaspurakan” as the “cover” of the “Sev Khach” and indicate that the famous Khrimian was a member of this terrorist organization, we could say that our risks of error are very small.

*Most of the members of the “Sev Khach” participated in the establishment of the first revolutionary Armenian party called the “Armenakan Party”.*

Moreover, when we research further, this risk of making an error falls to zero, because on the Armenian Wikipedia found on the internet, the following is written on Khrimian:

“Khrimian... assisted in the establishment and activities of the savior and private organizations of “Sev Khach” in Van and the “Defenders of the Fatherland” in Erzurum”.

In the biographies in English, French, German and Bulgarian, these interesting details have been forgotten...

Furthermore, after confirming the role of the Russian vice-consul Kamsagaran, the point on the “Sev Khach” ends in the following way:

Most of the members of the “Sev Khach” participated in the establishment of the first revolutionary Armenian party called the “Armenakan Party”. If we also include that Portukalian frequently met with Khrimian in Van, we cannot help but think that these three men (Portukalian, Srvandtzian, Khrimian) played a significant role within the “Sev Khach” terrorist organization.

Let us also note the element of privacy: It is at the center of Portukalian’s activities and we will address them again.

Let us look at a page in “The Armenian Issue” (page 220): “Mkrtich Portukalian was one of those working with Khrimian in Van. When arrests had started after the incident in Erzurum and he was prohibited from living in Van, Portukalian fled abroad with some of his advocates... Only the Armenians were admitted to the Armenakan Party. It was known that information on the use of weapons and military strategy was taught to the

members of the Armenakan Party in the Van Armenian School by the Russian vice-consul Kamsagaran”.

The interesting aspect to all these is the following: Neither Celebyan, nor Minassian mentions Portukalian’s past as a terrorist and they also do not refer to the connections he had with Khrimian.

Let us now study Hinchak Louise Nalbandian’s book. Will it be possible to find interesting information regarding the “Sev Khach”?

In his book entitled “The Armenian Revolutionary Movement”, Nalbandian dedicates a section, constituted by three sentences and a page (p. 83-84), to the “Black Cross” and/but not doing anything else but praising the organization, remains quiet and does not refer to the role of Portukalian and Khrimian. In other words, either the specialist of the “Armenian Revolutionary Movement” knew very little about the organization of the Black Cross or preferred to overlook its real identity.

There is more: Portukalian’s “activities” were mostly directed towards the Armenians. In fact, there are quite interesting references made in the book entitled “*Aspirations et Agissements Révolutionnaires des Comités Arméniens*”<sup>11</sup>. This book already mostly utilizes the documents received from the Armenian Committees and the following is stated on page 37: “Following Portukalian’s return to Van, a particular discontentment was created through the provocation of several Armenians who did not welcome the Christian religion being used as an instrument in the hands of Committees in the famous Theological Training School and understanding that it would be impossible to stay in Van, Portukalian fled to France and founded the “Armenia” journal there”.

While Celebyan kept silent regarding the role of the moderate Armenians in Portukalian being sent to exile, Anahide Ter Minassian states the following: “It is most likely that Portukalian, who was denounced and conveyed as an atheist and revolutionist by conservative Armenians, was forced in leaving Van and escaping to Istanbul”.

From there he went to France several years later and the Teacher’s Training School he had established was closed down<sup>12</sup>.

As can be seen, Ter Minassian is mistaken when stating that Portukalian “went to France several years later” (because he went in the same year).

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11 “*Aspirations et Agissements révolutionnaires des Comités Arméniens*” New Edition. Ankara 2001. Person preparing it for publication: Dr.Yusuf Sarıncay.

12 Ibid, p.153.

Therefore, we could better understand the reactions of the Ottoman Armenian citizens who did not think very positively about the interesting connection between religion and terrorist acts.

It seems as if there is a connotation in all of these regarding the conflict between the “advocates of Light” and the “advocates of the Dark”.

Without doubt, it was foreseen that this so-called lightening would be made through the lights of bombs...

In short and in other words, Portukalian was a revolutionist who defended terrorism by using religion after leaving Turkey and due to establishing this organization (Sev Khach), had many specific and detailed ideas concerning secret organizations.

## II) THE “ARMENIA” JOURNAL

The most reliable details regarding Portukalian after arriving to Marseille is provided by Mihran Damadyan<sup>13</sup>.

As a matter of fact, the leader of the Hinchak committee Mihran Damadyan, who was captured in Bitlis, submissively tells on all his friends and writes his life story and naturally, mentions Portukalian in it:

“The third committee is that of Portukalian Mkrtych and its headquarters is located in Marseille and it is apparent that a corrupt journal called “Armenia” in Armenian is published there<sup>14</sup>. Its Turkish transcription is found on page 21 and the original text is found on the 12th line on page 543 of “The relocation and resettlement of Armenians in Ottoman Documents”.

The idea supported by this is that the Armenians want to create a revolution in the provinces, but to implement this idea, they do not want to join and work together with revolutionary companies, but they work independently. In various locations, plotting committees must be under the administration of Portukalian’s Marseille Committee. Although I do not know where these kinds of committees are located, it could be understood from the arising conditions and the news published in almost all copies of “Armenia” that the Marseille Committee attempts to provide it to the people wanting to create uproars within the regions of Van and Iran”. From these interesting sentences,

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13 Confessions of Mihran Damadyan, “*Osmanlı Belgelerinde Ermenilerin Sevk ve İskanı (The Relocation and Resettlement of the Armenians in Ottoman Documents)*” p.18, 20, 22

14 Ibid, p.22, the original Ottoman Turkish text, p.543, line 12.

we become aware of the following reality: Damadyan does not very much like the rival organization called “Armenakan” which supports Portukalian’s theses, find its members to be “strong-headed” and cannot refrain from coming to terms with it. A second reality is: The “Armenia” journal in that period (beginning of 1894) is a very influential organ for the Armenians. A third reality is: The Marseille Committee was very strong and through its advocates, undertook acts of propaganda and armed activities in the east of Turkey.

Moreover, there was a local committee in Istanbul connected to the Marseille Committee before the Kumkapı Incident and Damadyan knew some of its members (p. 24).

Now we must ask the following question: How could Portukalian, who escaped from Istanbul in March 1885, publish a journal like “Armenia” in a foreign country towards the middle of the same year?

Let us not forget that Portukalian’s father had passed away a long time ago and his mother had died 20 years before. Then, it is without doubt that Portukalian benefitted from his father’s inheritance and established the journal “Armenia”. Furthermore, it was not much of a coincidence for him to take refuge in Marseille. As a matter of fact, there was an Armenian society who was in the trade business in Marseille since the beginning of the XVII<sup>th</sup> century<sup>15</sup>. It is possible that Portukalian had already contacted this society. It seems also possible that this society provided aid to Portukalian, but of course not all of the Armenians. The conflicts between the “advocates of the Light” and the “advocates of the Dark”, which we mentioned earlier in the beginning of this article, also being reflected in Marseille was inevitable.

Even though Antranik Celebyan refers to the Armenian society in Marseille and makes a mention of 150 individuals<sup>16</sup>, we do not accept this number.

Celebyan also adds the following: “...the Armenian society in Marseille embraced the journal published in their mother tongue with great pleasure and provided all kinds of material and moral support to Mkrtich Portukalian who founded it”.

It is obvious that the “Armenia” journal drew support in Marseille, but I think the following is forgotten in the statements quoted: “Armenia” was

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15 Jean-Louis Mattei, “Büyük Ermenistan Peşinde Ermeni Komiteleri” (*Armenian Committees Seeking Great Armenia*), pp.81-114.

16 Antranik Celebyan, “Antranik Pasha”, p.46. Reference: John Giragosyan “*Burjuva Diplomasisi ve Ermenistan (Bourgeoisie Diplomacy and Armenia)*”.

contradictory to the Ottoman Empire and the Armenians settling in Marseille, apart from the “Russians”, was mostly Ottoman citizens. Then it is without doubt that it was not quite possible for these merchants to at least *openly* welcome and praise this journal which challenged the empire to which the merchants were citizens.

There were translators who knew Armenians or who were already of Armenian origin in the Ottoman Consulate in Marseille. In fact, D. Mavroyani, who was in charge of the Ottoman Consulate in Marseille in that period, called on many Ottoman citizens of Armenian origin and asked them questions. Their support of “Armenia” back then was not open, but private.

The interesting aspect of this is the following: The Ottoman Ambassador in Paris asks whether there is an Armenian committee in Marseille and Consul D. Mavroyeni gives the following answer (30 January 1895)<sup>17</sup>: “... if there is, I would be grateful to bring to the attention of your Excellency that a serious inquiry is conducted with the purpose to examine its members. I must announce to your Excellency in private that to fulfill this purpose, I deployed a high-status local police officer whose loyalty to the Consulate General is well known. Therefore, the information I will provide is official and definite. The Armenian community here is comprised of approximately 60 Ottomans and more than 25 of the others, or of Russian citizens. Despite this, they agree on the same view and idea. Based on my former reports, this community of emigrants possessed a small church on 13<sup>th</sup> street in “L’Ormeau” in which apart from rituals, they gathered to discuss different issues of the community. Agop Selyan directs social services, Galbenk and Selyan are treasurers and Sahak Utuciyani is its current priest. According to the information I received, the revolutionary committee in London, which is the center of the Armenian movement and which spread to all cities of the European Continent in which other committees exist, calls on Armenian emigrants living in Marseille to organize around a committee... *In this situation then, there is no committee that exists*”.

Yet, we must indicate the following: In 1895, this Marseille Committee actually existed since 3 years ...

So far that a letter in Armenian dated 9 August 1892, which arrived in the hands of Ottoman officials, was sent by London and the Marseille Committee to Adana Armenian Deputy Vehebedyan. This interesting document, which was translated back then from Armenian to Ottoman Turkish, in addition to

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17 “Osmanlı Belgelerinde Ermeni-Fransız İlişkileri (Armenian-French Relations in Ottoman Documents)”, director of project: Doç. Dr. Yusuf Sarıncı, p.31, original French text pp.330–331, Volume I.

proving the armed activities of Armenians, provides evidence for the existence of these so-called committees and shows that there are many undertakers within the Marseille Committee. In this letter which especially concerns our subject, the following information is provided by the Committees of London and Marseille (Agopyan and Portukalian): Personal correspondences are sent to locations through the “Armenia” journal. Admonish Kasparyan present in Adana to make sure that the public reads the “Armenia” journals<sup>18</sup>.

The provocative nature of the “Armenia” journal in that period is therefore proven. The armed insurgency near Maraş (all its details are in this document)<sup>19</sup> was unsuccessful, but the coordinated initiatives of the London and Marseille Committees continued. The Marseille Committee means Mkrtich Portukalian and his “Armenia” journal. How could Consul Mavroyeni be mistaken on this important point? After thinking thoroughly, we come up with the following answers:

The character of a secret committee is to *be hidden and remain secret* as much as possible. Portukalian is a specialist regarding privacy. As can be seen, under the foundations he established, terrorist organizations like the “Sev Khach” are hidden. Another example: Avetis Terlemezian is actually Mkrtich Avedisyan’s other name, but in the documents in Marseille, this individual does not exist or has another last name. But still Avedisyan was in Marseille and was helping Portukalian. So, we know very little about one of the “Three Mkrtich” (Mkrtich Khrimian, Mkrtich Portukalian and Mkrtich Avedisyan) who were called the three “heroes”. As we had implied before, had Avedisyan adopted another nickname? Quite possibly yes.

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18 *Ermeni Olayları Tarihi (History of Armenian Events)*, Volume 1, Hüseyin Nazım Paşa, Ankara 1998 p.56-57

19 The members of committees would enter from getting off ships by masquerading as Circassians, Kurds and Greeks. Their purpose was to provoke a revolt among the Armenians of Cilicia. The document addresses disagreements between the Armenakans and the Hinchak Committee and the following was stated: “... and you sent us so much money that the transfer was a success”. The letter ended this way: “Prepare lots of money and men. The and Marseille Committees sends its greetings to the committees the letter is sent to by the head clerk”.

On the other hand, in another document, D. Mavroyeni argues that an Armenian agent whom he tried to use was not trusted, but a letter received from the Ottoman Porte shows the complete opposite. Similarly, a “high-status local police officer” named Argento seems very trustable to D. Mavroyeni. But, we could consider Argento to be playing to both sides at the same time.

Based on the documents, the following emerges: It was very difficult to become members of the Armenian society or committees. Let us not forget this important point either: D. Mavroyeni was in a foreign country, so his capacity of acting was limited. An “incident diplomatique” with the French Government would have been a highly unwelcomed event. If we include the lack of money and some agents not being trustworthy<sup>20</sup>, we could better understand D. Mavroyeni’s lack of information.

But still, according to D. Mavroyeni, the Armenians in Marseille support the violent acts taking place within the Ottoman Empire and he is able to provide very detailed information on Portuaklian: “Even if the Empire does not openly announce to its Government the hostilities outside, an individual named M. Portokalian (Portukalian) openly gets into action (agit). He is the leading editor of the “Armenia” journal situated in number 44 on Meilhan Street and lives in number 83 of Lietaud Street. This guy, who was notified earlier in different ways to the Government, has a large family of four-five children which he is responsible of taking care of. He has no other income other than this media organ which he publishes twice a week on Wednesday’s and Saturday’s. From subscriptions of 20 Franks per year, he gains 3000-3500 Franks and his newspaper editions are sent to London and Armenia.”<sup>21</sup>

Let us add the following: Meilhan Street is an extension of the famous Canebière Street. Lieutad Street also similarly does not exist afar. Then, almost everyday, Portukalian goes from Lietaud Street and stops by his newspaper and “goes” home in the evening or at night. Therefore, he had a comfortable life, because this head of the committee lived somewhere near his “work”.

In other words, we could say the following unless documents which show the opposite are discovered: Portukalian, who was a well known revolutionist for 36 years, without being threatened by the Ottomans or the French, openly published a journal in Marseille which threatened the security of another country.

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20 For instance, D. Mavroyeni is suspicious of an individual named Anton Sislian, Ibid, p.23, 24.

21 *Osmanlı Belgelerinde Ermeni-Fransız İlişkileri (Armenian-French Relations in Ottoman Documents)*, Volume I, p.32. French original text p.330-332.

According to D. Mavroyeni, the London Committee is the most important committee. But the London Committee he mentions was actually the Hinchak Committee... In fact, in the significant letter sent by Morel Bey to Ziya Pasha, the Ambassador to Paris (13 December 1895),<sup>22</sup> in particular the Hinchak Committee and the “charismatic” Nazarbekian were mentioned.

The Hinchaks were perceived as being the most dangerous revolutionists. Morel also provides the following interesting statement: “Just for your information, I will also mention a charlatan named Agopyan who argued that he established another committee called the “Armenian Patriotic Society”. The research conducted until now has put forth that this society was only represented by Agopyan and that not even a single other person existed. This person lives a not-too-secure life by giving Turkish lessons. Despite his name being mentioned frequently in newspapers, eventually this person is a little harmful”.

Actually, both Portukalian and Agopyan were the founders of the “Armenian Patriotic Society” and Portukalian had acted coordinately by sending weapons and bodyguards to Turkey. Hereby, this “little harmful” person was the head of the London Committee, but he did not administer the Hinchak Committee, but the Armenekan Committee.

As could be seen, both Mavroyeni and Morel underestimated the significance of the “patriots”, but they were not aware of the riots the Armenekans had initiated 3 years ago. They also were not aware of arms smuggling or the various members of committees sent to Turkey. On the complete opposite, the Ottoman Porte was very well aware of all these.

Concerning Mavroyeni, the Consulate of Marseille cannot perceive the real dimension of Portukalian without despising the revolutionist who was in charge of “keeping him in focus”. Mavroyeni also was not aware of Portukalian’s personal wealth. He was unaware of the Armenian society’s financial aid...

In a situation like this, “Armenia” was able to be published in Marseille freely and for a long time. An interesting detail is: In the local adjacent to their church where members of the Armenian society gathered and read newspapers, the “Armenia” journal did not exist. On the other hand, “Hayrenik” (Homeland) and the famous “Arevelk” (Dawn) published in Istanbul, “Mşak” (Countrymen) published in Russia and “L’Echo du Caucase” published in French existed.<sup>23</sup>

22 *Osmanlı Belgelerinde Ermeni-İngiliz İlişkileri (Armenian-English Relations in Ottoman Documents)*, Volume IV, p.6-7 original French text p. 223-224.

23 *Osmanlı Belgelerinde Ermeni-Fransız İlişkileri (Armenian-French Relations in Ottoman Documents)*, Volume I, p.24, the original text p.306.

This “nonexistence” should not be surprising. “Mşak”, with its anti-Turkish views, was being published in the Tzarist Russia. None of these four newspapers were being classified as “revolutionary”. On the other hand, “Armenia” was banned in both the Ottoman Empire and Russia.

“Armenia” not existing in the local of the Armenians in Marseille does not mean that it is not read by the Armenians of Marseille. We believe that it is likely for those opposing Portukalian to have also read the newspaper, but rather than local sales, “Armenia” was able to survive with its subscriptions directed towards other countries.

Now, let us study number 36 of 26 March-8 April 1914: The heading “Armenia” is read with Armenian letters. The edges of all 6 letters are snow-white and it is without doubt that it resembles Armenia’s snowy summits.

Over the heading, the following French words are written: ARMENIA, Journal en langue Arménienne fondé à Marseille en 1885 (ARMENIA, a journal in Armenian language established in 1885 in Marseille). Then, under the heading, in Armenian and with capital letters: “LIRAKÏR AZKAYÏN KAĞAKAGAN YEV AYLN” (A POPULIST, POLITICAL AND SO FORTH JOURNAL). In a caption underneath it, it is conveyed that the price of subscription for Turkey and Iran is 10 Franks.

Below the caption the following is stated: Namag gam tram ğırgel ays hatseov (Sending the letter or money with this address): M. PORTUKALIAN Directeur du journal *Armenia* MARSEILLE (France).

In this edition, we see the following: In the first page of “Armenia”, comprehensive excerpts (kağuadzner) are taken from the “Ararat” magazine published in Etchmiadzin (Yerevan). These are usually religious news. For instance, the Armenians of Turkey benefit more from administrative units and in terms of events, are much stronger than the other Armenians (Russia, Iran).

What is more interesting for us is surely the diplomatic relations of that period. For instance, Catholicos Kevork V in Russia sends a telegraph of appreciation to Boghos Nubar Pasha who lives on Trocadéro Street in Paris (29 January 1914). Catholicos Kevork renders his thanks to Nubar Pasha for his “attempts towards introducing the reforms to Turkey”.

In another source: Ker Kharakhanyan, the Patriarch of Muş, responds to the question of the Patriarchate concerning the Kurds and writes the following: “In point of fact, the Kurds are conducting secret preparations and this grows

day by day to greater extents. The Armenians are under threat. The government and police officers do not give much important to this (garevorutyun) and in order to defend themselves (andznabaşdıbanutyen hamar), put forth pathetic excuses in order to acquire a few weapons carried by the Armenians. The implementation of public order is prevented”.

The following message is sent from Kiğı to the “Azadamart” newspaper published in Armenian in Istanbul: “A private mobility is observed among the Kurds here. They participate in great parades. Habitants of Armenian origin in the city and its surrounding areas are in a serious rush”.

But the most interesting news comes last: “KARASNAMYA YOPELYAN MIGIRDİÇ PORTUKALYANI” meaning “MKRTICH PORTUKALIAN’S JUBILEE OF FORTY YEARS”.

The festival to be organized in honor of the veteran warrior Mkrtich Portukalian will not be held on 13-26 April as announced earlier, but on 27 April-10 May (1914) on Sunday in Istanbul. The organizing Committee hopes that this Istanbul festival, to which a large number of individuals will attend from within and outside the country, will be the top of the festivals of the same kind. Following this exile lasting for a quarter of a century, on this occasion, the veteran warrior will be invited to Istanbul, to the arms of his own people in order to benefit from the blessings (pariknerı) of his new situation.

The organizing Committee is certain that after drawing the lines of the program of the festival, all levels of society will attend this ceremony deserved by the veteran warrior.

On this occasion, those wanting to send gifts, manuscripts, letters etc. could send them to the two addresses given below: For telegraph: Docteur Basile, Constantinople

Letter, money: Terlemezyan Djelal Bey Han,  
Stamboul

For this occasion, the printing of a magazine was foreseen and the contributions of Portukalian’s fellow countrymen with their articles are requested.

March 1914

Istanbul (Police)”

Members of the Festival's Central Commission are being followed. Among them, there are many prominent Armenian figures. For instance: Agnouni E (Deputy, Dashnak), Asadur Hrant (Writer), Esayan Zabel (Author 1878-1943), Zohrab Krikor (Deputy 1861-1915),

Zartaryan Rupen (Writer 1874-1915 Dashnak), Terlemezyan Hovannes (Perhaps is the brother of Mkrtych Avedisyan), Gomidas Vartabed (Famous composer Gomitas Vartabed (1869-1935), Halacyan Bedros (Director of Ottoman Public Debt Administration, deputy), Vartkes (Former Armenakan, deputy ( 1861-1915) Şişmanyanyan Zareh (member of the Portukalian and Ararat Society), Boyaciyan Hampartsum (Deputy, former bodyguard, Hinchak 1867-1915), Papazyan Vahan (Deputy, former bodyguard, writer in "Azadamart", Dashnak 1876-1973), Sibil, (Asadur Zabel, writer, 1863-1934), Varujan Daniel (Poet, advocate of Dashnaksutyun), Diran Kelekyan (Journalist-linguist, member of the Ramgavar Party), Yervant Odyan (Writer, Father of "Comrade Panchoonie", 1869-1926) (For most of these names see: "Büyük Ermenistan Peşinde Ermeni Komiteleri" (Armenian Committees Seeking a Great Armenia)

*"Pro Armenia" is a newspaper published every 10th and 25th of the month. In the journal, the advertisement is made in French, but in Armenian it is written that "Pro Armenia" is published half in half in French and English.*

An interesting news on the last page of the journal: LOCAL (DEĞAGAN): "Despite Mademoiselle Shushanik Portukalian not being there, Women's Society (Azkanver Hayuhyatz Ingerutyun), in order for its Auxiliary Association to also become a member of the Administrative Board, thanks, during a meeting, all those honoring her with their votes and declares that she is not yet capable of this responsibility and that she has resigned from her duty".

Then, it is expressed that Hakki Pasha has returned to Istanbul from England, he will present the results of negotiations to the Ottoman Government and then will travel to St. Petersburg and address many questions concerning the reforms (parenorokumner) to be made in Armenia.

In another caption, the famous "Pro Armenia", which is actually an organ of the Dashnaksutyun, is being advertized. "Pro Armenia" is a newspaper published every 10<sup>th</sup> and 25<sup>th</sup> of the month. In the journal, the advertisement is made in French, but in Armenian it is written that "Pro Armenia" is published half in half in French and English.

Eventually we could see that over the years, Portukalian possesses other

sources of income besides “Armenia”. In columns, these books are offered for sale: “An Armenian Woman Hero” (second edition) (40 centimeters), “Armenians of Turkey and their Neighbors” (50 centimeters), “Armenia” Monitor, 1<sup>st</sup> year (1 Frank, 40 centimeters), “Revenge” (Vrej) (20 centimeters), “A Bulgarian Patriot/History of the Bulgarian Revolutionary Movement) (1 Frank, 40 centimeters) and “Don’t Migrate!” (Mi kağtek) (20 centimeters).

Now let’s first comment on all these news and information and then dig into more comprehensive observations on the “Armenia” journal.

As the date the journal was published (March-April 1914) shows, the world was entering a very delicate era. A war which could arise between great powers was being discussed for a long time. “Armenia” reflects this atmosphere only partially. In fact, it mentions Nubar Pasha and reforms. Actually Boghos Nubar’s goal was to “corner” the Ottoman government. On December 1<sup>st</sup> 1913, the “Asian French Committee” had gathered and “after a lengthy speech presented by the director of the Armenian delegation Boghos Nubar Pasha, the request for great powers not providing financial aid to the Ottoman government and not consenting to increase in customs and some taxes were accepted until the reform was implemented”<sup>24</sup>.

“The emergence of a prudent and intellectual patriot like Boghos Nubar is truly a pleasure. With his attempts since one and a half years, Boghos Nubar will set an example for the Armenian intellectuals and notables and will open a glorious page in our new national history” (“Troşak” newspaper number 1-237 –January 1914)<sup>25</sup> In other words, Nubar Pasha was blackmailing the Ottoman Porte.

5 months later, that is to say in the same columns of the “Ararat” magazine which the editors of “Armenia” have mentioned, Catholicos Kevork V was to support Tzarist Russia by speaking on behalf of all Armenians and would end his announcement in the following way: “We pray for the success and victory of the heroic Russian army and by blessing all of you, we request from God to protect Great Russia from all kinds of dangers and hostile attacks”.

The Catholicos of All Armenians Kevork V ( Kevork E Katoğikos  
amenayin Hayots) (August 1914)

(Original Armenian text, p.32)

24 Yusuf Halaçoğlu, *Ermeni Tehciri (Armenian Relocation)*, p.44.

25 *Aspirations et Agissements révolutionnaires des Comités Arméniens*, p.86.

Surely the Catholicos's approach could seem quite normal, but actually there is something missing in the columns of "Armenia": On that date, a great number of Armenian volunteers from all over the world and especially from America were flowing in great numbers to Russia and Portukalian, Kevork V and Nubar Pasha was aware of it. Nubar Pasha would even be proud of these volunteers after the war.

Let us also indicate this: The idea of organizing the Armenian volunteers was already a reality. In the Dashnaksutyun's organ "Hayrenik", published in Armenian on 20 March 1913 in Boston (US), a telegraph from Tbilisi is observed. Patriarch Mesrob says the following in his telegraph: "47.061 rubles and 11 dogs were taken. I thank you on behalf of the bureau and the volunteers (gamavorner)". Patriarch Mesrob had a significant place among the bourgeoisie of Tbilisi and was a relative of the Caucasian Naibi Kont Vorontzov-Dashkov. For us what is more important for us is the following: A stamp which says 17 March 1913 can clearly be seen.

It is without doubt that Ter Minassian (Ibid, p. 110) did not say the following for no reason: "The thin policy of Naibi Vorontzov-Dashkov in the Caucasus reconciled the Armenian church and bourgeoisie with the Russian government".

If we write "Dashnaksutyun" instead of the "Armenian church and bourgeoisie", it will not make much of a great difference. This telegraph sent exactly a year before the edition of "Armenia", through the advertisement made in "Pro Armenia", is clear evidence of the "good will" of the Dashnaksutyun Party which Portukalian supports indirectly in the columns of his newspaper.

Regarding the events of Kiğı, the following is expressed in Portukalian's newspaper: In the city and the surrounding neighborhood, a Hinchak Committee and a Dashnaksutyun Committee were present for many years and its members conducting armed training were patrolling the area<sup>26</sup>.

As the editors of "Armenia" implied back then, innocent Armenians were out of the question. Since 1908 (or since the declaration of the Constitutional Monarchy), Dashnaksutyun had disarmed and in fact, which government in which country would allow its citizens to possess a great number of weapons with the excuse of "self-defense"? And let us observe this: "Aradşnort" of Kiğı did not provide a single concrete event regarding the Kharakhanyan Kurds.

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<sup>26</sup> See: Yılmaz Akbulut, *Ermeniler ve Bingöl'de Ermeni Tehcirleri (Armenians and Armenian Relocations in Bingöl)*, Jean-Louis Mattei *Büyük Ermenistan Peşinde... (Seeking Great Armenia)* pp.274-.

Concerning the “Adzamart” newspaper published in Istanbul, it was linked to the Dashnaksutyun and was published according to the orders of Vahan Papazyan.

Vahan Papazyan (1876-1973) was a former famous bodyguard. He came from Russia. When he had first arrived in Turkey through an illegal way, he did not know a single Turkish word. But still, he became a deputy of Van. As could be seen, it was possible for this individual to participate in Portukalian’s jubilee. Head of the Hinchaks Hampartsum Boyadjian who was more restrained in March 1914, after slaughtering many innocent Turks, now followed a more moderate policy and would not participate in October in the assassination attempts of other Hinchaks which targeted Talat Pasha. Boyadjian became the Kozan deputy. Frankly speaking, it was expected for a majority of the most popular faces and militants of the Armenian world to contribute to this jubilee.

On the other hand, the talented linguist Diran Kelekyan seemed as an “innocent victim” for a long time, but a letter written in Armenian and carrying his signature which was sent to the Egyptian Ramgavar Committee while he was Ramgavar, does not leave room for any suspicion regarding his real interests. In fact, in his letter dated 20/5 March 1914 (a little before the edition of “Armenia” we are studying was published), Diran Kelekyan wrote the following in Armenian: “The issue of weaponry is an essential problem. Naturally, no one could deny its significance” and “our most valuable request is to work cooperatively with the “Hinchak” Committee”.<sup>27</sup>

*In his letter dated 20/5 March 1914 (a little before the edition of “Armenia” we are studying was published), Diran Kelekyan wrote the following in Armenian: “The issue of weaponry is an essential problem. Naturally, no one could deny its significance” and “our most valuable request is to work cooperatively with the “Hinchak” Committee”.*

Meanwhile, let’s give the following explanation: On that date, the invitees, mostly in secret but sometimes openly, were preparing the collapse of the Ottoman Empire (Perhaps with the exception of Hrant Asadur, his wife Sibil and Yervant Odyan).

Let us also emphasize this: Most of the individuals to be sent into exile in 1915 were members of the committee.

Did the jubilee of Portukalian really occur in Istanbul? As stated in

<sup>27</sup> See: *Aspirations et Agissements révolutionnaires des Comités Arméniens* pp.118-119. The Armenian text is in 20 pages of its originals.

“Armenia”, was it possible to benefit from the freedoms introduced with the “new situation” or the Second Constitutional Monarchy and the fragile peace “signed” between the Committee of Union and Progress and Armenian Committees? Unfortunately, in the following editions of “Armenia” which we were able to obtain, at least for now it was not possible for us to observe a rebound of this jubilee. So let us confine ourselves to making this indication: The jubilee was to take place in May and the First World War had erupted on August 2<sup>nd</sup>. Perhaps due to the tense international atmosphere, the Ottoman Government wanted to prevent the Armenians or committees making such an appearance on their own territories and as a result, did not give their consent at the last moment. But we have to make presumptions when no other documents exist.

Moreover, we learn that Portukalian also has a daughter due to this edition of “Armenia”. His son Vahan Portukalian (1887-1974), who fought until now as a military officer on the side of the French against the Turks in Cilicia, was among the Marseille Armenians. On the other hand, Shushanik Portukalian had wanted to work in the “Women’s Society”. We must indicate the following: Her personal opinion was not asked for and naturally Mademoiselle Shushanik had rejected joining the organization.

But still, “Azkanver Hayhuyatz Ingerutyun” was an extremely legal organization and the aforementioned writer-poet Zabel Asadur using the nickname Sibil was among its founders. The purpose of this society was to establish and revive schools for girls all over the Ottoman Empire. Eventually, the brochures written or presented by Portukalian were very informative. Let’s not forget that Bulgarian robbers and members of committees had set an example for the Armenians.

The word “Vrej” (Revenge) will not surprise us, because the same word was written on the flags of the Dashnaksutyun and clearly displayed the committees’ frame of mind. But right then, Portukalian’s brochure entitled “Göç etmeyin! (Don’t Migrate!)” had unexpectedly obstructed the policy of violence. This booklet, published in 1913, had already brought some differences to Portukalian’s views. We will return to this important point at the end of this article.

### **III) THE ROLE OF “ARMENIA” IN THE ARMENIAN REVOLUTIONARY MOVEMENT**

For the time being, let’s try to analyze the political situation of the “Armenia” journal on the brink of the First World War.

Despite some “forgetfulness” and lies of the “Armenia” journal in 1914, it seems quite moderate compared to the newspapers of “Hinchak” and “Troşak”. As could be seen, it does not entail many provocative and very clear-cut statements or views. Despite all these, this newspaper was perceived as a great threat to the Ottoman Empire for a long time. In fact, “Armenia” was regarded as an organ of the Armenakan Party. Paradoxically, this party under this title was not mentioned at all in Ottoman documents. Sometimes, in the eyes of for instance D. Mavroyeni, Portukalian was seen as a “père tranquille”(calm, fatherly) who was married and had children, but the Ottoman Porte did not believe this. Actually this man was one of those responsible for the bloody Van events in 1896. Between years 1885 and 1914, was there a change made in the “Armenia” journal?

Unfortunately, our sources for the period between 1885 and 1914 are few, but there are still some that exist. In fact, after the Adana incident in 1892, the Ottoman police carrying out a search near Maraş in 1895 have found, other than some copies of the “Armenia” journal, also some stamps of the organization founded in Marseille by Portukalian and sent to Maraş<sup>28</sup>.

With this search, a very interesting point emerges: One of the stamps found has a *black cross* on it. Due to abbreviations, it is difficult to understand the Armenian inscription surrounding it, but most likely it reads the following: “Maraş 1880” and “Hay H(ayr)e(nasira)ts Ing(erutyun)”, meaning the “Armenian Patriotic Society/Armenian Patriotic Union” founded firstly by Portukalian which we have mentioned in the previous pages. The “piyur letter” below could be the first letter of Portukalian’s name.

This organization, which continues its existence in Cilicia, is actually a continuation and extension of the “Sev Khach” or “Black Cross” terrorist organization established by Portukalian. In the edition of the “Armenia” journal dated 23 April 1890, the following is stated: “the purpose of the Armenian Patriotic Union is to bring a change and proposals to Turkish Armenia according to local necessities. The Armenians desire is to govern their selves. With this, the seizure of properties, which has caused damage to Armenia, could be eliminated. In order to fulfill the organization’s purpose, it consumes its own power and for freedom and liberties, forms an internal power and motivates those starting publishing and those striving with a divine manner for the wellbeing of their country. The Union has a newspaper like a language. Apart from its recognition, it announces the Union’s purpose to public opinion. It provides information on the enslavement of poor Armenians. And it installs patriotism to the Armenians.

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28 *Ermeni Olayları Tarihi (History of the Armenian Events)*, pp. 120-121, 124-125.

Those wanting to become members or communicate with the Armenian Patriotic Union must appeal to the figure below:

Mkrtich Portukalian Marseille (France)”.

Also among the documents confiscated during the search, the following section signed by Portukalian was found not in the first, but in one of the first copies of “Armenia”:

6/18 June 1885.

“The Purpose of Armenia”

“As the Armenian nation is dispersed all over the place, some of them live in Europe. The poor Armenians in Europe have been dismissed from their

*Famous Avetis Nazarbekyan, one of the founders of the Hinchak Party reaches the following conclusion: “The education provided at homes and schools eliminated our power, self-confidence and the initiative to freely speak and act according to our beliefs.”*

homelands in which they have been born with great difficulties. This exile was beneficial to the course which allowed the Armenians everywhere to build relations and communicate with each other. The first of the means for this is newspapers and as it incorporates the events in various places and the idea of Armenians in Europe, by announcing their way of uniting and negotiations, it prepares the unity and alliances formed in their minds”.

These documents are important because through the ideas they convey, the sovereignty of a new country different than the Ottoman Empire is implied. Supposedly, Armenian territories were occupied by the Turks and in order to regain them, “various” methods could be resorted to. The text does not clearly express this, but actually violence is one of these methods. As could be seen, Portukalian had not refrained from resorting to terrorism with the “Black Cross”, at least in the beginning. Portukalian, who also did not exclude armed struggle then, promoted local riots, but slowly much more severe and radical revolutionists than him started emerging.

For instance, in his article entitled “İnç enk yev inç piti linenk” (What are we and what shall we become?) in the edition of “Armenia” dated 28 August 1886, the famous Avetis Nazarbekyan, one of the founders of the Hinchak Party reaches the following conclusion: “The education provided at homes and schools eliminated our power, self-confidence and the initiative to freely speak and act according to our beliefs.”<sup>29</sup>

29 Gerard Libaridian *Modern Armenia: people, nation, state* pp.78-79.

There is one thing that Libaridian has not mentioned: When Lorents, alias Avetis Nazarbekyan and his friends attempted to include the Marxist theories in “Armenia”, Portukalian had refused to publish them. Portukalian was always a person who believed in God and tried to reconcile religion with revolution. This could be proven with the “Vardapetaran Hayastani Azatutyun” (Religious Teachings for Freedom of Armenia) published in 1891 in Marseille.

In the first footnote on page 85 of Gerard Libaridian’s, despite stating that the author or authors of this brochure is unknown, discovering that Portukalian, Agopyan and Mkrtich agree on Avedisyan’s printing, it would not be much of a surprise... In this book entitled “Vardapetan Hayastani Azatutyun”, the following is written: “political and religious principles approve the rebellion against the government; actually it is a religious duty”.<sup>30</sup>

Due to his close cooperation with Patrik Hrimyan, Portukalian’s religious approach seems rational. We could presume that because of feeling as if it contradicts his religious teachings, the idea of terrorism through the “Black Cross” disturbed Portukalian in spite of everything, because we believe that other Armenians could have also become victims of this terrorism. But still, the Armenakan Party not being too careful regarding methods was to emerge until 1896. Mkrtich Avedisyan who was Portukalian’s right hand guy during the Van rebellion was killed during conflicts and based on the data we gathered, it became a turning point in Portukalian’s ideas on violence. From then on, more restrained methods would be preferred. The Young Turk Revolution of 1908 highly effected Portukalian. Now, the Armenians were to defend their rights in the Ottoman Empire through legal means within a certain framework of sovereignty. In the edition of “Armenia” of 1914, the “new situation” entailed the freedoms acknowledged by Portukalian and granted to the Armenians by the Young Turks. For Portukalian, an Armenia which was the enemy of the Ottoman Empire was unthinkable. Among the brochures in the same edition of the journal, “Vardapetan Hayastani Azatutyun” does not exist, but “Mi kağtek” (Don’t Migrate!) does. What exactly was in this booklet?

The answer to this question is found on page 178 of Frédéric Macler’s book entitled “Chrestomathie de l’Arménien Moderne”. In fact, Portukalian wrote the following in his brochure published in 1913 in Armenian: “After the Ottoman Constitution was declared again, the numbers of migrant Armenians returning to their Homeland (Turkish Armenia) did not increase as expected.

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30 Ibid, p. 78.

On the complete opposite, the freedom to travel caused a greater mass to migrate. While eleven percent of the Armenians returned to their Homeland, there was an increase of ninety percent in their migrations to America. Therefore, the number of Armenian, Turkish and Syrian migrants gathering in Armenian hotels<sup>31</sup>, which have increased in Marseille, with the purpose to travel to America, gradually increased... They did not know the language, they had no money, they only knew one or two people in America and expecting financial aid from them was doubtful. Under these conditions, they had to wait in Marseille for months”.

After mentioning the obstacles which the Armenians had to face in America, he continues in the following way: “when I started my journey towards Harput to return to Van in 1876 without passing through Diyarbakır and Bitlis and observed its fertile fields, the carters repeated with pride this Turkish proverb common among society: *“Harput plain is a golden lair”*<sup>32</sup>... Look on all sides and you will clearly see the development in Turkey. Perhaps all these are developing slowly and are not done all at once. Compare it to times far from us and you will be able to understand the progress in Turkey much clearer...”

This document is important from several aspects, because certain modesty appears within Portukalian’s policy he is carrying out. But at the same time the following is proven: The Armenians had exiled their selves before the First World War and in his brochure, Portukalian neither mentions the pressures exerted by the Turks, nor the imaginary massacres.

Let us add this: Some Armenians returned during the war, but as volunteers supporting the Russians... Despite all these, in his brochure and the edition of “Armenia” we are studying in general, Portukalian displays, of course to a certain extent, his good will.

But it was also possible to ask the following question to Portukalian: Why had Portukalian, who had suggested not migrating, not returned or was returning to Turkey?

Perhaps Portukalian was providing explanations on this in one of the editions of “Armenia. But it is certain that especially since 1908, it is possible to observe a certain softening in Portukalian’s approaches. The Armenakan Party became the Constitutional Ramgavar Party which he was not even an official member of. Among the parties in the committees that had found its

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31 There was even a “Kiği Hotel” in Marseille.

32 In the original Armenian text, it is written in Turkish. [communiqués-de-presse/2012/communiqué-de-la-presidence-de-la-republique.13037.html](http://communiqués-de-presse/2012/communiqué-de-la-presidence-de-la-republique.13037.html)

origin, it was the most moderate party, but we should not forget this: Privacy, little talking, forgetfulness and silence was among Portukalian’s methods. On the other hand, Diran Kelekyan, who was a Ramgavar, had actually supported the Armenians resorting to weapons 1,5 years before the Ottoman Empire entered the war. Did Diran Kelekyan, who was from the same party, have a connection with Portukalian? Let’s assume that he did; how were their relations? Why this conflict?

What was Portukalian’s stance on the Armenian volunteers? In the text of the “Mi kağtek” brochure, there is no mention of the volunteers gathering in Russia and preparing to strike Turkey.

If we perceive all these within the framework of the solidarity between the Armenians, our margin of error will most probably be small. Obviously it will be naïve of us to expect Portukalian to openly denounce the Dashnaksutyun Party’s two-faced behaviors, but still, “from silence comes acknowledgment”.

How could one know whether he didn’t act two-facedly? In conclusion, a certain softening in the political concepts of Portukalian is reflected in the “Armenia” edition we are studying.

Religious news is very important for Portukalian. The editor of “Armenia” extensively publishes news concerning the reforms of “Turkish Armenia”. The initiatives taken against the Armenians, despite being controversial, are still conveyed. The incidents happening in Russia are also not forgotten. Unsurprisingly, there are also information and news provided regarding the Armenian community in Marseille, but Portukalian had become a specialist in establishing secret organizations. At the end of our research, we also discovered the reason for the Ramgavar’s also being among those arrested in 1915.

Despite being his opponents, Portukalian also supported the other Armenian parties. Portukalian came from a background of terrorism and had advanced to much more restrained approaches at least outwardly. Anyhow, the wording of “Armenia”, compared to “Troşak” or “Hinchak”, was much softer.

In 1914, it was no longer possible for the editions of “Armenia” to encourage the Armenians in Turkey to rebel. We conveyed our observations until now, but let us not forget that “Armenia” was published in Marseille until 1923. The photographs we possess, although partially, constitute the time of war and the period after. Researching the developments in “Armenia” within this time frame will be the subject of another article.

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