

THE FIRST REFUGE AND THE LAST DEFENSE

The Armenian Church, Etchmiadzin, and the Armenian Genocide

Whenever a massacre of Armenian Christians broke out in the Ottoman Empire, the common practice for Armenians was to seek safety within the walls of their churches and monasteries. It was no different at the start of the Armenian Genocide in April 1915 as atrocities committed by the Young Turk regime ruling the Ottoman Empire spread terror across the eastern province of Van. In the city of Van, Armenians and other fellow Christians barricaded themselves in the city's two Armenian quarters. Out in the countryside, as their villages were attacked and burned, Armenians fled into the mountains and sought shelter in the numerous religious sanctuaries dotting the landscape.



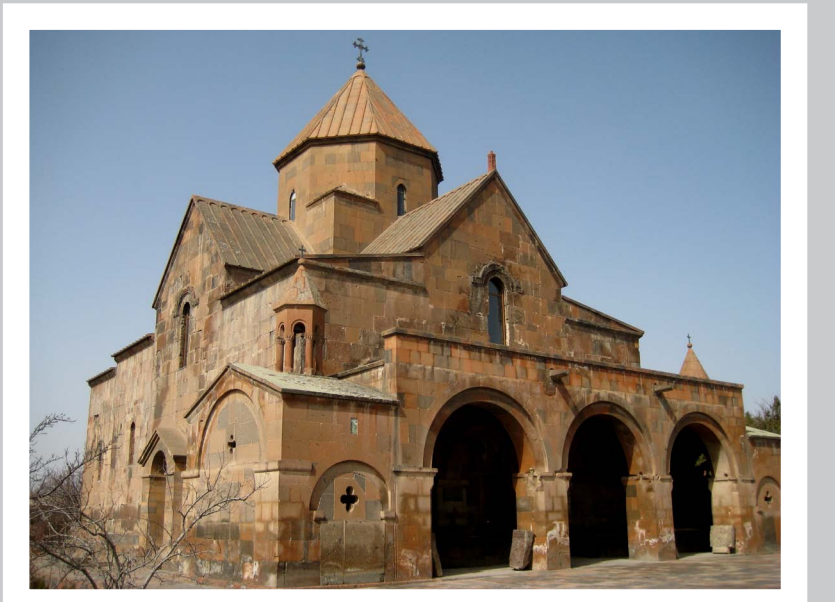
Van province was both densely populated by Armenians and located close to the Russian and Persian borders. For these reasons the Young Turk government selected this location to initiate its premeditated policy of expunging the Armenian population of the Ottoman Empire. The military campaigns of World War I provided the cover to arm the local Turkish and Kurdish populations and incite them into plundering and destroying the Armenian communities. News from the Armenian Patriarchate of Constantinople about widespread atrocities soon reached the leader of the Armenian Church who resided just over the border in the spiritual capital of Etchmiadzin.



The pontiff, Gevorg V Sureniants, with the title of Supreme Patriarch and Catholicos of All Armenians, alarmed by the violence being committed against the Armenian civilian population in Turkey, became the first public figure to alert the heads of states in Europe. With the United States a neutral party to the global conflict at the time, the catholicos also appealed directly to President Woodrow Wilson.

Much as the border between Turkey and Russia divided historic Armenia in two, it also separated the centers of Armenian Christianity. When Turkish forces staged their first major offensive along the eastern frontier by crossing into Iran and Russia in late 1914, they also attacked and dislodged the Armenian population. Driven from their homes by massacres, Armenians first turned toward Etchmiadzin to seek safety from the Turks and Kurds.

By the time Russian forces advanced into Van province in May 1915 and relieved the Armenians besieged in the city of Van, half the Armenian population of the region had already been slaughtered. In the face of a Turkish counter-offensive, the Russian command decided to withdraw from the region. The military retreat only spelled the renewal of atrocities and the remaining Armenians took flight from Van north toward the only destination they could, Etchmiadzin. From there Armenian refugees spread all across Russian Armenia and Transcaucasia toward Yerevan, Tbilisi, and farther north into Russia proper.

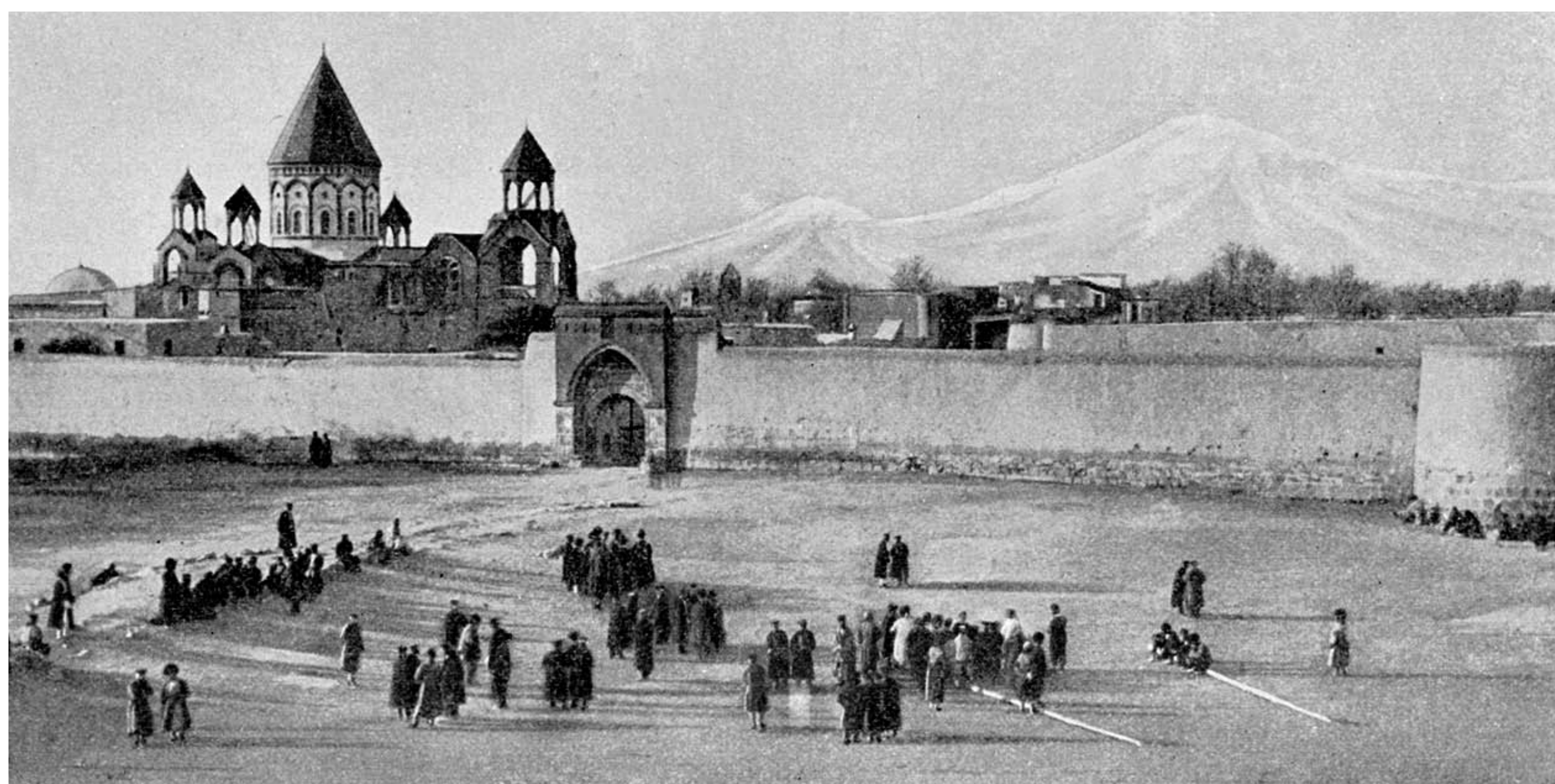


Under the direction of the catholicos, local Armenians organized to deliver relief to their displaced countrymen. With over 100,000 frightened and famished refugees streaming in, resources were quickly overwhelmed. Catholicos Gevorg V placed the entire compound of Etchmiadzin at the disposal of his people, but he could do little to stem the death toll as thousands starved. The tide against famine and epidemics was finally turned with the arrival of humanitarian aid from the United States.

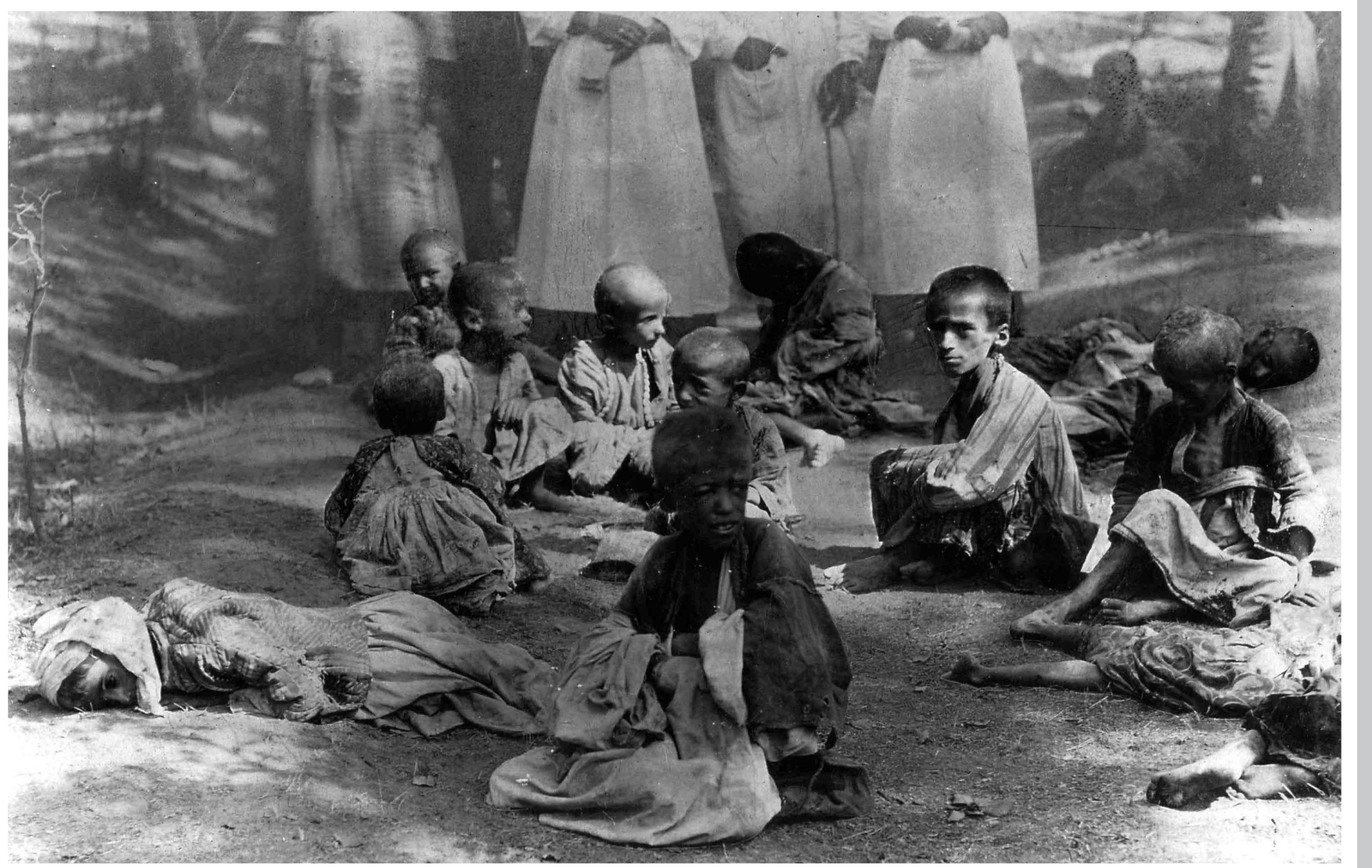


For the people of Armenia, 1915 was only the beginning of the disaster that ultimately claimed 1.5 million lives. With the ruin of the Armenian churches and monasteries in Van and everywhere else in the Ottoman Empire, the first Christian nation that traced its roots to the Apostles Bartholomew and Jude Thaddeus disappeared from most of its ancient homeland.

The photographs in this exhibit were assembled from a number of repositories in the United States and in the Republic of Armenia. They are brought here together for the first time to reconstruct visually the horrors that swept away the Armenian population of Van province in the Ottoman Empire, and to document the efforts of the Mother See of Holy Etchmiadzin to save the Armenian people from total annihilation.

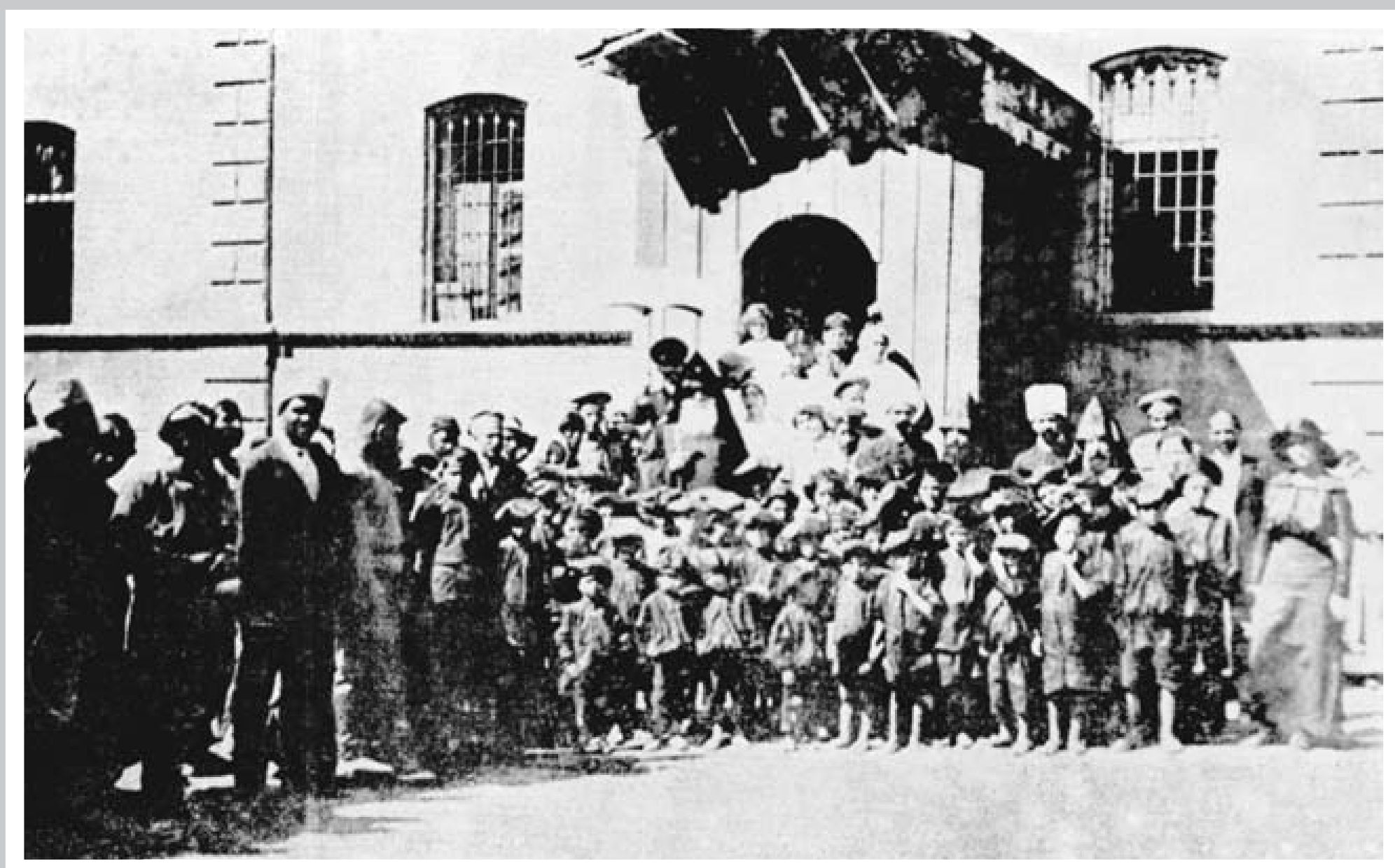


EARLY WARNING



Gevorg V Sureniants

- 1847 Born in Tbilisi (Russian Georgia)
- 1872 Ordained archimandrite (vardapet)
- 1874 Instructor at Gevorgian Academy
- 1875 Primate of Diocese of Karabakh
- 1878 Primate of Diocese of Alexandropol (Gyumri), constructs city cathedral Holy Mother of God (Surb Astvadsadin)
- 1882 Ordained bishop
- 1886 Primate of Diocese of Astrakhan
- 1895 Ordained archbishop
- 1907 Appointed locum tenens upon the death of Catholicos Mkrtych Khrimian
- 1911 Elected catholicos
- 1912 Appoints Armenian National Delegation headed by Boghos Nubar to represent Armenian concerns in European capitals
- 1914 Creates Fraternal Aid Committee to assist refugees
- 1915 Issues appeal to international community about atrocities in Turkey
- 1918 Refuses to abandon Etchmiadzin in the face of Turkish invasion
- 1930 Dies in Vagharshapat (Soviet Armenia)



The New York Times APPEAL TO TURKEY TO STOP MASSACRES

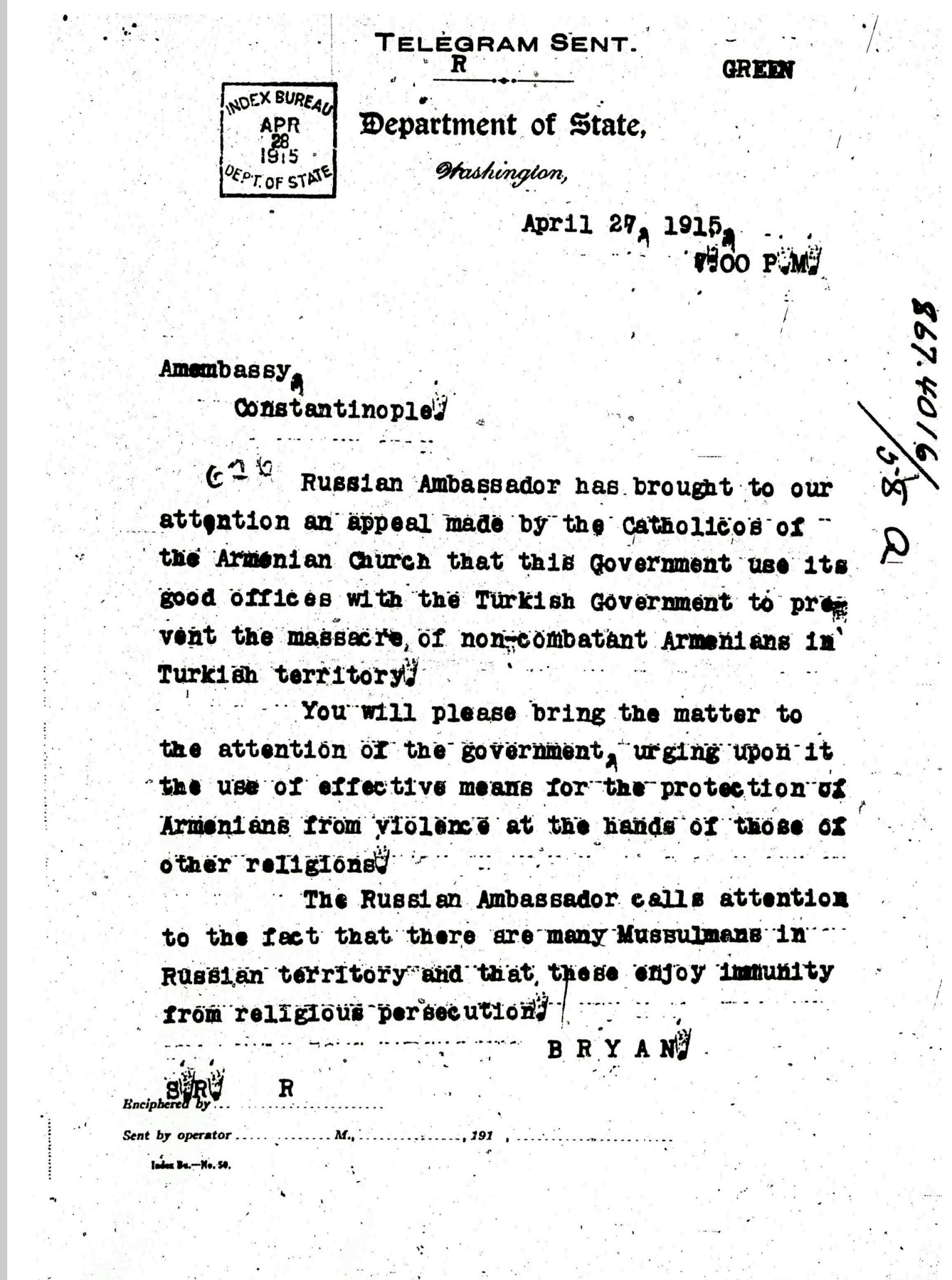
Ambassador Morgenthau Instructed to Make Representations on Request of Russia.

WASHINGTON, April 27.—An appeal for relief of Armenian Christians in Turkey, following reported massacres and threatened further outrages, was made to the Turkish Government today by the United States.

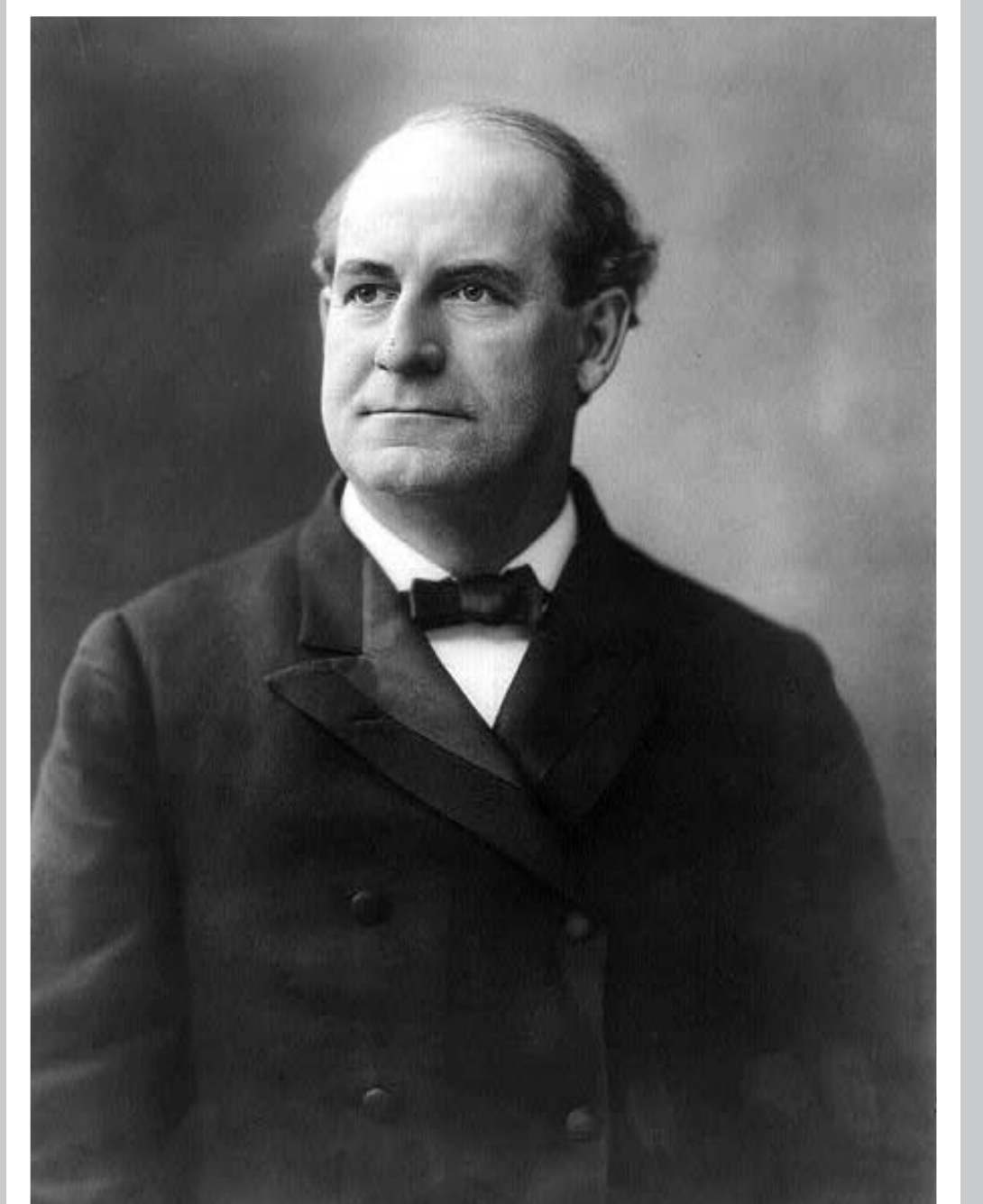
Acting upon the request of the Russian Government, submitted through Ambassador Bakhmeteff, Secretary Bryan cabled to Ambassador Morgenthau at Constantinople to make representations to the Turkish authorities asking that steps be taken for the protection of imperiled Armenians and to prevent the recurrence of religious outbreaks.

Ambassador Bakhmeteff called at the State Department late today with a dispatch from his Government, which included an appeal to the President of the United States for aid, forwarded through the Russian Government from the Catholicos of the Armenian Church at Etchmiadzin, in the Caucasus.

"The request from the head of the Armenian Church to this Government, forwarded through the Russian Ambassador," said Secretary Bryan, "is the first official notice the department has received of the reported Armenian massacres. Our action was taken as a matter of humanity."



William Jennings Bryan, United States Secretary of State (1913-1915) during the first administration of President Woodrow Wilson, notified U.S. Ambassador to the Ottoman Empire, Henry Morgenthau, of the message delivered by Russian Ambassador to the U.S., George Bakhmeteff, on behalf of Catholicos Gevorg V Sureniants. The Armenian pontiff sent similar messages to the heads of states of France, England, Italy, and Russia, effectively issuing the very first early warning of an impending genocide. The notification by Catholicos Gevorg Sureniants prompted the Allied Powers, France, England, and Russia, to issue on May 24, 1915, the first formal accusation of the commission of 'crimes against humanity.' Secretary Bryan instructed Ambassador Morgenthau to deliver the warning in Istanbul, which stated: "In view of these new crimes of Turkey against humanity and civilization the Allied governments announce publicly to the Sublime Porte that they will hold personally responsible these crimes all members of the Ottoman government and those of their agents who are implicated in such massacres."

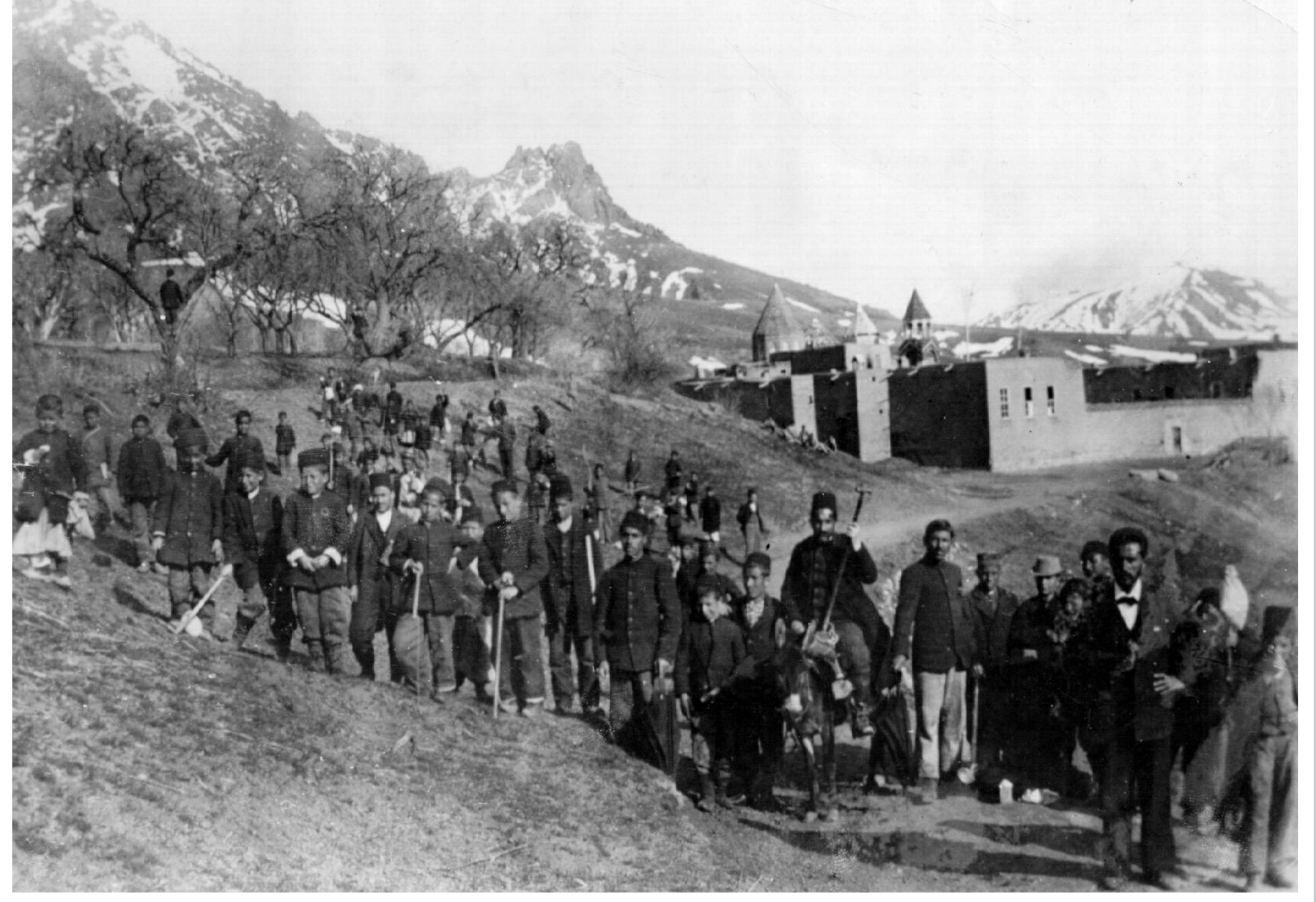
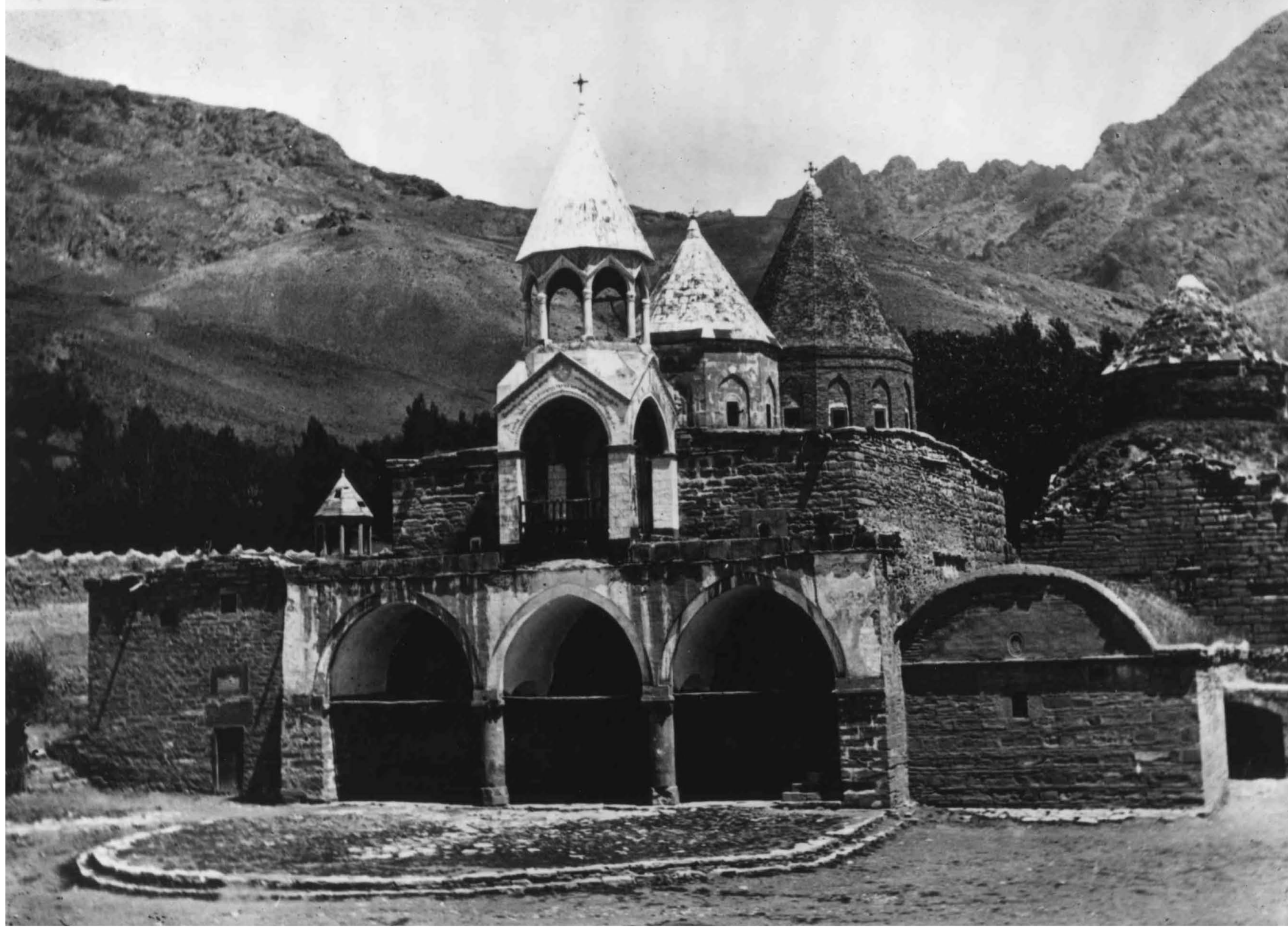


APRIL 28, 1915

ETCHMIADZIN 1441 - 1914

- 1441** — After centuries of exile, the Mother See of the Armenian Apostolic Church is restored to Etchmiadzin, its historic center in Armenia dating back more than a thousand years to the time of the Armenian kingdom.
- 1763 – 1780** — Catholicos Simeon Yerevantsi (Simon of Yerevan) opens a seminary, organizes the church archives, orders a cadastral survey of the church's landholdings, and, by establishing the first printing press in Armenia, transforms Etchmiadzin into a center of learning.
- 1780 – 1799** — Catholicos Ghukas Karnetsi (Luke of Karin/Erzerum) finalizes the architectural appearance of the Mother Cathedral of Etchmiadzin with its unique set of four smaller cupolas surrounding the higher central dome, symbolizing the sanctuaries originally built in the royal capital of Vagharshapat, including St. Gayane, St. Hripsime, St. Mariane called Shoghakat, and Zvartnots, altogether recalling the founding of Christianity in the 4th century at this site in Armenia.
- 1800 – 1878** — After a series of wars in the south Caucasus, Armenia is divided between Ottoman Turkey and Imperial Russia. Eastern Armenia, including Etchmiadzin, Yerevan, Gyumri/Alexandropol, and Kars are placed under Russian rule. Western Armenia, including Van, Bitlis, Kharpert, and Erzerum, remain under Turkish rule.
- 1843 – 1857** — Catholicos Nerses V Ashtaraketsi (Nerses of Ashtarak) revitalizes the Mother See of Holy Etchmiadzin as the leading center of the Armenian Church by encouraging the resettlement of Armenians in their homeland after 800 years of dispersion under the pressure of continued invasions by Turks, Persians, and Mongols. The grove of trees he has planted along the perimeter of Etchmiadzin is named in his honor.
- 1856** — Mkrtych Khrimian is appointed abbot of the monastery of Varag, a thousand-years-old pilgrimage site an hour east of the city of Van, where he establishes in 1857 the Zharangavorats (Heritage) seminary, the first school to apply modern teaching methods in Western Armenia, and where in 1858 he begins publishing *Ardsvi Vapurakan* (Eagle of Vaspurakan), the first periodical issued in Armenia proper.
- 1866 – 1882** — Catholicos Gevorg (George) IV Kerestechian begins publication of *Ararat* monthly, the official journal of the Mother See, and presides in 1874 at the opening of the Gevorgian Academy at Etchmiadzin, named in his honor, which becomes the leading school in Eastern Armenia. He ordains Khrimian as bishop in 1868.
- 1869 – 1873** — Mkrtych Khrimian serves as Armenian Patriarch of Constantinople/Istanbul, the highest Armenian church office in the Ottoman Empire.
- 1876 – 1909** — Sultan Abdul-Hamid II introduces autocratic rule across the Ottoman Empire and harshly suppresses minority aspirations through severe censorship of the press and a network of domestic spies. In Western Armenia, mounted paramilitary regiments, called Hamidiye in the name of the sultan, consisting of Muslim Kurdish tribesmen, are equipped by the government as a regional force to repress the Armenian population.
- 1878** — August: The Treaty of Berlin addresses the Armenian Question by requiring the Ottomans to implement reforms to improve safety of persons and security of property. Abdul-Hamid ignores the treaty provision. Returning empty-handed from the Congress of Berlin where he headed an Armenian delegation seeking international commitment to supporting reforms in the Armenian provinces of the Ottoman Empire, Khrimian delivers his Sermon of the Iron Ladle in Istanbul raising questions about the value of promises made by the Great Powers and encouraging self-reliance. He is exiled in 1890 to Jerusalem by the Ottoman authorities and denied travel permit.
- 1892 – 1907** — Catholicos Mkrtych I Khrimian, elected to the pontificate of Etchmiadzin, becomes popularly known as Khrimian Hayrik, father of the people, for his passionate defense of the rights of the common man against the abuses of Turkish and Russian governments.
- 1894 – 1896** — Large-scale massacres of Armenians in the Ottoman Empire during the reign of Sultan Abdul-Hamid II result in the killing of 200,000 Armenians and extensive destruction of Armenian-owned property. Thousands flee Turkey and take refuge in Russian Armenia. Others emigrate to the United States, where, with Khrimian's 1898 authorization, the Diocese of the Armenian Church of America is established.
- 1896** — Under the leadership of several political organizations, Armenians in Van organize defense against imminent massacre to avert fate of other Armenian-populated cities. Upon accepting a promise of amnesty, Armenians put down their weapons and the Armenian neighborhoods are immediately attacked and plundered while those attempting to flee the country are ambushed and annihilated. In light of international outrage at the empire-wide atrocities, under diplomatic pressure, Abdul-Hamid makes false promises of reforms.
- 1903** — Tsar Nicholas II of Russia decrees confiscation of Armenian church properties to undermine the rising tide of Armenian nationalism. Khrimian calls upon Armenians to resist the expropriations. Deputy Primate of Nor-Bayazid, Khoren Muratbekian (future catholicos 1932-1938), is exiled in 1903 for opposing the confiscations.
- 1908** — Young Turk Revolution in Constantinople overthrows Sultan Abdul-Hamid II. The Ottoman constitution decrees liberties and equality previously denied to religious minorities. Armenians begin organizing their communities to participate in political life.
- 1909** — Religious and political reaction to new rights extended to Christians intensifies social and ethnic tensions in the Ottoman Empire resulting in widespread massacre of Armenians in Adana province. Young Turk leaders turn radical and promote Turkification, Islamization, and ethnic homogenization policies.
- 1911 – 1930** — Catholicos Gevorg V Sureniants, convenes an ecclesiastical council meeting with national leaders in Tbilisi on September 19, 1912, in view of the continuing persecutions of Armenians in Turkey to appeal to the Russian government to intervene diplomatically and appoints Boghos Nubar as his representative in Europe to raise the Armenian issue with the Great Powers.
- 1912** — September 25: Deputy Primate of Yerevan, Bishop Khoren Muratbekian, leads a meeting which proposes to Catholicos Gevorg V to appeal directly to the tsar of Russia.
- December 23: Catholicos Gevorg V conveys his concerns to Nicholas II, stating: *The Armenian Question, which 34 years ago was raised in front of European diplomacy, remains unanswered to this day. If the Armenians are once again ignored, it would amount to delivering an entire people to final annihilation.*
- 1914** — August 1: World War I begins with Austria-Hungary and Germany aligned against France, Russia, and Great Britain. Ottoman Turkey signs secret alliance with Germany and begins mobilization. On the Western front, German forces occupy Belgium and advance through northern France until the mid-September Battle of the Marne. On the Eastern front, German army crushes Russian forces by the end of August at the Battle of Tannenberg. Half the Russian forces on the Caucasus frontier are reassigned to the Eastern front in Europe.
- October 29: Ottoman Turkey enters World War I by opening hostilities against Russia and Iran.
- December 22: Under the command of Minister of War Ismail Enver, one of the Young Turk triumvirs ruling Turkey, the Ottoman army goes on the offensive against Russia on the Caucasus front and advances on Sarikamish.
- December 28: As a stream of Armenian refugees from Turkey and Iran begins to arrive, Catholicos Gevorg V creates the Holy Etchmiadzin Fraternal Aid Committee in order to organize local relief efforts. The compound eventually becomes a vast refugee camp and the Gevorgian Academy is converted into a hospital and an orphanage. Bishop Yeprem Sukiasian is appointed the presidency of the Fraternal Aid Committee. Upon Bishop Yeprem's death from the spreading epidemics ravaging the refugee camp, Bishop Garegin Hovsepian (future primate of the Diocese of the Armenian Church of North America, and Catholicos of the Great House of Cilicia 1943-1952) is given the responsibility.

THE SCHOOL OF VARAG



The slopes and villages of Varag mountain are filled with mementos of [Ardruni King] Senekerim and his family. One of the villages is called Shushants after the name of the king's daughter, whose gravesite was a much-beloved shrine until 1915. Senekerim liked Varag so much that he willed that after his death his sons bring consecrated tokens (from Sebastia) to Varag. In fact, his grave is in one corner of the Mother Church near the burial site of Catholicos Petros Getadarts. One cannot know how many times the buildings of Varag monastery have been renovated since Senekerim [died] in 1021. Khrimian, in 1896, restored the monastery for the last time, after a destructive fire. Except for the mother church itself [the buildings] were used by the prominent people of Van as summer residences. The monastery had a faithful caretaker, Derts Petros, who looked after the manuscripts. Varag had a seminary, whose graduates spread the light to many parts of Armenia. - *Levon Kazanjian from Van city*



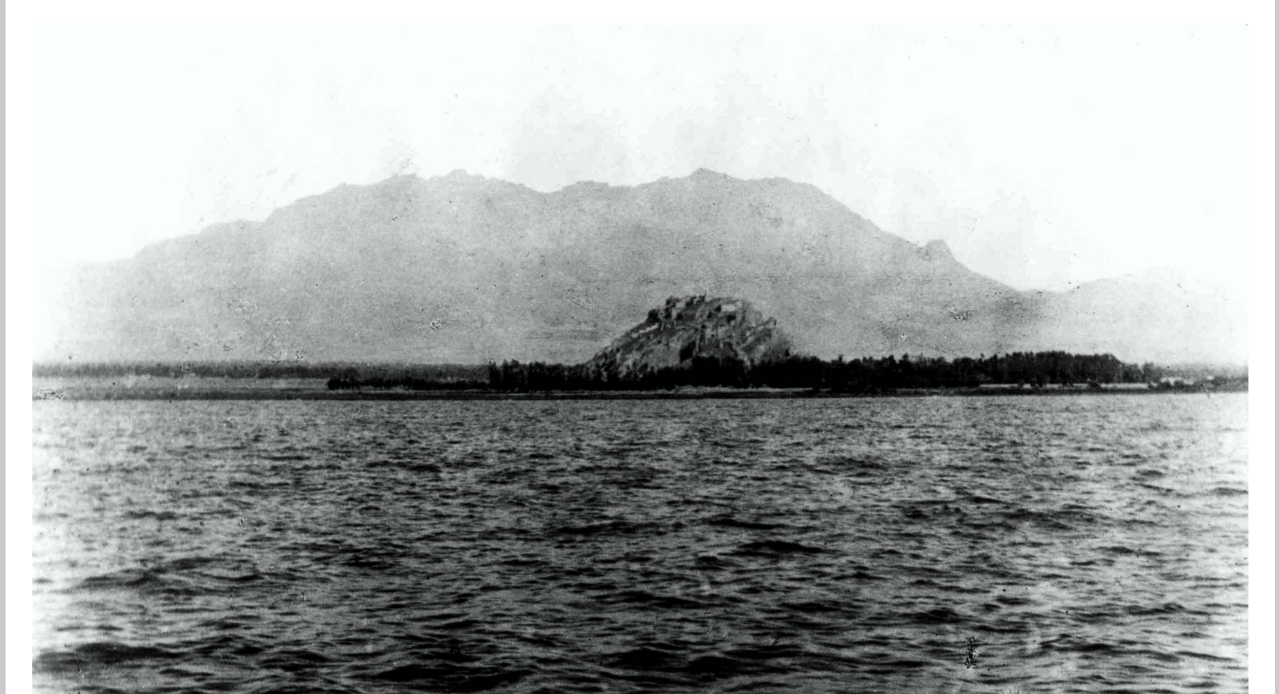
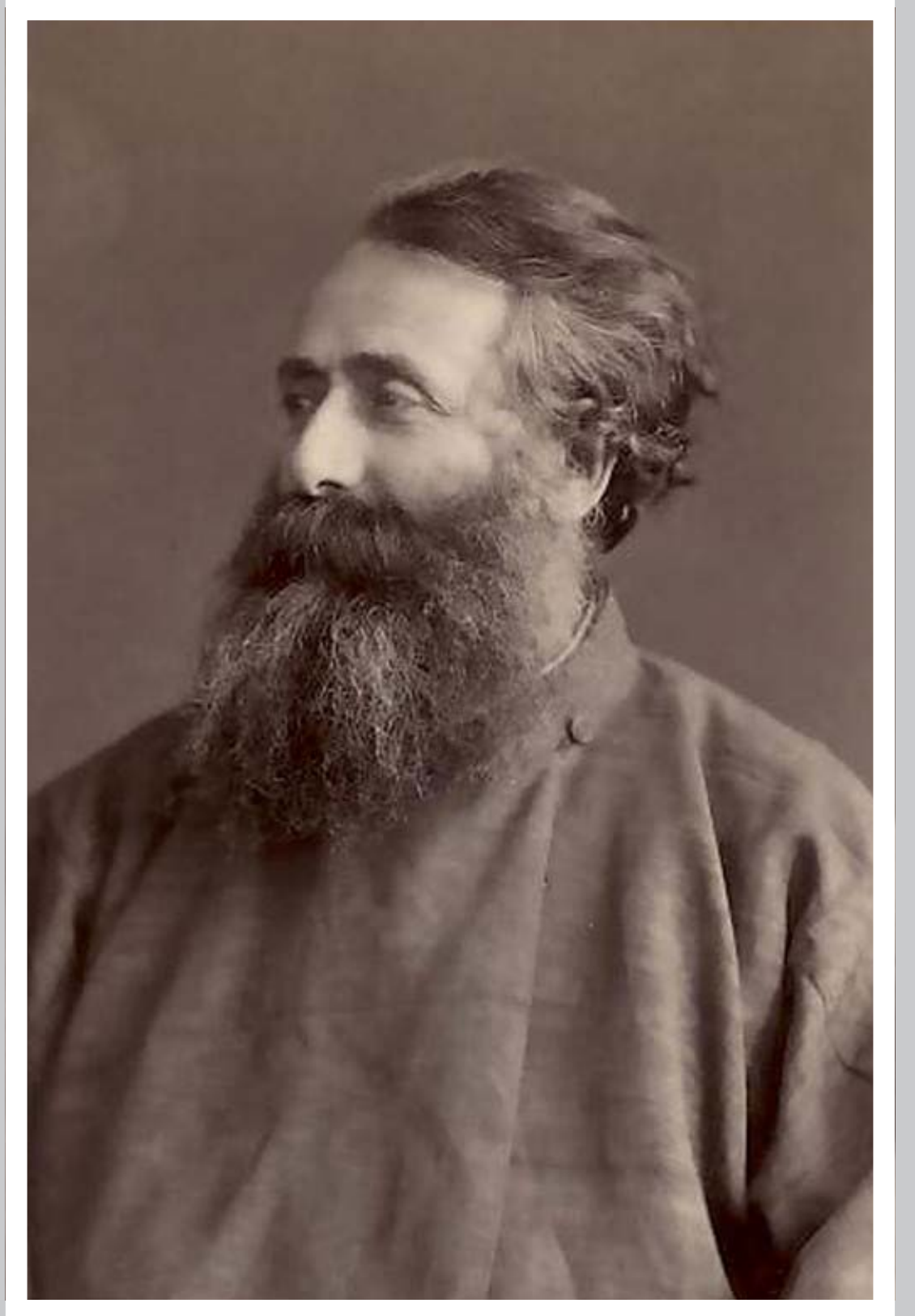
Above: The throne of Senekerim-Hovhannes of the royal Ardruni house, king of Vaspurakan (1003-1021) in southern Armenia, and other treasures of the Armenian Church associated with the era of Armenian self-rule, including a jeweled cross, a bishop's miter, two pontifical staffs, and a manuscript, preserved until the late 19th century—now lost—and displayed by the elder cenobites and young acolytes of the Monastery of Varag.

Right: Mkrtych Khrimian, abbot of the Monastery of Varag and founder of its school, later Armenian Patriarch of Constantinople and Catholicos of All Armenians at Etchmiadzin; the Rock of Van with Mount Varag in the background photographed from Lake Van; 'Castle Rock' with fortifications built up over a span of 3,000 years; Mount Varag, with the outcrop on the far right above the Monastery of Varag, viewed from the top of the Rock of Van; the Monastery and School of Varag.

Below: Ruins of the central churches of the Monastery of Varag across the decades of neglect and earthquake.

Top: The churches and school before their destruction.

The monastery of Yedi Kilisa [Seven Churches as the Turks called the monastery of Varag], situated on the slopes of that mountain, is the most frequented of the numerous cloisters in the neighbourhood; and thither we made our way on a fine November day. The first snowstorm of the coming winter had raged during the night; and the snow was lying in spite of a brilliant sun. A ride of some seven miles along the windings of the track brought us to the door of the enclosure. We had passed over rising ground, in places furrowed by the plough, but, except for the oasis of the village and monastery of Shushantz, entirely devoid of trees. A mere fleck upon the white canopy of the hills on our right hand had been named to us as the cloister of Surb Khach [Holy Cross]. Our Armenian friends in Van were fond of speaking of these foundations as centres of light and learning in the older and happier times. They have been scattered with a liberal hand over this magnificent landscape; yet how they have fallen from their estate! Two poor monks, who lived on gritty bread and salted cheese inlaid with herbs, received us at the gate. One was the abbot, or rather the deputy of the abbot; for that office is still held by the present Catholicos, the Hayrik or Little Father of the Armenians. -*H.F. B. Lynch, 1893*



APRIL 1915

Our [Kurd] villager Ibrahim the son of Salah stood in front of our village headman in order to protect him. However, someone from the [Turkish] militia first killed Salah and then killed Atom Karapetian. The majority of our village had succeeded in making their escape earlier. As for the others, Aso, the son of our Kurdish villager Ahmet, gathered those remaining in hiding and guided them toward the plain of Norgiugh before returning. That is how the people reached Varag unharmed.

-*Grigor Baghdasarian from Aratents village in Van district*

Holding my father's hand, in the company of others from our village, we ascended the mountain and wanted to reach Varag. The Turks stopped chasing us as night fell. Instead they went to besiege the monastery of Varag. Armenians fleeing Varag, were making their escape in our direction. At night, after we noticed that the Turks had departed, we descended from the mountain and sought refuge toward Van. In the fields near Van, the Turks opened fire on us and killed some of the women. The remaining ones with me and my father entered Van.

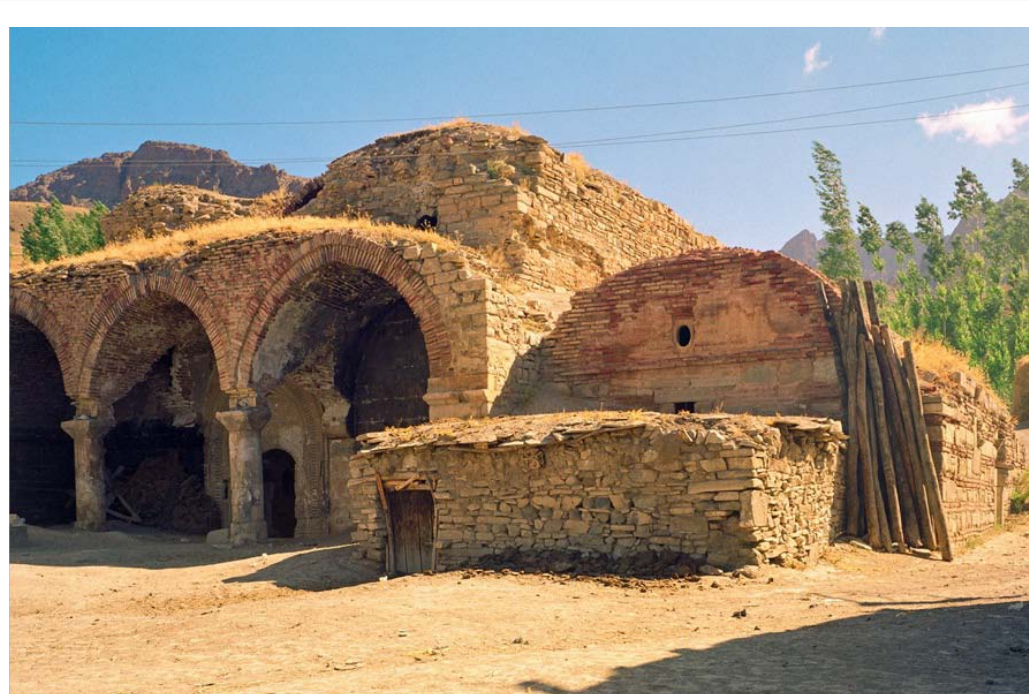
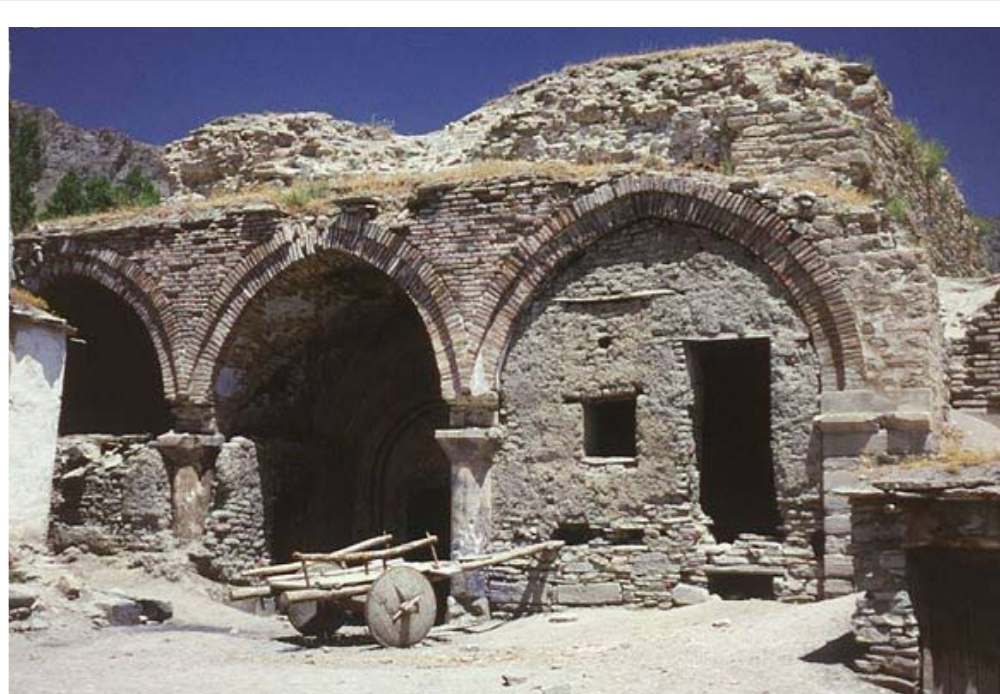
-*Sargis Aghoyan of Shushants village, Van-Tosp district*

At night we gathered at Varag. The people from the direction of Koghpan also arrived. We organized to defend ourselves, while three to four companies went up to mount Karargiah and Tziaternuk. However, Guyumdjian and Toros, the leaders in Varag, decided to take their fighters and withdraw under the cover of night. Within half a day, a mob descended upon Varag and began burning it. They chased us. Khacho from our village and Mkrtych of Arjak with their company of men fought back against some 30 government soldiers. About 15 to 18 persons from our people were killed. On the second night with some 1500 to 2000 people we descended to Van.

-*Survivors from Kurapash village, Van district*

The Kurds reached them and the youngsters in Varag, but it is not clear why they sent them to Van unharmed. However, just as we were nearing Kurapash, some 400-500 government forces and Hamidiye approached the more than 500 women and children and undressed us completely. Thus stark naked we approached Aygestan [the Armenian suburb of Van] from where they provided us clothing to enter the city.

-*Horomsima from Farman village, Van-Tosp district*



ETCHMIADZIN 1915 - 1918

1915

- January 17: Ottoman forces under the commands of Ismail Enver encounter stiff resistance at the Russian fortifications of Sarikamish while the risks of a winter campaign in snowbound country turns the offensive into a disastrous route. The Pan-Turanian objective of the campaign into the Caucasus is delayed until 1918, and with the near complete loss of the Ottoman Third Army, the eastern frontier of Turkey is left exposed to a Russian advance.
- February: Ottoman Minister of the Interior Mehmet Talaat, the Young Turk mastermind of the Armenian Genocide, appoints Enver's brother-in-law, Jevdet, governor of Van province. Scapegoating Armenians for its military failures, the Young Turk regime begins disarming and executing Armenian conscripts in the Ottoman armed forces as the initial phase of the Armenian Genocide.
- March 30: Jevdet arrives in Van and begins to surround the city with up to 10,000 troops consisting of regular Turkish army soldiers, Kurdish irregulars and Circassian horsemen. Jevdet pressures the Armenian community to deliver more conscripts and laborers raising fears about his true intentions.
- April 18: Signaling the start of the Armenian Genocide, as wholesale massacre of the population of Armenian villages along the southern shore of Lake Van at Vostan and Hayots Tsor begins, Jevdet orders Armenians in the city of Van to surrender their arms. Armenians read the order as the signal for their impending destruction and begin barricading their neighborhoods.
- April 19: Armed bands, militiamen, and gendarmerie under the command of local Turkish officials begin ravaging Armenian villages along the eastern shore of Lake Van. District governor Ali Riza Bey, a Young Turk from Istanbul, imprisons 400 men from Agants, with a population of just over 2,000 Armenians, marches them to the lakefront at night and executes them, effectively wiping out in a single blow the adult male population of the town. Along the northern shore of Lake Van, approximately 1,000 Armenian men, from the district of Perkri with a population of over 5,000, who had been consigned to a labor battalion since mobilization in August 1914 are systematically executed.
- April 20: The Turkish gendarmes sent to the Monastery of Varag, having murdered the handful of residents including Father Aristakes and Father Vertanes, and their four lay assistants, vacate the site. Many of the 6,000 Armenians who had fled into the recesses of Mount Varag take shelter in the abandoned monastery.
- April 21: Rafael de Nogales, a Venezuelan captain serving in the Ottoman army, reports the burning of Armenian villages along the rim of Lake Van with the church of Artamid blazing in the night "like a torch."
- April 22: When an encampment, along the northeastern shore of Lake Van, of Armenians already driven from their villages is surrounded by Turkish militiamen and Kurdish irregulars, followed by a mob seeking loot and captive women, 12,000 ferry to the nearby small and barren island of Lim where the shortage of food and lack of sanitation swiftly begins taking a toll of the survivors.
- April 23: As Jevdet tightens the noose around the Armenian neighborhoods of Van with constant shelling by artillery surrounding the town and positions upon the heights of the Rock of Van behind the city, Nogales reports the arrival of hundreds of Kurds in Van "to help in killing all the Armenians."
- April 24: The Italian consular agent G. Spordoni, who, as the last European official remaining in the city, mediated between Turks and Armenians, tells Jevdet that the Armenians have no intentions of surrendering as they are convinced that the Young Turk government "wishes to eliminate every last one of them." Unbeknownst to the Armenians in Van, the leadership of the Armenian community in the capital city of Constantinople is summarily arrested that night. The Young Turk government begins the empire-wide deportations to the Syrian desert where hundreds of thousands ultimately perish from hunger and thirst while large-scale massacres decimate the Armenian population along the deportation routes.
- April 25: Jevdet orders the shelling of the American mission in Van, consisting of a hospital, a church, schools for boys and girls, and private residences of the missionaries, in order to eliminate the "American infidels."
- May 1: Jevdet has the women and children captured by his men during their raids on the Armenian villages brought to the city to have them executed in full view of the besieged Armenians.
- May 3: Jevdet calls for a ceasefire in order to regroup his men as the vanguard of the Russian forces from the front reach the northern tip of Lake Van.
- May 8: Jevdet musters a force of some 2,000 men along with artillery and turns his attention to the Armenians who had retreated up the slopes of Mount Varag. He attacks and burns the alpine villages and wrecks the monasteries in which Armenians were sheltering. Armenians fiercely defend the Monastery of Varag but are forced to flee as the ancient hermitage is given to the flames along with its library of ancient manuscripts. Thousands more are driven into Van as part of a strategy to starve out the resistance.
- May 14: With Russian troops advancing daily as they hastened to relieve the siege, Jevdet orders his forces and the Muslim population to evacuate Van.
- May 18: Russian army advance units, including an Armenian volunteer battalion, with Major-General Nikolayev's division arriving a day later, reach the city of Van. While the besieged Armenians are liberated, they find the province of Van utterly devastated. Russian forces count as many as 55,000 corpses. Jevdet and regular Ottoman army forces continue to systematically destroy every Armenian village along their retreat south of Van.
- July 31: Fearing encirclement upon the opening of a counter-offensive by the Ottoman army, Nikolayev orders the retreat of Russian forces from Van. Fleeing certain death, a mass exodus of Armenian survivors begins with a long march toward Etchmiadzin in Russian Armenia.
- August 3: As the last Russian forces exit, Turkish troops move into Van and slaughter all Armenians unable to evacuate.
- September: In a matter of days, the grounds of the Mother See of Holy Etchmiadzin become a vast refugee camp, where 60,000 refugees are reported starving among the surrounding forest groves, among them 3,000 orphans. The spread of epidemics due to illness, exhaustion, and lack of sanitation is reported to have caused 2,613 deaths in a two-week period alone from late August to early September.
- September: To raise funds in the United States for the delivery of humanitarian aid, a committee for Armenian relief is organized by American philanthropists in New York.
- September: The Young Turk regime attempts to contain international outrage by pretending that Catholic and Protestant Armenians are exempt from the deportations.

1916

February 9: United States Senate passes Concurrent Resolution 12 stating: *That, in view of the misery, wretchedness, and hardships which these people are suffering, the President of the United States be respectfully asked to designate a day on which the citizens of this country may give expression to their sympathy by contributing to the funds now being raised for the relief of the Armenians in the belligerent countries.*

July: The Young Turk regime effectively abolishes the legal existence of the Armenian community in the Ottoman Empire by closing down the Armenian Patriarchate of Constantinople and the Catholicosate of the Great House of Cilicia and by exiling Patriarch Zaven Der Yeghiayan and Catholicos Sahak II Khabayan to Jerusalem.

1917

October/November: Bolshevik coup in Russia overthrows democratic government in St. Petersburg. Seeking an end to the war at any price, Bolsheviks leave Transcaucasia undefended as the Russian army disintegrates. Ottoman forces go back on the offensive and march on Russian Armenia.

1918

May: Urged to flee Etchmiadzin in the face of advancing Ottoman forces, Catholicos Gevorg V refuses to abandon the Mother See and exhorts the dispirited Armenians to make a last stand. Armenians rally and defend the territory of Yerevan province along a line stretching across the entire northern perimeter of Eastern Armenia. Pitched battles rage from May 16 to May 30 at Bash-Abaran, Karakilise, and Sardarapat, a mere hour from Etchmiadzin, when the Ottoman advance is finally halted. With the fate of the Armenian Church and the physical survival of the Armenian people in the balance, Bishop Garegin Hovsepian leads a contingent of clergymen into the Battle of Sardarapat.

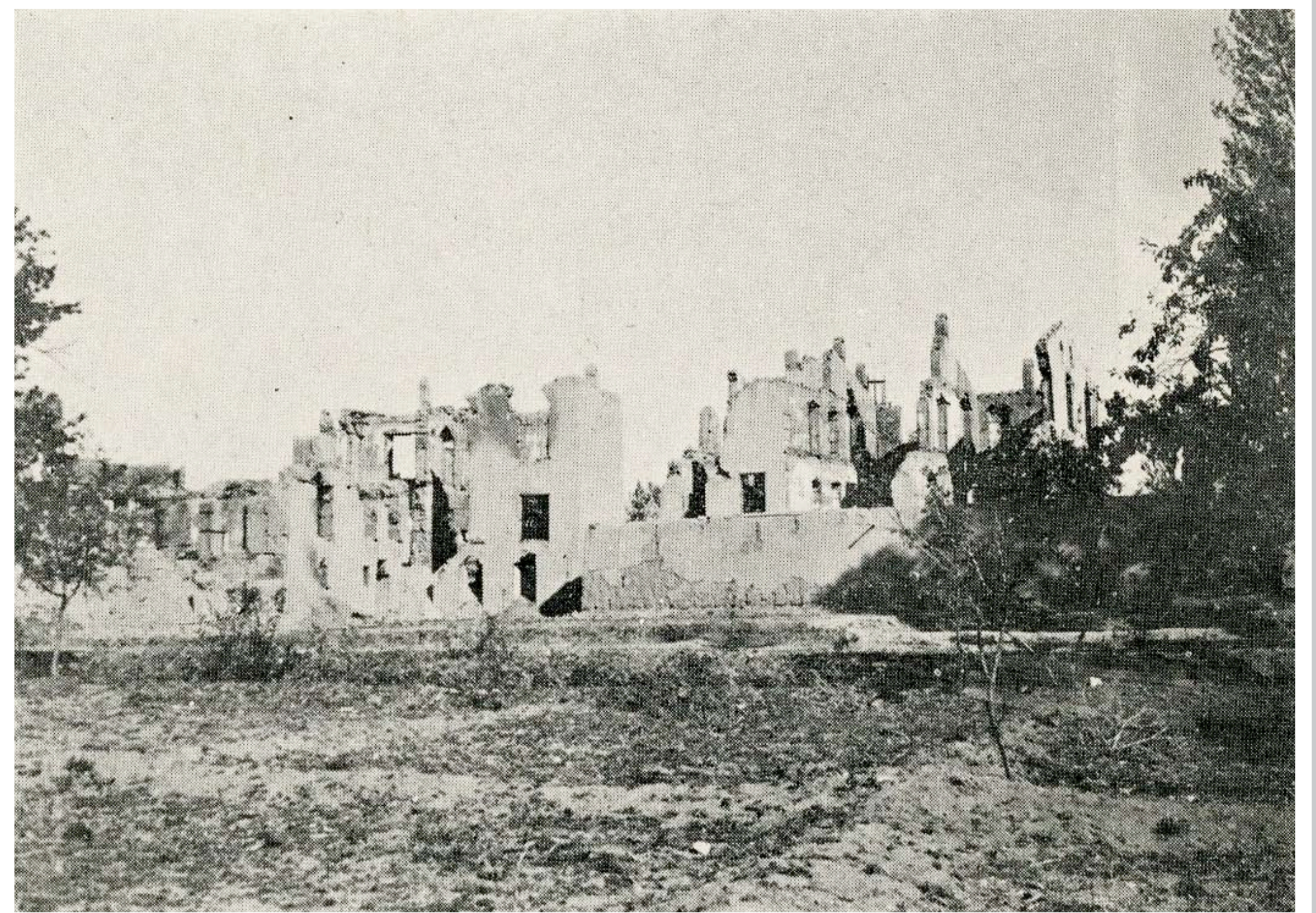
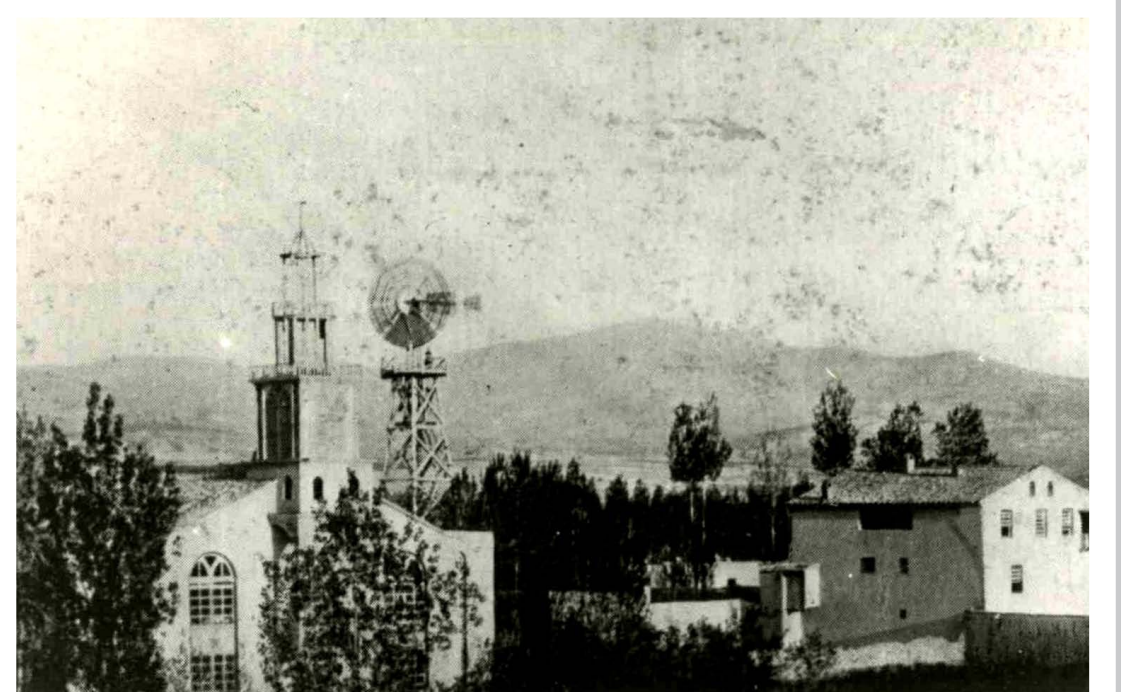
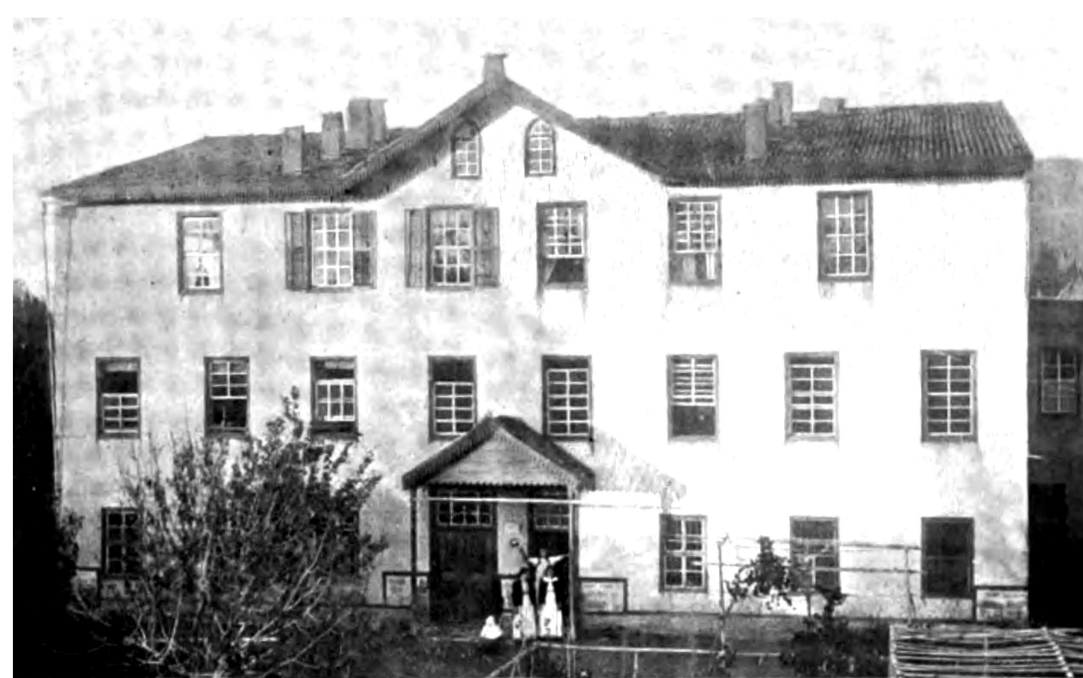
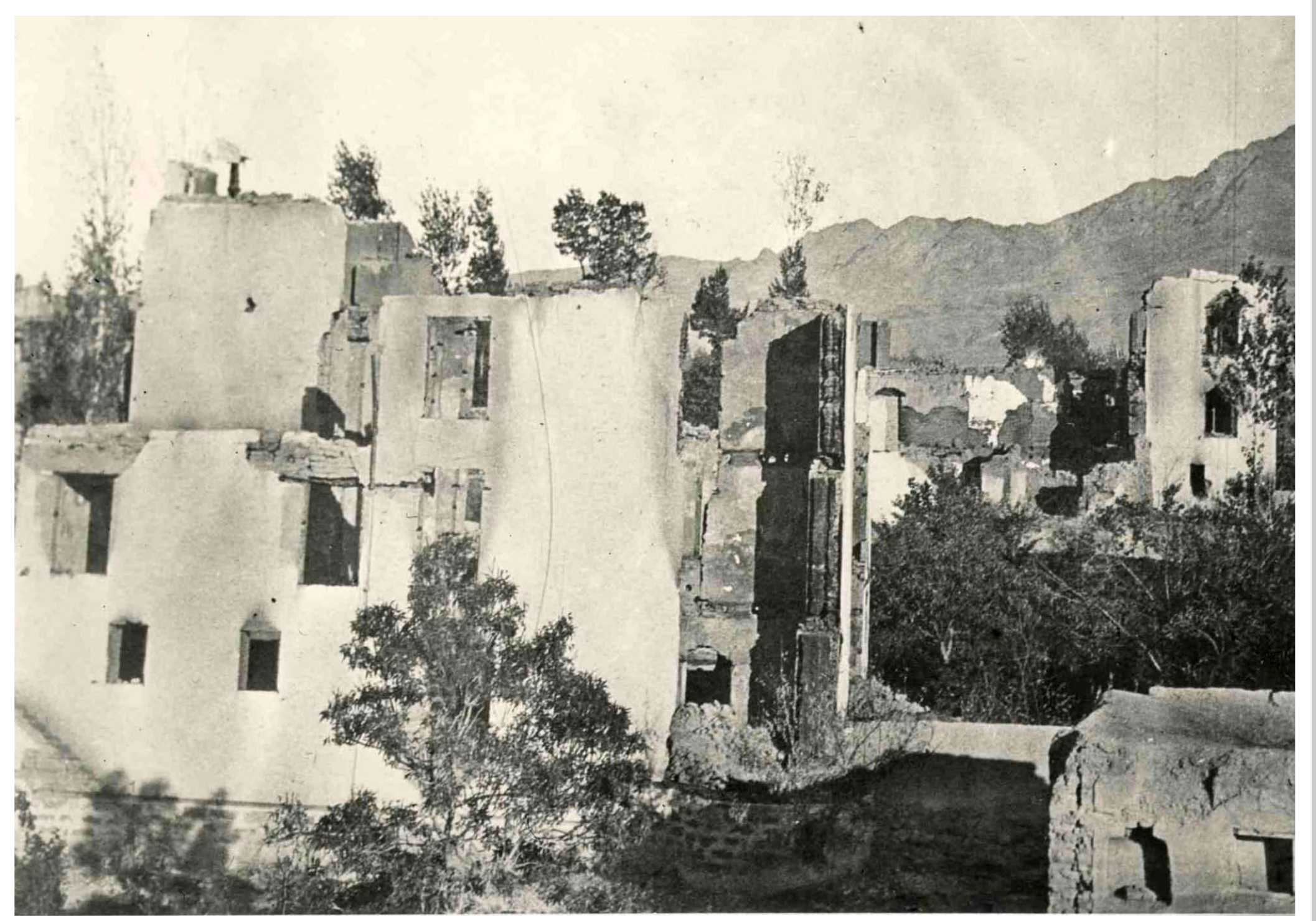
May 28: Republic of Armenia founded with proclamation of statehood in the former Russian province of Yerevan. City of Yerevan becomes capital of Armenia. For the first time in nine centuries the Mother See of Holy Etchmiadzin is located within the borders of an Armenian state.

THE RUINS OF VAN



May 15, 1915
Suddenly, late that afternoon our ears were startled by that uncanny shriek, rising to a crescendo which once heard can never be forgotten and a shell from Hadji Bekr's Barracks exploded in our hospital yard. Another brought down the Red Cross flag. Five more followed in quick succession, one striking the ground in Mr. Yarrow's garden, another, evidently aimed at the American flag flying above the girls school building, made a great hole in the roof near the base of the flagstaff. Then silence!

May 16, 1915
During the forenoon the great guns at the barracks again opened fire. First, on the trenches in the plain east of us, and those of us who were at home watched, fascinated, each spurt of dust and smoke down there following after a perceptible interval the boom of the cannon. Each explosion seemed nearer than the last, and soon a shell crashed into the mission cemetery at the eastern end of our compound, where at that moment a little child was being laid to rest, and the next fell into our premises, and the next and the next. One fell into a room in the boys school where forty-five people were gathered, but landing in a barrel of water did no harm. Another struck the church. One entered Miss Knapp's room, exploded there, and parts of it flew through a partition wall into my daughter's room. But my children were comparatively safe in the semi-basement of the house, where they remained two or three hours, listening to the shriek of each approaching shell, waiting tensely to hear where it would explode.
-Clarence D. Ussher and Grace H. Knapp



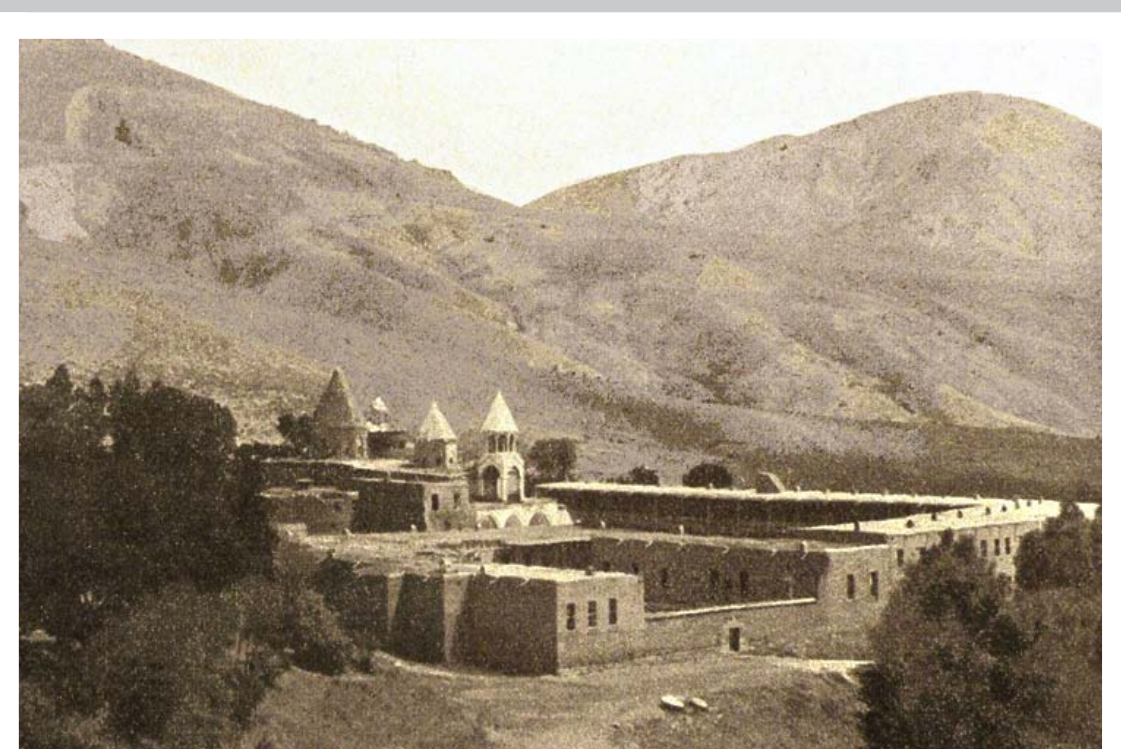
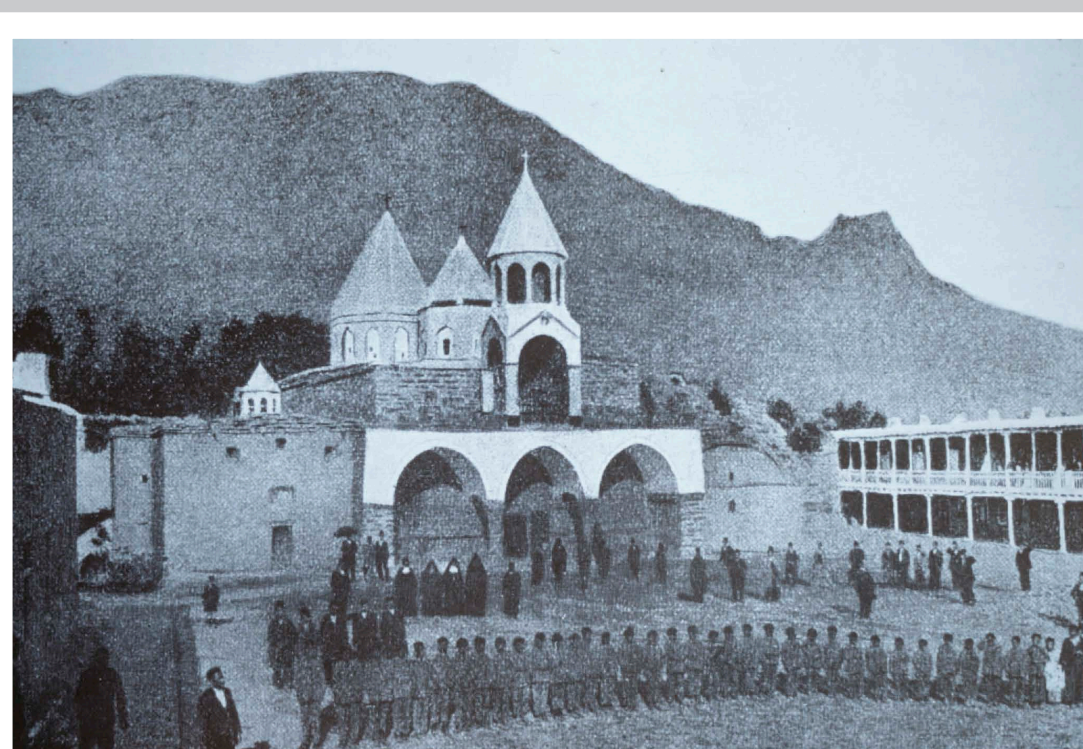
...there are two little waifs, sitting now in the sun, in our yard, about whom I must tell you. They were found near our garden gate this morning, crying from cold and hunger. The older, a girl of about five or six, had carried her two-year-old brother on her back from the Varag monastery, which had been a refuge for 2000 villagers before the Turks burnt it up yesterday morning. Their mother who had two other children to bring, had left them and they followed on alone as best they could. They spent the night on the plain alone, and why they did not freeze I can not see, for the baby had absolutely nothing on him but a ragged cotton shirt. The night was very cold. Their hands and feet were blistered and sore, and they were so hungry that we could not get a word from them till after they had had a bath, a warm breakfast, and some clean clothes. - Elizabeth Ussher



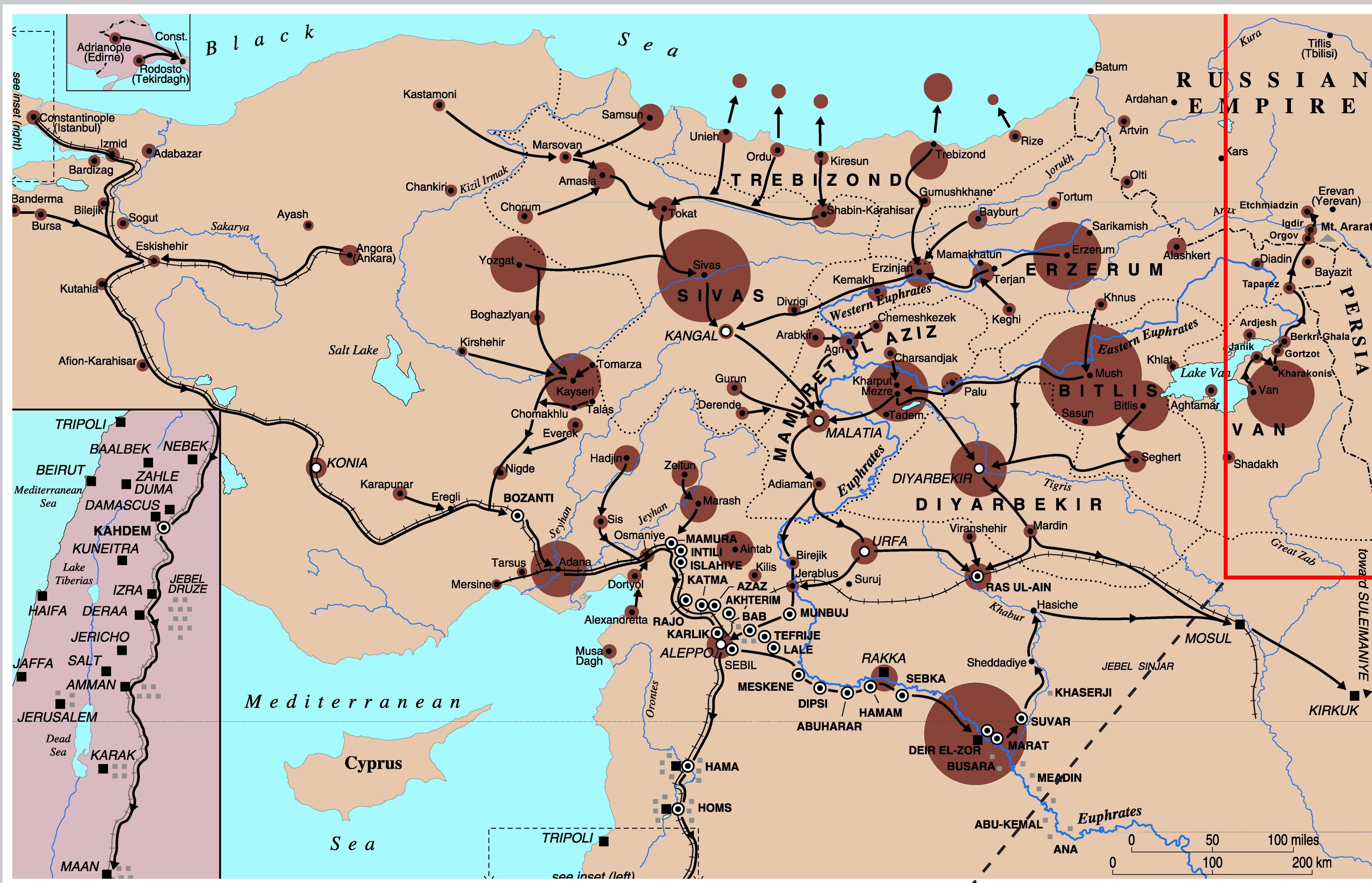
All of the above photographs depict the American mission compound in the city of Van before and after its destruction.

The photographs to the immediate left and below show the monastery and school of Varag before and after its destruction.

Upon entering Varag we saw two archimandrites (vardapets), one baker and three grounds keepers. The archimandrites had been murdered in their cells. First they had been shot and then dismembered with dagger and sword. The cook had been murdered with an ax by splitting his head into two. As for the acolytes, one was disemboweled, and another shot in the chest and then dismembered.
-Neshan Hovhannisian from Krel village in Khoshab district



THE EXODUS FROM VAN



The events described in this exhibit represent but a sliver of the enormity of the Armenian Genocide. The assembled photographs only trace the disaster along the Russian-Turkish border where even the possibility of rescue did not spare the Armenian population from mass death. While the destruction of the Armenian population of Van occurred within the war zone, as the comprehensive map of the Armenian Genocide shows, the wholesale deportations and massacres of the Armenians in the Ottoman Empire occurred beyond the war zone and all across historic Armenia, Anatolia, and Syria.



The New York Times

KURDS MASSACRE MORE ARMENIANS

All Inhabitants in Ten Villages
Near Van Said to Have
Been Killed.

APPEAL SENT TO WILSON

By Head of Church—Evidences
of Fearful Outrages Seen in
Deserted Settlements.

STORY OF GREAT EXODUS

Flight from Persia Full of Suffering
for Thousands Who Escaped
the Sword.

TIFLIS, Transcaucasia, April 24, (via Petrograd and London, April 25.)—Refugees who have reached the Russian line report that the massacre of Armenians by Mohammedans is being continued on even a greater scale. They say that all the inhabitants of ten villages near Van, in Armenia, Asiatic Turkey, have been put to death.

On being advised of massacres at Erzerum, Berjan and Zeitun, and of the conditions at Van, the Katolikos, head of the Armenian church at Etchmiadzin, near Erivan, cabled to President Wilson an appeal to the people of the United States on behalf of the Armenians.



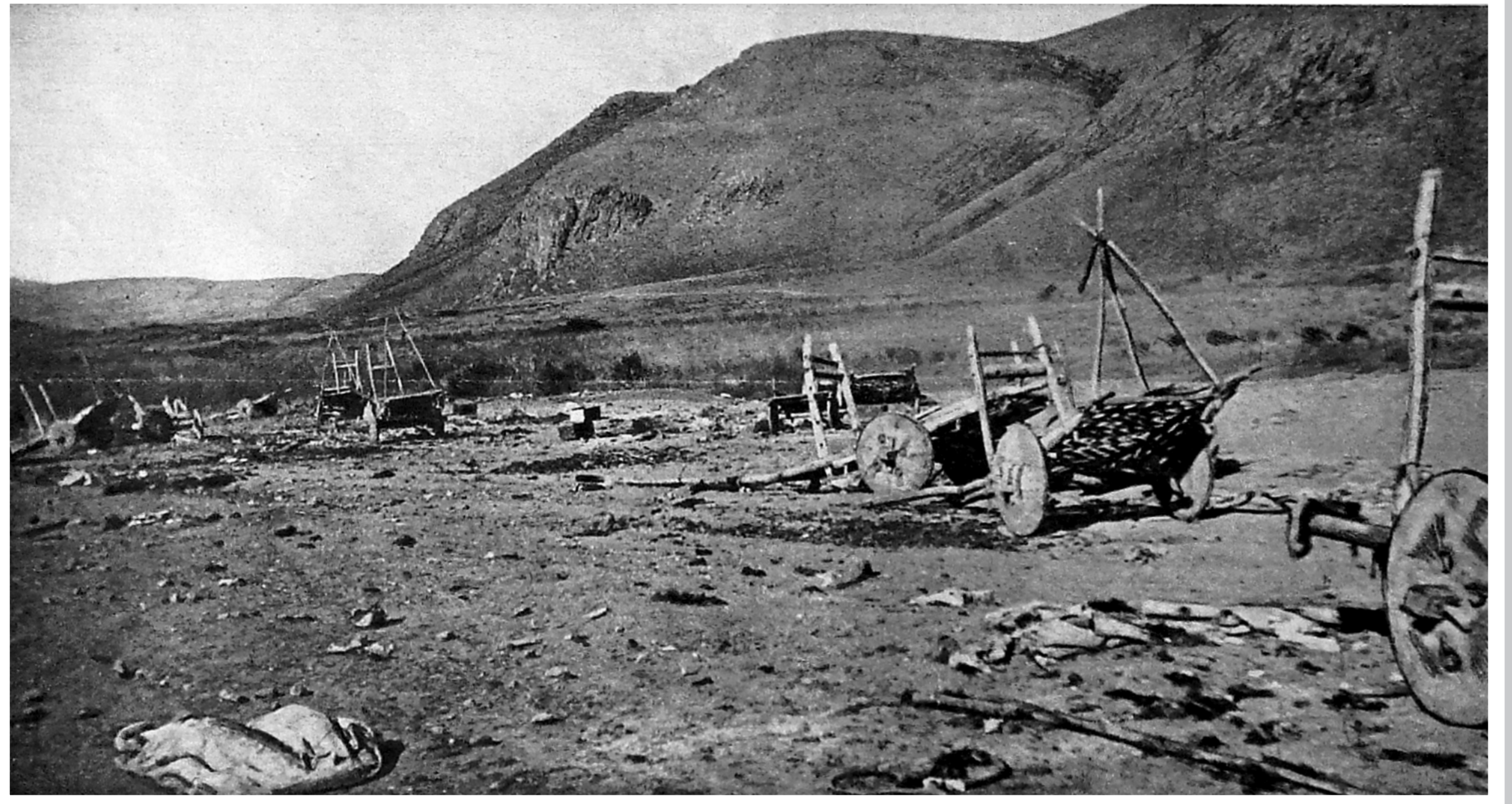
Before nightfall, having overtaken many of the people who left Van and the region west of it before us on foot, we had become part of the vast ever northward-flowing stream of humanity, the great multitude plodding along in the dust, their faces strained with terror. Not one of all these but knew, most of them by the witness of their own eyes, what it meant to fall into the hands of their oppressors. This was the Exodus of a nation from the land of their captivity. But, alas! It was their homeland as well – the home of the race for centuries before the Turks subjugated all the eastern world. They were leaving the homes they had built with their own hands and the homes of their ancestors for many generations, the fields they had tilled all their lives, the harvests they had sown a few months before, and all their possessions except what they could carry with them in hurried flight. And for what? Bare safety beyond the Russian border, with want and all the bitterness of exile.
-Clarence D. Ussher and Grace H. Knapp



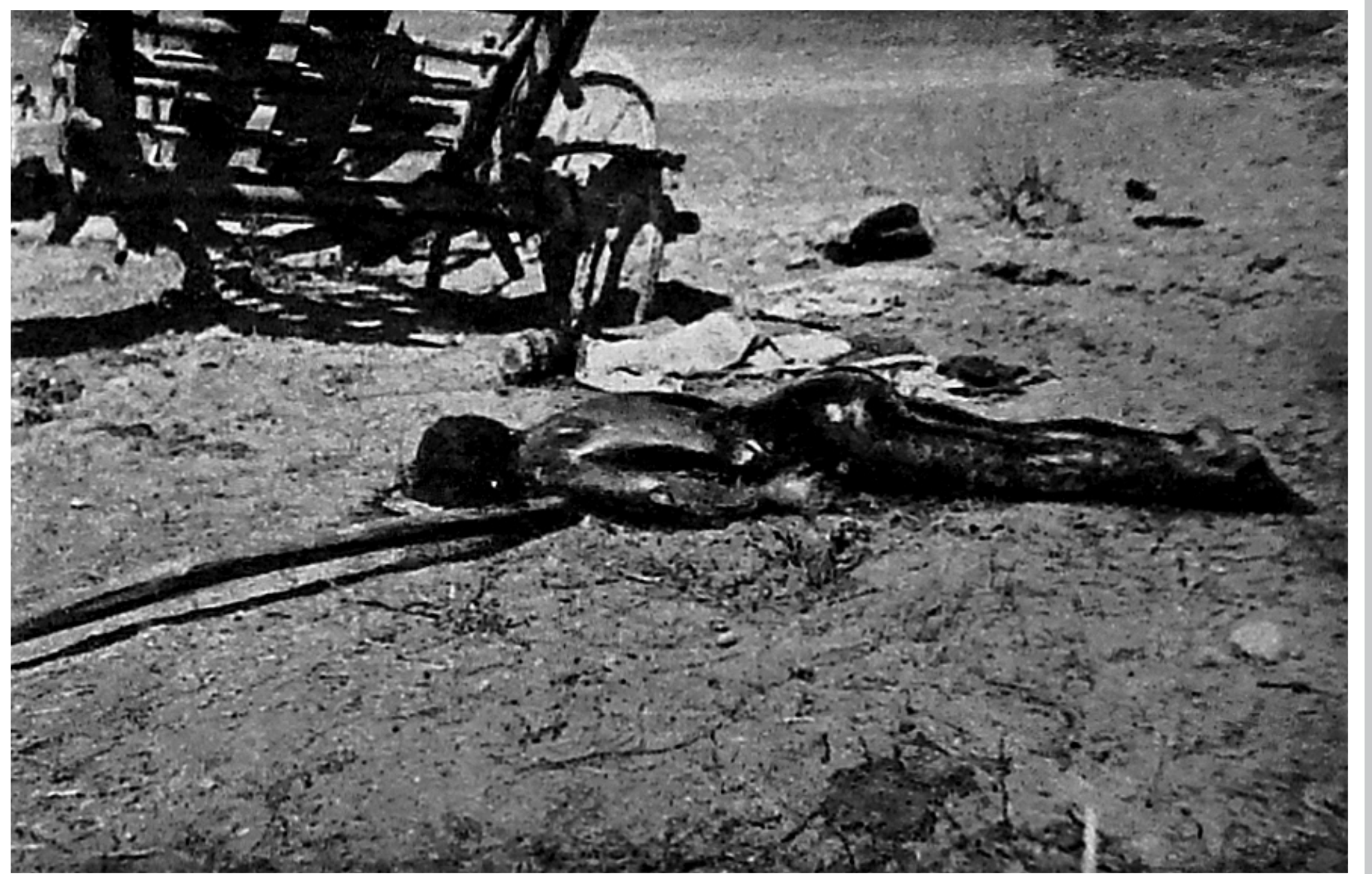
Clarence D. Ussher (1870-1955), a medical missionary from Canada, served in Ottoman Turkey from 1898 to 1915 at the behest of the Boston-based American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions.

APRIL 26, 1915

MASSACRE ON THE ROAD



Very soon we had a swift and rather deep river to ford. Struggling up a high bank on the other side we found ourselves in a narrow gorge commanded by precipitous hills bristling with rocks. And from these rocks Turks and Kurds were firing down into the unarmed multitude hemmed in between hills and river... Hundreds threw themselves over the precipice into the river to escape the worse fate of falling into the hands of the Kurds. Fathers and mothers killed their own children to save them from the Turks. But thousands struggled on panting, gasping, for mile after mile... It seemed an eternity of horror...
- Clarence D. Ussher and Grace H. Knapp



More than a year later, in that long, narrow valley through which we had raced so madly, were found the whitening skeletons of about seven thousand men, women, and children who had come to their death by the hand of the Turk that day.
- Clarence D. Ussher and Grace H. Knapp



When tsarist Russia ordered a retreat of its forces, we had no choice but to evacuate toward Berkri where we needed to cross an abyss of a gorge to enter the plain of Abagha. A hundred thousand refugees were crossing the gorge all of whom imagined reaching Yerevan as their salvation. With my mother and the children we reached the turbulent Bandimahi River. I asked my mother to let me go and splash my face with water. As soon as I left I felt as though it started hailing. The Kurds had occupied the heights on the opposite side of the gorge. They were firing and people were dropping. I saw how those arriving threw themselves into the river. I took off my clothes and jumped in the water. I had reached the middle of the river when the current pulled me under. Hundreds of corpses were floating down river one after the other and washing away toward the sea. Suddenly I felt the skirt of a woman who was holding on to a tree. I clung to her skirt and slowly pulled myself out of the water. I owe her my life. Who was that woman? I don't know. We came out of the river, cold and shivering. I asked a Russian soldier to take us on his horse. When the horse did not budge, I dismounted. I saw an ox which had dropped its baggage and found a bread roll in the baggage. I was starved so I ate it. A passerby sat me on the ox and tied me down on it with rope. People were shouting and calling out, everyone searching for their immediate families. - *Tovik Baghdassarian from Hndstan village in Hayots Dzor, Van province*



MASS DEATH



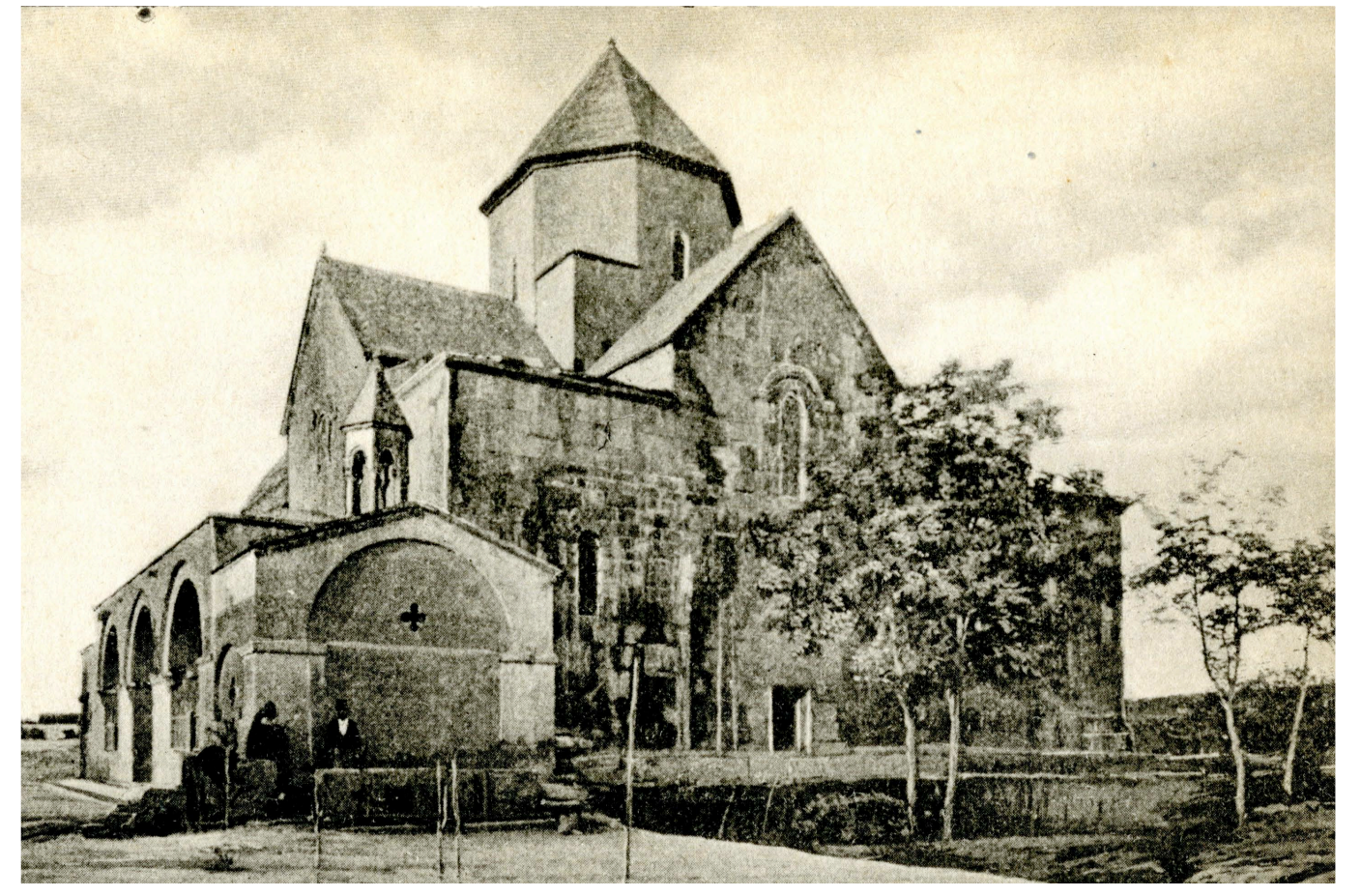
The survivors of the massacres from our village, after the July 1915 retreat from Van, suffered many human losses under the ramparts of Etchmiadzin. They fell victim to contagious diseases because they were so weakened from the privations they endured along the road and were drained of any capacity to overcome the epidemics. - *Grigor Baghdasarian from Aratents village in Van district*



The corpses lay in the streets, beneath walls, in that hell of a slaughterhouse...next to living beings. Hovhannes Tumanian had transformed the Gevorgian Academy into an orphanage. Surrounding the building were spread out the frozen cadavers of hundreds of children, and along the pathways, here and there, seated or lying down were suffering infants bleeding and near death.

I noticed among a group of refugees a beautiful woman with her five sons. Every time I passed them by I could not hide my admiration and my sadness. One of the children had taken ill...I took him to the children's hospital, but he could not be saved. One after the other three of his dark-eyed brothers also died. The mother sewed a shroud for each from her dress and arrayed them next to one another...I visited them a couple of days later. The mother was enshrouding her last child with the last shreds of her dress. She was practically naked. And as she had run out of string, she had pulled out a strand of amber dark hair from her braid, threaded it in the needle, and was sewing. - *Martiros Sarian*

ETCHMIADZIN THE REFUGEE CAMP



Late 19th and early 20th centuries photographs of Etchmiadzin depicting the Mother Cathedral, the Gevorgian Academy, the Church St. Gayane, the clergy of Etchmiadzin with Catholicos Gevorg V Sureniants seated in the middle and Bishop Khoren Muratbekian, future catholicos, standing over his left shoulder, the schoolboys at the Gevorgian Academy, the Nersisian Pool, a street of the neighboring town of Vagharshapat, the Nersisian Grove with the Church of St. Gayane in the distance, and the Etchmiadzin printing house.

Bottom: Refugees from Ottoman Turkey arriving in Russian Armenia.



Etchmiadzin & The City of Vagharshapat



I reached Igdir on the morning of the seventh day of the retreat, in a state of utter fatigue and moral depression. I had a single wish - to find a tranquil corner so that my worn out body and desperate soul could have some peace and rest. Before coming to Igdir, I had done my utmost and made strenuous efforts to reach that desirable shelter as soon as possible. I was in a hurry and endured everything, anxious about reaching there, but alas, what a great pity, I was totally emaciated and only thought of resting and having a sleep...

The vast, countless number of refugees had flooded the houses, roofs, streets, gardens, public utilities, boulevards and tea-rooms, in a word, every place and corner in that village town called Igdir. I huddled up beside the first group of people I saw like an unwelcome guest...

"Will all these sufferings ever end?" I was asking myself. Not far from the tents I could see small groups of refugees who undoubtedly were the unfortunate families of the sick. Their conditions were truly tragic, their only home from the baking sun being every kind of rugs, clothes and sheets...

I decided to move Father from that hellish Igdir, that had become the center of bloody flux, typhoid fever and malaria killing people with high temperature. Finding Father in agony, my sister having turned into a 'walking skeleton' and my brother totally fever-stricken, I dared to make the logical conclusion that if the rest of my unfortunate family, those three members, lived in those morbid conditions for several other days, they would be sure to become prey to death leaving me an utter orphan...

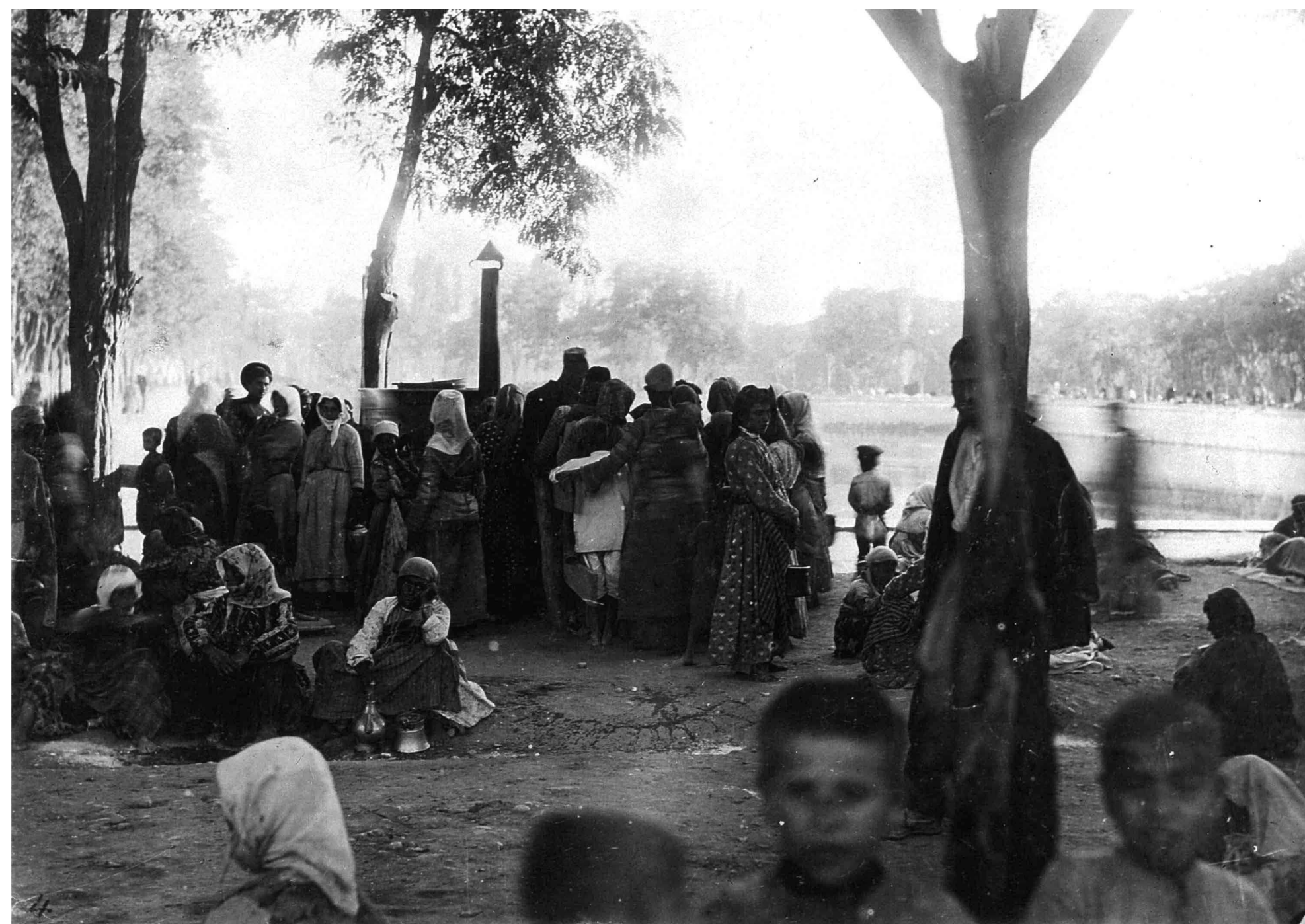
The carter took us to the neighborhood of Etchmiadzin Cathedral, where we were petrified at the sight of the vast multitudes of countless refugees gathered there. Those confused and perplexed crowds were storming like the rising and falling waves of the raging sea. The scene represented a true chaos: the young and the old, men, women and often even the domestic animals had flooded the area, huddled together. Cries, screams, weeping, swear words, the cows' bellow and donkeys' bray were mixed so that one might think that sea of people was preparing for another retreat-escape...

The crowds of deportees had poured into the parks and areas belonging to Etchmiadzin Cathedral so that we had great difficulty in finding a place a long way from the Cathedral...

Then addressing my brother, I said, "Get up, brother! Let's go to the Cathedral, where we'll probably find a body established to help the refugees. Be quick, let's go: if we don't manage to get food till midday, all of us will die of hunger."
- Sirak Sarhadian from Aykestan neighborhood of Van city



FEEDING THE STARVING



Born in central Anatolia in 1869 and orphaned at the age of 11, **Komitas** was taken to Etchmiadzin to receive training because of his native musical talents. Upon completion of his education, in 1893 he was appointed choirmaster of the cathedral church and soon joined the clergy as a celibate priest. He continued his musical training in Europe.

Komitas devoted his life to collecting and transcribing Armenian folk music and gathered more than 3,000 songs. Seeking to bring appreciation of Armenian music to a wider audience, in 1910 Komitas settled in Istanbul where he formed a choir that toured the Armenian communities. In addition to collecting popular songs, Komitas developed the scholarship that identified the ethnomusical characteristics specific to Armenian folk composition and presented his findings at European academic symposia.

Komitas gathered Armenia's musical heritage in the nick of time. He was among the 200 prominent figures of the Armenian community of Istanbul arrested on the night of April 24, 1915, which marked the beginning of the Armenian Genocide in Ottoman Turkey. Spared execution, Komitas was rescued through the appeals of the International Musical Society. Witness to the decimation of the people through whose towns and villages he had wandered over the years recording their music, by the time he was released his mind had become unhinged. Taken to Paris in 1919 he spent the rest of his life in a sanitarium. He died in 1935. Komitas was so beloved a figure among the Armenian people that his tragedy was remembered as their greatest single loss.

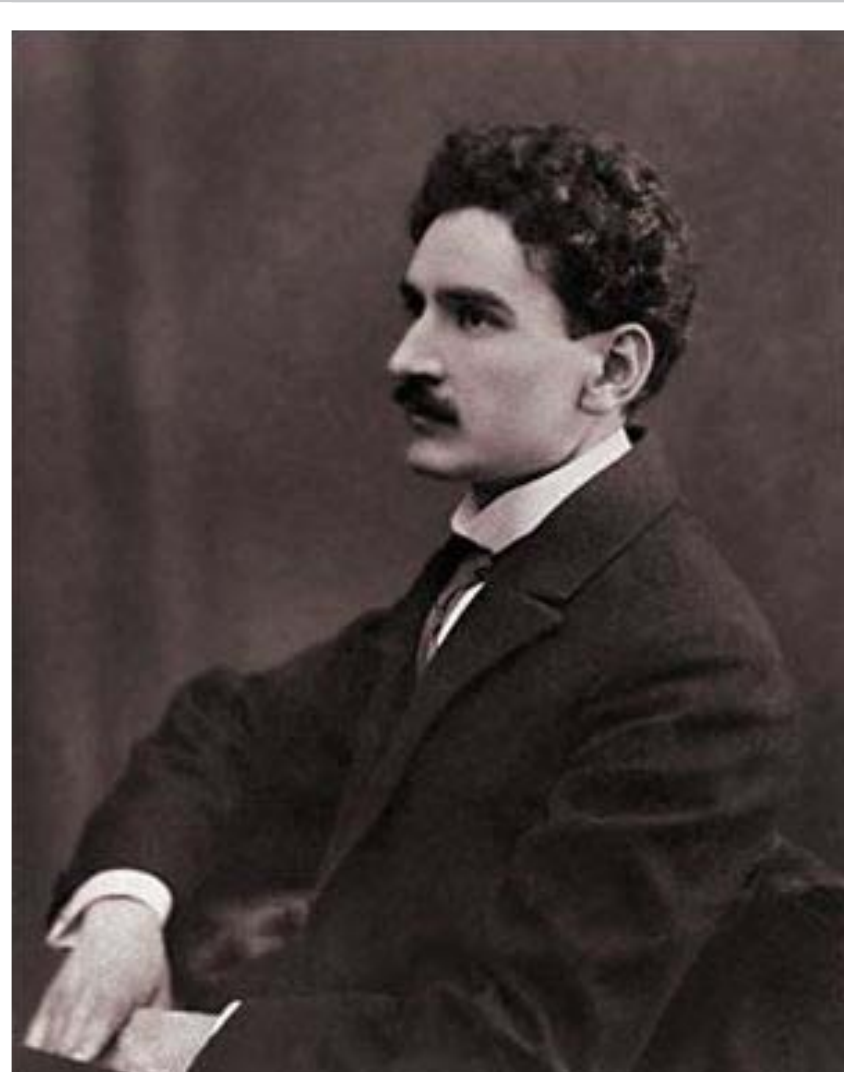
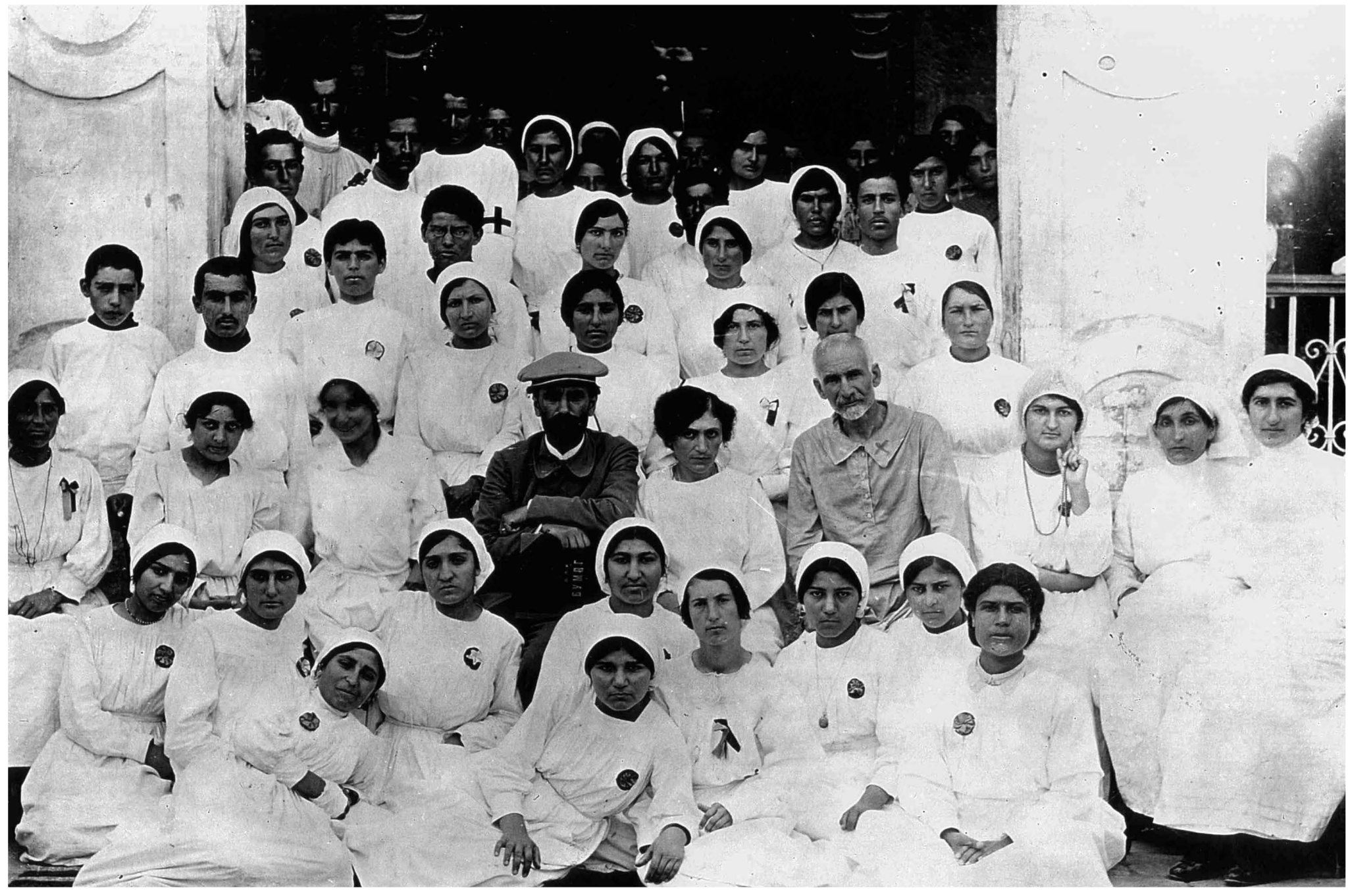
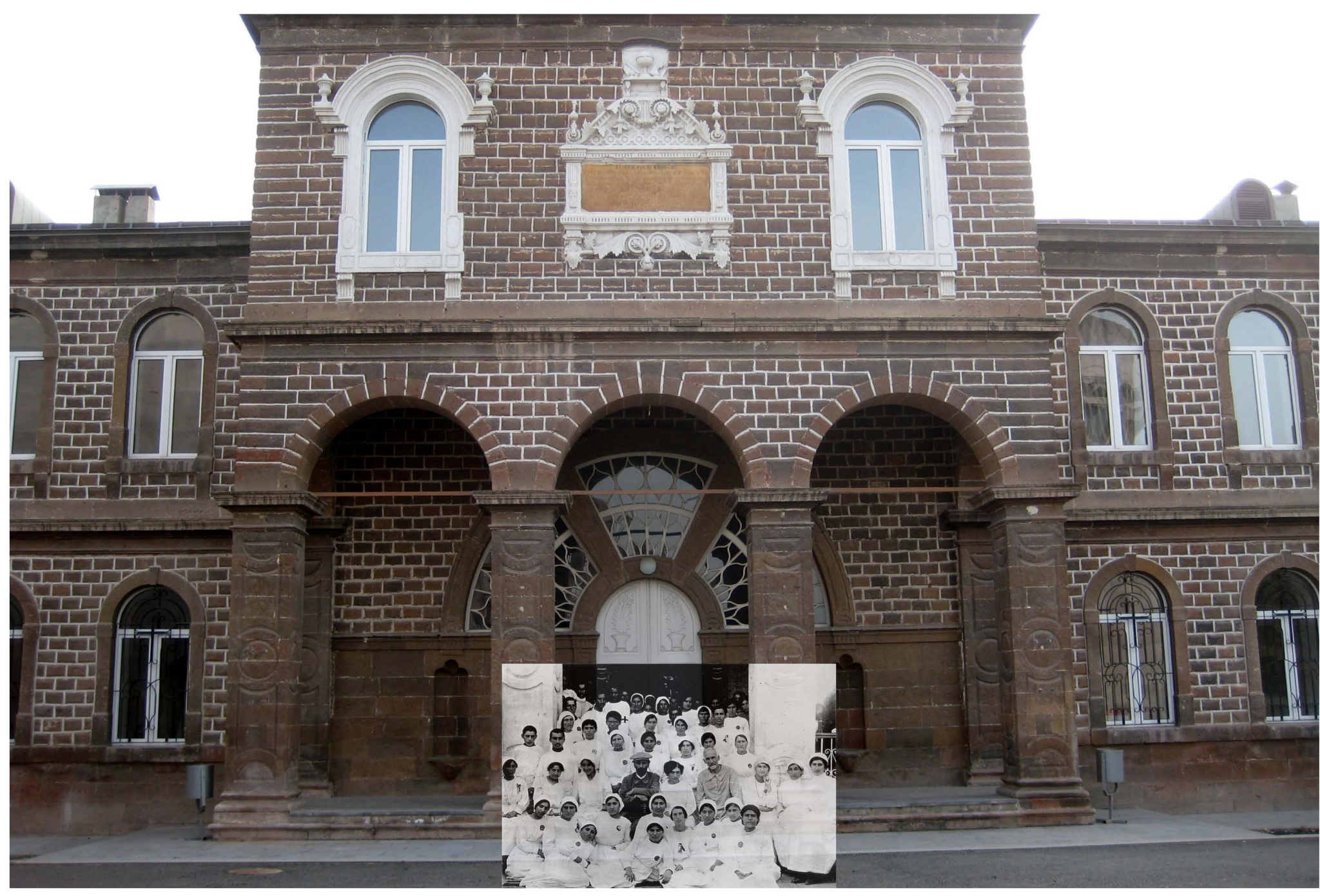
He is pictured (seated on the right) in happier times with the students and teachers of the Gevorgian Academy picnicking in the Nersisian Grove on the grounds of Etchmiadzin at the very site that was transformed into a vast refugee camp during the years of the Armenian Genocide.



The luminaries of the Eastern Armenian intelligentsia photographed together in Tiflis in 1908. From left to right, the painter Gevorg Bashinjaghian (standing), the musicologist Komitas, the educator Ghazaros Aghayan, the writer Vertanes Papazian, the writer Hovhannes Tumanian (standing), the dramatist Levon Shant, and the poet Avetik Isahakian (standing).



FRATERNAL AID COMMITTEE

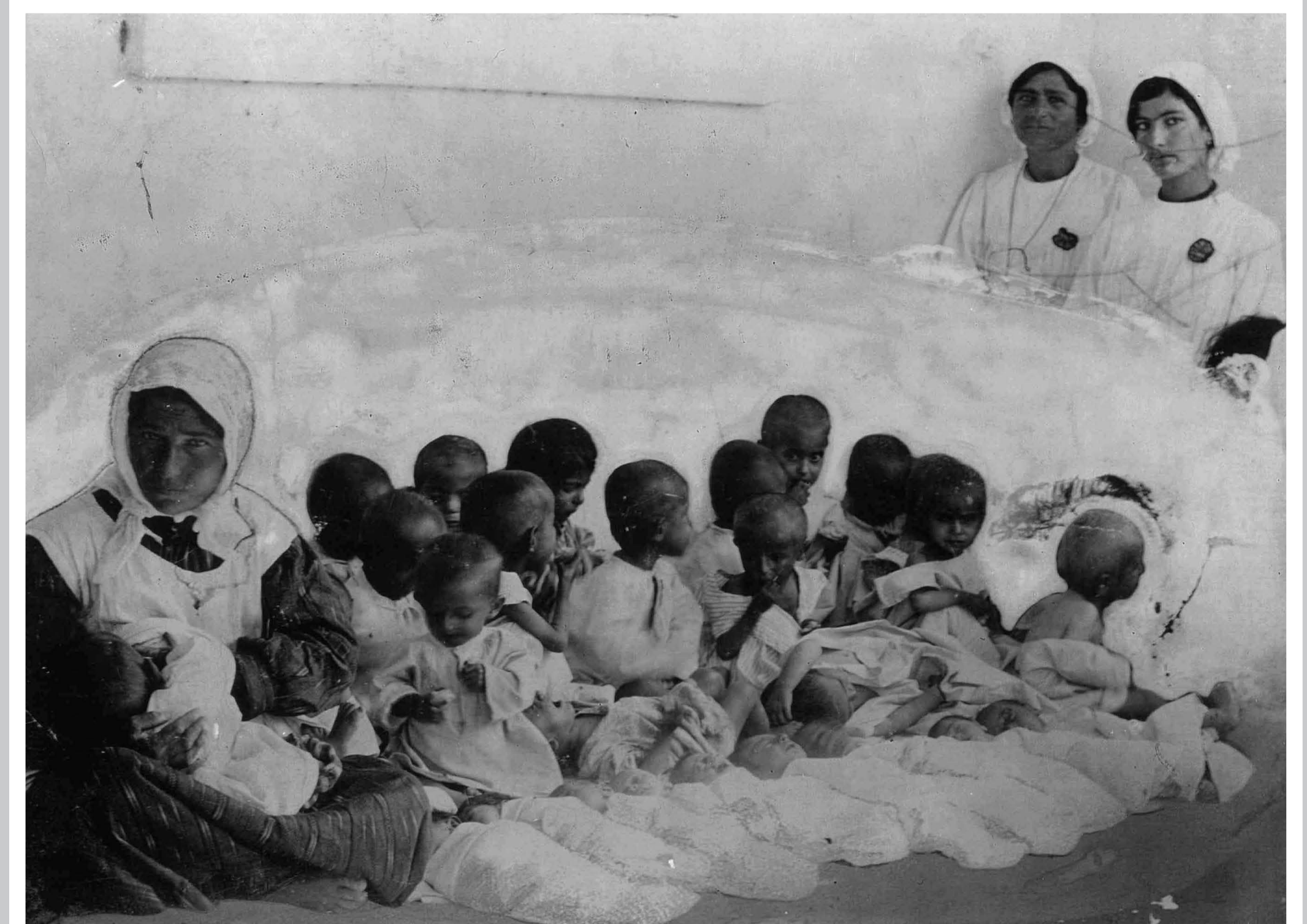


Upon hearing of the arrival of the refugees, **Hovhannes Tumanian** (1869-1923) had rushed from his home in Tiflis to Etchmiadzin. The famed writer of some of the most popular works in the Armenian language was speechless upon first seeing the unfolding disaster. All he could do was jot down some words: tumult, weeping, sighs, mourning... He reported on August 12: "A hundred thousand refugees are arriving in Etchmiadzin from Turkey through Igdir. At present the end cannot be seen to the masses arriving convoy after convoy... The majority are women and children, drained of strength, exhausted, starving, and barefoot. The stories they tell of the barbarities of the Kurds and the Turks are full of indescribable horrors." As epidemics spread across the vast and growing refugee camp site, Tumanian assisted in converting the Gevorgian Academy, whose students under the circumstances had been dismissed for the school year, into a hospital. He personally took to transporting children who were so vulnerable to contagion away from Etchmiadzin to Yerevan and to Tiflis. On September 14 he wrote: "Tonight at 7 p.m., 600 souls were sent to Tiflis. In the region of Igdir, at Etchmiadzin and Yerevan, they are dying at the rate of 700 persons a day." He added that from August 10 (the date of his arrival) to September, 7,000 refugees had perished at Etchmiadzin, of whom 3,000 were children.

Tumanian was photographed with members of the Red Cross, the Sisters of Charity and the Fraternal Aid Committee in front of the Gevorgian Academy at Etchmiadzin which he, with the assistance of other volunteers, converted into an emergency hospital. The Red Cross workers are identifiable by their international emblem. The Sisters of Charity, which was a local Armenian aid group, worked as the women's counterpart to the Fraternal Aid Committee, and can be identified by their emblem in the form of a heart upon their chests. All the medical, sanitation, and other volunteers were Armenian residents of the Transcaucasus supported by Russian civil administration authorities and Russian philanthropic efforts.

The Eastern Armenian intelligentsia in the Russian Empire was deeply disturbed by the arrest and execution of nearly the entire Armenian leadership and intellectual elite in the Ottoman Empire that permanently silenced the Western Armenian population. They felt a profound responsibility to fill the void and do their utmost for the survivors. In calmer days in the summer of 1914, before the outbreak of war, pictured with their spouses are the leading Armenian cultural figures of the era with Hovhannes Tumanian (from the left seated in a circle), the novelist Derenik Demirchian, the poet Vahan Terian, Hakob Ayyvazian, the dramatist Levon Shant, and the painter **Martiros Sarian**.

CARING FOR THE CHILDREN



The New York Times

ASK AID FOR ARMENIANS.

Relief Committee Tells of Sufferings Due to War.

An appeal for aid for destitute non-combatants of Armenia was issued yesterday by the American Armenian Relief Fund, of which Bishop Greer, Oscar S. Straus, Charles W. Eliot, Bishop Rhinelander of Philadelphia, and Isaac N. Seligman are members. More than 100,000 Armenian refugees have sought protection on Russian soil, and, the committee says, these unfortunates are in a pitiful condition.

"A more deplorable condition prevails in Turkish Armenia," the committee adds, "where all able-bodied men are dragged to the battlefields, and thousands of families, deprived of their supporters, plunged into privation, while pestilence works its ravages and Kurdish savagery spreads terror and destruction."

The Treasurer of the fund is Brown Brothers, bankers, 59 Wall Street.

STARVING

HELP NOW

MILLIONS ARE STARVING IN BIBLE LANDS: ARMENIA - SYRIA - CAUCASUS - EGYPT - PERSIA - PALESTINE

Two cents per day will save a life. Send money to your local treasurer or to Chas. R. Crane, 70 Fifth Ave., Treasurer, Armenian Syrian Relief Committee, General Office, 1 Madison Ave., N. Y.

All money goes for relief, none for expense. RELIEF WORK NOT STOPPED BY WAR.

64th CONGRESS, 1st Session, **S. CON. RES. 12.**

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES.

FEBRUARY 10, 1916.

Referred to the Committee on Foreign Affairs.

CONCURRENT RESOLUTION.

Whereas in countries now engaged in war there are several hundreds of thousands of Armenians in need of food, clothing, and shelter; and

Whereas great numbers of them have been required by conditions growing out of the state of war to leave their homes and their property, deprived of an opportunity to make provision for their most elementary wants, causing starvation, disease, and untold suffering; and

Whereas the people of the United States of America have learned with sorrow of this terrible plight of great numbers of human beings and have most generously responded to the cry for help whenever such an appeal has reached them: Therefore be it

- Resolved by the Senate (the House of Representatives concurring), That, in view of the misery, wretchedness, and hardships which these people are suffering, the President of the United States be respectfully asked to designate a day on which the citizens of this country may give
- expression to their sympathy by contributing to the funds
- now being raised for the relief of the Armenians in the belligerent countries.

Passed the Senate February 9, 1916.

Attest: **JAMES M. BAKER,** Secretary.

HOUSING THE WIDOWS



YOU CAN'T LET US STARVE
 2½ million women and children
 now starving to death.
YOUR BIT SAVES A LIFE
 Send Money to
ARMENIAN and SYRIAN RELIEF
 1 Madison Ave. N.Y. City



**MEMORANDUM ON THE CONDITION OF
 ARMENIAN REFUGEES IN THE CAUCASUS**

DATED 29th DECEMBER, 1915

According to information obtained by Mr. Sarebey, the Dragoman of the Vice-Consulate at Van, from the Armenian Bishop of Erivan and from various other data he has been able to procure on the spot, the number of Armenian refugees in the Caucasus is 173,038, of whom 105,000 are from the Province of Van; 48,000 from the districts of Alashkerd, Bayazid and Passin; and 20,038 from Moush, Boulanik, &c., &c.

They are housed as follows

Government of Erivan:	
Town of Erivan	18,820
Villages in the neighbourhood of Erivan	14,680
Market town of Vaharshapat	5,360
Villages of the district of same name	22,730
Town of Nahichevan	271
District of Nahichevan	468
Igdir	1,028
Surmalin	7,342
Town of Alexandropol	8,450
Villages in the neighbourhood of Alexandropol	14,121
Sharori	268
Town of Novo-Bayazid	1,164
Villages of Novo-Bayazid district	10,336
	105,038
Government of Elizavetpol:	
Town of Elizavetpol	12,000
Villages, district of Elizavetpol	5,000
District of Karabagh	1,000
	18,000
Province of Kars:	
Town of Kars and adjacent villages	26,000
Karakeliss	4,000
	30,000
Government of Tiflis:	
City of Tiflis	5,000
Villages of the district of Tiflis	3,000
	8,000
Northern Caucasus (probably the Armenian town of Nahichevan-on-Don)	
	12,000
Grand Total	173,038

-Mr. Stevens, British Consul at Batoum

The New York Times
 THURSDAY, OCTOBER 7, 1915
**800,000 ARMENIANS
 COUNTED DESTROYED**

LONDON, Oct. 6.—Viscount Bryce, former British Ambassador to the United States, in the House of Lords today said that such information as had reached him from many quarters showed that the figure of 800,000 Armenians destroyed since May was quite a possible number. "Virtually the whole nation had been wiped out," he declared, and he did not suppose there was any case in history of a crime "so hideous and on so large a scale."

"The death of these people," said Lord Bryce, "resulted from the deliberate and premeditated policy of the gang now in possession of the Turkish Government. Orders for the massacres came in every case direct from Constantinople. In some instances local Governments, being humane, pious men, refused to carry out the orders and at least two Governors were summarily dismissed for this reason."

"The customary procedure was to round up the whole of the population of a designated town. A part of the population was thrown into prison and the remainder were marched out of town and in the suburbs the men were separated from the women and children. The men were then taken to a convenient place and shot or bayoneted. The women and children were then put under a convoy of the lower kind of soldiers and dispatched to some distant destination."

"They were driven by the soldiers day after day. Many fell by the way and many died of hunger, for no provisions were furnished them. They were robbed of all they possessed, and in many cases the women were stripped naked and made to continue the march in that condition. Many of the women went mad and threw away their children. The caravan route was marked by a line of corpses. Comparatively few of the people ever reached their destination."

"The facts as to the slaughter in Trebizond are vouched for by the Italian Consul. Orders came for the murder of all the Armenian Christians in Trebizond. Many Mussulmans tried to save their Christian friends, but the authorities were implacable and hunted out all the Christians and then drove them down to the sea front. Then they put them aboard sail boats and carried them some distance out to sea, and threw them overboard. The whole Armenian population, numbering 10,000, was thus destroyed in one afternoon."

The Lord Mayor at a meeting at the Mansion House on Oct. 5, will start a fund for the aid of Armenian refugees. Among the speakers will be Lord Bryce, Cardinal Bourne and T. P. O'Connor.



OCTOBER 7, 1915

KEVORK, THE SERVANT OF JESUS CHRIST, AND BY THE WILL OF GOD PRIMATE AND CATHOLICOS OF ALL THE ARMENIANS AND SUPREME PATRIARCH OF THE NATIONAL SEE OF ARARAT, THE APOSTOLIC MOTHER CHURCH OF THE CATHEDRAL OF ETCHMIADZIN, to WOODROW WILSON, President of the United States of America, Greetings. We send You Benediction from Our Patriarchal See, and pray for You long life and strength in the Lord.

Mr. President

We are deeply grateful for the many works of kindness which the people of Your Great Nation have extended to Our little flock scattered throughout the world. Exiled as they are in barren deserts, You extended to them a helping hand that they might be preserved in life, and might steadfastly maintain that faith in Christ for the sake of which many of them have been martyred, as the saints were slain of old by the sword of the wicked.

Orphans and widows, old men and children, young brides and tender virgins, deprived of their possession and bereaved of those dear to them, fed on grass, starving and desolate, raise their hands in prayer that the Lord may assist You to protect those who are living in distress that they may be spared in their places of banishment, and by Your care and that of other sympathetic nations may be returned in safety to their homes.

Joining Our children in these their prayers, We beseech the Lord of all that the humane compassion of Yourself and Your nation may not diminish, and that We may not be left forsaken under the hand of the oppressor, but by Your assistance may be delivered and rescued from this heavy yoke. May You be given long life, and strength in the grace and help of the Lord.

Kevork V
 Catholicos of All the Armenians

April 23, 1916



To the Right Reverend Arsène E. Vehouni

Your Eminence:

I was very much touched to receive at your hands the other day the address which His Holiness, Kevork V, Primate and Catholicos of all the Armenians and Supreme Patriarch of the National See of Ararat, was gracious enough to send me in recognition of such services as the representatives of the United States have been able to render to the distressed Armenians upon whom the burden of the present war has fallen with circumstances of special tragedy. I am sure that I am expressing the feeling of the people of the United States when I say that the little we have been able to do has been done with hearts full of sympathy, and that the suffering people of Armenia may rest assured that they will continue to receive at our hands an unqualified sympathy and, whenever it is possible, generous assistance.

Cordially and sincerely yours,

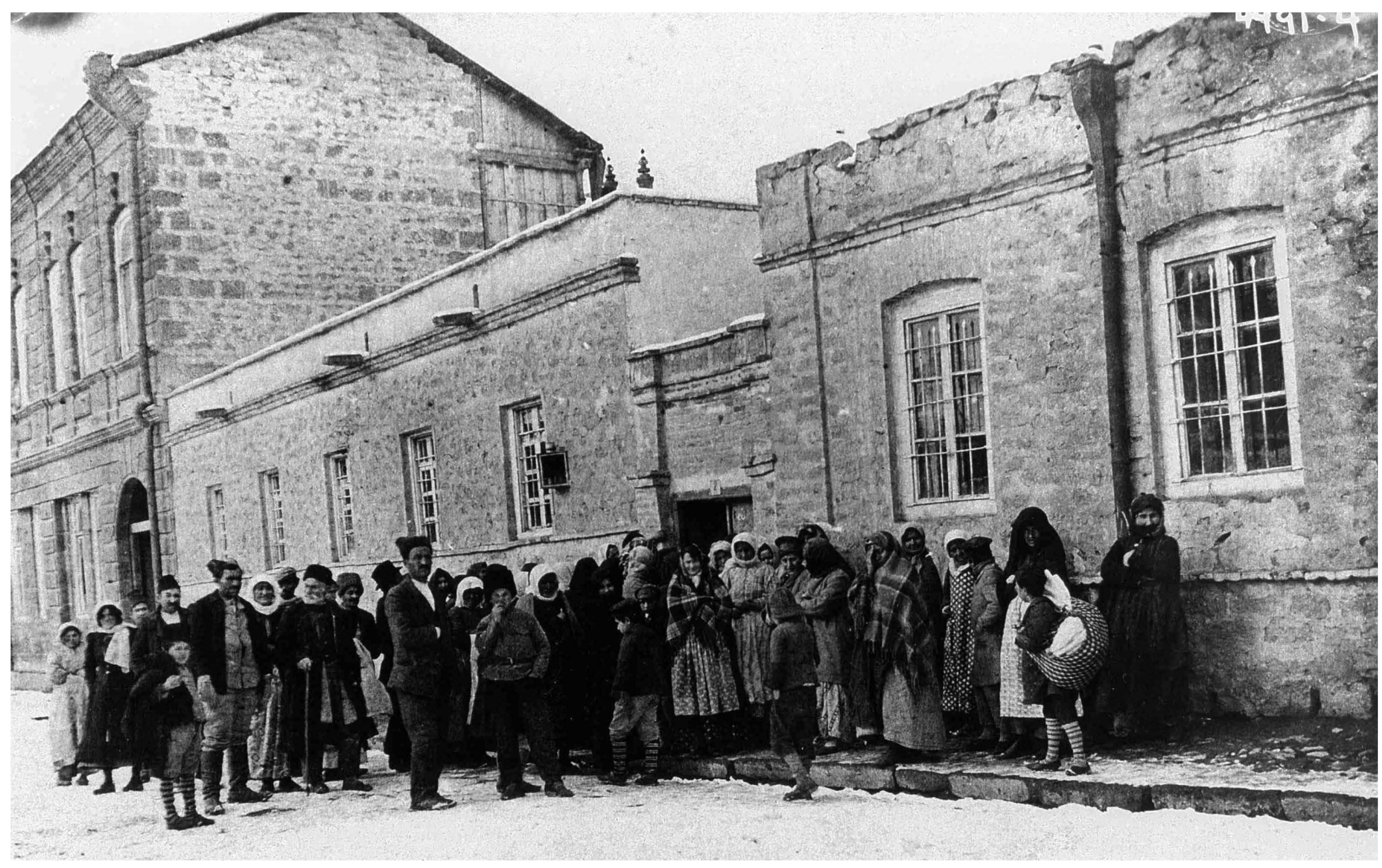
Woodrow Wilson

AIDING THE REFUGEES

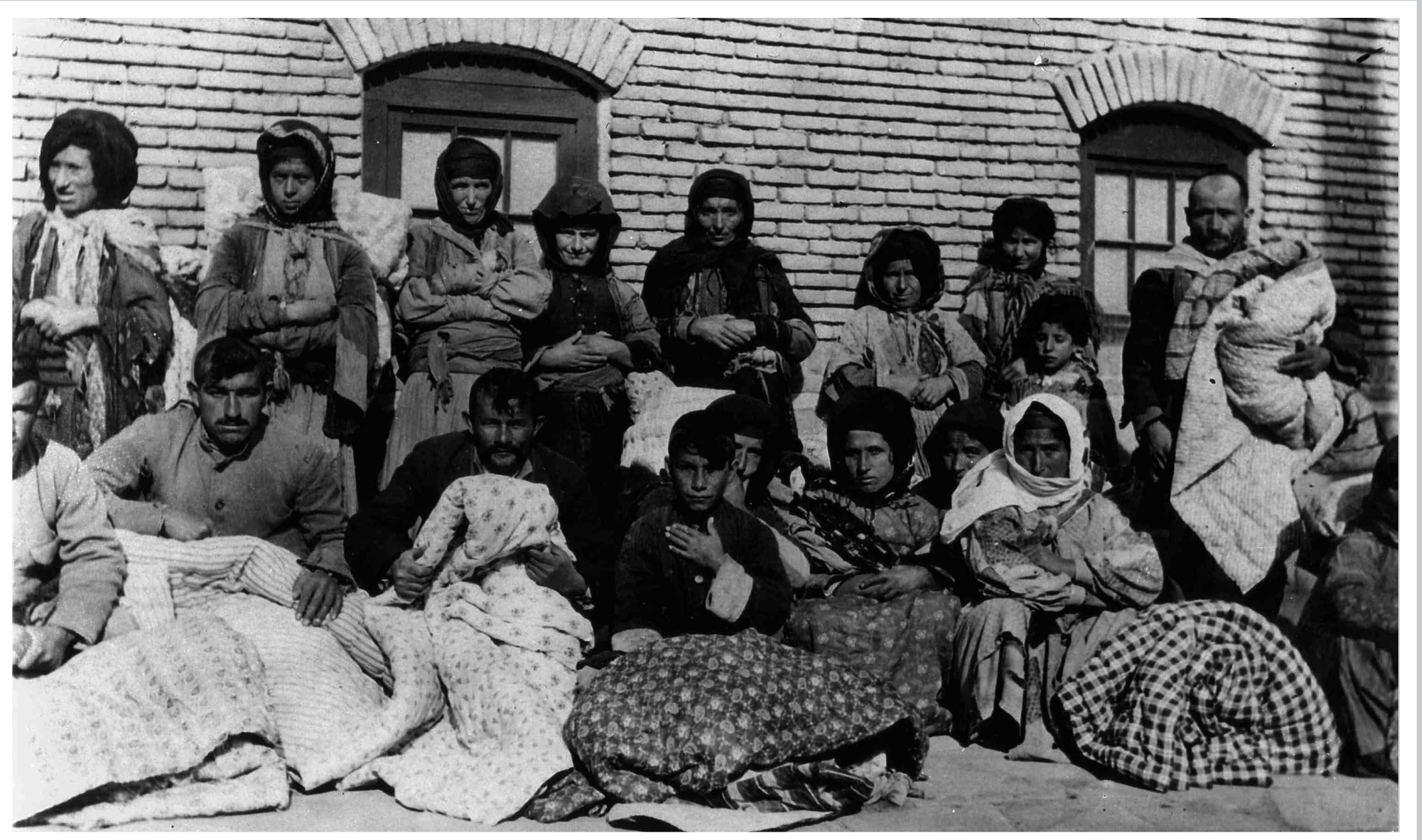


The Caucasian Armenians rose magnificently to the occasion. The brunt of the relief work fell upon them, and their organisation was as admirable as their generosity. They were subsequently reinforced by aid from London, Boston, and, above all, from Moscow; but the magnitude of the task was overwhelming, and the need continued to be very great.

Viscount **James Bryce**, British Ambassador to the United States from 1907 to 1913, who submitted to the British Parliament in 1916 the first official report on the Armenian Genocide, *The Treatment of Armenians in the Ottoman Empire, Documents Presented to Viscount Grey of Fallodon, Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, Laid Before the Houses of Parliament as an Official Paper*



Deputy primate of Alexandropol Artak Vardapet with Russian governor of Yerevan province Count Tiesenhausen (center) at a hospital in 1915 photographed with Red Cross and other medical volunteers.

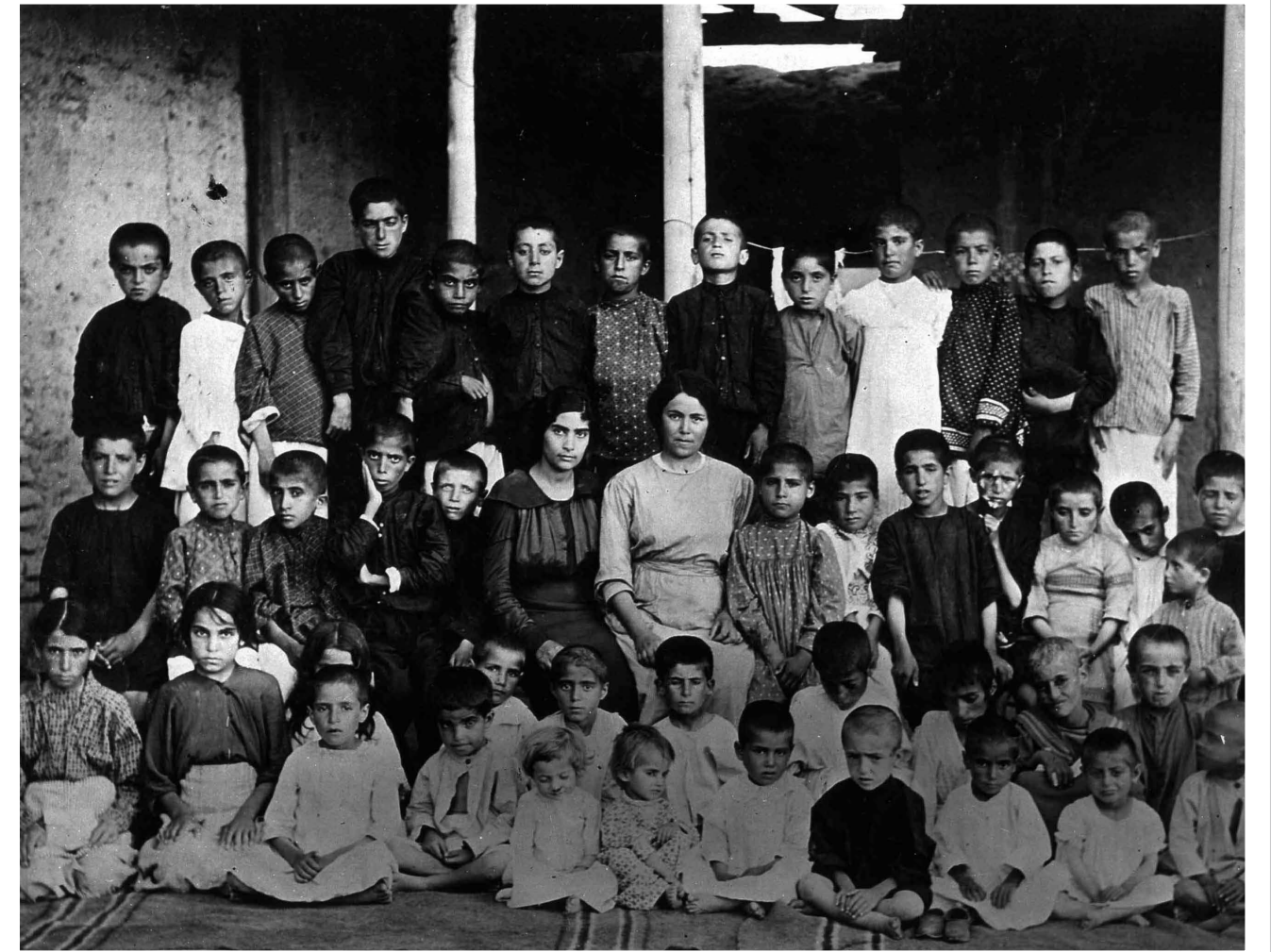
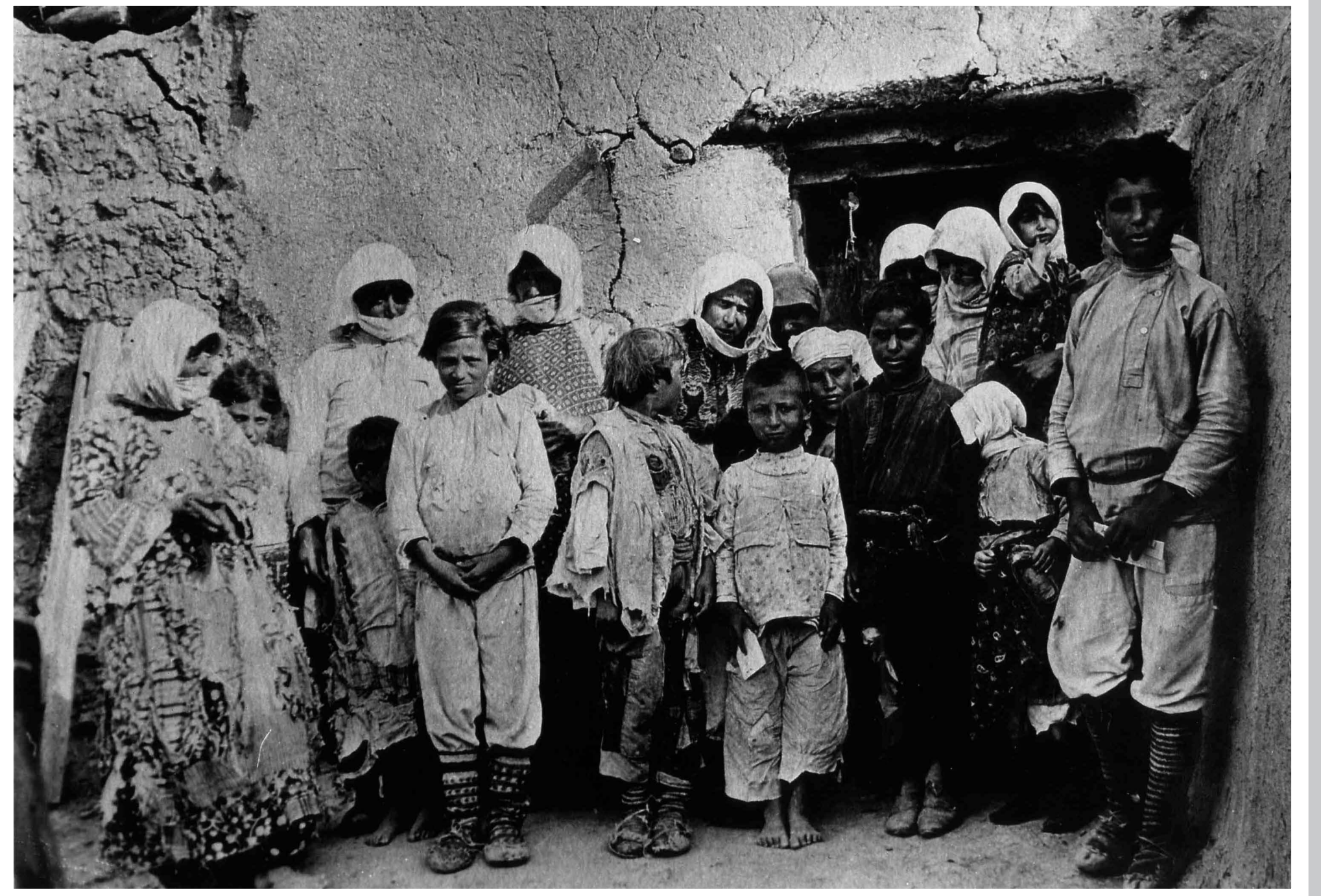


It is reported that the Katholikos has received 120 bales of warm clothing from America, and Mr. Hatisov [Alexander Khatisian], Mayor of Tiflis, another 11 bales of the same kind of wearing apparel from London, for distribution among the refugees.

25,000 [Russian rubles] (£2,500 [British pounds]) a donation by a rich Armenian gentleman named Mantashev have recently been spent by the Mayor of Tiflis in procuring warm bedding, as for instance mattresses, quilts, and pillow cases, which have been sent to Igdir, Delijan, Novo-Bayazid and Elizavetpol for the use of refugees.
-Mr. Stevens, British Consul at Batoum



GATHERING THE ORPHANS



MEMORANDUM ON THE CONDITION OF ARMENIAN REFUGEES IN THE CAUCASUS

DATED 29th DECEMBER, 1915

Although the considerable sums that have recently been finding their way to Russia are being applied to the relief of Armenian refugees in the Caucasus, and the numerous consignments of clothing placed by various organisations at the disposal of the Relief Committees are being served out to them, the need of the refugees for further urgent help is reported to be still very great.

Prince Argoudinsky-Dolgoroukov, the Acting Representative of the Caucasian Section of the Urban Union, after having visited the refugee camps at Bambak and Delijan, furnishes the following report on his tour of inspection:--- Four thousand refugees are concentrated in the 26 villages which he visited in the districts named above, the more wealthy villages housing a greater number of fugitives than the less important ones. He found that, as a rule, two refugees are quartered in each house. In the whole of this district, excepting at Karakeliss, the refugees are everywhere gratuitously lodged...

The exceedingly well organised Relief Committee of the Karakeliss Brotherhood is very attentive to the needs of the refugees... The Urban Union maintains a fairly well organised and equipped hospital for fifty beds at Karakeliss...

An orphanage managed by the Petrograd Armenian Committee has also been opened at Karakeliss. It accommodates 170 beds. The premises are good---well kept and clean. The children belonging to the orphanage are taught at the Church School at Karakeliss. They are all well dressed, but do not get sufficient food. This affects their outward appearance, and the orphans are consequently pale and somewhat emaciated. Prince Argoudinsky was informed that at times some of the children would wake up at night and search for remnants of bread left about during the day.

The Tairov Asylum for Orphans, maintained at the personal expense of Mrs. U. M. Tairov, impressed the Prince very favourably. The Orphanage is equipped for 25 orphans belonging to soldiers, and for 25 fatherless and motherless refugees....

The conditions obtaining in the district of Kazakh are not so satisfactory as they are at Karakeliss. The need for methodical organisation in supervising relief work and introducing a defined plan of action is everywhere noticeable.

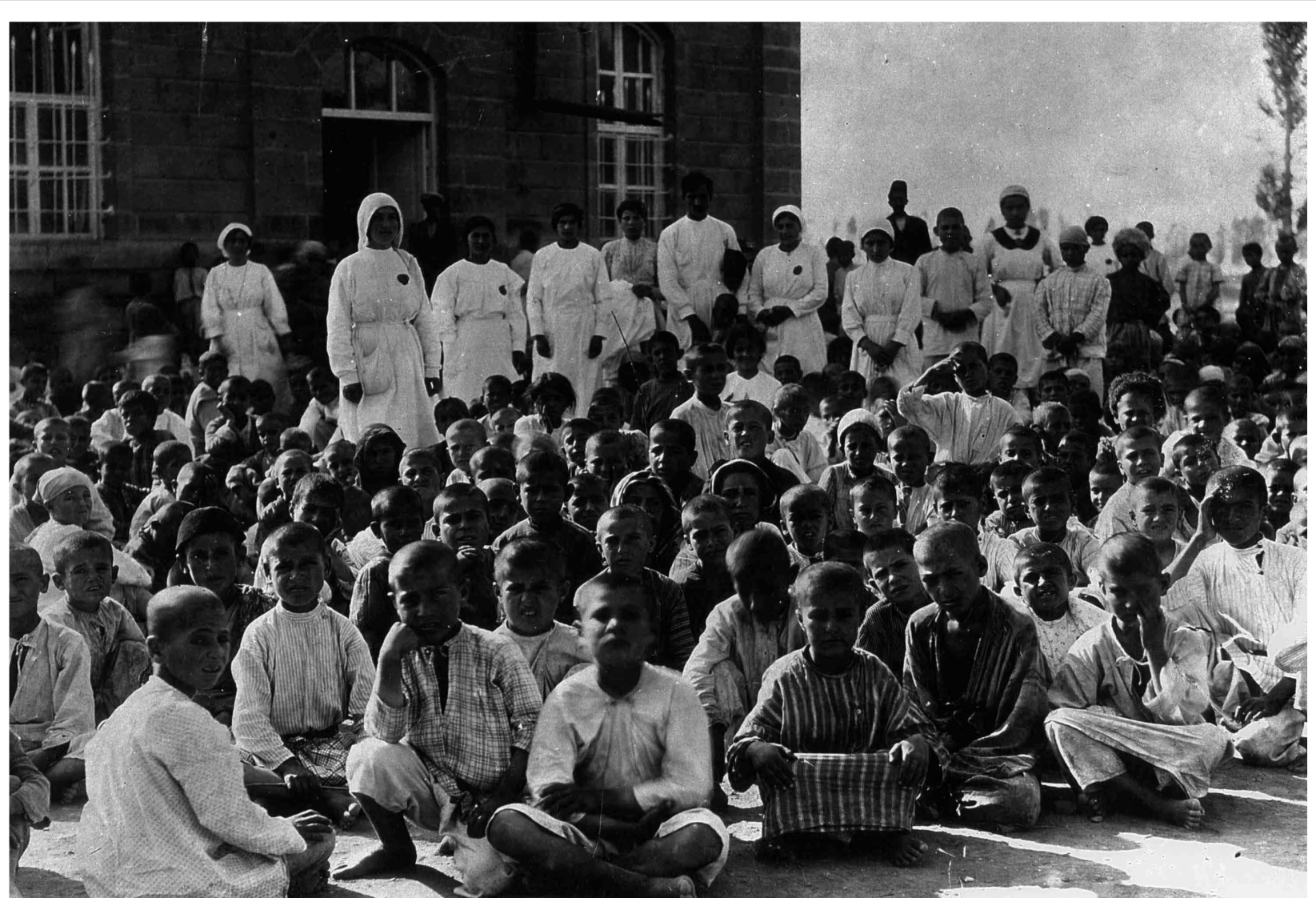
About 4,500 refugees are concentrated in this locality, viz. :---3,145 Armenians, 805 Nestorians and 550 Armenian orphans. The latter are accommodated in the Orphanage of Delijan.

At Delijan four asylums for children exist. Prince Argoudinsky was only able to visit one of these establishments. The one inspected by him is managed by Princess Toumanov, and is maintained out of funds furnished by the Armenian Benevolent Society...

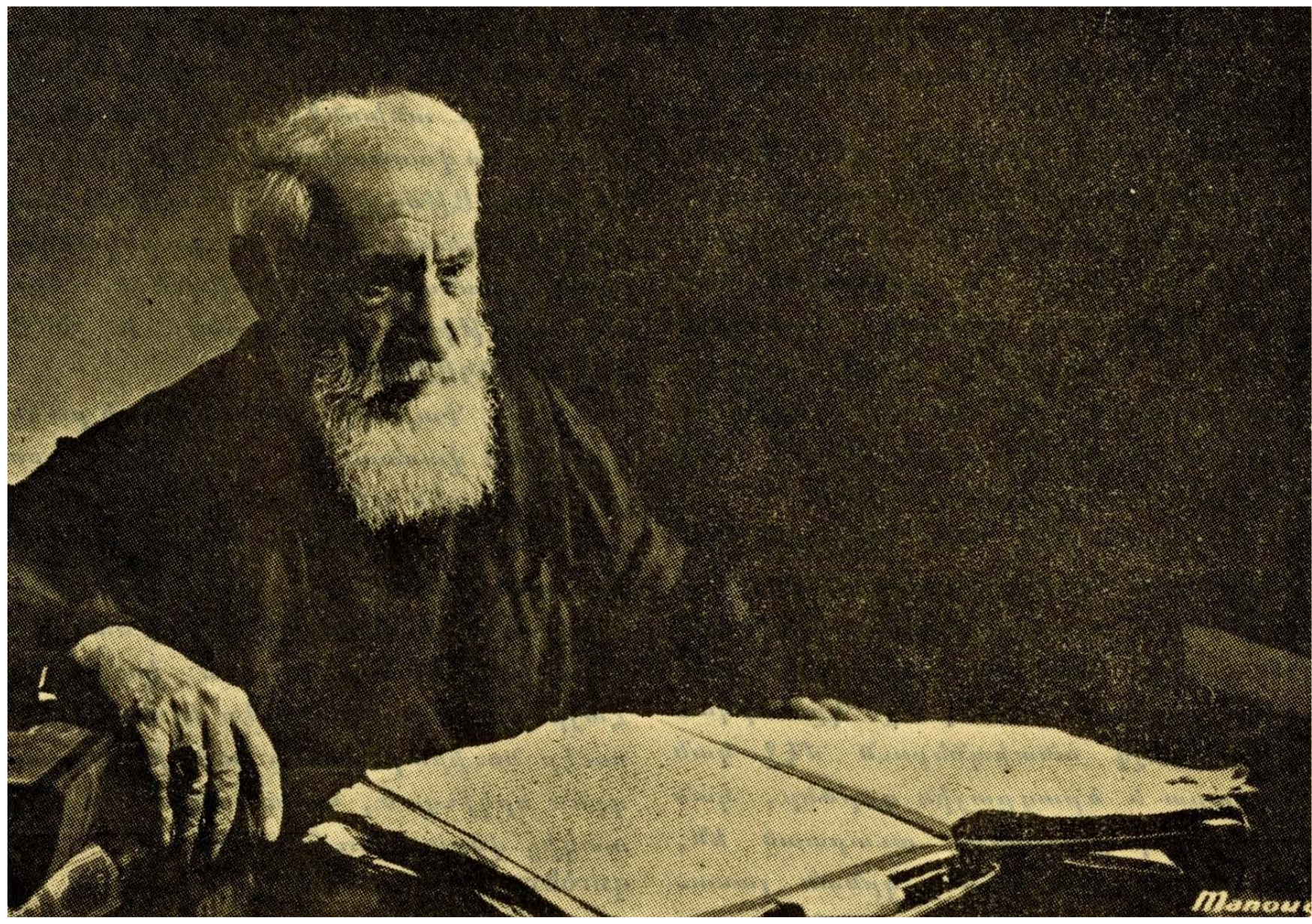
The Bakou Refugee Committee has just forwarded several further consignments of 10,000 quilts, 12,000 mattresses and sacks, 12,000 pillow cases, 600 jackets, 3,000 shirts, 3,000 pairs of drawers; and the Tiflis Committee, 400 quilts, 4,000 mattresses, 4,000 pillow cases, 200 jackets, 1,000 shirts and 1,000 pairs of drawers, to the Governors of Elizavetpol and Erivan, to be served out to the refugees. The latter Committee has also sent several bales of clothing to Persia and to Turkish Asia Minor for the refugees, but according to the newspapers a large proportion of the fugitives are still in utmost poverty---destitute, to a very great extent, of the absolute necessities of existence.

Seventy-six railway truck loads of flour, of which 53 were for the needs of the Armenian Refugees in the Government of Erivan and 23 for the use of those in the Government of Elizavetpol, left Gulevich in the Northern Caucasus a few days ago. These trucks, under ordinary conditions, should already have reached their respective destinations.

-Mr. Stevens, British Consul at Batoum



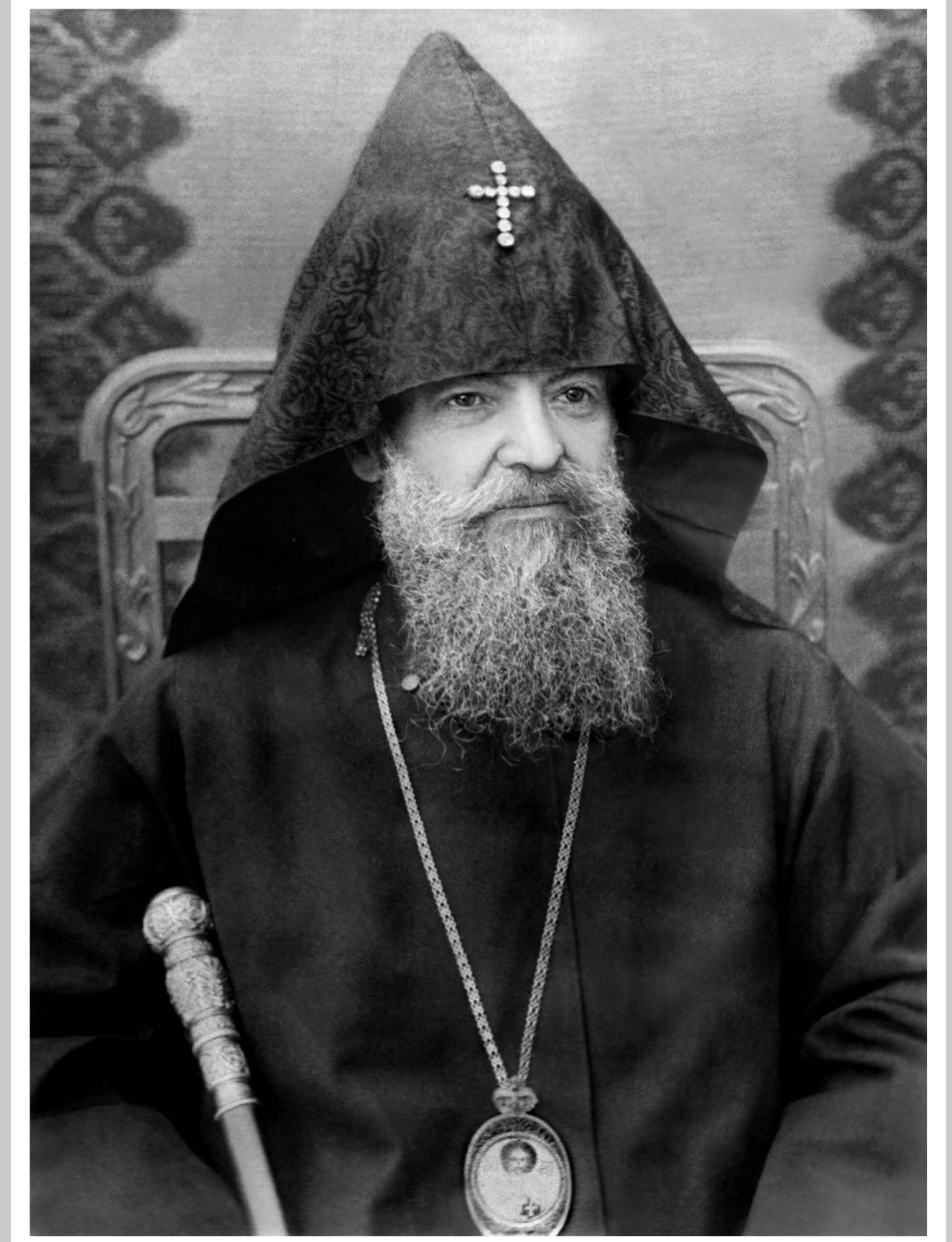
THE RELIEF ORGANIZATIONS



Bishop **Khoren Muratbekian** was deputy primate of Yerevan during World War I and served as principal instructor of Armenian military chaplains during the years of conflict that ravaged the region. He headed the Fraternal Aid Committee of his diocese and was sent as the representative of the Catholicos to the Armenian Delegation at the 1919 Paris Peace Conference. He subsequently traveled to the United States in 1920 where he re-organized the North American diocese of the Armenian Church.

Like his contemporary, Garegin Hovsepian, Khoren Muratbekian was also a clergyman of great courage and leadership skills. By the time he was elected Catholicos of All Armenians in Etchmiadzin in 1932 he had been serving as locum tenens for the ailing Gevorg V Surenians since 1923 and defending the church in the face of the exactions of the Communist authorities who established Soviet power in Armenia.

The pontificate of Khoren I coincided with the harshest years of Communist repression of church and religion in the Soviet Union and his term was cut short by Soviet dictator Joseph Stalin's secret police with his murder by strangulation in Etchmiadzin. The sanctuary that Catholicos Gevorg V had so bravely protected from the Turks was finally defiled by the Communists with the martyrdom of Catholicos Khoren I in 1938.



One of the most learned clergymen to occupy the pontifical throne, **Garegin Hovsepian** was born in Karabakh in 1867, received his education at the Gevorgian Academy, and earned a doctorate in divinity from Leipzig University. Ordained a celibate priest in 1898, he became a teacher at Etchmiadzin and embarked upon a career of prolific scholarship. He inaugurated the publication of Armenian colophons as important sources of information on Armenian social and religious history in the late medieval period and published some of the earliest studies of Armenian miniature illumination, one of the most unique forms of Armenian artistic production, as well as works on medieval Armenian church architecture.

He was sent to the United States in 1934 where he was elected primate of the Diocese of Armenian Church in North America in 1938. He held the post until 1943, when he was elected Catholicos of the Great House of Cilicia, the second pontificate of the Armenian Church which had relocated to Antelias, Lebanon, upon exile from Ottoman Turkey, and served in that capacity until his death in 1952.

During the Armenian Genocide, he had succeeded Bishop Yeprem Sukiasian and Bishop Bagrat Vardazarian as head of the Fraternal Aid Committee at Etchmiadzin created by Catholicos Gevorg V Surenians in response to the influx of refugees fleeing Turkey. A man of great personal courage, sensing the dire consequences of the fateful moment when Ottoman forces invaded Eastern Armenia in May 1918, he participated in the Battle of Sardarapat at the head of a contingent of clergymen determined to arrest the advance of a genocidal regime into the last portion of the Armenian homeland.

REPORT ON THE ACTIVITY OF ARMENIAN REFUGEE RELIEF ORGANISATIONS IN THE CAUCASUS

DATED 3rd JANUARY, 1916

The Armenian organisations in the Caucasus which have been so active in relieving Christian refugees since the first arrival of the latter in this country in the early days of July last, still continue their good work.

The number of victims of the war who took refuge in the Caucasus from Turkish Armenia and Persia, in roughly estimated figures, is 150,000. The influx of refugees, however, continued for some time after July. There is, therefore, good reason to believe that the number of refugees who crossed the Russian border was in excess of the figures quoted above.

The refugees for the most part settled in the Government of Erivan, and principally at and about the town of Etchmiadzin. Housing accommodation for such large numbers could not here be provided, and the refugees, in the circumstances, had to be accommodated without cover in yards and open spaces, in the neighbourhood of the Monastery of Etchmiadzin.

Daily telegrams from Etchmiadzin to the Principal Relief Committee at Tiflis depicted a truly painful situation, and reported that from 350 to 400 deaths were daily taking place, owing to the destitute and starving conditions that prevailed amongst the refugees.

At this time relief work was in the hands partly of the "Chief Caucasian Committee for Succouring Victims of the War," and partly in those of the Red Cross Society. Shortly after, several other public bodies joined in relief work.

The combined efforts of these various organisations had little effect in improving the situation. The funds at their respective disposals were small, and quite out of proportion to the enormous numbers of the refugees, whose ranks kept on swelling, especially after the heavy fighting that took place last summer on the Caucasian front.

Meanwhile the insanitary condition of the refugees, in view of the very hot weather, was daily becoming more and more appalling. Dysentery, spotted fever, typhoid, measles, diphtheria, and subsequently cholera, all of which were assuming epidemic form, were thinning the numbers of the refugees at a very rapid rate; and yet, despite this alarming situation, the funds necessary to cope successfully with the deplorable conditions were not forthcoming.

Finally, the Caucasian Section of the All Russia Urban Union after a hurried investigation of matters, prepared a rough estimate of the money needed for the immediate relief of the refugees, and a grant of Rs. 1,103,250 (£110,325 about) was asked for by the Section from its Principal Organisation. This money was shortly afterwards remitted to the Caucasus, and the urgent needs of the hordes of refugees were then and there met. The temporary measures of relief adopted gave the Caucasian organisations a short time to think matters over, and to decide on further action in connection with relief work.

Accordingly, steps were taken to bring the pressing needs of the refugees before the public, and, in response to appeals made throughout the Caucasus, in Russia and abroad, moneys were collected privately; the Russian Government contributed important sums, and latterly funds have been flowing in from the United Kingdom and America. With these moneys relief work is being extended on a wider scale, and the requirements of the refugees are being more closely attended to; but the needs of the fugitives are still very great, and more and more moneys are required.

The following is a list of the medical and kitchen stations which have been opened by the Union and are at present serving the needs of the refugees in the areas mentioned above:--

I

HOSPITALS

1. At points at which the refugees originally settled.

(a) At Etchmiadzin---A hospital consisting of several buildings belonging to the Monastery and to its Academy, which have been temporarily adapted to accommodate 570 beds for patients of both sexes and for children.

A cholera ward, No. 6, in which, owing to the disappearance of the disease, no cases are at present under treatment. The vacant beds of this ward (70) are now being used for cases of spotted fever.

A flying medical column (consisting of a medical officer, his assistant and several competent attendants) has been provisionally formed to attend to those sick refugees who are within the limits of Monastery territory.

Three miles distant from the Monastery, on the road to the railway station of Etchmiadzin, a medical quarantine station has been established. At this point healthy refugees are subjected to a quarantine of four to five days, before they are allowed to proceed to the station for the purpose of entraining en route to the Government of Elizavetpol. On their journey, the refugees are accompanied by a medical officer and two professional assistants.

(b) At Igdir---A hospital, in temporarily occupied buildings, accommodating 100 beds; and, three and a half miles from this point, at a village named Plour, a hospital for 50 beds.

(c) At Erivan---A hospital, in private houses provisionally rented, which provides 200 beds. A quarantine station of a temporary type has also been opened in connection with this hospital. Two assistant medical officers are placed in charge of the latter establishment, and they accompany refugees by rail to their places of settlement in the Government of Elizavetpol.

(d) At Alexandropol---A hospital, in premises rented temporarily, accommodating 200 beds to which an isolation section has been added.

Within the limits of the district of Elizavetpol several stations have been established with assistant medical officers in charge.

2. Along the refugees' line of advance.

(a) Nijni-Akhti---A hospital for 50 beds.

Assistant medical officers' stations at Elenovka and Tchibouhli.

(b) Delijan---A hospital for 50 beds.

3. In places where refugees have more or less settled.

(a) Novo-Bayazid (Erivan)---A hospital for 50 beds.

(b) Annenfeld---A hospital for 80 beds.

(c) Kedabek---A hospital for 50 beds.

The total number of beds provided-including the 70 belonging to the cholera ward at Etchmiadzin---is 1,450.

NOTE: Funds furnished by the Urban Union are at present being employed for adapting a building-ceded to the Military by the Katholikos---to the needs of the refugees.

II

KITCHEN STATIONS

1. On the railway lines used by refugees.

At the quarantine station near Etchmiadzin and at the stations of Aghtalia and Annenfeld.

2. On the metalled roads (chaussées) used by refugees.

At Parakar, Erivan, Novo-Nikolaievka, Ailar, Suhoi Fontan, Nijni-Alehti, Elenovka, Tchibouhli, Delijan, Tarsa-Tchai, Karavansarai and Uzuntal.

Bread and hot food are served out to the refugees at these stations. The refugees are quartered during their stay at these points in sheds rented for the purpose which are properly roofed.

A separate kitchen station has been opened at Djoulfa out of funds---Rs. 10,000 (£1,000)---placed by the Urban Union at the disposal of Bishop Nerses, for the use of Nestorian refugees.

III

With a view to improving the insanitary conditions obtaining in the refugee settlements, and also the hygiene of the refugees:

1. Three disinfecting stations have been opened.

The first of these is now operating at Etchmiadzin. The station undertakes to disinfect cemeteries, refuse-dumping grounds, hospitals (in the event of infectious disease), and premises of every other type, and to operate the disinfecting camera.

The officials of the station perform their duties under the guidance of a sanitary medical officer.

The second station is at Igdir, and the third at Erivan.

The duties of the latter two stations are identical with those of the first-named station, and each is worked by a similar personnel.

The following is a list of other organisations engaged in relief work in this country:--

The Etchmiadzin Brotherhood;

The Tiflis Armenian Central Committee;

The Moscow Armenian Red Cross Committee;

The Russian Red Cross Society; and

The Communes of the various villages in which the refugees have settled.

The Etchmiadzin Brotherhood, under the chairmanship of the Katholikos, maintains branches of its organisation at Igdir, Erivan, Alexandropol, Kars, Nahichevan, Novo-Bayazid, and Karakeliss. Relief work was undertaken by the Brotherhood in March, 1915. Since that date, apart from the large quantities of clothing, medicines and other comforts served out to the refugees, a medical detachment has been organised at Igdir, and, in all, the Brotherhood has spent Rs. 900,000 (£90,000) in relief work. This, in the main, has been obtained by voluntary contribution from persons of Armenian nationality all over the world, but especially in the Russian Empire (at Petrograd, Moscow, Kharkov, &c.). The Brotherhood serves out with punctual regularity flour rations, money allowances, and clothing to the refugees. It has all along maintained kitchens at Igdir, Etchmiadzin, and Alexandropol, as well as hospitals in various places; has organised a proper system of medical aid; and has opened refugee orphanages, schools and workshops for the children. In short, the organisation is thorough, and this is one of the most important relief societies engaged in work in the Armenian refugee pale.

The Tiflis Armenian Central Committee has also been carrying out relief work for nearly ten months. This body maintains its own hospitals and kitchens, and hitherto has expended Rs. 200,000 (£20,000) in connection with the relief of Armenian refugees settled in the Government of Erivan. The necessary funds are raised by voluntary contributions collected from members belonging to Armenian society in the Caucasus.

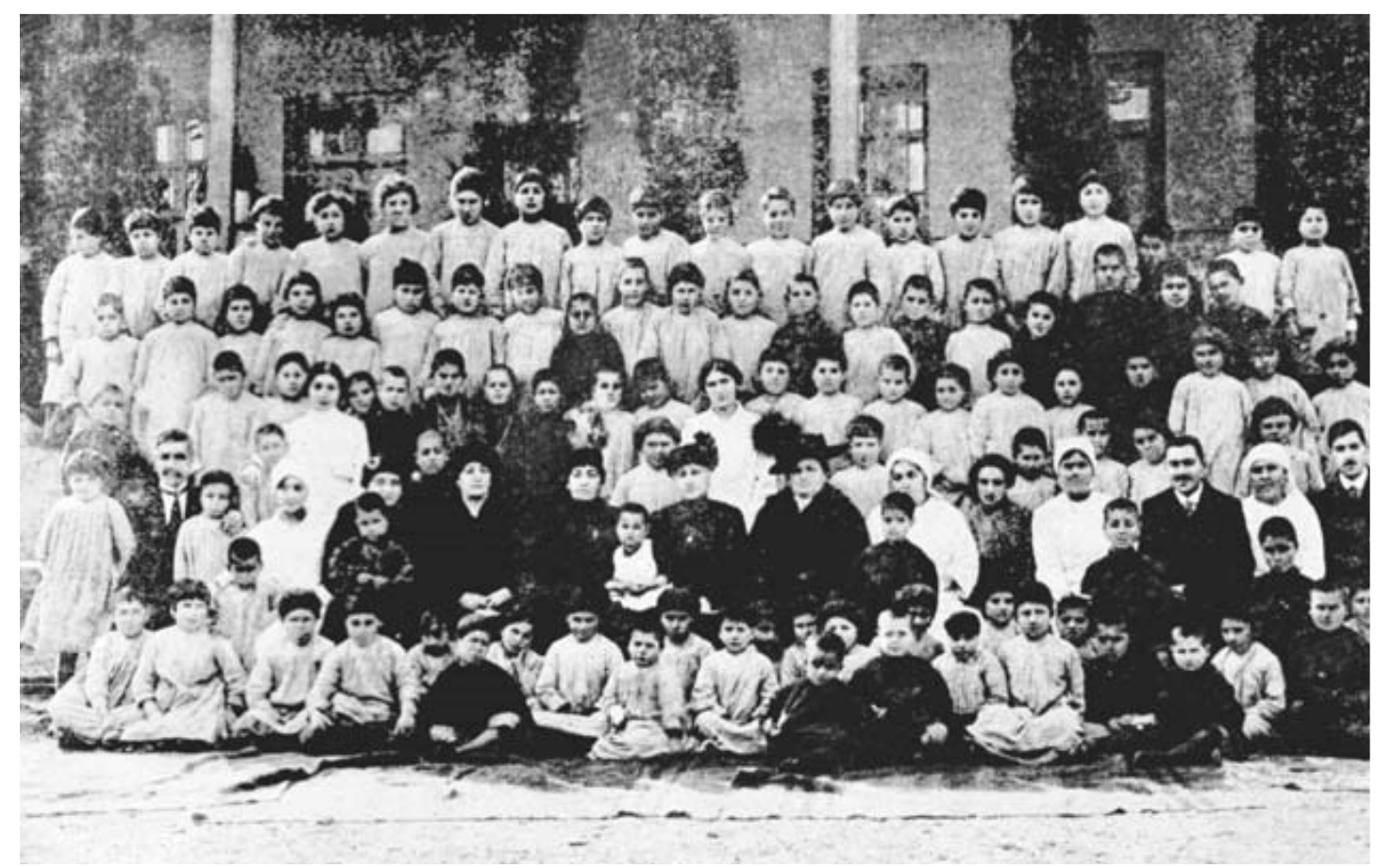
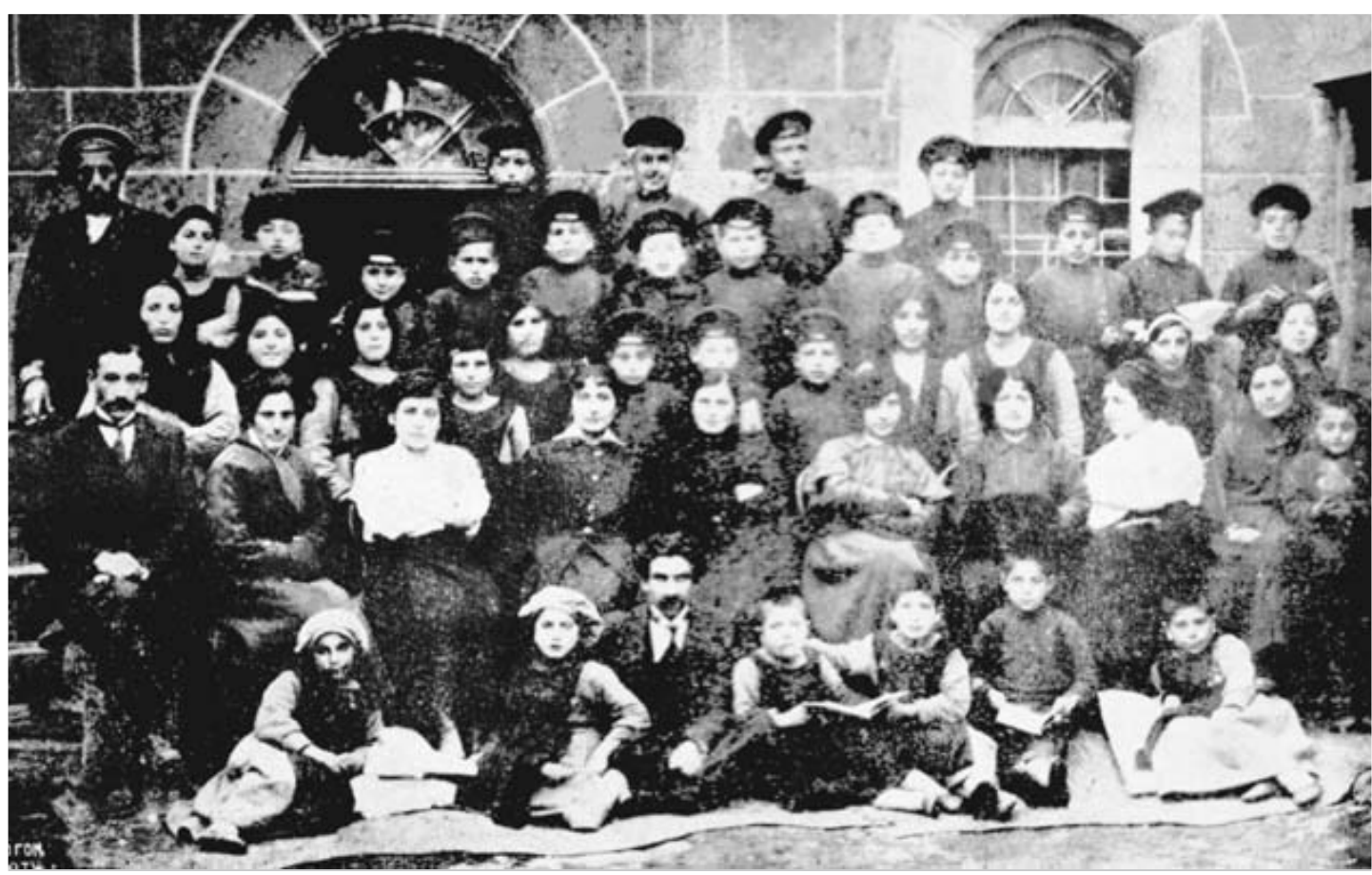
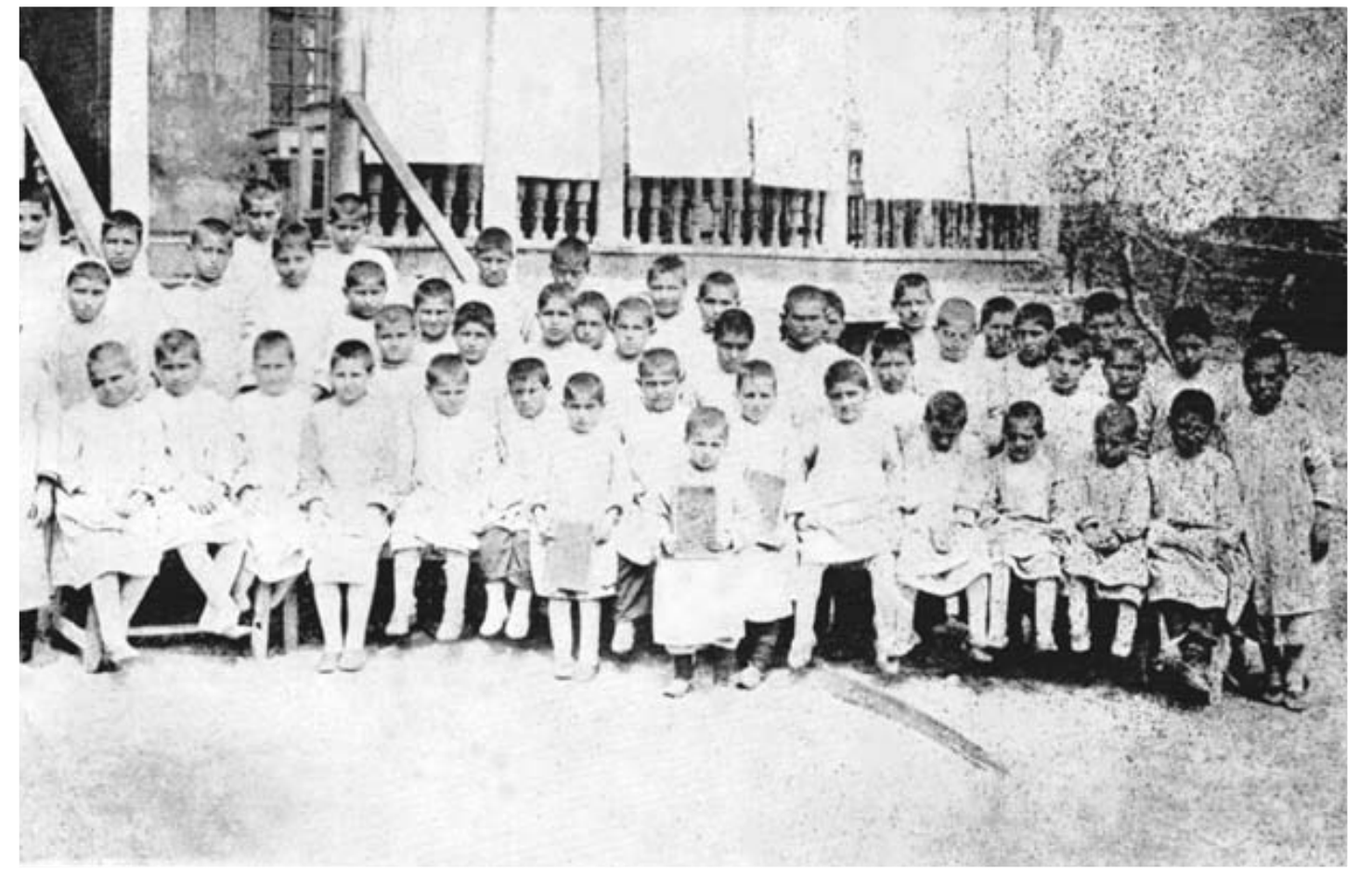
The Moscow Armenian Committee of the Red Cross---The relief work of this organisation is confined to the Government of Erivan. The Committee commenced operations in April last, when four medical and kitchen stations (viz. at Etchmiadzin and at the villages of Markar, Ashtarak, and Arzap) were opened. A staff consisting of a medical officer, two assistants, and several competent attendants and nurses, besides several sanitary officers and other employees, is appointed to each of these stations. The organisation affords relief when and as urgent occasion requires. This Committee has spent Rs. 300,000 (£30,000), all of which has been contributed by the Armenian colony at Moscow. An orphanage is maintained by the Committee at Ashtar, together with a school and workshop. The organisation likewise keeps a flour store and stocks of other provisions at the last-mentioned place. Refugees are fed by the Society at Markar and at eight other villages situate in the valley of Alashkerd. The above remarks apply only to the more important duties that devolve on the Committee, but it also attends to the needs of the refugees in many other ways. A hospital at Arzap is also maintained by the Committee.

In August, 1915, The All Russia Red Cross Society entered the field of refugee work by opening a medical observation point at Igdir. The staff here consists of a superintendent, a medical officer, two assistants, and 19 sanitary officers. In September last, alone, this body served out 18,598 dinners and 16,775 portions of tea, and rendered medical aid to 4,652 refugees. In October, 1915, the Red Cross Society daily fed from 850 to 900 refugees in the district of Igdir. The stations of this Society are well organised, the staffs strictly disciplined, and their work is effected with neatness and punctuality. The Society maintains a dispensary and victualling store at Igdir. The estimated cost of the dinners and tea served out to the refugees by the Society is between 17 and 18 copecks (3d.) a day per head.

The Village Communes---The peasants of each of the villages in which refugees have been settled have undertaken to accommodate them, gratuitously, in their houses. In these the refugees find warm shelter, and are not infrequently fed as well out of the slender resources at the disposal of their hosts. Whilst seemingly unimportant, the relief extended to the refugees by the peasantry is of the greatest value. An accurate idea of this benevolence can only be formed when all the good deeds of the peasantry are taken into consideration. Undoubtedly, this aid relieves the contributory public from responsibilities amounting to several hundreds of thousands of roubles. In other words, the charitable disposition of the by no means affluent peasant effects an enormous saving of money, which under other conditions would have to be provided by the various organisations.

-Mr. Stevens, British Consul at Batoum

THE ORPHANAGES OF ARMENIA



THE ORPHANS OF GENOCIDE

While crossing the bridge over the Bandimahi River, the people of Van suffered many victims. The bridge was narrow. It was a sorrowful site. Many were obliged to throw their children into the river.

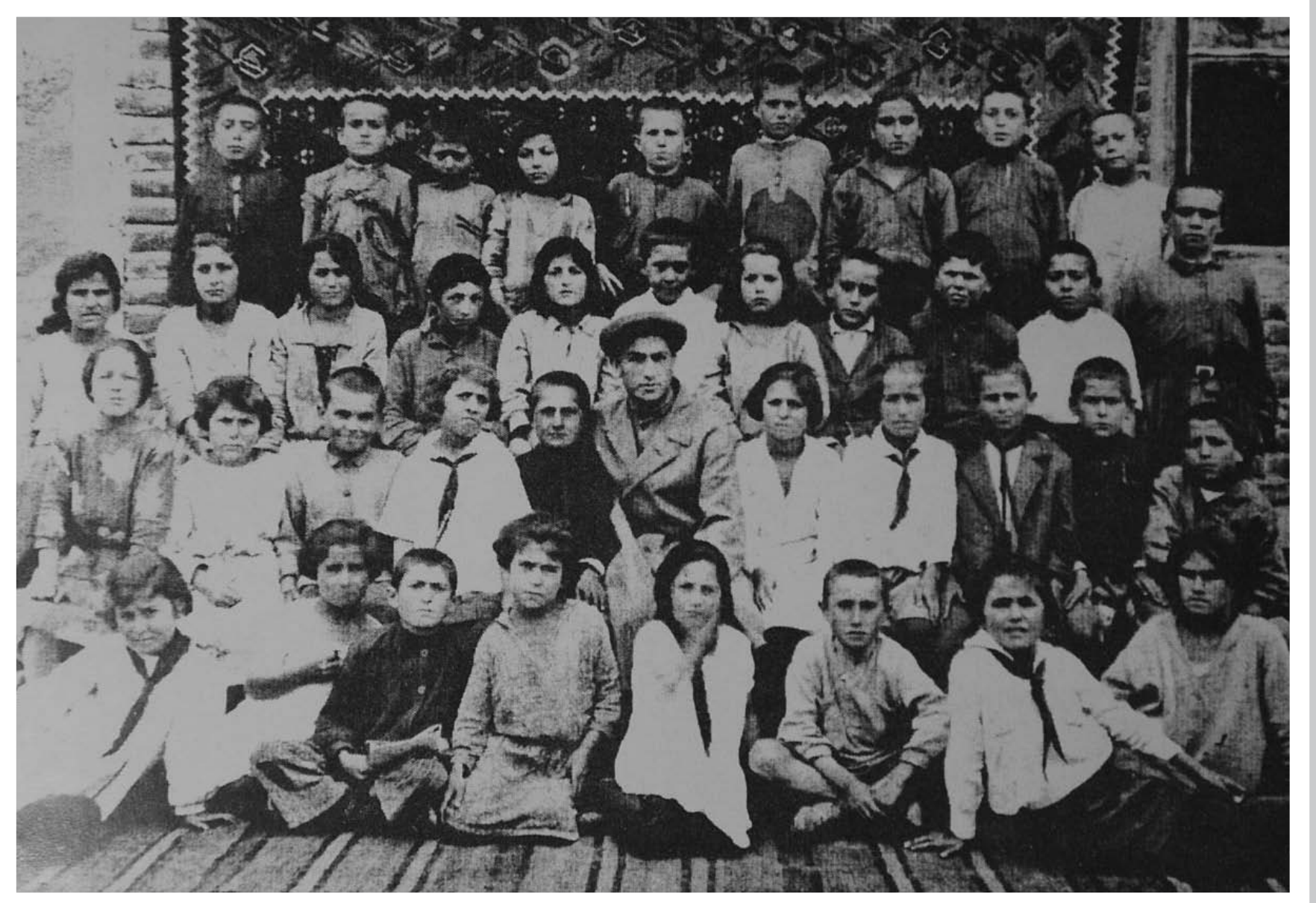
We encountered the most violent battles near Berkri. The Russian soldiers had taken the children on the Russian vans, and the Kurds, who had been hired to slaughter the Armenians, attacked us. They were overturning the vans and pouring the children into the river. Finally the Russian soldiers, who were accompanying us, succeeded in expelling the Kurds, and having opened the entrance of the valley, returned. I was sitting in a van. We reached Igdirdir and stayed there. Some of the people began to complain that they were hungry and wanted bread.

We forded the Arax River, and arrived at Etchmiadzin where the refugees were scattered all along the walls of the monastery. Hundreds were dying of typhus. Conditions were appalling. Even the houses were converted into hospitals. When my brother Gurgen died, I saw how the corpses were arranged like sticks one over the other in order to transport them to the mass graves at night.

My father realized that we were also going to die, so he gathered us and took us to Tiflis. My uncle was there, the Ter-Harutiunians with their families, who had taken refuge there after the disturbances of 1896. Together my mother, my father and my brother Ardrun...and myself were accommodated at the Aramian Hospital. Here my father died of typhus.

We found ourselves in an orphanage. My sister, my brother and I were raised at the Benevolent orphanage, which was overseen by Hovhannes Tumanian. He had adopted three boys: the future poet Vagharshak Norents; the literary critic Norayr Dabaghian; and Mihran Tutundjian. The orphanage was located in the courtyard of the Monastery of Dsiravor in Tiflis. Pilgrims used to come to make offerings, and thus we were fed, but later our situation became difficult...

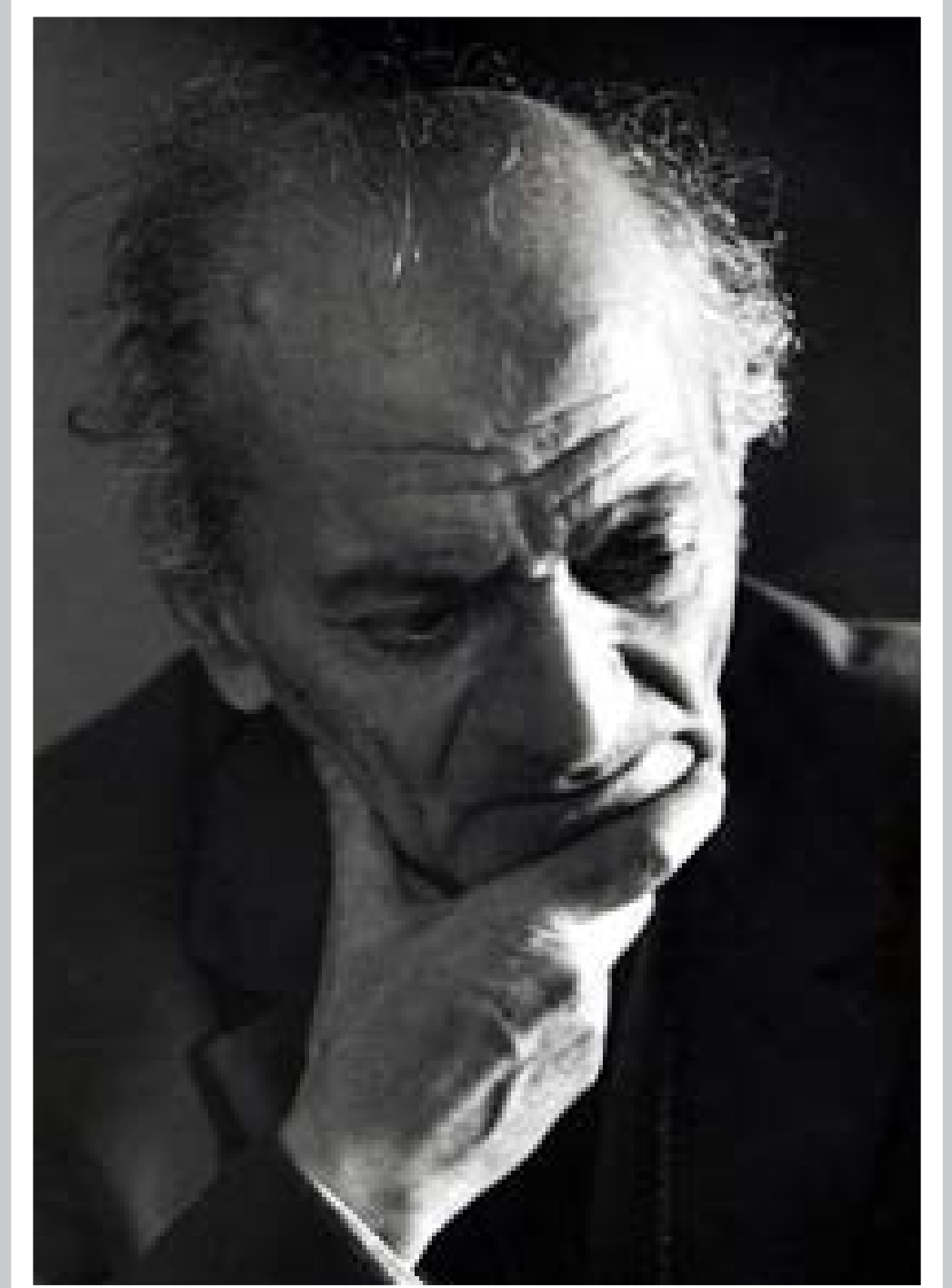
Even though we were spared slaughter at the hands of the Turks, by the end of our period of exile, only my mother, my brother, and I, out of the nine members of our family, survived. - *Varazdat Harutiunian*



Gurgen Mahari (1) and Nairi Zarian (2) at one of the three orphanages run by the Fraternal Aid Committee in Yerevan

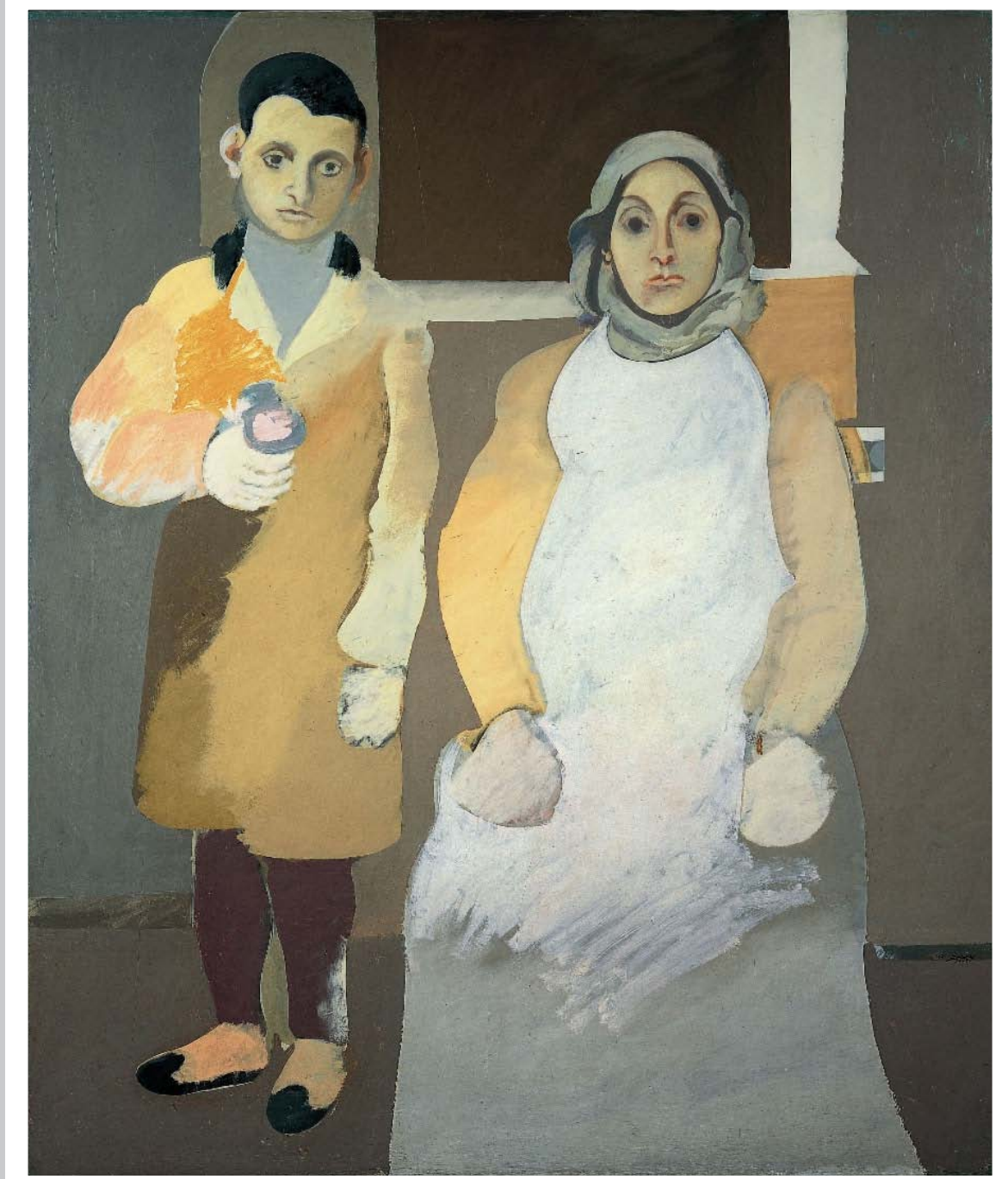
They swing their swords without mercy, they don't ask who is who, mother or child, master or servant. They kill by the hundreds and thousands, they pillage as well, they deport people to the fields, to the mountain passes and the valleys, so that the cities do not reek of death, and the plague does not devour the hordes that are responsible for spreading death and devastation.

- *Gurgen Mahari*



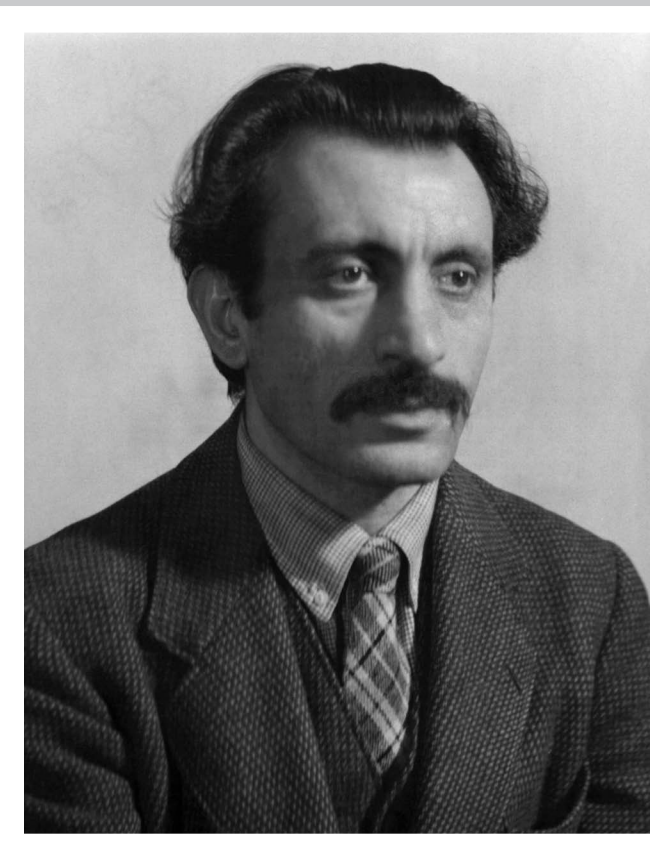
"Well, what am I to do after having reached Igdirdir, which is the frontier? Dear Sergei, this is a general question that all the refugees will wonder about: thousands are asking themselves the same question in this sea of Armenians. I do not think that once we reach Igdirdir, that is to say, once we have crossed the border of the Russian Empire, our misfortunes are to come to their end. There can be no doubts that a new stage of tragedy is sure to begin for our deportees: those surviving this infernal escape are to be exposed to new calamities and unspeakable difficulties. Loneliness, need, starvation, diseases and finally, unemployment will continue the massacre of many people who will be lucky enough to have a narrow escape from the horrors of this displacement."

Aghassi Khanjian speaking to Sirak Sarhadian



The bearers: Dikran der Garabedian, Manoog Adoian and Nazlu Shaghoian are worthy Armenians of good character and ability personally known to me. Any assistance to them in reaching their relatives in America will be appreciated and will not be misplaced. - *C.D. Ussher*

Dr. Clarence Ussher's 1919 letter of reference to the American Consul in Tiflis to issue permits for travel to the United States for 17-year-old Arshile Gorky, born Manoog Adoian, and for Dikran der Garabedian, known as Kertsia Dikran, a family friend who acted as his guardian during the crossing from Batoum, the Russian port on the Black Sea, now in Georgia, through Constantinople, to Ellis Island.



Arshile Gorky

I remember her [Shushan, Gorky's mother] in Yerevan because my mother used sometimes to obtain extra bread from somewhere, and she would give me a loaf to take to them.

Once when I went she was sitting in a very bare room with earthen floor, and just some rags there, and she was sitting in a corner on those rags. I remember her apron like that. I don't know if it was the same apron that Gorky drew, but the aprons were about that shape. She was sitting there very quiet, very sad.

After that, they moved away from Yerevan, so we lost track of them. Then when she died, they must have come back, because when they were leaving Armenia my sister Mariam left with them. They went to Constantinople together, with Dikran Kertsia.

- *Araxi Hovsepian*

Naturally, the day they told us we must escape, all of the city panicked and the streets filled with people....There was nothing but parched earth when we left Van. The Armenian commandos placed those who could not walk on caravans. But all of us walked...We marched along the east end of Lake Van, a very mountainous area, passed Bergri Dasht where later the Turks massacred 50,000 Armenians. We walked day and night with little rest. We had no food to speak of. If mother found anything she would give it to Gorky because you take more care of a boy than girls and he was the only boy and he was very thin. My mother always worried about him. He was her favorite. Even when we kept fasts in Van, Mother would give him food. Some Vanetzis journeyed to Persia and then on to Baghdad. But we journeyed to Yerevan, to Caucasian Armenia.

- *Vartoosh Mooradian (Arshile Gorky's sister)*

After the occupation of Eastern Armenia by the Red Army in November 1920, the orphans from Van and other historic Armenian provinces in Ottoman Turkey grew up in Soviet Armenia. Acknowledging the reality of Soviet power and rule by Russian Communists, many turned their attention to rebuilding what little remained of their shattered homeland, while others, finding ideology repugnant, opposed the repression that followed. Varazdat Harutiunian (1909-2008) became an architect and a prominent scholar who headed the committee for the protection of historical monuments in Armenia. He also advised Vazgen I Palchian, catholicos from 1955 to 1994, by serving as a member of the architectural commission of the Mother See of Holy Etchmiadzin. Gurgen Mahari (born Gurgen Ajemian) (1903-1969) became a writer who, for his political views and belief in the freedom of thought, endured two rounds of decade-long exile to Siberia from the 1930s to the 1950s, and authored *The Burning Orchards*, a searing novelized remembrance of his birthplace. Aghasi Khanjian (1901-1936) joined socialist youth movements and quickly rose through the ranks to become the chairman of the Communist party in Armenia, effectively head of the government in Yerevan, but whose charismatic and popular leadership made him an early victim of Joseph Stalin's dictatorship. He was killed during the Great Purges at the age of 35. Nairi Zarian (born Hayastan Yeghiazarian) (1900-1969) became a prolific author but lived compromised by the popular belief that he had cooperated with the authorities in censoring other writers. Vosdanik Manuk Adoian (1904-1948) left Yerevan in 1919 for the United States, where he emerged as a leading figure on the American modern art scene under the name of Arshile Gorky. He continued to be haunted by personal tragedies and at the height of his creativity committed suicide.



To my Native Home

Tonight I had a sweet dream:
I was rebuilding the home of my childhood,
The sky of my childhood spread over my head,
And rising dawns shed color in my soul.

My mother was there, her face glowed bright,
The stream chattered away in my native tongue,
An ancient tree stirred in the yard-
It was all so familiar, all so like spring.

The sunbeam that slid from the rooftop
Seemed to be my soul's golden key;
The sun looked down with a motherly warmth,
The world was sweet and knowable.

-*Nairi Zarian*

DEFENDING THE CHURCH

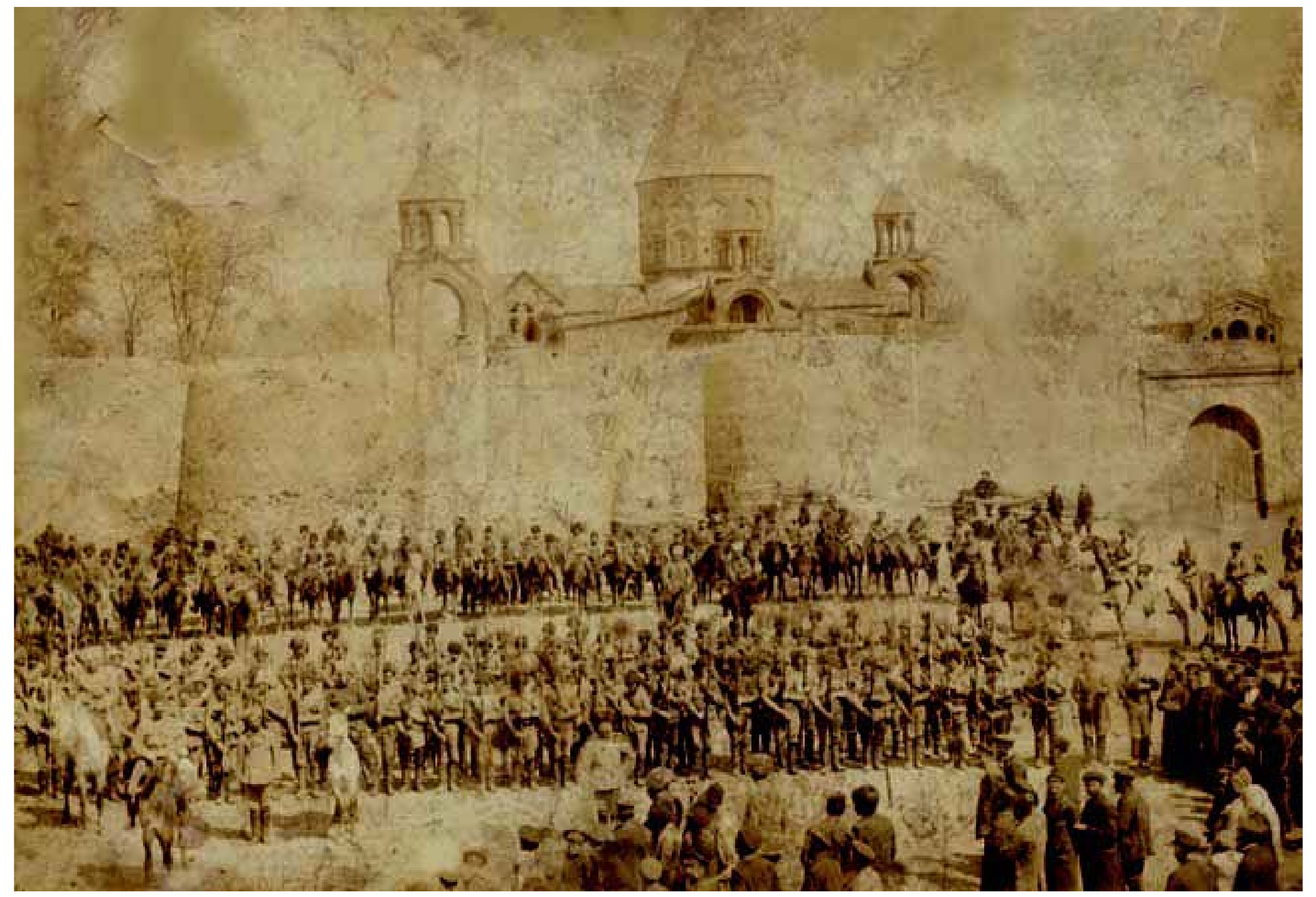
May 20, 1918

People of Armenia, the Turk, the centuries-old enemy of our reasonable people, has invaded Alexandropol [Gyumri], and is advancing toward the heart of our country, of our faith, and of our existence. It is advancing upon the plain of Ararat. The Turk is coming, bringing slaughter and ruin, and our commanders see no relief from this evil (aghet), other than to urge the escape of the Armenian pontiff. They are proposing to the Catholicos of All Armenians to abandon the Mother See of Holy Etchmiadzin, our sanctuaries, the Armenian people, and the last morsel of our ancestral patrimony, to the jaws of the enemy. They are proposing abandoning all this to save one's personal life by retreating to Biurakan or some other unpleasant crevice in the mountains.

No, absolutely not, a thousand times no. I will not abandon the tradition-bound Mother See of my holy predecessors. I will not remove myself from the hearth of the Armenian Apostolic Church. If the Armenian soldiery and the Armenian people itself are unable to halt the advance of the enemy, if they do not have the strength to preserve our values, then let me be martyred right here, at the threshold of the Mother See, which honor I have to hold as the incumbent with the honest intercession of my holy predecessors and the mercy of God. Will it be that we will not succeed in keeping alight the flame in our hearth, the lantern of our faith, and the foundations of our national existence? If the end has arrived, then why not accept it honorably and bravely instead of slithering in front of the adversary like a pitiable escapee.

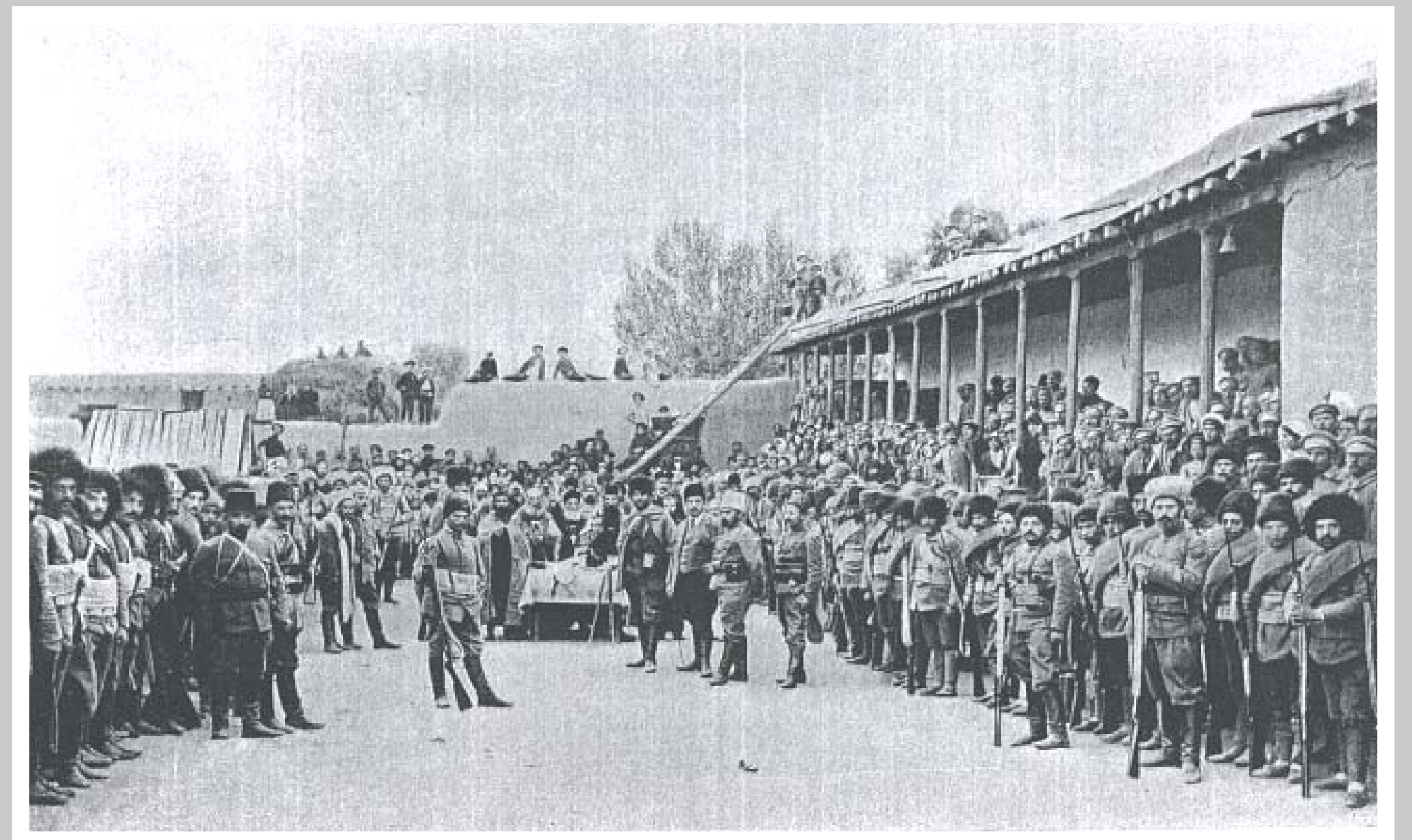
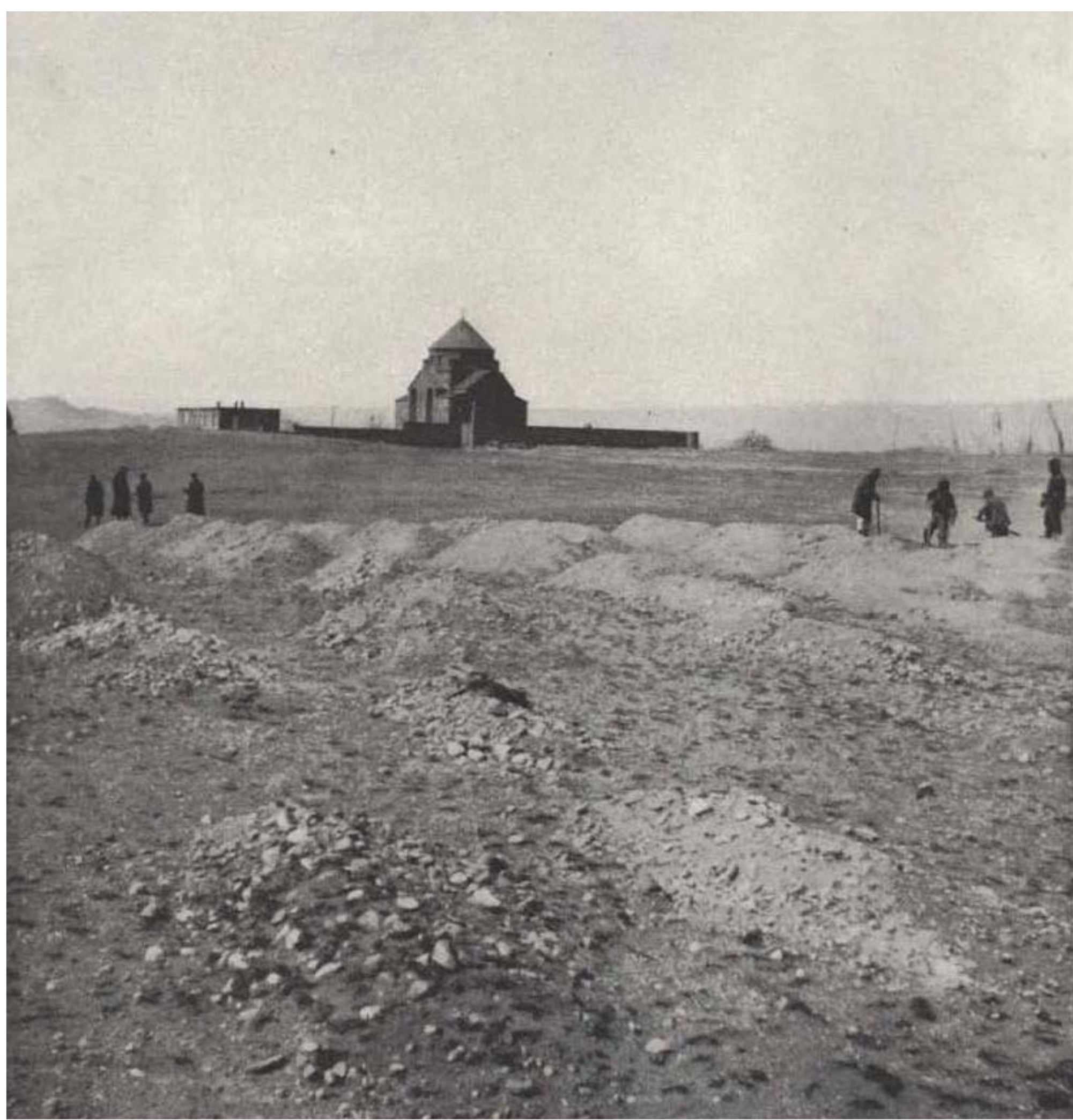
The past centuries of our history are replete with examples of courage, saturated with the blood of martyrs, yet courage has not diminished from our ranks. The Armenian people has endured thusly for centuries on end, by struggling for its existence, by making sacrifices today in order to ensure its future. Whosoever dies for an ideal, does as the grain of wheat, for by the death of the seed, sooner or later, new lives are born. That is the reason our national biography frequented by wholesale slaughter and death has not had, and never will have, a final punctuation mark. So why betray our national profile for mere existence and endurance? Why shall we not rise up as a people against the enemy, glutted with its easy victories across the Arax River, thirsting for our last drop of blood? I have always believed in the spirit of my people. I know the bitterness of the road it has traveled. But I am convinced as well that my people has not said its last word to its vile enemy, and that word will be victorious.

Gevorg V Sureniants



Catholicos Gevorg V proved to be a pivotal figure in mobilizing the defense of the Armenian Church in the face of the genocidal campaign of the Young Turk regime in Ottoman Turkey. For all his efforts, however, he was unable to avert the mass destruction of his countrymen in Turkish Armenia. His fortitude did make a difference in preventing the Young Turks from extending their war of decimation across all of Russian Armenia. Even so, the conditions created by such destruction and brutality continued to take their toll upon surviving Armenians who continued to bury their kin by the thousands.

In boustrophedon sequence from top right: Armenian volunteers beneath the walls of Etchmiadzin; Catholicos Gevorg V Sureniants with General Andranik Ozanian leader of Armenian volunteer forces; General Andranik flanked by clergy and General Offley Shore (left) and Captain G.F. Gracey (right) of the British Military Mission in the Caucasus and Armenian volunteers; Advance unit of the 4th regiment of the Russian Armenian defense forces with Khachik Vardapet Dadian at Vagharshapart in 1918; Russian Armenian volunteer unit headed by Drastamat Kanayan, popularly called Dro (with white cap at center), at Etchmiadzin; Mass graves of Armenians with the Church of St. Hripsime in the background and the cupola of St. Mariane visible on the left; Remaining segment of the ancient walls of the Church of St. Hripsime.



ENCYCLICAL OF THE CATHOLICOS OF ALL ARMENIANS GEVORG V SURENIANTS IN RESPONSE TO THE PROPOSAL BY THE ARMENIAN PATRIARCH OF CONSTANTINOPLE ZAVEN DER-YEGHIAIAN DESIGNATING APRIL 24 A NATIONAL DAY OF REMEMBRANCE

Gevorg, servant of Jesus Christ and by the incomprehensible will of God, Chief-bishop and Catholicos of All Armenians, Supreme Patriarch of the pan-national and pre-eminent See of the Araratian Apostolic Mother Church of Holy Cathedral Etchmiadzin

To His Beatitude Armenian Patriarch of Constantinople, Archbishop Zaven, Loyal Son of the Mother See, greetings and pontifical blessings:

We received the letter issued on the 24th of September [1921] numbered 63 from Your Beatitude, and having read it, became aware of the wishes of our beloved people favoring the perpetuation of the memory of our countless martyrs and victims of the massacres of the World War, by designating a specific day, namely the 24th of the month of April. With the great satisfaction and consolation of Our grieving heart I welcomed your proposal reflecting the collective wish of our people, arriving from our own genuine people in your regions. Considering the legions of martyrs worthy of eternal memory, with this Pontifical Encyclical, We establish the 24th of the month of April as a day of commemoration by designating it a "National Day of Remembrance of our Countless Martyrs of the World War."

With blessings of the memory of the martyrs who paid with their lives for the love of the nation and Holy Church, and so deprived by sword, fire and sundry bitter torments, We give pontifical instruction to arrange for the promulgation everywhere of this regulation of Ours, as well as to issue on the calendar as an eternal memorial for the future, just as We order it to be published on the calendar page of the Mother See of Holy Etchmiadzin.

Be well, strengthened by the blessing of the Most Holy Spirit of God. Amen

*Gevorg V
Catholicos of All Armenians*

30 October 1921
No. 416

