



TURKISH RESCUERS

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Report on Turks who reached-out to Armenians in 1915

An uncharted territory waiting to be discovered



The International Raoul Wallenberg Foundation and the Kaloosdian/Mugar Chair at the Strassler Center for Holocaust and Genocide Studies at Clark University join forces in a major research effort under the supervision of Professor Taner Akcam.

This ambitious research project aims at identifying Turks and Kurds that reached out to the victims of the Armenian Genocide. The main mission of the IRWF is to unveil untold stories of rescue and solidarity. The issue of the Muslim rescuers who went out of their way to save Armenians at the beginning of the 20th century was not properly studied yet and, thus, is an uncharted territory waiting to be discovered.

It is a great honor to join forces with Professor Taner Akcam, a world-renowned Turkish historian and sociologist who has devoted his efforts to try and reconcile the narratives of the Armenian and Turks, and his chair at the Strassler Center for Holocaust and Genocide Studies at Clark University.

This is a unique attempt to identify and honor the many Turks and Kurds that lent a hand to their Armenian neighbors in one of the darkest periods of mankind. The Wallenberg Foundation does the same concerning the Holocaust. Rather than focusing on the evil, our NGO strives to highlight the spirit of solidarity of the women and men who, like Raoul Wallenberg, oftentimes risked their own lives to save others. This is our duty towards those saviors and, above all, our obligation to the young generations that should be aware of these role models.

The research work conducted in this regard was undertaken in a in-depth and painstaking manner in Muslim (Turkish and Kurdish) provinces where most of the killings occurred, and where most of these stories have been passed on verbally from generation to generation.

As promised, the research is now published and presented to the public light in order to be examined and commented by experts and lay readers as well.

Recognition of goodness is one of the pillars of our mission, and we are confident that this ambitious research will enable us to add more names to the list of rescuers.

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I. In search of Righteous persons in 1915

Armine Guleserian – I would like to ask you a very simple question. I hope that you will answer me as honestly as I have done.

Armine Guleserian stands up and shows her chair.

Armine Guleserian – Sit here, okay?

Erdoğan Türkyılmaz – Why?

Armine Guleserian – To better be able to put yourself in my shoes.

Erdoğan Türkyılmaz – Here. I am in your seat now.

Armine Guleserian – Now look at me.

Erdoğan Türkyılmaz – I sat in your chair, in your place. Ask me whatever you like.

Armine Guleserian – Would you want to be an Armenian in 1915?

-Silence¹-

Just like Michel Beretti's character Erdoğan Türkyılmaz who rejects the Armenian genocide, for many people in Turkey, the question "*Would you want to be an Armenian in 1915?*" is an unexpected, unsettling question. Nevertheless, in spite of the facts they deny, they know, or at least sense, that the answer to this question is 'no'.

Although not as risky as being an Armenian in 1915, objecting to deportations and genocide that the Armenians were subjected to at this time was greatly risky too. Speaking of conscience in a time when people were carried away from their homes by being marked as "traitors" or "enemy conspirators" meant disregarding "national ideals" and "peace of the homeland". An attitude of this sort meant being relieved of duty or being dismissed from a position as civil servant, and in some circumstances it meant risking death. Conditions were even more dangerous for civilians who usually had no support to protect themselves and their families. The command of Mahmut Kamil Pasha stood hung above their heads like the sword of Damocles: in some situations there was not even need for state supervision to carry out the order to "*Execute and burn the house of any Muslim who protects an Armenian*"². Some civilian parts of the society who took part in the genocide, especially tribute chieftains or large families, would not hesitate to execute punishment for such disobedience themselves.

Despite this atmosphere of fear, efforts to legitimize the massacre of Armenians and serious life-threatening risks, in 1915 in every city, including the regions where the most violent massacres took place, there were statesmen, religious functionaries, chieftains, village headmen and ordinary civilians who defied orders and tried to save the Armenians from the march of death.

Hundreds of people - whose names today have been forgotten, whose stories even their own families don't know, some of whom don't even have a grave, who have been erased from the memory of the establishments and the cities where they served or lived – displayed a conscientious attitude in 1915 through a variety of motivations and approaches.

Unearthing the stories of these people opens the doors to more than just a belated expression of respect toward their memories. It shows to the Turkish society – who finds it difficult to consider the possibility of the leaders within their current country having committed murder in the past and acquired wealth as a

¹ "La nuit où on a pissé par-dessus la frontière", theatre play, Michel Beretti, 2011.

² Tehcir ve Taktik, Divan-ı Harbi Örfi Zabıtları, Vahakn N. Dadrian, Taner Akçam, p. 64, Istanbul Bilgi University Publications, 2008, Istanbul.

result, the possibility of The Republic itself being constituted on the denial of these crimes – another way of facing the Armenian genocide. This makes it possible to ask the question, “*If even back then there were people who risked their lives by refusing these murders, why do we still identify ourselves with criminals and avoid questioning history?*” Remembering those who maintained a conscientious attitude in a country where those who are responsible for the genocide are still esteemed with the honor of heroes – names of streets, primary schools carrying their names, committees being established in their names – gives us the chance to reveal the magnitude of “the mountains of lies”³ on which we sit.

Those who portrayed a conscientious attitude in 1915 do not only present the Turkish society the ways of facing the Armenian genocide by showing positive models, they also help us ask questions like, in which conditions do ordinary people change into villains, how can it be possible to resist and at the same time preserve our humanity in the direst of circumstances. Those who defied orders sometimes by risking death, contrary to what comes to mind first, are not heroes or super-humans. While the events are unacceptable for some people in terms of humanity, for the others the religious beliefs forbid such treatment. There were others who protested Against such massacring of Armenians with the belief that it was an economic, social and cultural disaster for the home-cities or regions they lived in. The reason who directed some chieftains and their communities to resist the government was probably that the Armenians in question were “their own Armenians”, in other terms, members of their tribute, or at least those lived under their control. In this situation the ruling norm was an understanding of honor and reverence based on not delivering to anyone the persons that they saw as being taken refuge in them. Some people saved those whom they knew, those who lived in their immediate vicinity, and some opened their doors to people whom they didn’t know at all and came face to face with the government. Whatever their motivation, even though there were among them ones with an admirable feeling of justice and courage, none of these people were “super-heroes”. They were not of any obvious superiority to other people in terms of ethical standing, conscience and mercy or feelings of empathy. In the same way, not all of those who took part in the genocide and obeyed the orders verbatim, on a small or large scale, were villains, psychopaths and sadists⁴. In fact, those who executed the genocide were not even closely related to the ideology from which this decision originated. Studies showing how a great number of civil servants, soldiers and police officers obeying orders because they could not see any other solution than submitting to authority – yet still finding psychological routes of escapes to excuse themselves – hold light onto our efforts to understand those who took part in and those who resisted the Armenian genocide.⁵

The Milgram experiment, which demonstrates in a striking way how inclined we are to submit to authority, illustrates in which circumstances the roads to resistance can open. The distance between the persecutor and the victim, the authority claiming to be striving “for a good cause” (like the peace of the nation, the progress of science etc.), affirming to “accept full responsibility”, its perceived prestige, whether there is conflict between representatives of the authority and the presence or absence of other persons defying the orders : these criteria could be among determining factors to submit to inhumane acts

³ According to Cypriot writer Sevgül Uludağ Turkey is based on “Mountains of Lies” concerning three issues: Armenian genocide, Kurdish question and Cyprus problem. Even though significant changes in the attitude of the government about these issues have taken place since the time we made our interview -in which she used this expression in 2004- “mountains of lies” still stand in their places for a considerable part of the society.

⁴ Stanley Milgram examined the mechanisms of submitting to an authority that dictates cruel orders, in order to understand how the Holocaust came about. In his experiments, he showed that those who obey the orders are not indifferent to the suffering of the victims, in fact it was determined that only 5% of the subjects portrayed sadistic inclination. Obedience to Authority, Stanley Milgram, 1974.

⁵ For a very detailed analysis on this subject: *Un si fragile vernis de l’humanité. Banalité du mal, banalité du bien*, Michel Terestchenko, Editions La Découverte, 2007, Paris.

or to resist them⁶. It is necessary to evaluate the stories who defied orders and those who resisted them in the Armenian genocide in the light of this perspective as well. It is not of course by any means possible to relieve those who committed a crime Against humanity of their responsibility or to legitimize their acts. Nevertheless, we can take lessons not to experience what happened in the past again, if we can understand in which circumstances ordinary people turn into villains and in which conditions paved the way towards resistance.

What kind of a course did we take?

Both the victims of the Armenians genocide and those who tried to save them by defying orders – with some exceptions – are not alive today⁷. Tracing people who got involved in a matter experienced 100 years ago, which was considered taboo and therefore was not spoken of until recently, was most of the time a search for a needle in the haystack. We started by scanning sources that would give us clues as to the whereabouts of the “needles”. Investigations making references to the testimonies of those who survived the genocide were of great guidance to us in this respect. Using those, we tried to reach the full-scripts of the testimonies. Testimonies in The Nubarian Library in Paris and the ones gathered together by Andonian, even though those who gave them are not alive anymore, made it possible to hear those testimonies almost as if from the horse’s mouth. Similarly, memoirs published by Armenians about their home country and the days of deportation in locations they settled down in ensured the appearance of names that were not known till now. In the archives of the Aram Society in Marseille we could reach memoirs in the Armenian language, untranslated into other tongues. The accusations, copies of judgments, court records and sections from the testimonials of the trials of The Committee of Union and Progress, contained a great deal of information on those who defied orders. In this matter, we benefitted once more The Nubarian Library, from the Renaissance newspaper that followed the trials closely in that period. Memoirs of high Ottoman officials who were holding office at the time, or the memoirs of people from the gentry, as well as correspondences of diplomatic representatives of various countries and mission houses have led us to a great deal of details. Testimonies at second hand, family stories and the publications in which they took place also were a significant source for us.

We discovered the stories of some people in places where we went for field work. Especially in Kurdish areas we had the opportunity to listen to many protection stories that were handed down from generation to generation. The critical question was this: Could we accept as data every “*Our family has protected Armenians too*”? Those whom we call “Conscientious” were the ones who stood up against deportation and massacre and tried to prevent deaths directly or indirectly, or the ones who expressed their oppositional standing. The so called benefit-oriented “protections”, help that was offered in a self-interest, using children and women surviving the genocide as a labor and Islamizing them by force was already excluded from our definition⁸.

⁶ Un si fragile vernis de l’humanité. Banalité du mal, banalité du bien, Michel Terestchenko, op.cit, p. 123-134

⁷ Writer Chris Bohjalian writes that 98 year old Asiya, whom he met in Çüngüş in 2013, is one of few people that survived the genocide. La dernière des survivants du génocide arménien, Chris Bohjalian, The Armenian Mirror-Spectator, 22.06.2013. Dr. Şabuh Gedik, with whom Cansu Çamlıbel from Hürriyet made an interview in 2010 in Nice – in which he explains how Konya Governor Celal Bey saved him and his family – regrettably passed away in April 2014.

⁸ We accepted Islamizing as a way of protection only when both parties used this as a temporary hiding method, when it was a mere appearance for the outside, when it was not a real conversion and no pressure was made to fulfill the requirements of the religion. In the same way, we also considered those who saved a small child from the genocide or those who raised an orphan child as their own – unless returning to the actual family or communicating with them was prevented, or he or she was not treated as slave or workforce – among those who displayed a conscientious attitude. As Taner Akçam points out, those who used children as means to gain wealth, after the regulation that allowed those who adopted wealthy Armenian families’ children to acquire the property of the families, are not considered in this definition. In the Hrant Dink Association’s

Although they may appear as real saving stories at first glance, we subjected all testimonies (be it based on written or oral expression, be it belonging to surviving Armenians or belonging to Muslims) to a strict examination, trying to validate them by making comparisons between various written and oral sources. We compared the lists of people who were responsible for deportation and massacre formed by The Armenian Patriarchate before trials of The Committee of Union and Progress with the names in our hands. Whenever possible, we examined the attitudes of some people before and after 1915 and especially in the Republican period. In this respect, we saw that a great number of the people who were in opposition with the Committee members, especially on the subject of genocide, did not get along with the dominant powers in the Kemalist struggle Against the Allies and in the Republican period. One of the main reasons of this was because Committee members were gathered around these circles. Some people, only because of this reason, stayed away from the struggle Against the Allies that Mustafa Kemal organized and were accused of “treason” in the Republican period as a result. Nevertheless, there were times when the opposite happened. People like Celal Bey, Governor of Konya, who objected to the deportations and massacres, reacted to the country being under occupation and made connection with Mustafa Kemal and joined the efforts towards liberation. Nevertheless, for some, even this could not prevent being marked as “unreliable” by the government.

We tried to confirm the names, positions, places and times in the testimonies with the documents in the Ottoman Archives as much as possible⁹. Especially in stories transferred at second hand, we saw that times and people could be confused – sometimes even by those who experienced the events as well – and civil servants’ duties were not known properly. Some documents we came across in the Ottoman Archives asserted that some saving stories were in actuality not as they were told; for example, those who saved Armenians by giving them employment in a manufacture house did not do that with their own initiative, but upon an order they had received.

As a result of all of these confirmation efforts, we traced their families in order to find more information, pictures and personal details about the Conscientious. In some cases where we only had one person’s name or the name of a place, what we were looking was exactly Joe Schmo. Additional difficulties were the fact that surnames didn’t exist in Ottoman era, that the names of most settlements in Turkey have been changed, the presence of a number of people with the same name or in similar positions in the same region, or wrong pronunciation of some names. In order to tackle this problem, we were able to reach those who carried out local history research in regions where they lived or people who, with respect to their age, listened to stories about that period from their elders. We scanned obituaries in the archives of Cumhuriyet and Milliyet newspapers in order to find a trace about some people’s families. With the information on the family relationships on these pages, often times like solving a riddle, we tried to determine the family members that are still alive today. Our efforts proved to be in vain for some people, but we were able to reach the family data of a many people.

With the exception of Kurdish regions where memories of 1915 persisted as lively as if they happened only yesterday, most of the family members of conscientious people were unaware of this side of their grandfathers. Many people, especially the grandchildren of statesmen, learnt about the attitude of their family elders in 1915 from us. The conscientious people had not shared this subject with the household. It is difficult to explain this solely with the authoritarian family structure of the time or the modesty of the

Conference on Islamized Armenians, where Akçam presented his paper, the expressions of G.T. from Diyarbakır, “*Now I understand everything. For years I have tried to understand why people who scorn us in such a way and dislike us, also saved and adopted up. This is the reason then*” serves as an example among many that show us that the real reasons of these “savings” were painstakingly hidden by people and the traumas created as a result persist to this day.

⁹“BOA...” inscription on notes indicates documents from Başbakanlık Osmanlı Arşivleri (Ottoman Archives of Turkish Prime Ministry).

people in question. In a society where the Armenian genocide was considered a taboo, the treatment that those who objected to the deportation and the massacre were given was also a taboo. Another factor that fortified the mystery woven around this subject within the household was for some people who objected to the massacre to find themselves in the list of “150 persona non grata of Turkey”. It was not enough for them to have been declared traitors; they had become “persona non grata” for the Republic as well. It is understood that some of those people who could return to Turkey, erased these difficult times from their personal histories in order to try to protect the new generations from being the object of discrimination.

As for the Kurdish regions, contrary to the Western regions, we see that even the smallest details concerning the subject are remembered as if they happened yesterday, not only by family members, but often by the whole community in the region. Therefore, our efforts to reach families that progressed with much ease in these regions, did not find a correspondingly efficient parallel in Western cities, in fact most of the time as soon as we uttered the word “Armenian” doors were shut to our faces. We even came across family members who refused to meet with us.

About what designations should be given to those who defied orders, objected to deportations and massacres in the Armenian genocide, the first concepts that came to researchers’ minds were “Righteous” in English and “Juste” in French. However, the term “Righteous” makes a reference to “*Righteous Among the Nations*” honorary title, which is given to people who saved Jewish people from death and from being sent to concentration camps and it requires abiding by very specific criteria. This title includes conditions like taking considerations only first degree testimonies, risking of one’s life or freedom while saving Jewish people and it is unfortunately not a concept that can be applied to all persons who tried to save Armenians in 1915 and examined in this research. If some of them had come before Yad Vashem in the context of the Holocaust, maybe they could be accorded the title “*Righteous Among the Nations*”. However, it is not possible to say this for all of them. Therefore, in our study, in addition to “Righteous” we will use the term “Conscientious” or “Those who maintained a conscientious attitude”, which are terms that became more widely-used in Turkey thanks to the endeavors of Hrant Dink Foundation.

Honoring Righteous and Conscientious people in 1915: Who and How?

With regard to the Holocaust, Yad Vashem and Raoul Wallenberg Foundations, as for other crimes Against humanity foundations like Gariwo honors conscientious people and contribute to creating awareness about the subject in the public opinion. In recent years, it has been uttered that those who maintained a conscientious attitude in 1915 could play a determining role in making it easier for the Turkish society to face the Armenian genocide. In this respect, in this study that we asked to prepare, we wanted to address who the aforementioned honoring could include and in which ways they can be executed.

The hundred years that have passed since the events makes it possible neither for the victims to directly give testimonies nor to express gratitude to the Conscientious ones themselves. The families of those who were deemed worthy of the title, *Righteous Among the Nations*, are ceremonially awarded medals and certificates, the name of the saving person is added to the “Wall of Honor” in the “*Righteous Garden*”. In addition to this commendation, various material awards are offered to those who have the title and to their families by Israel.

In the Armenian genocide, if a similar way of honoring is preferred, since none of them is alive now, all rewards, medals or certificates will be given to family members that are still alive. Considering that 100

years have passed since the facts, we believe that we must be extremely picky in the context of the Armenian genocide. It can be very difficult to confirm that the persons mentioned in a testimonies are really Righteous. There are also other difficulties on this subject.

Even though they have ceased being seen as taboo, for a great section of the society, the words ‘Armenian’ and ‘genocide’ are still not concepts that are easy to articulate. The denialist discourse that the society was forced to memorize has spread even to the grandchildren of those who have risked their lives in order to prevent the massacres in 1915. We must not overlook the fact that these people may not want to accept an award on behalf of their ancestors. Even in cases where they would accept, we must take into account the risk that they can act with denialist ideas and display attitude against the spirit of this initiative.

Another problem that may occur when honoring families arises from the complexity of saving stories. There are many saving stories where a person objects to the massacres, yet his son or other family members are among those who perform the massacre. There are examples where massacring relatives attacked, or even killed persons who offered aid to the Armenians.

Even if we leave such cases aside, there is another important issue that is not to be ignored: we are not our grandfathers. If we benefit from the wealth that our grandfathers have acquired illicitly, perpetuate the unfair treatment or try to conceal what they have done, this will make us responsible for present situation. The positive and Righteous attitudes of previous generations should not be used to cover our responsibilities. For this reason, instead of honoring directly the descendants of Righteous -it is of course possible to do this honoring in rare and précis cases- it is possible to take a more social approach.

It is possible to think of other ways of honoring those who maintained a conscientious attitude in 1915 in ways that are more lasting, ways that reach over to larger parts of society and contribute to facing the genocide. Being lasting as well as encouraging studies in this field, a preferable alternative could be research scholarships (it is possible to give this scholarship dedicated to different people every year) to be given in the names of some certain conscientious persons. Establishing memorial places in Turkey in the names of the conscientious people is a lasting venture in that it may bring to memory their names and remind the society of their attitude in 1915. These memorial places, (wall signs with their names on, museums, forests, parks or monuments) can be placed especially in locations where the Conscientious people lived or served. It is possible to propose and realize projects like this in municipalities governed by HDP, since they don’t deny the Armenian genocide and have engaged various activities on the way to facing it. Moreover, giving conferences about the Conscientious people, establishing chairs in their names in universities, supporting all kinds of artistic activities concerning their lives - including films and exhibitions – are among lasting ways of honoring them. Also, funds, in the names of the Conscientious people, that support activities aiming to protect the Armenian cultural heritage in Turkey or to normalize Turkey-Armenia relations can be created. By engaging joint efforts together with Hrant Dink Foundation, in the event of The Hrant Dink Awards that are organized in September every year in Istanbul, an award that bears the name of one of the Conscientious people (for example Celal Bey) can be given to people who contribute to the search for justice or to the improvement of Turkey-Armenia relations.

Among around two hundred names¹⁰ we have obtained, a few exemplary persons can be given priority in honoring in terms of the firmness of their stance, the risks they took, the identities they represent and their

¹⁰ In this report, we mentioned the story of 80 Righteous persons which we could reach more information about. The integral list of 184 persons can be found at the annex of the report.

approaches. In this respect, it is possible to start the various kinds of honoring exemplified above with the names listed below:

- Aleppo and Konya Governor Celal Bey
- Kaimakam of Lice Hüseyin Nesimi
- Mardin Province Governor Hilmi
- Kastamonu Gendarme Commander İzzet
- Mevlevi Sheikh Abdülhalim Çelebi
- Circassian Emir Pasha in Sivas
- Seyit Ali in the name of the people of Dersim
- Alike Batte and Zahruani Haco in Midyat
- Vehbi Efendi in Savur
- Germiyanzade and Hodjazade families in Kütahya
- Three anonymous Muslims who were hung in Bayburt
- Anonymous Muslims of Ordu, Samsun and Trabzon

II. Konya Province

Aleppo and Konya Governor Celal : “If all our enemies of the world came together and pondered for months, they could not imagine a greater evil”

« My situation in Konya was that of a man sitting by the side of a river with absolutely no means of saving anyone from it. Blood was flowing down the river, and thousands of innocent children, irreproachable old people, helpless women and strong young men were streaming down this river towards oblivion. Anyone I could save with my bare hands, I saved, and the rest went down the river, never to return”¹¹.

This is how Celal, governor of Konya, who has become a symbol of the officials who defied orders during the Armenian Genocide, evoked that time in his memoirs published in 1918 in the newspaper *Vakit*. This narrative full of imagery perfectly reflected reality: the “flow” was so strong that it swept all those who tried to stand in front of it and rendered them powerless. The number of people Celal managed to “catch with his bare hands” to save them from going “down the river never to return” is significant. The Province of Konya, where people deported from western towns were gathered before being exiled to Der Zor was, as such, along with Malatya in the east, one of the major transit points of the genocide. During his tenure of four months, Celal managed to keep thousands of Armenians and to save them from deportation.¹²

Being the son of an official from the Ministry of Finance, Celal was also a member of the Ottoman family, because he was the grand-son of one of the daughters of Abdülhamid. It is perhaps due to this status that the government would simply remove him from office and he would be spared being murdered, which was the fate of other officials who opposed the orders in 1915¹³.

Celal graduated in 1883 from *Mülkiye*, the Ottoman equivalent of France’s *École Nationale d’Administration*, of which he would later become the director. He then studied agricultural science in Germany. He worked as a teacher in several towns and held senior positions in the Ministry of Education. After his post as director of *Mülkiye*, he was first appointed governor of the Province of Erzurum, and later of Edirne and of Izmir. He was Minister of the Interior between December 1911 and July 1912, and Minister of Agriculture between January and June 1913¹⁴.

¹¹ *Ermeni Vakayî’i, Esbab ve Tesirâtı*, Celal Bey, *Vakit*, December 10, 12, 13, 1918. Two versions in modern Turkish have been used in this article: Ari Sekeryan’s translation published on July 30, 2010 in the newspaper *Agos* and Zeki Sarihan’s translation, published on April 24, 2014, in the newspaper *Radikal*.

¹² Apart from his memoirs published in the newspaper *Vakit* where he states this number, there are many stories witnessing the rescue of about 30-40 thousand Armenians by Celal in Aleppo and Konya. The reports of German and American consuls in Aleppo, survivors’ testimonies, minutes of the trial of the leaders of the Committee of Union and Progress contain various information about the actions of Celal. DE/PA-AA/RI4089- A35046, *Report of Aleppo consul, Rössler, to Chancellor Bethmann-Hollweg*, 16.11.1915 and DE/PA-AA/BoKon/169- A53a/1915/3790, *From Aleppo consul, Rössler, to Embassy in Constantinople*, 21.06.1915, in *The Armenian Genocide: Evidence from the German Foreign Office Archives*, Wolfgang Gust, Berghahn Books, 2014, United Kingdom. *Armenian Atrocities, From J.B. Jackson, consul, formerly at Aleppo*, 04.03.1918, in *United States Official Documents on the Armenian Genocide*, Ara Sarafian, 1994, Armenian Review.

Two survivors’ testimonies about Celal: *Nous avons bu la même eau/We Drank the Same Water*, Serge Avédikian, Les Films d’ici, 2006.

“There was such a governor in Konya. Celal Bey... All the Armenians were grateful to him”, stated the writer Yervant Odian who gave evidence at the trial of Torlakyan, pointing out that he personally knew Celal. *Torlakyan Davası*, Murat Çulcu, p. 126-127, Kastaş, 1990, Istanbul.

¹³ Hüseyin Nesimi, *Kaimakam* of Lice and Ali Sabit, *Kaimakam* of Besiri, were assassinated because of their opposition to deportation and massacre orders. Hilmi, sub-governor of Mardin, escaped murder attempt. Apart from these officials, many civilians were also attacked and killed as they tried to stop the massacres.

¹⁴ *Yeni Mülkiye Tarihi ve Mülkiyeliler*, Ali Çankaya, II. Cilt, p. 831-833, Mars Matbaası, 1969, Ankara.

At the beginning of World War I, Celal was governor of Aleppo. The attitude he took when tensions erupted in Zeitun following mobilization and harassment of the population by some officials suggested his future disagreement with the government. Celal listened to the concerns of the Armenian community of the city and looked for ways to appease them. When he tried to resolve the crisis by promising young Armenians that they will do their military service in the nearby provinces, a new sub-prefect was appointed to Marash. Upon his arrival, the latter arrested the Armenian notables of Zeitun. Celal intervened and helped free those who were not charged of anything. But it was his last initiative in Zeitun: the *sancak* of Marash was separated from the province of Aleppo and declared an autonomous “*liva*.”¹⁵ Thereafter, the deportation orders began to be sent to provinces.

In his memoirs published in the newspaper *Vakit*, Celal admitted he originally believed that these orders were some temporary measures taken as the result of wartime exigencies. “I admit, I did not believe that these orders, these actions revolved around the annihilation of the Armenians. I never imagined that any government could take upon itself to annihilate its own citizens in this manner, in effect destroying its human capital, which must be seen as the country's greatest treasure”, he says. Having this belief, he even requested “the allocation of funds to construct houses and settle Armenians in them”¹⁶. But the exchanges he had with the German consul in Aleppo, Walter Rössler, show that Celal began to worry even before the deportations. In a letter sent on April 12, 1915 to the Department of Foreign Affairs and to the German Ambassador in Istanbul, Rössler states that Celal let him know that in the Ottoman government a current is gaining the upper hand which is inclined to consider all Armenians as suspicious or even hostile. “He thinks of this development as a misfortune for his fatherland,” writes Rössler and adds: “He begged me to persuade His Excellency the Imperial Ambassador to counteract this trend”¹⁷.

It took little time for Celal to realize that the purpose of deportation was the extermination of Armenians. He shared his concerns and the nature of the orders he received with the US and Italian consuls in Aleppo with whom he had forged friendships¹⁸. He asked the diplomats to convey the seriousness of the situation to their governments and to prevent massacres using the influence they had at the Sublime Porte. According to the conversation he had with the Italian consul in Aleppo, Antonio Gauttieri, which the latter related to Diran Babikian in 1921, Celal was willing to take serious risks to try to stop the killings. Celal told Gauttieri that he received secret orders aiming at the destruction of the Armenian population. He stated that this was contrary to his conscience, but he had no possibility to take any action and could only soften the harshness of orders. He believed that the only way to prevent this crime was to involve German and Austrian governments. “Make sure these facts are known at the Italian Embassy in Istanbul in order that they call upon the two governments. Otherwise, you can be sure that the entire Armenian nation will perish,” he declared. The consul replied that this was impossible because of the censorship in force. But Celal insisted and claimed that he would ensure the letter reaches Istanbul through safe people.

¹⁵ The *sancaks* of İçel and of Kütahya were also declared autonomous “*livas*” on the same date; hence, it is difficult to ascertain that this decision was intended to leave Maras beyond the control of Celal. BOA, DH.İ.U.M.EK. 6/76, 16/R/1333.

¹⁶ There is no trace in the Ottoman archives of this request mentioned by Celal in his memoirs. However, it is likely that “*the response telegram sent from the General Directorate of Security to the Province of Aleppo concerning the settlement of expenses for Armenians from the contingency fund*” (BOA, DH.ŞFR. 52/335, 27/C/1333) was addressed in response to such requests.

¹⁷ DE/PA-AA/R14085-A-14801, From the Consul in Aleppo, Rössler, to the Foreign Office, 12.04.1915 in *The Armenian Genocide: Evidence from the German Foreign Office Archives*, op.cit p.166.

¹⁸ The US Consul in Aleppo, J.B. Jackson related about his close and “brotherly” friendship with Celal, and how they tried jointly to save Armenians from deportation. in *United States official documents on the Armenian Genocide*, op. cit. p. 143-144.

Gauttieri agreed, but these efforts proved to be in vain because Italy went to war Against the Ottoman Empire a few days after the letter arrived to its destination¹⁹.

This interaction must have taken place on the eve of May 23, 1915, the date when Italy went to war Against the Allies. The support Celal hoped for did not give the expected results. Germany, on which Celal relied heavily, as a power with a notorious influence on the Sublime Porte, made very limited interventions, despite many alarming reports of its consuls in the Ottoman Empire²⁰.

Meanwhile, the local club of Union and Progress tried to remove Celal by various means. The delegate of the party, Ihsan Ali Efendi, lodged a complaint Against him with charges going up to “treason Against the motherland”. Hamid, an administrative inspector - who was appointed to this position after being Governor of Diyarbakir – was sent to Aleppo to investigate the matter. The investigation led by Hamid showed that all accusations were “baseless and false.”²¹ Nevertheless, Celal was removed from the province shortly after.

As long as he was in Aleppo, Celal didn’t merely “soften” the harshness of orders. He refused to deport the Armenians of Antioch. He also tried to arrange for his close friends, members of Parliament Krikor Zohrab and Vartkes Serengulian, who were sent to Diyarbekir for trial at the court martial, to stay in Aleppo. It was clear that this transfer was in fact a death sentence. He put Zohrab, who suffered from heart disease, in Dr. Altounian’s clinique²². “I could not send them to death with my own hands [...] I wrote to Istanbul asking that they be allowed to stay in Aleppo. I didn’t receive any answer. But I promised them that I will not let them go while I’m in Aleppo and I kept my word. Vartkes and Zohrab were transferred the day after I left,” he says in his memoirs. Zohrab and Vartkes were dispatched to Urfa after the departure of Celal. They were then sent to Diyarbakir and murdered in an ambush by Ahmet the Circassian before reaching their destination.

After being removed from Aleppo, Celal was first transferred to the Ankara prefecture. A “becayış” (exchange of positions by mutual consent between two government officials of equal rank) was decided between Celal and Mazhar, governor of Ankara²³. But the arrangement was quickly rejected. Apparently, people in charge at the Ministry of Interior realized at the last minute the inconvenience of an exchange between Celal and Mazhar, who was opposed as well to the deportation and massacres. Mazhar was

¹⁹ *Les Arméniens, 1917-1939 : la quête d’un refuge*, Raymond H. Kévorkian, Lévon Nordiguian, Vahé Tachjian, p.310-311, 2007, Réunion des Musées nationaux, Paris.

²⁰ For more information on this subject see *German Responsibility in the Armenian Genocide. A review of historical evidence of German complicity*, Vahakn Dadrian, Blue Crane Books, 1996, Watertown.

²¹ *Bir Milli Mücadele Valisi ve Anıları: Kapancızade Hamit Bey*, Halit Eken, p. 479, Yeditepe Yayınları, Istanbul.

Although he proved that charges Against Celal were unfounded, Hamid’s memoirs suggest that he did not like the governor of Aleppo. For Hamid, Celal “gives too much attention to his pleasures” and is not “a hard-working and selfless servant, as required by these times.” Hamid also denies the fact that Celal was “transferred to Konya because he did not approve the deportation.” He says there were no charges concerning that question whatsoever and even states that the deportation in that region was not yet considered necessary at that time. It is difficult to explain Hamid’s attitude towards Celal solely by personal animosity. Hamid was himself dismissed from the Province of Diyarbekir for similar reasons. He investigated the murder of two *kaimakams* who opposed the massacres and testified at the trial of the Unionists in Istanbul. His silence about his own attitude in 1915, while many sources testify it, suggests a serious self-censorship of his memoirs. It is likely that Hamid, who had disagreements with Mustafa Kemal at some time and was accused of being close to the English and Armenians, filtered his autobiography through “national ideology”. It must be recalled that the year 1926 when he wrote his memoirs was also the year when Talat and Cemal were rehabilitated, and their families were granted properties and lands by decision of the parliament, the accusations Against the perpetrators of the genocide were set aside and dozens of people were accused of “treason” during the trials of the assassination plot in Izmir.

²² *Zohrab ve Vartkes’in son günleri*, Rober Koptas, Agos, 16.07.2010.

²³ BOA, MV. 240/56, 03/B/1333.

retired by a sudden decision and Celal was appointed to the prefecture of Konya²⁴. Meanwhile, Celal sent numerous telegrams to the Sublime Porte in which he criticized “the treatment of the Armenians.” He told in his memoirs he sent a “secret and personal” letter to Talat, Minister of the Interior, containing these words: “Working towards the destruction of Armenians will be a loss for the country which will be impossible to compensate for ages. If all our enemies of the world came together and pondered for months for the best way to harm us, they could not imagine a greater evil.”²⁵ He travelled to Istanbul to convey personally this view, but nobody deigned to listen. He asked the persons in charge to find someone else to replace him if “the Armenians of Konya are also to be deported.” He was assured that they wouldn’t, but discovered the deception even before arriving to Konya. In Akşehir, in Ilgin and in the city center of Konya he saw that thousands of Armenians were waiting to be deported in “heartbreaking misery and deprivation.” Celal immediately sent back the Armenians of Konya and tried to save from poverty the deportees from other regions by providing them a daily payment.

Every day, trains carried thousands of Armenians to Konya, while orders were arriving to accelerate their transfer to Der Zor. At first, Celal tried to delay the departure of the convoys, claiming lack of wagons for loading so many people. A large number of letters were thus exchanged between Istanbul and Konya on this wagon question²⁶. But Celal didn’t merely hide behind pretexts; he stated clearly that he “could not take part in such an undertaking that he considered harmful to the country.” He was then threatened by the Central Committee of Union and Progress through a deputy of Konya. “This operation was validated after long deliberations by the central committee and cannot be changed. The transfer of Armenians being necessary for the national ideal, one must sacrifice his personal opinion. If you oppose to these views [...] Konya will be left without you”: this is how they tried to intimidate him. Celal was revolted by the mention of a “national ideal”: “What national ideal? Turks and Muslims suffer deeply from these killings. But they have no way to prevent them. Calling such atrocities as national ideal is the biggest insult and defamation for the nation.” Celal continued to withstand pressures and succeeded, “taking advantage of every single opportunity” to keep nearly 30,000 Armenians in Konya.

Despite his efforts to save thousands of people from death marches, it is known from various testimonies that Celal failed to completely stop deportations. This is how Dr. Dodd, a doctor at the American hospital in Konya, described the situation in a letter to the US Ambassador Henry Morgenthau: “The Governor is

²⁴ In a telegram written in response to a message of Mazhar, Talat tries to convince him to accept the position of governor of Aleppo. The content of the message gives us to understand that Mazhar made it clear to the Minister of the Interior that he does not wish to go to Aleppo if the Province will also be a scene of massacre. BOA, DH. ŞFR, 54/94, 09/Ş/1333. But Talat’s efforts failed to convince Mazhar and the latter was retired because of disagreements on the subject of “*transfer and settling of Armenians*”. BOA, İ. MMP. 198/1333, 06/N/1333. For the cancelation of Celal’s appointment in Ankara and his transfer to Konya see: BOA, İ. MMP. 197/1333, 18/Ş/1333.

²⁵ There is no trace of the “secret and personal” letter in the Ottoman Archives, like of other letters mentioned in the memoirs of Celal. It is likely that some correspondence exchanged between Celal and the Ministry of Interior are in the Atase archives, which are accessible only to a limited number of users approved by the Turkish General Staff. A telegram evoked by Aram Arkun and mentioned in a publication of the General Staff suggests such a possibility. (*Zeytun and the Commencement of the Armenian Genocide*, Aram Arkun, in *A Question of Genocide, Armenians and Turks at the End of the Ottoman Empire*, Edited by Suny, Gocek, and Naimar, p. 393, Oxford University Press, 2011). This telegram without signature, which is in the Atase archives, points out – relative to the events in Zeitun - the need for the state to only punish the guilty and avoid “*offensive and humiliating*” treatments to those Armenians about whom “*there is no doubt and hesitation on their loyalty to the country.*” These lines - as the phrase “*I released the delegate*” - have many similarities with what Celal wrote in his memoirs. It is likely that the letters referred to by Celal, of which we find no trace in the Ottoman Archives, are held in the archives of Atase. For the telegram in question see *Arşiv Belgeleriyle Ermeni Faaliyetleri*, 1914-1918, Cilt 1, p. 71-72, Genelkurmay Başkanlığı, 2005, Ankara.

²⁶ BOA, DH.ŞFR. 56/174, 17/Za/1333, BOA, DH.ŞFR. 55/186, 13/L /1333, BOA, DH.ŞFR. 56/89, 11/Za/1333.

a good man, but almost powerless. The Ittihad Committee and the Salonika Clique rule all. The Chief of police seems to be the real head.”²⁷

It became clear to the authorities that Celal would not succumb to intimidation. On October 3, 1915 he was removed from office. His departure was also the beginning of disaster for Armenians of Konya. “I heard in Istanbul on the same evening I left, that two officers in charge of deportation said to Armenians of Konya, “Your father left, you will leave too”. While in Istanbul, I did everything I could to prevent this catastrophe. I called upon everyone, but to no avail. On the contrary, I was blamed “for not having sacrificed my personal opinion to the national ideal,” he says.²⁸

Difficult days began for Celal and his family. He was not assigned to a new position after his dismissal. The family had to overcome financial difficulties for years. In 1918, Celal wanted to get into modern farm business in Eskişehir. But the machines he imported from abroad with a German partner were confiscated by the General Directorate of equipment.²⁹ He then created an insurance company, named Ittihad-i Milli Osmanli, which became, after changing hands, Sark Sigorta and later Axa Turkey.³⁰

The end of the war marked a new era for Celal. Unionists were held responsible for dragging the country into the abyss during the war, and "blameless" officials that had not been involved in crimes Against humanity were required. In November 1919, Celal was appointed governor of Adana, which was then under French control. Various sources state that this appointment was welcomed by the Turkish and Armenian population of the city. Armenian newspapers published articles praising Celal, accompanied by numerous photos, while the Turks felt they found “a protector in the bureaucracy.”³¹ But Colonel Edouard Brémond, Chief Administrator of Cilicia, opposed the appointment evoking Celal’s “intemperance”³². Brémond had reason to worry: as soon as he took office, Celal adopted an attitude Against the French occupation and contacted Mustafa Kemal to support the struggle organized by the latter Against the Allies.³³

While opposing the occupation of the Ottoman territories and thus affirming his allegiance to the “Council of Representatives” chaired by Mustafa Kemal, Celal was at the same time concerned that Armenians could be targeted during the fight Against the Allies. He apparently raised concerns in a secret

²⁷ Letter from Dr. Dodd to Morgenthau, 8 September 1915, in *United States official documents on the Armenian Genocide*, op. cit. p. 254. For the entire text of Dr. Dodd’s letter, see: Report from Dr. D. in *The Treatment of Armenians in the Ottoman Empire 1915-16*, James Bryce, Arnold J. Toynbee, p. 423, T. Fisher Unwin Ltd., 1916, London.

²⁸ Immediately after Celal left, local authorities reported to the Ministry of the Interior that 10,000 Armenians have been deported from Konya in three days. BOA. DH.EUM.2.Şb. 68/92, 07/Z /1333.

Wilfred M. Post, who works with Dr. Dodd at the American hospital in Konya, tells that on the day of Celal’s recall, a policeman came to his pharmacy and cried out of happiness: “We won!.” in *Turquia, Estado Genocida (1915-1923): Documentos*, Pascual C. Ohanian, p. 527. Another witness told that the day of his departure Celal left the exiles’ tents with tears in his eyes. in *The Treatment of Armenians in the Ottoman Empire 1915-16*, op.cit. p. 437.

²⁹ BOA. DH.İ.UM.EK. 25/18, 15/S/1335.

³⁰ BOA. MV. 249/63, 25/C/1336.

³¹ Concerning the articles in Armenian newspapers see *La Cilicie en 1919-1920*, Edouard Brémond, p. 336, Revue des Etudes arméniennes, 1921, Paris. For the viewpoints of Turks of Adana about Celal see *Çukurova Kurtuluş Savaşında Adana cephesi*, Kasım Ener, p. 21, Kültür Bakanlığı Yayınları, 1996, Ankara.

According to Vahé Tachjian, the popularity of Celal among Armenians who have not forgotten his deeds in 1915 and the new approach Paris took towards the Kemalists play a key role in the approval of this appointment by France. *La France en Cilicie et en Haute-Mésopotamie. Aux confins de la Turquie, de la Syrie et de l’Irak (1919-1933)*, Vahé Tachjian, p. 115, Editions Karthala, 2004, Paris. For a more flexible attitude of France in anticipation of a possible agreement with the Kemalists see *Ibidem*, p. 162.

³² *La Cilicie en 1919-1920*, op.cit. p.336. *La France en Cilicie et en Haute-Mésopotamie*, op.cit., p. 149.

³³ *Millî Mücadelede vilâyetler ve valiler*, Kamil Erdeha, p. 317, 1975, *La Cilicie en 1919-1920*, op.cit p. 343-353.

letter he sent to Mustafa Kemal and asked that “no attack is made Against the Armenians of Cilicia.” We learn this information from a telegram sent by Mustafa Kemal, dated March 11, 1920, where he states that Celal requests not to attack the Armenians in order not to encourage “those who were inclined to collaborate with us” to support the French³⁴. For the moment, it is not known if those words belong effectively to Celal, if he wrote them in order to convince Mustafa Kemal or if Mustafa Kemal used this argument to convince others.

Before being appointed to Adana, Celal made a statement to the Commission of Inquiry set up for the trial of Unionists in Istanbul. References to his testimony can be seen in the judgment of the first hearing. He tells about his removal because of his disagreement with the government concerning the Armenian question and about his unsuccessful attempts to make Talat and Nazim understand the consequences of their policy³⁵. The full text of his statement, like the rest of the full record of the Unionists’ trials, are unfortunately not accessible in the Ottoman archives.

After being Prefect of Adana, Celal was appointed mayor of Istanbul between July 1921 and March 1922. He died Feb. 11, 1926. Thousands of people, especially Armenians, attended his funeral, which according to his family, stopped business life in Istanbul for several hours³⁶. Celal liked breeding birds, held passionate discussions with friends, he loved to have fun and go for good food with alcohol, was recognized as an excellent speaker and a persuasive writer, was very cultured, liberal and of high moral qualities³⁷, hence he is not only remembered as an official who has kept his conscience and his honor in the darkest years of his country. His nearly century-old memoirs published in the newspaper *Vakit* can shed light on today’s debates. The points raised by Celal, as if he already knew the future arguments of the policy of denial that will prevail in Turkey, emphasize his exceptional foresight and his righteousness:

“[*Even though some Armenians helped the enemy*] The duty of the government is to arrest and punish only the guilty ones, and if that is not possible, to settle the Armenians of the region in other places but not in a hostile manner, in contrary, with a friendly approach and temporarily. A member of an armed band can do anything. Because he is a bandit. [...] But the government sues only those who have committed crimes. Unfortunately, the government leaders of that time never lost their “Committee” spirit, and implemented this deportation in such a way that the most daring and bloody bandits could not have imagined.

The government of that time said they had extended the deportation to Ankara, Konya and Eskişehir as a precautionary measure, claiming that the Russians were going to attack the Sakarya Valley and that Armenians were going to help them. At that time [...] we were able to control to a certain extent the Black Sea, through the war cruisers *Yavuz* and *Midilli*. In these circumstances, it was not possible for the Russians to land in the Sakarya Valley. Now, assume that their hypothesis was correct. Why Armenians of Bursa, Edirne and Tekirdag were deported? Were these places also part of the Sakarya basin?

³⁴ Encrypted telegram sent by Mustafa Kemal to the Commander Selahattin in Sivas, to Cevdet in Diyarbakir and to the inspector of mobilization Kemal in Everek on 11.01.1336, in *Kurtuluş Savaşı ve sonrasında Niğde*, Faruk Yılmaz, p.63, 1998.

³⁵ *Tehcir ve Taktik, Divan-ı Harbi Örfi Zabıtları*, Vahakn N. Dadrian, Taner Akçam, p. 242, Istanbul Bilgi Üniversitesi Yayınları, 2008, Istanbul.

³⁶ Excerpts from the book (non published outside the website) written by his grand-son Fikret Ali Ceyhan: *Mehmet Celal Bey, Bir dönem bir insan*, Fikret Ali Ceyhan, <http://www.mehmetcelalbey.com/tr/icerik1.php>

³⁷ Concerning Celal’s qualities see *Les Arméniens, 1917-1939 : la quête d’un refuge*, op.cit, p.309. *Istanbul Şehreminleri*, Osman Nuri Ergin, p. 460-490, Istanbul Büyükşehir Belediyesi Kültür İşleri daire başkanlığı, 1996, Istanbul. *Mehmet Celal Bey, Bir dönem bir insan*, op.cit. *Yeni Mülkiye Tarihi ve Mülkiyeliler*, op.cit. p.831-833.

What did they want from the Armenians of Aleppo, which represented less than the twentieth part of the population of the *vilayet*? Whether it was a mistake or not, if the transfer of Armenians to another place was considered necessary for the country's sake, was it necessary to apply this measure in this way? When ordering the transfer of Armenians to Der Zor, did the government think how these poor people could survive without food and housing, among the nomadic Arab tribes? If they did, I must ask: how much food did they send in these regions? How many houses did they build for the immigrants' settlement? What was the purpose of transferring a population that was sedentary for centuries in the deserts of Der Zor, without trees, water and any kind of construction material? It is not possible to deny or to turn the question differently. The goal was extermination and they were exterminated. You cannot hide the fact that the decision was taken by the leaders of the Central Committee of Union and Progress and that the government, which was part of the committee, executed it. [...]

If it were not so, the *kaimakams* who did not want to take part in the killings would not have been killed, and governors and sub-prefects who opposed them would not have been dismissed, while the executors were promoted. Also, deportation issues would not have been supervised by members of Union and Progress.”

For Celal, there was no “single Turk or Muslim who condoned the deportations and didn't condemn the killings.” Despite this image that is far away from reality in which he attributes the sole responsibility of the genocide to Unionists – thus overlooking the participation of civilians in all regions and their personal enrichment that resulted from it - the answer Celal gave hundred years ago to today's negationist statements is a very valuable evidence.

Abdülhalim Çelebi : “The essence of our order is to serve humanity”

Celal Bey, who tried to prevent deportations and massacres in Konya in 1915, was not alone in his efforts. The ex-sheikh of the Mevlevi Order Abdülhalim Çelebi was also worried about the events. However, he was removed by the Party of Union and Progress, he was without any official authority. Veled Çelebi, who shared the same views with the Unionists, was put in his position³⁸. We realize that this removal did not result only from a difference of opinion, because Abdulhalim Çelebi prevented a massacre, similar to the ones attempted Against Christians during the 31 March Incident, from happening in Konya.

On 13 April 1909, three people disguised as hodjas gave speeches in mosques in Konya to provoke people against the Christians. The city was taken by panic for a few days. While the Governor of Konya did not intervene with the events, hundreds of Armenians from Konya took refuge in the British Consulate in the city. The spreading of the events was prevented thanks to Abdülhalim Çelebi, who at the time was Sheikh of Mevlevi order. Çelebi made a calming speech addressing the people of Konya, inviting them not to attack their Christian brothers. By this means, a massacre such as the one in Adana did not occur in Konya³⁹.

The results of the events of March 31st, that may seem to be organized Against the Unionist government, would benefit most to the Unionists. The attitude of Abdülhalim Çelebi in this events was the precursor of the conflicts that he would soon experience with the government. In fact, Abdülhalim Çelebi supported the Unionists in toppling Abdülhamit and proclaiming constitutional monarchy. Nevertheless, in Çelebi's words, the “*insane politics*” that would be followed by the Unionists would in a short period of time put a distance between him and the government. According to what we learn from a letter written in March 1919, Abdülhalim Çelebi saved several people condemned to death by the government by expressing to Sultan Reshad their innocence⁴⁰. The letter does not indicate who these people were, whether he was protecting them as was the case in April 1909. These interventions by Çelebi would not be taken kindly by the central government.

On May 24, 1910 Abdülhalim Çelebi was discharged from sheikhdom and Veled Çelebi took his place⁴¹. This decision was received with confusion in Konya. Notables in Konya showered Istanbul with telegraphs, protesting the discharging of Abdülhalim Çelebi and they expressed they wouldn't accept his successor Veled Çelebi⁴². Yet their efforts were in vain: that such oppositions were “illicit”⁴³ was told to them and they were warned Against it⁴⁴.

In 1915, The Mevlevi Order was given by Veled Çelebi to the government's beck and call. In a way that was not seen in the history of the order until then, in the leadership of Veled Çelebi Mevlevis from Konya

³⁸ On how Veled Çelebi acted as if he was a member of the Party of Union and Progress: *The Ottoman Mobilization of Manpower in the First World War : between voluntarism and resistance*, Mehmet Beşikçi, p.189-190, Brill, 2012, Leiden. On Veled Çelebi's close relation with the Party of Union and Progress and his not being on good terms with the Mevlevis in Konya: *Veled Çelebi İzbudak*, Metin Akar, Turkish Language Society Publications, p. 39, 1999, Ankara. The writer attribute the reason of this disagreement to the wheat sharing problems between Mevlevis. However, he ignores that his Unionist identity played a role in these problems.

³⁹ *Anadolu'da 31 Mart ve İttihat Terakki*, Aykut Kansu, Toplumsal Tarih, Sayı: 124, p.78, Nisan 2004, Istanbul.

⁴⁰ The rough copy of a letter that belongs to Abdülhalim Çelebi, which was given to Abdülbaki Gölpınarlı by Rusuhi Baykara. in *Veled Çelebi İzbudak*, op.cit, p. 44-50, 1999, Ankara.

⁴¹ BOA, BEO. 3770/282704, 14/C/1328

⁴² BOA. BEO. 3770/282737, 19/C/1328

⁴³ BOA. DH. MUİ. 108/10, 18/C/1328

⁴⁴ BOA. DH. MUİ. 108/10, 18/C/1328

and many other cities gird themselves and forming a Mevlevi Regiment, go to Damascus in order to “boost the morale of the army”. Abdülhalim Çelebi rued those days in his letter: “*The essence of our Dervish Order is not taking part in war and going to kill people by wearing swords, on the contrary to serve with wisdom and humanely without engaging any kind of racism whatsoever. (...) Veled Efendi (...) has utterly trampled upon the core values of our order in the sight of the entire universe*”. In the meantime deportation was initiated, Abdülhalim Çelebi realized that The Party of Union and Progress, which he called “*cruel organization*”, had embarked on a policy of “*destroying the Christians*”⁴⁵.

We learn about the attitude of Abdülhalim Çelebi in this period from Trabzon Bishop Jean Naslian’s memories, as he put down records of Armenians who survived in all the cities after the war. Çelebi asked the people of Konya to protect their fellow townsmen and not to allow the spilling of blood by any means⁴⁶. Even though he could not prevent the deportation, he tried to make people in Konya help the Armenians⁴⁷. In the first volume of his memories, Naslian referred to Çelebi without giving name, as “*The Great Son of Sheikh Mollah*”. Then in the second volume, he confused his name and refers to Sadeddin Çelebi as Konya Mevlevi Order Sheikh. Yet, Sadeddin Çelebi was the person who for some time was Aleppo Sheikh, then he went on go on to became clerk in Konya. In Naslian’s memories, it is rather often that we encounter confusions concerning names⁴⁸. That the person mentioned here is Abdülhalim Çelebi is understood from the expression “*Son of Mollah who made the new Padishah his sword*”. Konya Mevlevi Order Sheikhs would make the Padishah gird his sword during enthronement ceremony and are called as “Mollah Hünkaroğlu”. This ceremony was performed for the last time during Sultan Mehmed Reşad’s enthronement by Abdülhalim Çelebi.⁴⁹

In the letter mentioned above where Abdülhalim Çelebi narrates his memories, unfortunately he did not go into detail about his attitude in 1915. Only, he relayed the following lines as if giving consent on Naslian’s memories: “*All my ancestry has completely abided by our order’s principle to serve humanity and have always been protective of Christians, thus saving them from atrocities. It will clearly be seen, through their approval of Christians in our age, that my bishop as well as myself have not strayed from this path of our ancestry even by a hair breadth.*”

Abdülhalim Çelebi was known as the “*Mevlevi who has reached the furthest point in Alawism*”. He had joined Bektashism and by this means created a proximity between Bektashism and Mevlevi order⁵⁰. With the end of the Unionist government after the war, he was once more given the position of sheikhdom. In the meantime, he served as Konya deputy in the Parliament. Yet his second sheikhdom lasted a short time. In 1921, he was dismissed from his position by being charged with supporting the Konya Uprising and was appointed to the Martial Court. The forces dispatched to suppress the revolt hanged Armenian notables of their entry into town. Abdülhalim Çelebi, who had protected the Armenians in 1915, is thus in the accused stands at the end this revolt. A while later Abdülhalim Çelebi was acquitted, then he was returned to sheikhdom.

Nevertheless, this honoring period lasted a short time. In 1925, the interdiction of convents and orders came into question. Abdülhalim Çelebi met with Mustafa Kemal in order to prevent the Mevlevi Order

⁴⁵ Abdülhalim Çelebi’s letter, *Veled Çelebi İzbudak*, Metin Akar, op.cit. p. 46.

⁴⁶ *Les Mémoires de Mgr Jean Naslian, Eveque de Trébizonde*, Jean Naslian, I. Cilt p.372 ve II. Cilt p.191, 1955, Beyrouth.

⁴⁷ In a speech he made in the parliament on November 18th 1918, Artin Boşgezenyan, deputy of Aleppo, considered Konya Muslims to be among those who “*opposed the government’s order and saved from the oppression of deportation*”.

⁴⁸ He also mentions Kütahya sub-governor Faik Ali Bey as Fuad Pasha. *Les Mémoires de Mgr Naslian*, op.cit. I. Vol. p. 350.

⁴⁹ Abdülbaki Gölpınarlı suggests that in Ottoman history the only Mevlevi sheikh that gave his sword to the Sultan.

Mevlânâ’dan sonra Mevlevîlik, Abdülbâki Gölpınarlı, p.255-256, İnkılâp kitabevi, 2006, İstanbul.

⁵⁰ *Dünyada ve Türkiye’de Alevi-Bektaşî dergâhları*, Bakı Öz, p. 409, Can Yayınları, 2001, İstanbul.

from being included in this enactment, but his efforts yielded no result. The Mevlevi Order had to bring its activities to an end. A short time after these developments, his life ends in a tragic way, according to some sources by falling from the balcony of the hotel in which he stayed, according to other sources by committing suicide upon the interdiction of the Mevlevi Order⁵¹.

III. The Province of Diyarbekir

The Province of Diyarbekir, together with Mamuretül Aziz, Erzurum, Van and Bitlis, is among the regions where Righteous people in 1915 are most common, or among regions where their stories have reached our present day most. “*We have experienced the disaster of 1938 because we have not been able to sufficiently protect Armenians*”⁵² said Dünya Ana from Dersim. The feeling that “in 1915, an irreversible rupture had taken place in their own fate” is probably one of the most significant factors causing the memory of the period to remain in such a vivid way in this region.

"*Fermana Filla*" –in Kurdish “the decree of the non-muslims- targeted not only the Armenians, but all Christians including the Assyrians. From Ergani-Maden in the north, to Mardin in its south and Cizre in the east, the Province of Diyarbekir was the settlement of Armenians, Assyrians, Nestorians, Chaldeans, Arabs and Kurds. Prior to 1915, it could be said that these communities, on the basis of some tribe regions, were in a state of “needing and protecting each other”. However, the general atmosphere in the province was tense, “living together” was on a knife-edge. “Equality to Christians” that came together with Constitutional Monarchy and the possibility that they may have to return the properties which they had acquired illicitly had disturbed many tribe chiefs. Therefore, the Kurdish movement of the period led by Bedirhan family was using a discourse that charged the Party of Union and Progress with impiety and treachery, contained intense Islamic emphasis and was anti-Armenian. Yet, it was obvious that the kind of justice that they feared would remain a possibility at most, and could go no further: the government did not entertain intentions of returning the seized possessions. In order to prevent other tribes from supporting the Kurdish movement, in a short time the government would attract many groups to its side by using a similar Islamic and anti-Armenian discourse⁵³.

Despite this, there was still a state of “needing each other” in different parts of the Mardin district. This situation was true especially for the regions where not only Kurdish but also Armenian and Assyrian tribes were dominant and made a living by breeding livestock. In an agricultural system, it was the land that gave power to the clans, yet some Kurdish landlords who made a living on livestock in the mountainous areas of Midyat could not have sustained themselves without the Armenian and Assyrian villagers⁵⁴. In the cities, we see examples of this during the 1895 massacres: Mardin city center Muslim

⁵¹ Son Mevlevi şeyhlerinden Abdülhalim Çelebi, Mehmet Demirci, Yeni Asır Gazetesi, 20.12.2013. The verdict to close dervish order was known publicly long before the date when the enactment was discussed in congress and made on November 30, 1925. The state enactment in this regard was announced on September 2, 1925. Çelebi’s going to Ankara must have come to these date.

⁵² Dünya Ana, who has witnessed the Dersim Massacre in 1938 and who is widely known among the people of Dersim for her wisdom, asked that these words were marked on her gravestone : “*When those fine people who have a different prophet abandoned us (...) then the times of hell started for us*”. Interview with Metin Kahraman in October 2005 in Istanbul.

⁵³ For relationships of Kurdish clans and the Party of Union and Progress: *The Extermination of Armenians in the Diarbekir region*, Hilmar Kaiser, Bilgi Üniversitesi Yayınları, 2014, Istanbul.

⁵⁴ Interview with A.D., grandson of Temir Agha who ruled in Midyat Erde and Binkelbe villages.

tribe chiefs protected Armenians and Assyrians in 1895⁵⁵. Unfortunately, in 1915 not all of these same tribes would display the same attitude, most of them would join the massacres⁵⁶.

Despite the presence of tribes who supported the government and joined the previous attacks, the opinion that leading notables and landlords in the city would not remain silent about the deportations was a serious source of anxiety for the Party of Union and Progress. The idea of arranging tours in the region in the leadership of Diyarbekir deputy Pirinçizade Fevzi emerged in this way. From the middle of April 1915 in Mardin, in May in Cizre and in June in Diyarbakır, he went to every village with a hodja and invited the landlords “to fulfill religious duties”⁵⁷. Even though it took different shapes in different places his statement is based on saying that Armenians and Assyrians conspire against the government, that they supported the France in the war, that deportations and massacres are acceptable in terms of religion, that their property and honor is *halal* (rightful) to the Muslims.

However, these words were not enough to provoke especially the Mardin Muslims against their Armenian and Assyrian neighbors, since they were sure of the loyalty of the Armenians and Assyrians to the Ottoman state⁵⁸. Therefore, the authorities resorted fictive accusations such as burying weapons near the Assyrian Catholic Church and then later claiming these were “secret weapons of Mardin Armenians”⁵⁹. They alleged that the “Aziz Francois Fraternity” list found in the Capuchin Church was a proof of their collaboration with France or presented the texts about the sacred blood of Jesus as “swearing to spill Muslim blood”⁶⁰.

One of the biggest conspiracies organized was the Diyarbekir Market fire that was started on 18-19 August 1914. Hundreds of shops, bakeries, inns and work places, most of which belonged to Armenian tradesmen, burnt to ashes. This was the great fire that caused the market in the district of Balıkcılarbaşı to be called “*Çarşıya Şewiti*” (“Burnt Market” in Kurdish) and it was started by Police Chief Gevranlızade Memduh within the knowledge of Pirinçizade Fevzi⁶¹. The aim was, so to say “to kill two birds with one stone”. They wanted to hold the Armenians responsible for the fire and thus to make them targets, as well as to weaken non-muslims in trade as befitting the nationalization of economy policy of the Party of Union and Progress. However, probably because of flaws in the plan, it quickly became known in the entire city that Memduh had started the fire. One of the first conscientious statesmen of 1915, Diyarbakır Vice Governor Hamid Bey, removed Memduh from his post as soon as he came to office. Later he would face the government and then he would be dismissed altogether on Mart 25, 1915.

⁵⁵ Gustave Meyrier, *Les Massacres de Diarbékir*, L’Inventaire, Paris, 2000, p.158.

⁵⁶ Comparing the names that Gustave Meyrier gave as those who protected Armenians and Assyrians in 1895 with the list of those responsible for the genocide that the Patriarchate gave and comparing it with the opinions we got from the interviews we had in Mardin. Interviews made with C.U., I.D. and A.G., January 2014, Mardin.

⁵⁷ *Le génocide des Arméniens*, Raymond Kévorkian, Editions Odile Jacob, Paris 2006, p. 440

⁵⁸ Jacques Rhétoré, *Les Chrétiens aux bêtes*, Paris, 2005, Cerf, p.56-58.

⁵⁹ Ara Sarafian, The disasters of Mardin during the persecutions of the Christians, especially the Armenians, 1915, Haigazian Armenological Review, 1998, p. 263

⁶⁰ Raymond Kévorkian, *Le génocide des Arméniens*, op.cit., p.455, Ishaq Armalto “*Les Calamités des Chrétiens*”.

⁶¹ *Ibid*, p. 437

Diyarbakir Vice Governor Hamid Bey : “I do not want to be involved in this illegal operation”

Hamid Bey was appointed as vice governor on September 7, 1914 to Diyarbakir. He was known for his honesty in his past positions; “*established a strong relations between the Muslims and the minorities in the country; (...) exercised equality in his conduct; (...) the people have benefitted from the advantages of Constitutional Monarchy thanks to his strong skillful service*”⁶².

During his six month service, he tried to prevent the extremities of Pirinççizade Fevzi at the risk of comments such as the following to be directed at him later on: “*Do not be overly kind to the Armenians*”, or even, “*Hamid Bey did not serve as a governor, through pursuit of personal pleasures, he has complicated the affairs of the state, while rendering himself powerless. (...) All significant affairs were left into the hands of the Armenian resistance members.*”⁶³ His removal of Police Chief Memduh from his post because of the Market fire investigation became a sign that he will not be taking part in the deportations and massacres. He was discharged from his position on March 25, 1915 and Doctor Reside, who would later become one of the main actors in the Armenian genocide, replaced him.

Hamid Bey later on was appointed to the “Ministry of Internal Affairs Investigation Committee General Directorate”. He would express what he witnessed while was in this position, especially the killing of two kaimakams (district governors) who were opposed to the deportation⁶⁴, in the testimony that he gave in 1919 in Istanbul in the trial of the leaders of The Party of Union and Progress⁶⁵. Hamid Bey was discharged from his position before the start of the deportation. But the letters⁶⁶ and memoirs⁶⁷ that Armenian notables wrote about him reveal that he had sensed the coming storm and was protecting the Armenians in that period. He was trying to prevent attacks like the Diyarbakir market fire from happening again.

Even though these data can be found in many sources, Hamit Bey talked about this period very little in his own memoirs. Hamit Bey, who was in conflict with Mustafa Kemal for a period of time – perhaps refraining from the possible consequences of once more being shown as “close to the Armenians” – seems to have skipped over his attitude in 1915 deliberately. Some sentences he rarely uttered on this subject are, “*I was neither friendly nor hostile towards the Armenians*”⁶⁸ and about commissions on property “*I do not want to interfere with this treatment whose every stage is Against lawful ways of conduct.*”⁶⁹

We most clearly see that Hamit Bey subjected his memoirs to the filter of the “official political line” and dispensed with the inconvenient ones in his writings concerning the two investigations he was conducting

⁶² Ali Çankaya, *Yeni Mülkiye târihi ve mülkiyeliler*, Ankara Üniversitesi, SBF, 1971, Volume III, p. 955, “Berâet-i Zimmet Mazbatası” for the period of governorship of Hamit Bey, attributed by Tokat District Governance Council.

⁶³ It was expressed by Doctor Reşid who replaced him as Diyarbakir Governor (simplified quotation). *Sürgünden intihara Dr. Reşid Bey'in hatıraları*, Tükelmat, 1992, p.32.

⁶⁴ Hamid Bey tried to investigate the killings of Besiri Deputy Kaimakam Ali Sabit Es Süveydi and Lice Kaimakam Hüseyin Nesimi in 1915. But he would only be able to complete his work in 1918. *The Extermination of Armenians in Diarbekir region*, Hilmar Kaiser, Bilgi Üniversitesi Yayınları, p. 407-408

⁶⁵ Vahakn N. Dadrian, Taner Akçam, *Tehcir ve Taktik, Divan-ı Harbi Örfi Zabıtları*, İstanbul Bilgi Üniversitesi Yay., 2008, p. 242

⁶⁶ Lettre du Catholico de Sis le 29 Novembre 1921 in *Le Kémalisme devant les alliés*, Michel Paillares, Edition du Bosphore, p. 385

⁶⁷ The Diyarbakir Massacres and Kurdish Atrocities, Thomas K. Mugerditchian, Gomidas Institute, 2013 (The first print of the report was published in Cairo in 1919). P. 15-16-17-18

⁶⁸ Bir Milli Mücadele Valisi ve Anıları : Kapancızade Hamit bey, Halit Eken, Yeditepe Yayınları, p.476-477

⁶⁹ Ibid, p. 479-480. Hamit Bey expresses that he had to accept this mission that he did not want upon insistence and “*with the intention of preventing abuses*”. Because of this work which he did “*grudgingly*” he considered quitting official duty.

in 1918 about two kaimakams, who opposed the deportation, that were killed in 1915 by the Diyarbekir governor in Dr. Reşid. “*Reşid Bey has concluded from some of the questions of Tasvir-i Efkâr newspaper reporter that I was investigating about him. This is not true. Neither have I been in contact with the Investigation Committee nor have I anything to do with the investigation itself*” he said and hid the truth. In fact, there are tens of telegraphs carrying his own signature showing that he personally carried out the investigation concerning the killing of the kaimakams in the Ottoman archives.⁷⁰

Perhaps one of the most heart-breaking cases concerning this attitude of Hamid Bey is the way he relates to a young Armenian civil servant named Astik Efendi in his memoirs. Hamid Bey had worked in the past together with Astik Efendi in different cities in the Investigation Committee. He talks about Astik Efendi as “*a quite loyal, hardworking and honorable graduate of Mülkiye (Ottoman Administration School)*”. In 1914, Astik Efendi came to Diyarbekir to meet Hamit Bey, “*in a miserable state*”. Hamit Bey asked him to stay in Diyarbekir and appointed him as collecting registrar. Nevertheless, this initiative will be presented as “*Hamid Bey appointed a member of Armenian revolutionary committees*” by Dr. Reşid. Hamid Bey avoids openly writing about having protected Astik Efendi in his memoirs. The “official political line filter” in his mind is at work again. He highlights Astik Efendi’s loyalty and expresses that he was “*protected from deportation for a while*” while leaving the person who provided the protection unrevealed. It is understood that Hamit Bey tried to protect Astik Efendi even after his departure from Diyarbekir. We found traces of Astik Efendi in Mülkiye Graduates Book. After Hamit Bey was removed from Diyarbekir, Astik Asador was appointed to Van and he passed away at the age of 26 in 1915⁷¹. Even though Mülkiye Graduates Book does not say how he died at such a young age, the date of his death is significant.

Murdered for their Righteous attitude

After Hamid Bey was removed, Dr. Reşid was appointed to Diyarbekir Governorship. One of the first things the new governor did was to recall Police Chief Memduh back to his position and to set up gangs consisting of infamous bandits, some tribe chiefs in the region.

The methods of Reşid (apprehension and torturing of Armenian notables in Diyarbekir, burning Priest Mgrditch Tchilgadian after various tortures, the unusual violence of the gangs that were assigned to the deportation) and his openly declaring that he aimed to eradicate Armenians, caused distress among some civil servants working in districts and villages within the city.

Compared with the other cities, maybe the reason that there were so many civil servants opposed to the orders in Diyarbekir was because it was so obvious that a terrible fate awaited the deportees. In other places the duty of the civil servants could be merely to organize the deportation and to see the groups off. Even if they more or could guess about what would happen to the deportees – or in some cases knew certainly – it was easier for them to convince themselves that their charge was limited. In contrast, Diyarbekir sub-governors and kaimakams were verbally or through unofficial messages were ordered to

⁷⁰ Hilmar Kaiser dedicates a great deal of space to these correspondences in his work. *The Extermination of Armenians in Diyarbekir region*, op.cit. p. 408. On the determining role of the period in which Hamit Bey wrote his memoirs cf. supra note 18.

⁷¹ Ali Çankaya, *Yeni Mülkiye târihi ve mülkiyeliler*, op.cit. p.1395. Çankaya gives Astik Asador’s date of death as January 1, 1915. However, as Hamid Bey mentions that he was “*for some time*” protected from deportation, this date should be later. It is possible that Çankaya took this date from registers of persons. There are other examples showing that the civil registry office wrote January 1 as the date of death in cases when a certain date was not obtained. For example Abdülhalim Çelebi passed away on 12 November, 1925, but in his registry it says 1 January, 1925. TBMM Albümü, Cilt 1, p. 43.

eradicate the Armenians⁷². Hüseyin Nesimi, kaimakam of Lice and Sabit Es Süveydi, kaimakam of Beshiri paid with their lives their opposition.⁷³

Hüseyin Nesimi, Kaimakam of Lice district : “A matter of conscience”⁷⁴

Hüseyin Nesimi was appointed as kaimakam in Lice on 13 January 1915. He was a Mülkiye graduate and attached to the Bektashi/Sufi tradition he received from his family. Sufism was so central to his life that in his essay in which he analyzed the decline of the Ottoman state, he proposes the proliferation of the Sufism as a solution.⁷⁵

From the memoirs of his son Abidin Nesimi, we understand that the kaimakam’s humanitarian approach would cause him to be quickly in disagreement with Dr. Reşid. Nesimi defends that those who lack loyalty to the state must be punished, but innocent people should not be hurt. When he noticed that the orders coming referred to an exile and massacre on a massive scale, first he believes that he can do something by intervening with this situation. He tried to protect as many Armenians as possible by delaying groups from setting off. He also tried to prevent the attacks of gangs by accompanying the first group of deportees in person. He convinced Lice old men to contract “fake marriages” with Armenian women, in order to save them⁷⁶. In this way he saved many women by showing them as Muslims.

However, the news about Nesimi’s disobedience reached Dr. Reşid. Between Lice Kaimakam and Diyarbekir Governor a tight correspondence began. Hüseyin Nesimi blamed Dr. Reşid to be as cruel as Genghis Khan.⁷⁷ He was called to Diyarbekir in order to discuss his ideas concerning the deportation. What would happen to Nesimi on the way of Diyarbekir were the usual methods of Dr. Reşid. He was killed by Harun the Circassian and his gang in an ambush on 29 June 1915 near Karaz village in Lice. The murder was blamed upon “Armenian rebels” and his corpse was not delivered to his family. Abandoned and without a tomb, calling to mind the murders of unknown assailants in the 1990, he was buried on the side of the road by his killers.⁷⁸ His death went into the official records as “*He was martyred by assailing gangs during bandit investigations*”⁷⁹. Nevertheless his family and the people of Lice did not believe this story. In the letter that his son Abidin Nesimi sent to Ali Çankaya in 1966, he expressed that his father was killed “*because he did not comply with the policy of The Party of Union and Progress*”

⁷² It was expressed by many statesmen from the period that, other than the written deportation orders coming from the central government, in some districts and cities, Katib-i Mesuller (Party Secretaries) were transmitting oral orders. Konya Governor Celal Bey shares with the Italian Consul that during his Aleppo Governorship he received “secret orders” of this kind (Raymond Kévorkian, Lévon Nordiguian, Vahé Tachjian, *Les Arméniens 1917-1939, la quête d'un refuge*, Presses de l'Université Saint Joseph, 2007 içinde Christine Babikian Assaf, *Diran Babikian (1887-1973) : Itinéraire d'un Arménien de Cilicie réfugié au Liban*, p.310-311).

⁷³ Although some sources add Midyat Kaimakam Nuri to this list, there is no other evidence testifying that he lost his life in this manner. In the main accusation of The Party of Union and Progress it is said that only two kaimakams were killed. Vahakn N. Dadrian, Taner Akçam, *Tehcir ve Taktik*, op.cit. p. 242.

⁷⁴ Ali Emiri in his work *Osmanlı Vilâyat-ı Şarkiyesi* describes Nesimi’s resistance with these words. in *The Extermination of Armenians in Diarbekir region*, op.cit. p. 407.

⁷⁵ *Tanzimat'ın 150. Yıldönümü Uluslararası Sempozyumu: bildiriler*, 25-27 Aralık 1989, Milli Kütüphane, Ankara, p. 306.

⁷⁶ *The Extermination of Armenians in Diarbekir region*, op.cit. p.392

⁷⁷ Ibidem, p.393.

⁷⁸ Joseph Naayem, *Turkarnas folk-mord på assyrier-kaldéer och armenier*, 2003, Nsibin (*Les Assyro-Chaldéens et les Arméniens massacres par les Turcs*, Paris, 1920 Swedish translation of the work), p.70.

⁷⁹ Ali Çankaya, *Yeni Mülkiye târihi ve mülkiyeliler*, op.cit, p. 304

Lice notables Selim and Mahfuz Bey had a tomb built to the place where Nesimi was buried. This became a place visited for many years with the name “*Tırba kaymekam*” (Kaimakam tomb)⁸⁰. In 1915 Naman Efendi who was manager of Public Debts in Lice, told Catholic Chaldean Priest Joseph Naayeim how the kaimakam was killed and how he himself visited his tomb together with his family.⁸¹

In his memoirs, Dr. Reşid rejects that Hüseyin Nesimi was killed because he did not accept to deport Armenians. “*On the contrary, Nesimi Bey was doing the Armenian dispatch, as in every task in the civil service, here too he was acting with some degree of tardiness*” he wrote.⁸² However, he forgot that he had mentioned in official records that the reason for Nesimi’s journey was investigating bandits. So he did not abstain from writing that he called Nesimi to Diyarbekir himself.

Dr. Reşid also tried to give a bad reputation to Nesimi in his memoirs. He writes that there are accusations about Nesimi such as “*by taking money from some Armenians*” he allowed them not to be deported. Nevertheless, no such accusation is present in the testimonies of the Armenians and Assyrians survivors. If we take into account that Dr. Reşid was extremely particular about implementing the deportation with discipline and enthusiasm, and transferring the Armenians’ properties to the state treasury, in the face of such an accusation it was obvious that he would not simply call Nesimi to Diyarbekir, but would attempt to dismiss him from his position and would mention this in his memoirs⁸³.

The killing of Nesimi was brought to the agenda in the main trial about leaders of The Party of Union and Progress. Previous Diyarbekir Governor Hamid Bey gave his testimony “*About two kaimakams that were exterminated because of their opposition to the deportation*”.⁸⁴

Today, the people of Lice still designate the place near Karaz village as “kaimakam tomb”. However the tomb built by notables of Lice is long gone. In a visit we made to Lice in 2013 November, we saw that memories about Hüseyin Nesimi are very well-preserved. Especially the old people clearly expressed that they learned the fate of the kaimakam from their grandfathers⁸⁵. Again Nihat Işık, the grandson of Selim Bey who had Hüseyin Nesimi’s tomb built, relayed to us a conversation he had with an old soldier in the 1950s who was in the gang that killed the kaimakam. This soldier told Nihat Işık that Dr. Reşid ordered the killing of the kaimakam and said he bore a heavy conscience for having been involved in this thing.

In the September of 1915, a commission working in the region of the 3rd army “*charged with sending to the martial court those who do not obey the law concerning the dispatch of the Armenians.*”⁸⁶ Concerning Nesimi’s murder, the chief of this commission, Mazhar Bey, interrogates Chief of military recruitment bureau Süleyman Bey in February 1916. Süleyman Bey tells that Harun came with a unit consisting of Circassian gendarmes to Lice, arrested the kaimakam and sent him to Diyarbekir with two gendarmes accompanying him. A short time after they set off, news of Hüseyin Nesimi’s murder is heard. Süleyman

⁸⁰ Abidin Nesimi, *Yılların İçinden*, İstanbul, 1977, Gözlem yayınları, p. 31. Interview with Selim Bey’s grandson Nihat Işık, March 2011, Diyarbakır. Nihat Bey expressed to us that Hüseyin Nesimi was Selim Bey’s tenant.

⁸¹ Joseph Naayeim, *Turkarnas folkmord på assyrier-kaldéer och armenie*, op.cit, p.70

⁸² *Sürgünden intihara Dr. Reşid Bey’in hatıraları*, op. cit, p. 86.

⁸³ For Dr. Reşid’s firm belief in the necessity of deportation for the country’s salvation from – in his own words- “*microbes*”, and his execution of the deportation with great discipline and opposing gaining personal wealth, see *Dr Mehmed Reshid (1873–1919): A Political Doctor*, p.268-269 (Hans-Lukas Kieser, Dominik J. Schaller, *Der Völkermord an den Armeniern und die Shoah*, Zürich: Chronos, 2002)

⁸⁴ Vahakn N. Dadrian, Taner Akçam, *Tehcir ve Taktik, Divan-ı Harbi Örfi Zabıtları*, op.cit, p.242

⁸⁵ Tepecik villagers close to Karaz district told a different version of Nesimi’s killing: “When the kaimakam learnt that Armenians of Lice were killed by being thrown into pits in Fis, he set off to go there and prevent them. Then apparently he told them “Do not kill them and. Make sure they arrive unharmed at Diyarbekir” He was killed right there for trying to prevent the massacre”. Interviews in Tepecik village, November 2013.

⁸⁶ BOA. DH.ŞFR 56/179, 17/Za/1333.

Bey, denying what Dr. Reşid says, especially emphasizes that at the time there were no Armenian gang members in the region.⁸⁷

Is the ex-soldier who expressed his problems of conscience to Nihat Işık in 1950s could be Süleyman Bey, who gave testimony to Mazhar Bey in 1916? We do not have enough information to speculate on this matter. If the two are the same persons, we can assume that he was feared in 1916 to say that he took part in the killing of Nesimi, but his conscience suffering remained with him during whole life.

As for Hüseyin Nesimi's tomb just outside Karaz district on a hillside on the old route of Diyarbekir, it bears signs that it was especially intended to be remembered. Today on the tomb there is neither a tombstone, nor any other sign. Nevertheless, on this piece of land surrounded on all four sides by fields, Hüseyin Nesimi's tomb area strikes us as the only spot where no agriculture is done and with a single tree on it. His grandchild with whom we met in Istanbul expressed that he knew very little about his grandfather since he was killed while his father was still very young, that the family went through great difficulties and that they wanted the memory of their grandfather to live on. The intention of the family to build a memorial onto the place where Hüseyin Nesimi was killed still awaits to be realized.

Ali Sabit Es Süveydi, Deputy kaimakam of Beshiri

Ali Sabit Es-Süveydi was born in Baghdad in 1890. Right after he graduated in 1911 he was appointed as officer in attendance in Diyarbekir province. Since he rejected to take part in the deportation during his office in 1915 as deputy kaimakam of Beshiri, he was killed by Aziz the Circassian gang upon Dr. Reşid's order. He was only 25 when he was killed.⁸⁸

In order to find those responsible for the killing of the young kaimakam his brother Naci Bey carried out an investigation. His findings lead him to Diyarbekir Governor Reşid.⁸⁹ Sabit Bey's killing is brought up during the trials of the leaders of The Party of Union and Progress in 1919.⁹⁰ Contrary to what he relates in his memoirs, Diyarbekir deputy governor Hamid Bey would carry out the investigation concerning Ali Sabit's killing in person in 1918.

Mardin Sub-governor Hilmi Bey : "I am not so unconscientious to take part in a massacre"

Mardin sub-governor Hilmi Bey's story demonstrates how the Unionists could make, even years after, pay those who opposed the orders during the Armenian genocide for their attitude. Just like Aleppo Governor Celal Bey did, Hilmi Bey tried to stop the atrocities by alerting German diplomats.

Governor Dr. Reşid, one of the main actors of genocide, had determined that Hilmi Bey would not submit to his authority. While going from Mosul to Diyarbekir in 1915, Reşid had apprehended many Assyrian notables, to whom he ascribed various crimes. However, Hilmi Bey refuses to act upon groundless accusations and releases the arrested Assyrians. Reşid realized that he would not be able to make Hilmi Bey obey all his orders. In the coming months, he would make every effort to have him dismissed from his position.

⁸⁷ Hilmar Kaiser found the telegraph, dated 8 February 1916, in which this testimony of Süleyman is found and which was sent to Talat by Mazhar among the documents Krikor Guerguerian compiled. It is certain that the contents of this correspondence, of which no traces are present in The Ottoman Archives of The Prime Ministry and which researchers have not been able to attain so far, contains a great deal valuable information. *The Extermination of Armenians in Diarbekir region*, op.cit, p. 406

⁸⁸ Ali Çankaya, *Yeni Mülkiye târihi ve mülkiyeliler*, op.cit, p.1442

⁸⁹ *The Extermination of Armenians in Diarbekir region*, op.cit, p.395-408

⁹⁰ *Ibid*, p. 409-413

Dr. Reşid first demanded that the Mardin sub-governor to be discharged from his position and showed some robberies and attacks which he ascribed to Ali Batte and the Yezidis as an excuse, saying the governor “did not take the necessary precautions”. In the meantime, Hilmi Bey gave signs to Mardin Christians that he would support them in the coming storm. He joined Easter celebrations in the churches. After he learned that a Muslim militia was formed in Mardin, he visited a monastery close to the city. He had ordered the arrest of a person giving speeches targeting Christians.

When Reşid ordered notable Christians in the city to be apprehended and killed in May 1915, Hilmi opposed the order. According to Dominican religious Jacques Rhétoré, he gave Reşid a response based on conscience: “*I am not so heartless as to take part in the massacring of Ottoman citizens that I know well to be loyal to the state and innocent*”.⁹¹ This answer broke ties with Reşid who demanded from Istanbul that Hilmi be discharged. He blamed Hilmi Bey for being “Weak, idle, old regime collaborator, refusing to work with the party, stubborn, meeting night and day with “evil” persons such as Catholic Armenian Bishop Maloyan, even incautious to the degree of informing the Armenians of the aims of the state”. Reşid wanted his own man Bedrettin to be appointed instead of Hilmi Bey as Mardin sub-governor.⁹²

When he did not receive immediate answer from Istanbul concerning his demands, Reşid set out to use his own methods. He commissions Diyarbekir Police Chief Memduh to procure a fake testimony accusing Mardin Catholic Armenian Bishop Maloyan of hiding weapons. On 3 June, 1915 he took advantage of Hilmi Bey’s being outside the city and had Maloyan and other Christian notables apprehended on the basis of this fake testimony. When Hilmi Bey returned to the city on 7 June, he reacted to the apprehensions. However, there was nothing that he could do. On 8 June, he is discharged from his office and is appointed to Hakkari Sub-Governorship.⁹³ On 10 June 1915 Maloyan and 410 arrested Armenians and Assyrians were made to set out under color of sending them to Diyarbekir. When the convoy reached Kara Köprü, Maloyan was killed.

Hilmi Bey left Mardin at the end of June. However, he moved towards Mosul, not to his place of duty Hakkari. In Mosul, he told German Consul Walter Holstein about Dr. Reşid’s actions and Maloyan’s murder. He told Holstein that Dr. Reşid “*attacked the Christians in the city like a mad dog*”, and that one night he had about 700 people including the Armenian Bishop “*slaughtered like sheep one night outside the city*”. Holstein, expressed to Istanbul Consulate the events by quoting Hilmi Bey and said that unless Reşid was discharged from his position Muslims in the city might kill Christians like him.⁹⁴ This information prompted ambassador Wangenheim to action and on 12 July 1915 he gave the Internal Affairs Minister Talat a note. Hilmi Bey’s words were on this note, as well as on the telegraph with which Talat told Reşid “*not to create a bad influence on the international public opinion*”. Talat told Reşid “*It is by no means legitimate to pass the military precautions and policies taken concerning Armenians to*

⁹¹ Jacques Rhétoré, *Les Chrétiens aux bêtes*, op. cit, p. 62. A witness that Yves Ternon mentions talks of a different version of this answer: “Mardin Armenians are from Armenian Catholic order and they speak in Arabic only. They have no connection with Gregorian Armenians. The libertarian mentality has not reached them and they are unarmed. They are known for being honest and civilized. They are innocent and there are no crimes that can be ascribed to them. There are no other people that need to be apprehended from other communities as well”. *Mardin 1915*, Yves Ternon, op.cit. p.119

⁹² The Extermination of Armenians in Diarbekir region, op.cit, p. 312-316

⁹³ 8 June, which Hilmar Kaiser has given as date of appointment, is the date at which the situation was informed to Reşid by the Ministry of Interior. BOA. DH.ŞFR. 53/291, 25/B /1333. According to Ottoman Prime Ministry Archives “Mardin district governor Hilmi and Hakkari governor Şefik Bey’s exchange of offices” were decided on 31 May 1915. BOA. İ.DH. 1514/1333 17/B /1333

⁹⁴ From the Vice-Consul in Mosul (Holstein) to the Embassy in Constantinople, Mosul, 10.07.1915, DE/PA-AA/BoKon/169 in *The Armenian Genocide : Evidence from the German Foreign Office Archives*, Wolfgang Gust, op.cit. p. 245

spread to other Christians”.⁹⁵ Hilmi Bey’s efforts, at least to some extent, paid off. However, we know that the order that came from the Internal Affairs Ministry did not stop Reşid, he continued to target Assyrians and other communities together with Armenians. A few days after his correspondence with Talat, he ordered attacks Against Christian districts of Midyat on 19 July 1915.⁹⁶

After this date, Hilmi Bey is appointed to Hakkari, Nablus, Malatya, Der Zor and Bayezid sub-governorships.⁹⁷ He was appointed in August 1919 to Eskişehir sub-governorship controlled by the English army. In this very short service, that would last till his murder on 4 October 1919, he would be in conflict with Mustafa Kemal and his entourage. Almost all the Kemalist notables that he witnessed to be around Eskişehir were the ex-members of The Party of Union and Progress: Ali Fuat (Cebesoy), Küçük Talat (Muşkara) and Halil Pasha (Kut) were a few of these people. As we say with other examples, he would not want to be part of a group of persons that had taken part in the Armenian genocide. So, he would keep a distance with the struggle that Mustafa Kemal engaged. On 17 September 1919, Mustafa Kemal sent a telegraph to Hilmi Bey asking him to cut his ties with Istanbul government and “*to comply with the national desire.*” He added that “*Otherwise, he could not resist the national desire even for a short period of time*”. On 24 September 1919, Mustafa Kemal issued a notice “*about Eskişehir sub-governor who engages actions Against the Struggle*”.⁹⁸

On 3 October 1919, Kemalist Forces—despite the continuing presence of the English army in the city—gained dominion over Eskişehir. They declared that Hilmi Bey was discharged from his position and was replaced by Sabri Bey. Therefore Hilmi Bey was neither a hindrance nor a threat for them anymore. Nevertheless, he could not escape from becoming a target. While on his way for home for lunch, he was shot by an unknown person. Ali Fuat Cebesoy relayed the developments to the 15th Corps Command by saying “*Hilmi Bey, who greatly persevered against the Struggle, was killed by a nationalist*”⁹⁹ His killer would never be caught or punished. According to the report sent by the inspectors who were appointed to investigate the murder, the gendarme soldier who was near Hilmi Bey at the time of the event “*knew the name of the killer, but for unknown reasons refused to reveal it*”.¹⁰⁰ Mustafa Kemal sends the following telegraph on 12 October 1919 to Süleyman Nazif, who asked for his opinion on this subject:

“We do not know the deceased Hilmi Bey. We do not and cannot by any means have any connection whatsoever to those who killed him. The information we received on the murder incident merely tells us that he was killed because of his opposition to the engagements concerning the national struggle by a nationalist. It is certain that The National Forces will provide the state with every assistance it can in order to implement the laws to pursue all criminal and murderous persons. We also would like to add that just like you we also greatly touched and regretful at due to the event.”¹⁰¹

Mustafa Kemal’s answer to Süleyman Nazif is the repetition of the information Ali Fuat Cebesoy imparted to him. Yet, right after the incident and in his memoirs published soon, Ali Fuat Cebesoy, who wanted to connect the murder only to Hilmi Bey’s opposition to the National Struggle, skipped over a

⁹⁵ *The Young Turks’ Crime Against Humanity: The Armenian Genocide and Ethnic Cleansing in the Ottoman Empire*, Taner Akçam, p.208-209, Princeton University Press, 2012, New Jersey

⁹⁶ cf. infra p. 30

⁹⁷ Ali Çankaya, *Yeni Mülkiye târihi ve mülkiyeliler*, op.cit, p. 435

⁹⁸ *Kurtuluş Savaşı Günlüğü : Erzurum Kongresi’nden TBMM’ye*, Zeki Sarıhan, p. 122, 1982, Istanbul

⁹⁹ *Milli Mücadelede Eskişehir*, Ali Sarıkoyuncu, p. 41, Osmangazi Üniv. Yay., 2002, Eskişehir.

¹⁰⁰ *Eskişehir Mutasarrıfı Hilmi Bey’in öldürülmesi*, Zafer Koylu, Türk İnkılâp Tarihi Enstitüsü Atatürk Yolu Dergisi Sayı 46, p.445, 2010, Ankara.

¹⁰¹ Ibidem, p. 446-447

point. Hilmi Bey gave testimony, about the responsibility of Halil Kut in the genocide, to the commission of inquiry that was set up in Istanbul prior to the trials of members of The Party of Union and Progress. In August 1919, Halil Kut escaped from the prison and went to Anatolia to join the National Struggle. According to the reports of English Foreign Ministry and The Armenian Patriarchate in Istanbul, the person who had ordered the murder of Hilmi Bey is Halil Kut.¹⁰²

The murder is hastily attributed to “*a nationalist*” and as a result of “*the police and military acting indifferently towards the incident*”¹⁰³ the case is closed. The testimony, that probably cost Hilmi Bey his life and which he gave to the commission prior to Istanbul trials, is unfortunately not accessible for researchers in the archives, just like the other parts of the investigation file of this trials.

Istanbul Government put a salary on Hilmi Bey’s spouse Şemia Hanım and on her son Keramet Efendi who was studying in Germany.¹⁰⁴ In our research, it was not possible for us to find traces of Hilmi Bey’s family in later years.

The following words, said to have been uttered by Hilmi Bey, who was known as “*Honest, libertarian and humanitarian*” draw the portrait of a mindset ahead of his time: “*I see the people under my governance only as Ottoman citizens. I do not pay attention to their religion, their beliefs are their own personal matters*”.¹⁰⁵

Derik : “Unfortunately we could only save a small number of them...”

“*This is the only place left, and this one we protect like the pupil of our eye.*” Naif Demirci, who is one of the last Armenians living in Derik with his wife, carefully opens the door of Surp Kevork Church, which has been through a thousand calamities so far. The Armenian community could only reclaim the church, which was seized by the government after 1915 and which was used as a stable for a long time, by paying for it in 1957.¹⁰⁶ With the name he is known as in Derik “Uncle Naif” tells that they owe this to Necimoğulları family who protected the Armenians in 1915. “*The state initiated a tender to sell this place. Ahmet Necimoğlu sent news to all the notables, saying ‘None other than Armenians will enter the bid. So that they can take back their church. If it wasn’t for his intervention, we could not have taken this place back’.*” Yet, the status problem of the church, where they can perform rituals once a year with clergymen coming from Istanbul, has not been solved yet. The fact that the structure is shown as “house” in the title deed still hangs like the sword of Democles over Surp Kevork’s head.

Uncle Naif’s grandfather and whole family avoided the deportation and massacre in 1915 by hiding in the mansion of Necimoğulları, who were members of Rutan tribe, one of the worthy families in the region. “*The government severely threatened those who offered help,*” he says about what his father and grandfather told him. “*They stayed in their house until the end of the decree*”. Naif Day still pursues

¹⁰² *The Extermination of Armenians in Diarbekir region*, op.cit, p. 319, while note 18. makes a reference to Raymond Kévorkian Patriarchate’s report, it refers to Hilmi Bey erroneously as “Siirt Governor Serfiçeli Hilmi”. Serfiçeli Hilmi took part in the genocide, has no connection whatsoever with Mardin Governor Hilmi Bey other than name similarity. *Le Génocide des Arméniens*, Raymond Kévorkian op.cit. p. 431

¹⁰³ Eskişehir Gendarmerie Battalion Commander Hamdi Bey’s testimony. *Eskişehir Mutasarrıfı Hilmi Bey’in öldürülmesi*, Zafer Koşlu, op.cit. p. 444

¹⁰⁴ Ali Çankaya gave the name of his spouse as Şehime, and his son’s name, who was studying in Germany, as Hüseyin Bahir, *Yeni Mülkiye târihi ve mülkiyeliler*, op.cit, p. 435. However, The Ottoman Archives of The Prime Ministry refer to his spouse as Şemia, and to his student son as Keramet. Hüseyin Bahri must have been Hilmi Bey’s one year old son at the time he was killed. BOA. İ..DUİT. 97/25, 16/Ş /1338

¹⁰⁵ Jacques Rhétoré, *Les Chrétiens aux bêtes*, op. cit, p. 56

¹⁰⁶ Interview with Naif Demirci on 27.11.2010 in Derik.

ironworking, the craft of his grandfather. Derik Armenians who survived the genocide migrated to Istanbul or to Europe. “*On many occasions, they visit the families who saved us*”, he adds. Who will “dote upon” Surp Kevork garden after him? That is uncertain.

Salkans (Gökalp family) are among notable tribes of Derik. Once upon a time, in the narrow streets and neighborhoods, where stone houses of Derik are located, Rutan, Abbasan and Mahmudan tribes was living. Regardless of whether they are Armenian or Kurdish, all people from Derik belonged to one of these tribes. When the order of deportation arrived, Salkan tribe –and in a more limited scale Rutan tribe – decided to save the Armenians who belonged with their clans. “*All craftsmen and artisans of Derik, from stove producers to shoe-makers, to orchardists, they all were Armenians. The decision of protection of clan chiefs was also kind of dependent on the fact that there were no other artisans. Especially the protection of Rutans was based on this*”, says local historian Eyüp Güven of Derik¹⁰⁷. As for Salkans, they protected those who did not show mastery on any field as well.

The traces of 1915 in Derik’s Kale neighborhood are not hidden only in the stone houses or in the mansion of the Salkans. On every corner, from old women to small children, all Derik people have a surprisingly vivid collective memory about the events that happened. Who joined the massacres, who opposed them, whose house raided, where Armenians were massacred : all that information in detail is transmitted to the present generations. Two women, aged 95 and 70, from Salkan tribe begin to tell the stories of their families without being asked.¹⁰⁸ “*Three families from Salkans, each of them took ten to fifteen Armenian families into their houses. Despite scarcities, food, clothes, everything in the house was being shared. In our house they hid them in the stable. Every time gendarme came, they would run away from the back door of the stable. When they could not find the Armenians, eventually the gendarme beat the men of the chief*”, they say.

With its 2,5 meter thick walls and its convenient location in the city, Salkans Mansion was one of the most important refuges for the Armenians in 1915. “*The house was built in the manner of a castle. Even if they cannonballed the place, the gendarme still could not have managed to get inside, that’s why it was the most appropriate place to hide*” explains Abdülkadir Gökalp, a notable member of Salkan tribe¹⁰⁹. He especially stress that other clans of Derik, Abbasans and Mahmudans, did not protect the Armenians, while the Salkans did. “*In Ottoman records our clan has been marked as ‘unreliable’. Our people were never supportive of the state policies.*”

Older uncles of Gökalp, **Mehmet Tahir Bey** and **Ömer Bey** opened the doors of their house to about ten families. They hid them behind a wall, parts of which spread to a whole street, covering almost half of Kale Street. After the end of deportations, Armenians returned to their houses in Derik. Abdülkadir Gökalp counts all the families they hid by their names. “*Salkans saved three hundred people in this way*”. As he says this, the pride that reflects on his face is soon eclipsed. “*But then again, we could only save a small number of Derik Armenians*”. Abdülkadir Bey at the same time makes calls to Armenians living in Istanbul. “*Our friendship with all of them still continues, they certainly do visit us when they come*”. The most important trace from Mehmet Tahir Bey and Ömer Bey up until today is this friendship. The street were the Salkans mansion is situated is said to carry the name of the family. But no sign or inscription is visible.

¹⁰⁷ Interview with Eyüp Güven on 27.11.2010 in Derik.

¹⁰⁸ The interview made with P. and N. on 27.11.2010 in Derik.

¹⁰⁹ The interview made with Abdülkadir Gökalp on 28.11.2010 in Derik.

Mollah Iskender Kazım's attitude is one of the most important reasons why Pirinçizade Fevzi's provocations of Muslims using religious motives Against the Armenians were not effective in Derik. Mele Iskender was a religious functionary closely interested in the political affairs of the period and wrote oppositional poems in Kurdish. He was a mufti in the district in 1915 and was born in 1874 in Dera Metina village of Mazıdağı. When he received news of the deportation and massacre, he invited the Muslims of Derik to protect the Armenians by calling from the minaret of the mosque, "*The Armenians believe in Allah too, this is a massacre, it is cruelty*".¹¹⁰ Cigerxwin, the Kurdish poet who settled down in Derik after 1922, would later become his close friend. He was apprehended in 1927 because of his oppositional identity and he passed away a year after that¹¹¹.

Derik Kaimakam Reşid Bey : a confused story?

Derik Kaimakam, who was killed because he disobeyed the orders, is mentioned in the memoirs of Dominican religious functionary Jacques Rhétoré, who was in Mardin in 1915. According to Rhétoré, the kaimakam learned the decision of deportation about the 1700 Armenians in Derik and the presence of the gangs waiting for them just outside the city. Reşid Bey, who does not find any kind of illegal act in the conduct of the Armenians within his administration, writes a letter to Dr. Reşid telling him that he would not implement this decision. "*I only see loyal fellows in the Christians of Derik, who act to the benefit of the state. I can not sentence them to death merely by your order. I can reconsider how I may act on the matter only if a written order from Istanbul is issued*", was his response.¹¹² Dr. Reşid called him to Diyarbakir to Show the written orders. However, the kaimakam never reached the city. He was ambushed on the way in a manner that would remind what befell Lice Kaimakam Hüseyin Nesimi. He was killed by Circassian gangs of Dr. Reşid.

After the killing of the kaimakam, Dr. Reşid sent a report to Istanbul, informing that the murder was done by Derik Armenians and that they needed to be punished. In mid-June he commissioned chief of Diyarbakir Military Crime Court, Tevfik, who organized the deportation in Viranşehir, to work in Derik. The destiny of Derik Armenians was drawn in ten days. Similarly to the other districts, first men were apprehended and killed in groups. Women and children were massacred just outside the city in vine yards known "*Rezike Korta*".

Even today in Derik it is told that some elderly refuse to eat the grapes coming from the vines just because they grew in a spot where massacres were committed.¹¹³ However, it is impossible to find the slightest trace from Kaimakam Reşid Bey in the district. Derik people who remember the events of 1915 in detail like yesterday and who hid and saved many an Armenians with the initiatives of prominent families, seem to have erased traces of Reşid Bey from their memories for some reason.

It is impossible to find a trace about Derik Kaimakam Reşid Bey neither in the Ottoman Archives nor in Mülkiye Book of Honor. This brings to mind the possibility that Rhétoré may have confused the story Hüseyin Nesimi and adapted it to Reşid Bey as well. The fact that Derik people have no memory of him further strengthens the possibility of confusion.

¹¹⁰ The interview made with Eyüp Güven on 27.11.2010 in Derik.

¹¹¹ Eyüp Güven, *Derik Tarihi*, 2008, p. 78-80 ve Ali Sarıkoyuncu, *Milli mücadelede din adamları*, Diyanet İşleri Başkanlığı, 1995, p. 220

¹¹² Jacques Rhétoré, *Les Chrétiens aux bêtes*, op. cit, p.46-47.

¹¹³ Interview with B.Y. and his family in Derik on 28.11.2010.

Midyat : “How could you break the promise we gave to Christians?”

“We always say this. Our Muslims are far better than the Muslims in the north of Tigris, they protected us”. Midyat Assyrian Church diacon Ayhan Gürkan cannot skip this sentence while talking about his grandparents¹¹⁴. The story of his family is at the same time the story of a side of 1915 that is not often mentioned; Seyfo’s story; the sentencing of Assyrians, Chaldeans and Nestorians in the region to the same fate with the Armenians. It is also the story of the “kirve”¹¹⁵ tradition rejecting this fate.

When news of deportation and massacre reached the region Ayhan Gürkan’s great grandfather Circo Midyat’s Muslim kirves living in Xalah (Narlı) village took refuge in **Mala Sino** (in Kurdish, Sino Family). They hid in their house for a while. Yet, those who helped the Assyrians were in danger as well. “Mala Sino said to my grandfather ‘They will kill us all if you stay here. If you wish, I can take you to Ayn Wardo’¹¹⁶. But there may be attackers on the way’. Upon this my grandfather became a Muslim”. Circo’s religious conversion was only for not to endanger the lives of his family and Mala Sino. He did not allow his spouse or his children to change their religion. In this way, he stayed at Mala Sino’s until the end of the deportation and then they returned to their village. But this time, there was the risk of seizure of their property by the state. However, this was not the only thing that scared Circo. One of his children was killed before taking refuge at Mala Sino’s place. With the fear of going through the same pain again, Circo continued to remain a Muslim until 1945, when he became ill and realized he was close to death. Then he called the villagers and said he wanted to be buried in the Assyrian graveyard. Their friendship with Mala Sino continued till his death.

The Heverki (or alias Haverkan) who were the most prominent clan confederation in the region – despite its internal conflicts and from time to time changing sides – were one of the forces who protected Midyat, Nusaybin and Idil Assyrians and Armenians¹¹⁷. This attitude of theirs was known to the government before 1915 as well. Notables from the Heverki, Çelebi Agha and Ali Batte had been put into prison before the deportation started. However Ali Batte escaped from prison a short time after and protected the Assyrians in his own domain¹¹⁸. Çelebi and Sarohan, who were leading the other branch of the confederation – despite the hesitations they displayed from time to time – joined the protectors.¹¹⁹

¹¹⁴ Interview with Ayhan Gürkan on 30.11.2010 in Midyat.

¹¹⁵ Like a “godfather” in the baptism ritual, one person close to the child’s family became “kirve” in the circumcision ritual among Muslims. “Kirve” of a Muslim child was often chosen among Christians in the Kurdish region at this period.

¹¹⁶ Midyat’s Ayn Wardo (Ayn Vert – Gülgöze) village in 1915, was considered to be relatively more safe because of the resistance they put up Against Assyrian population and the deportation.

¹¹⁷ For a detailed examination about The Heverkis: Nezire Cibo, *Haverkan Sultanları I*, Komal Basım Yayın, Istanbul 2010. The Assyrian population is greater than the Armenian population in the Turabdin region. Armenians took refuge in villages like Ayn Wardo where Assyrians were protected.

¹¹⁸ Assyrian researcher İskender Debbaso expresses that Ali Batte was in prison when the deportation started, that Batte’s mother Fasile made efforts to protect the Assyrians in their own domain. Other sources show 1917 as the date when Ali Batte escaped from prison. In our interview with Ali Batte’s grandson, who was named after his grandfather, he told us that his grandfather escaped from prison while the deportation was still going on.

¹¹⁹ The first of the sources concerning how Heverki leaders protected Assyrians and Armenians, is Melfono A. Mesih Karabaş’s diary which was found in Mardin Assyrian Deyrül Zarafan monastery in 1915. (Abed Na'man Qarabasch, *Vergossenes Blut: Geschichten der Greuel, die an den Christen in der Türkei verübt*, was the name with which it was published in 1999 in German). We have a Turkish translation of the diary that was published serially in the year 2000 in Kolo Suryoyo journal with the title “Christianity in the Massacres”. Kolo Suryoyo No 127, 128, 129, 2000, Glane, Netherland. We used this translation as reference in this study.

The second source is the diary that contains the information that the Assyrian Orthodox Priest Süleyman Hinno gathered from Assyrian migrants while he was in Assyria. As for this diary, we used its Turkish translation that was published in Kolo Suryoyo journal with the title “1915 Turabdin region” in 1993. For a detailed synthesis on the two sources *Massacres, resistance, protectors*, David Gaunt, Gorgias Press, 2006, New Jersey, p. 197-270.

Ali Batte : “The state never forgot our attitude”

The Heverki clan, that controlled Midyat and its vicinity, were known to have never got along with the Ottoman governments. The Heverki tribe was structured in a way to not recognize any other authority than their leader in the region. The tribe had also Assyrian and Yezidi members, and their role, in the contrary of other clans, was not limited to being a “subject”. When the leader of the Heverki, Haco II, was killed in 1870’s, the direction of the clan had been undertaken by an Assyrian, Şaboyê Mirêd.¹²⁰ Ali Batte would not ever part with his comrade in arms Assyrian leader Şemun and would make every decisions by consulting him¹²¹.

When World War I broke out, Ali Batte was among the names that gave administrative authorities in the region a hard time. He refused to comply with the mobilization order and he also banned people from paying a tax to the government. He also rejected to let the military confiscation in the lands under his domain. His actions were not devoid of a political vision. He was in contact with the Kurdish uprising in Bitlis and with Abdürezzak Bedirhan. However, his interest for the independence of the Kurds – at least at that stage – were not strong enough to make him forget power relations and conflicts between clans.¹²²

In 1914, according to Diyarbekir Governor Şefik Bey, Midyat had become “the center of activities Against the government”. In order to end this situation, he proposed to the Minister of Interior the murder of Heverki leaders and the exile of their families. Şefik Bey attains his goal, albeit partially, in September 1914: Ali Batte and other Heverki leaders were caught and put into prison.

In spring 1915, Ali Batte and his right hand Şemun were still in Kharpert prison. According to some sources, Heverki tribe tried to protect the Assyrians and Armenians in the region from deportation and massacres with the initiative of Batte’s mother **Fasile**¹²³. Some others sources precise that Batte directed in person the rescue operations with instructions that he sent from prison.

In June 1915, notable Armenian and Assyrian Protestants in Midyat were arrested and then killed. This event caused the Assyrians in the city to be seized with fear and to set up barricades in their districts to protect themselves. On 2 July 1915, Hacı Başar Bey brought together Midyat’s Kurdish and Arab clan chiefs and asked for their support in the assault he would launch on the Christians.

According to Ali Batte’s 82 year-old grandson, who is also named Ali Batte, his grandfather was already escaped from prison with Şemun at that time. When he learned about the meeting to be done in the city, he proposed to Şemun to assist to this meeting together. Şemun refused, he told him the aim was to make each clan massacre “their own Christians”. “*Alike Batte still went to the meeting*”, tells the grandson Batte. “*When they asked for his support to the massacre, “Whoever kills Christians will have to face me” he roared. Us, The Çelebis and Mala İsmail, namely all Heverkis, protected them. Afterwards we had a conflict among ourselves for the leadership, but we acted in unison at that time*”.¹²⁴

¹²⁰ Turabidin’den Baltık’a, Nezirê Cibo, Kovarabir, 3 Ağustos 2011.

¹²¹ Some sources allege that because of their Ezidi origins and the fact that they had been subjected to a lot of oppression, the Heverki established close bonds with the Assyrians. in *Social Relations in Ottoman Diyarbekir*, Jongerden, Verheij, p. 248, Brill, 2012, Leiden.

¹²² According to Cegerxwin, Dekşuri leader İzedin Ali offers Batte to unite their forces and to establish their own state by taking help from the English. This agreement is not realized because Ali Batte demands a guarantee that he will be the leader of this state. *Hayat Hikayem*, Cegerxwin, p.38-40, Evrensel Basım Yayın, 2003, İstanbul.

¹²³ Interview with İskender Debbaso, November 2013, Midyat.

¹²⁴ Interview with Ali Batte’s grandson Ali Batte, November 2013, Nusaybin.

Is it possible that Ali Batte was able to prevent the massacres in person after escaping from prison, just like his grandson narrates? According to the Ottoman archives, Ali Batte would be in prison at least until April 1915. According to the Assyrian researcher Iskender Debbaso, Ali Batte did not get out of prison at that date, and his supporters, his mother and the people of Mzizex, the center town of the clan, took active roles in protecting the Christians.¹²⁵ On 19 July 1915, Ömeryan clan and security forces attack Midyat's Christian districts. A massacre took place, and a resistance group retreated to the Ayn Wardo village. The Heverki helped the rest of the inhabitants to reach Ayn Wardo without being attacked. They hid also a little group in their own villages.¹²⁶ Ayn Wardo would become in 1915 a defense base and a refuge for Assyrians and Armenians.

The news of the massacres reached Kharpert prison as well. Ali Batte bribed the officials everyday so that they would not kill his comrade Şemun. Arrested Assyrian and Armenian notables were brought to Kharpert prison. Aşir Yusuf, a newspaper owner of Kharpert, was among them. *“One day the money will run bout too, then they will take you and me away”*, he said to Şemun. Yusuf is executed, Ali Batte and Şemun had no more strength to intervene. They could not save him, but they managed to run away from the prison. Other Heverki leaders, Çelebi and Haco, couldn't escape. In **Çelebi's** absence, his wife **Nazeli** organized the rescuing of Assyrians and Armenians. She commissioned tribesmen to take them to Rayite Tor Izlo (the region in the south of Midyat), which was considered as a safer place. Another leader of the clan **Sarohan**, protected the inhabitants of Rayite.¹²⁷ In 1917, when Assyrians in Basiribin village were attacked, Ali Batte took them to his town in order to protect them.¹²⁸

After the war, Ali Batte would announce that he did not recognize the state authority by a bigger resistance. On 11 May 1919, he attacked Nusaybin city with his forces. *“The Aghas (Seigneurs) were taking money from everyone, unrightfully. Ali Batte punished them all, “People of Nusaybin, that money is yours, he said”* tells us grandson of Ali Batte. *“A woman came, ‘The state imprisoned my son for the last four years, what kind of agha are you?’ she complained. Ali Batte upon this headed straight to the prison. He did not know Turkish, he did not even have an identity card, that's why we do not have a photograph of him. Şemun was his translator. “Let us talk to the prosecutor to have the boy released, do not do it this way”, he said, but could not convince. Ali Batte released the prisoners. Then he took the prosecutor and the kaimakam as hostages and fled to the mountains.”* At the end of a chase that lasted months, Ali Batte's location was found on 18 August 1919. He was killed in a clash with security forces and tribesmen supporting the government.

After Ali Batte was killed, his family escaped to Syria. They stayed there until the Democrat Party issued an amnesty in 1950. Then they settled down in Nusaybin, in Turkey. *“After the death of Ali Batte, the Christians were unprotected, their heads were bent. They were obligated to quit the country”* says grandson Batte. *“After we left, the security forces destroyed everything in our village, Mzizex. They burnt our houses for three days and three nights, the smoke could be seen from Syria. The state never forgot the attitude of the Heverki in those days. The prisoners in this region are still asked: Are you a member of*

¹²⁵ The Mala Sino family, that protected the aforementioned Circo, was related to Ali Batte as well. Interview with N. B., 2013, Midyat.

¹²⁶ *Massacres, resistance, protectors*, David Gaunt, op.cit, pp.186, 192-195.

¹²⁷ Interview with İskender Debbaso, op.cit. But later the Çelebi and Sarohan would gain proximity with the Dekşuri and the government. Çelebi, Sarohan and his son Serhan Agha made attacks to Assyrian villages between 1907-1910 as well, seizing land and property. Therefore it is difficult to consider the chiefs of this branch of the clan among those who were “conscientious”. *Tanzimat'tan sonra Tur Abdin'de Aşiretler ve Hristiyanlar*, Suavi Aydın, Mardin Tebliğleri, p. 148-153, Hrnt Dink Vakfı yayınları, Ekim 2013, İstanbul.

¹²⁸ Basiribin is the village of Şemun's brother. Yves Ternon recounts from Armalto, Mardin 1915, p.355, Belge yay. 2013.

Heverki tribe, we will treat you according to that, they say. Because we are still in the same position as at that time: Against the government”.

Other Righteous figures in Midyat

The grandparents of Yuhanna Aktaş, founder of Midyat Assyrian Culture Association, was saved by **Zahrani Haco**¹²⁹. He was a local seigneur who was controlling the region including Baksıyan village. When the deportations and massacres started in 1915, Haco took Baksıyan and Der Kube villagers and assured them to reach the Hah village, which was considered to be more secure. The Baksıyan people stayed in Hah during the war and could return to their village with the help of Heverki Çelebi Agha.¹³⁰ Zahrani Haco's grandson Süleyman Doğan expressed that his family is always considered as suspect by the government because they protected the Assyrians in 1915. In the 90's, the names of family members were in a list of people to be killed, established by paramilitary forces.¹³¹

Midyat's Hebsinas village staged a collective resistance. In this village, where Assyrians and Arabic-speaking Muslim Mihellemis were living, the inhabitants decided to resist together.¹³² When Raman clan members surrounded their village, they fought together. Even though they manage to repel the attack, Hebsinas was not safe anymore. In the leadership of, **Hammetko, Hacı Hasan, Hacı Halil and Ali Keleş**, notables of the village, they hid the Assyrians in caves and wells in the vicinity, they carried food to them at night. In later days, they took their Assyrian neighbors to Ayn Wardo and Enhel, which they deemed to be more secure places. After the war, Hebsinas villagers returned to their houses. The solidarity between the villagers went on for many years, they acted together in disagreements with neighboring villages. However, the insecure atmosphere of the 90s forced Hebsinas Assyrians to migrate to Istanbul and Europe. Today, in the village where a single Assyrian family lives, Hammetko's stories are still narrated.

Sheikh Fethullah is one of the most pronounced names by Muslims and Assyrians in Midyat when the 1915 genocide is evoked. The way he stopped the clashes in Ayn Wardo village, which resisted Against deportations and gang attacks, has been told from generation to generation until our present day. Security forces surrounded Ayn Wardo in 1915 for sixty days, but they could not defeat the resisters. As a religious leader who was relied by both parties, Sheikh Fethullah is appealed. When he entered Ayn Wardo, he realized the massacre tried to be committing there and he reprimanded the clan chiefs that surrounded the village : *“How could you betrayed the promise that Mahomet gave to the Christians? You have destroyed the trust we constructed in many years”*.¹³³ He took a promise that no other attacks would be made to the village and he made a truce. He also stopped the massacre of Assyrian children in Gercüş. *“If you do not stop this massacre, I will not enter this village. This place is a sin”*, he declared. When Sheikh Fethullah passed away in 1947, Assyrians joined his funeral in great numbers.

¹²⁹ Savior Haco, who is seen in many sources, is not III. Haco who was one of the Heverki leaders. The person in question is Zahrani Haco. He was known as Mala İsmail whose family was from the Heverki.

¹³⁰ Interview with Yuhanna Aktaş on 30.11.2010 in Midyat. Süleyman Hinno, *“1915 Turabdin bölgesi”*, Kolo Suryoyo dergisi, 1993, Glane, Netherland. Massacres, David Gaunt, op. cit. p. 218.

¹³¹ Interview with Süleyman Doğan, November 2013, Nusaybin.

¹³² Interview with Hammetko's older grandson Mehmet Ali Aslan on 30.11.2010 in Midyat.

¹³³ Interview with Mehmet Ali Aslan and Şeyh Fethullah's older grandson Şeyh Abdülkadir on 01.12.2010 in Midyat. Süleyman Hinno, *“1915 Turabdin bölgesi”*, op. cit.

We see that in general in many districts of the city notable people objected to the massacres, even though they had a limited influence. Mala Aghaya Sor in Şırnak, Reşkotan chief Heci Mihemedi Misti in Beşiri, Mele Hesene Tawiki in Derik, Mele Abdullah in Silvan are among other conscientious people in the city.

Vehbi Efendi from Savur: “Being unfair to Christians is a sin”

In many sources about the region of Mardin in 1915, the name of Vahabi Efendi is mentioned as a man who saved almost two hundred people, most of whom were children¹³⁴. The person in question is Vehbi Efendi, the former Diyarbakır and İstanbul Post and Telegraph Director. Vehbi Efendi hid tens of people in the mansion in Savur and in the caves nearby. We were able to reach his 94 year old grandchild Nusret Özbek in Ankara. Vehbi Efendi was Nusret Bey’s father’s uncle, at the same time his wife’s grandfather too. He had the chance to hear about Vehbi Efendi from his father, father in law and from the Assyrians living in the region and to meet the people that he had protected. Despite his advanced age, he kindly dedicated some time for us and talked about Vehbi Efendi.

There were few Armenians living in Savur in 1915, a population of 1000 had gathered in the city center.¹³⁵ Like in the other settlements in the vicinity, the Assyrian population was more dense. Qelet (Dereiçi) is an important Assyrian settlement that still continues to exist in our present time. Vehbi Efendi had long retired from Post and Telegraph Ministry. He had studied political sciences in Paris, he had been II. Abdülhamid’s chamberlain. After his retirement, he returned to Savur.

Deportations and massacres in Savur started in June 1915. Qelet was very close to Vehbi Efendi’s mansion, he was quickly aware of the deportation of the villagers. He immediately went to the village and took 87 men and 8 women out of the deportation convoys.¹³⁶ 95 Assyrians saved from the deportation stayed in the spacious mansion, which the family defined as “*like a castle*”, until the dust settled. New ones would be added to this number and tens of other deported Armenians and Assyrians would take refuge in Vehbi Efendi’s mansion.

Ras El Harf, the location of the mansion, was on the deportation route of Sassoon and Siirt. Dominican nuns and seminar students in Siirt were added to the convoy. When they were halfway through to Mardin, gangs attacked the convoy, stoning women and children and taking their clothes. Vehbi Efendi saved about twenty injured women. He took them home, took care of them for months. In Dominican priest Jacques Rhétoré’s words “*He treated them in a very honorable way and never proposed them to become Muslims*”. After the deportation ended, he entrusted them to Christian families and to Dominican men religious men where he thought they would be safe.¹³⁷

¹³⁴ Racho Donef, provides his position mistakenly as “kaimakam” by relying on the witness account of someone saved by Vehbi Efendi. This expression was repeated in other sources as well. The mistake is likely to have been caused by the fact that Vehbi Efendi’s son Abdüllatif Bey was a mayor. *Righteous Muslims during the Genocide of 1915*, Racho Donef, 2010, Sydney.

¹³⁵ *Le génocide des Arméniens*, Raymond Kévorkian, op.cit. p.460-461

¹³⁶ Interview with Vehbi Efendi’s grandson Nusret Özbek, family members Atilla, Şükran and Taci Özbek, August 2014, Ankara. According to Nusret Bey, Vehbi Efendi reacted harshly to the kaimakam saying “*What are you doing?*” and then was unable to control his anger and beat him with his cane.

¹³⁷ Sister Issa Warina, who was deported with Siirt convoy and was saved by Vehbi Efendi, told his story to Dominican priests Marie Dominique Berré, Jacques Rhétoré and Hyacinthe Simon after she reached Mardin. All three would highlight different aspects of this account in their memoirs. Berré refers to Vehbi Efendi without giving his name, saying “*The Kurdish chief of a town closeby*”, Rhétoré refers to him as “*An Efendi from Sor (Savur)*”. Warina would mention later in 1930 in her own witness account, that this person was Vehbi Efendi. *Les Chrétiens aux bêtes*, Jacques Rhétoré, p. 183, Cerf, 2005, Paris. *Mardine, la ville héroïque*, Hyacinthe Simon, p. 170-171, Namaan, 1991, Jounieh. *Massacres de Mardin*, Marie-Dominique Berré,

Vehbi Efendi's mansion became also a refuge for Sassoon Armenians who were escaping from deportation. His name became known among Sassoon Armenians as a "savior". In 1916-1917, when a relative of Vehbi Efendi was trying to escape from the region that fell into the Russians' control, he could return to his village with the help of an Armenian working in the Russian army.

Vehbi Efendi found and brought to his own house Assyrian children that survived after their family members died. He took under his protection 75 orphan children¹³⁸. He made it possible for Assyrian and Armenian women, who were kidnapped and detained, to return to their families. *"They kidnapped S.T.'s mother to Savur, even though she was married. She found her husband after the genocide. Her husband's friend asked Vehbi Efendi to help him. Vehbi Efendi found the woman, verified that she wanted to return to her husband and sent two of his men in order to make sure she got back home"* says Iskender Debbaso, researcher on Midyat Assyrians' history.

In the mansion of Vehbi Efendi, the meals were, at this time, cooked in large boilers which could take as much as 2-3 tin canisters of wheat and nine tandoors of bread were made by day, in order to assure sufficient food for more than a hundred people. The tandoors were also used for hiding children during the raids. The children were hidden in cold tandoors or wheat depots. But Vehbi Efendi's protection of Christians and his announcing of that he will assure them to return to their houses was bothering the people who seized the Christians' property. They denounced Vehbi Efendi to the authorities. Therefore, he was obligated to hid Assyrians and Armenians in caves and wells for some time.

Because of his righteous attitude, Assyrians gave Vehbi Efendi the title "*Ebuna*", that means "Our father" in Assyrian language, and which is a form of address used for priests. After Vehbi Efendi's passing away in 1924, the Assyrians in the region showed the same respect to his children and grandchildren. While Nusret Bey was working in Midyat-Idil road construction in 1976, he passed through a village in Idil. An old Assyrian approached him, asked him where and from which family he was. When he learnt that he was Vehbi Efendi's grandchild "*There is a divine smell around you*" he said and embraced his hands.

As we see in the stories of many Righteous people, their attitude in 1915 became a determining factor in the treatment reserved for them at Republican period. The same rule was valid for Vehbi Efendi's family. After Sheikh Said rebellion in 1925, Vehbi Efendi's family members were exiled to Manisa by the pretext that they were among notable people in Savur. They stayed in exile for 8 years. In the meantime, the property of the family was sold for a song.

What remains from Vehbi Efendi to our present time, is the memory of a man, who advised his children not to be mean to Christians since he thought it was a sin, who loved reading the Koran as much as he was known to read the Bible and who did not tolerate the slightest maltreatment of animals. *"He had a brown Arabic horse"* remembers Nusret Bey. *"He would never whip the horse. 'I cannot lay hands on this, if I whip it will be disturbed and it will be a sin. Let it take me the way it wants to walk', he would say. The horse would go by itself on its own. It would carry him from home to Savur, and from Savur to home"*.

Haigazian Armenological Review, vol. 17, p. 81-106, 1997, Beyrouth. *Les Catherinettes de Mésopotamie*, Missions Dominicaines, p. 19, 1930, Paris. Contrary to what Berré thought Vehbi Efendi came from an Arab family.

¹³⁸ Interview with Iskender Debbaso, op.cit.

IV. Kastamonu Province

A Contradictory Portrait: Kastamonu Governor Reşid Pasha

In 1915, Kastamonu was mostly made up of Muslims, 13 thousand Armenians lived in scattered and isolated settlements¹³⁹. Moreover, the region was far from battle areas. In this province, all the pretexts used by the Party of Union and Progress to convince the population to the necessity of deportation were invalid. Nevertheless, the province would stage the savage killings of majority of Armenians transferred from Istanbul to Çankırı and to the deportation of the local population. Some highest civil and military officials, religious leaders and notables in the city would try to prevent the atrocities, but they would not succeed.

Governor Reşid Pasha became the person whose name was uttered most, concerning the resistance to genocide in the region, with the testimony he gave in the trials of the Party of Union and Progress. The testimonies of the Armenians that survived the genocide,— especially the memories of Krikor Balakyan who was among the exiles to Çankırı – confirm that Reşid Pasha objected to put the deportation into practice and was therefore discharged from duty in a short time. However, the way he expressed this period in his memoirs and his career afterwards bring to mind question marks about to what extent he portrayed an oppositional attitude.

According to his testimony read in Responsible Secretaries of the Union and the Progress trial in 1919, Reşid Pasha received an official message ordering the deportation of Kastamonu by Bahaeddin Şakir. Because he refused to obey this order, he was called “*The governor of not the Turks’ but of the Armenians*”, and a short time later he was discharged from duty.¹⁴⁰ He was replaced by Atıf, who was responsible of massacres of Ankara Armenians. Armenian intellectuals who were in exile in Çankırı, upon heard this news and they get anxious. Diran Kelekyan, who for many years had given Political History lessons in Ottoman Administration School, and who was a writer and reporter at the same time, told Priest Krikor Balakyan that this appointment would bring about their demise. “*Atıf has been appointed as Kastamonu Governor... In a few days he will commence duty. Our days are limited. (...) We should already prepare ourselves to die*” were his words¹⁴¹.

As soon as Atıf commenced his duty, it was confirmed that Diran Kelekyan was justified in his concerns. He sent Kelekyan in the company of two gendarmes “to be tried in Diyarbakır Military Court”. However, two weeks after they set off, Kelekyan was killed on Kızılırmak Bridge near Sivas.¹⁴² Balakyan believed that Reşid Pasha was “*personally Against this kind of cruel acts*” of the Unionists. However, while he himself was still on duty the dramatic ends of two convoys— only 7 people would survive from 82 people – showed that he could not influence the Responsible Secretary and could not prevent deportations and massacres.

According to Balakyan, Reşid Pasha clearly expressed that “*The Armenians were the pillar of the Ottomans, without them the country would be driven to poverty. The will of the Party of Union and Progress to destroy the Armenians was a narrow-minded policy going Against the interests of the*

¹³⁹ *Le génocide des Arméniens*, Raymond Kévorkian, op.cit. p. 661

¹⁴⁰ *Tehcir ve Taktik, Divan-ı Harbi Örfi Zabıtları*, Vahakn N. Dadrian, Taner Akçam, op.cit. p. 153-154.

¹⁴¹ *Ermenilerin Golgothası*, Krikor Balakyan, p. 158-159, Belge Yayınları, 2014, İstanbul.

¹⁴² Diran Kelekyan’s biography is included in the Mülkiye Book of Honor, which contains graduates and teachers altogether. Concerning his death, the note that “he passed away on 1 September 1918” was put down. Mülkiye, where Kelekyan served for many years – Muammer who was governor of Sivas at the time of his death, was among his students – unfortunately was not able to record his death correctly.

homeland”¹⁴³. We see that Reşid Pasha expressed similar thoughts – in not so direct a manner, in fact rather implicitly – in his memoirs. But in his memoirs, he does not make any references to the fate of Armenians in Kastamonu. He does not mention also the details he gave in his own testimonies in the trials of the Unionists. He merely utters the following sentences:

“I do not wish to bring to mind what we have done in The World War and what was done to us inside and outside. (...) The Turks bore all the weight of these four years on their shoulders. With the dream of reviving a country that was bound to collapse, they mobilized their possessions and life - with unbelievable insistence and a unique generosity. They fought in ten battlefronts, half hungry and half naked. They were betrayed, ambushed and trapped by nations with whom they lived as brothers for six hundred years. (...) I was governor of Kastamonu while the first acts of this bloody disaster, which is full of scenes that will change the course of history, was being put on stage. There I saw with my own eyes how a nation was melting, how social balance was disrupted gradually, I was falling ill from my sorrow and was trying my best to protect, as much as was possible, the city Against disastrous financial impasses. (...) Since the Sublime Porte was full of people devoid of individuals with statesmanship skills, till the last day they did not even feel such a need, let alone see the opportunity. Nevertheless, the same Sublime Porte did not refrain from detaining worthy and clean people from office. Despite my constructive services in the transformation to Constitutional Monarchy, they dismissed me from service as well – by attributing disobedience to my actions.

Nevertheless, the Party of Union and Progress was still different. The government did not refrain from easily sacrificing civil servants that were members of the party. But the party did not fail to conciliate its brothers that were oppressed in this way. Yet, the deceased Minister of the Interior, Talat Pasha discharged me from duty, but he did not neglect to offer conciliation with his title as party member. He made me deputy to Ergani district, and made sure I was chosen a member of the board of one of the newly-established banks.”¹⁴⁴

As the rest of his memoirs, these words are full of praises to the Party of Union and Congress. Reşid Pasha was already a member of the party since the time of the Constitutional Monarchy. The party had also designed him as deputy of Ergani. In short, he is one of “*the brothers*” of the party. The “*bloody disaster*” that he mentioned (if the previous sentences are kept in mind) are not the Armenian genocide, but the 1st World War. When he said, “*There I saw with my own eyes how a nation was melting, how social balance was disrupted gradually, I was falling ill from my sorrow and was trying my best to protect, as much as was possible, the city Against disastrous financial impasses*”, he seems to be referring to the possible financial and social effects of the deportations and massacres. However, even if our assumption is correct, it certain that he did this in a very covert way. The only expression he uses concerning his dismissal from governorship is “*attributing disobedience*”. It is possible that he meant his opposition to orders of deportation, but even if this is the case, because of the intense praise that the rest of the text contained concerning the Party of Union and Progress and talking about the deportation as “*the treatment that was carried out with a military necessity during the years of war*”¹⁴⁵ makes the reader question to what exactly Reşid Pasha is displaying “disobedience”.

¹⁴³ *Ermenilerin Golgothası*, Krikor Balakyan, op.cit. p.154-155

¹⁴⁴ *Reşit Pasha'nin hatıraları*, Reşid Pasha, [Rdt edvC.] Yularkıran , p. 5-7, Tan, 1939, Istanbul.

¹⁴⁵ *Ibidem*, p. 39

One possibility is that Reşid Pasha may have seen deportation as a “*necessity*”, but he was Against the killings. Another possibility is that, just like governor Hamid Bey, he appropriated his memoirs to the “official line”. Because quotations taken from the verdict of Responsible Secretaries trial are completely contrary to his memoirs: “*It has been established that, Governor Reşid Pasha, who insistently opposed the deportation on the basis that Kastamonu Armenians were rather few in terms of their proportion to the general population and the fact that they did not engage murderous acts as befitting the deportation law and saying “I will not get my hands in blood”, was in fact dismissed from service with number of attempts by Kastamonu Responsible Secretary Hasan Fehmi.*” Moreover, according to the testimonies evoked in the verdict, Reşid Pasha wanted Hasan Fehmi to be discharged from office accusing him of provoking the people Against Armenians and showing disobedience to government affairs.¹⁴⁶

At this stage, the information we have concerning Reşid Pasha is full of contradictions. However, we will talk about other Righteous persons, about whom we have been able to reach clearer information, in the Kastamonu province.

Kastamonu Gendarmerie Commander İzzet Bey : “You will be held responsible for your actions in the future”

There was one person who was a beacon of hope, albeit for a short time, for Krikor Balakyan and other intellectuals during their days of exile in Çankırı: Kastamonu Gendarme Commander İzzet Bey who was serving as Çankırı deputy sub-governor.¹⁴⁷ The deputy sub-governor, whom they described as “*A sensitive and kind Circassian*” showed sympathy to the Armenian exiles. The exiled intellectuals were finally allowed to go everywhere except Istanbul. However, since they did not know which place was reliable, they wanted to ask İzzet Bey, whose friendship they trusted. Balakyan’s intention was to go to Armash Monastery and to stay there till the end of the war. İzzet Bey advised Balakyan and Kelekyan not to leave Çankırı. In August 1915, it would be dangerous for them to be somewhere where İzzet Bey could not interfere. Every kind of journey would make things easier for gangs that were seeking an opportunity to attack Armenians. Balakyan and 18 friends of his heeded İzzet Bey’s advice, but a group of 11 people among whom were Dr. Sevag Çilingiryan and poet Taniel Varujan decided to leave Çankırı at all costs. Balakyan could not dissuade them from their decision despite all his efforts. Six hours after they set off, Halo’s gang set up a trap for the convoy upon the order of the Club of Union and Progress and they killed all of them savagely. The police and gendarme accompanying the convoy connived at the killings. The cartwright told Balakyan about the events with teary eyes. The young cartwright was greatly affected by what he had seen. “*The end of these killings is hell. That is not the way to earn one’s living. Tomorrow, I will sell my horses and leave this city*” he said.

İzzet Bey, who saved Balakyan and others by warning them, went to the crime scene in order to investigate the events and caught the gang members. The assailant confessed to having acted upon the orders of the Club of Union and Progress.

After At if’s appointment to Kastamonu Governorship, it became more difficult for İzzet Bey to protect the Armenians within the city. 150 families in Taşköprü whose occupation was rope-making were deported to Der Zor. In Balakyan’s words, İzzet Bey who “*openly opposed the deportation*” learned about the incident after the convoys had set off, and was mad because the gendarme at his command were

¹⁴⁶ *Tehcir ve Taktik, Divan-ı Harbi Örfi Zabıtları*, Vahakn N. Dadrian, Taner Akçam, op.cit. p. 658.

¹⁴⁷ Even though The Ottoman Archives of the Prime Ministry confirm that İzzet Bey was the Kastamonu Gendarme Commander whom Balakian talked mentioned in August 1915, they do not contain any information as to whether he was holding the office of Çankırı Deputy Governorship.

used in this operation without informing him. In the meantime, the convoy composed by 850 people, in which there were women and children as well, had advanced for about approximately four hours. İzzet Bey made the convoy return. He also made sure that a group of 400 people, who were sent to Der Zor via Ankara, returned to their homes.¹⁴⁸ With these interventions, İzzet Bey attracted the anger of the Unionists on himself. Kastamonu Responsible Secretary Hasan Fehmi carried out a campaign to discredit İzzet Bey. He told everywhere “*History and future will curse İzzet Bey for preventing the deportation of the Armenians*”.¹⁴⁹ As for governor Atıf, he had begun looking for ways to send İzzet Bey away from the city.¹⁵⁰ After some time, he succeeds to appoint İzzet Bey as Mamuretülaziz Gendarme Chief Region Inspector.¹⁵¹

Atıf thought it was rid of İzzet Bey by sending him to Mamuretülaziz. But he was unaware that he would in fact make a move that would immortalize İzzet Bey. It was certain that someone like İzzet Bey, who could not tolerate what happened in a city where the deportation affected a small number of people, would of course not remain silent in the face of large scale massacres that were happening in Mamuretülaziz. He does not withhold from saying everywhere that “*those officers who deported the Armenians were base and vile and they would be held strictly responsible for their acts by their superiors in the future*”. It is understood from Governor Sabit’s own telegraph, in which he demanded that İzzet Bey be dismissed, that İzzet Bey’s words created a considerable amount of uproar in the city. This telegraph, which must have been forgotten among a mass of correspondence that were cleaned from the archives, is rather valuable: this is the unique document of an opposition to genocide and being discharged from duty as a price for this attitude.¹⁵²

DH.ŞFR. 535/58 TELGRAPH ORIGIN: Elaziz Date: 5/8/332

To The Internal Affairs Ministry

Coded

Gendarme Region Inspector İzzet Bey does not possess a sense of duty and homeland. He says that he was dismissed, like the Governor Reşid Pasha, because of his opposition to the dispatch of Armenians while he was in Kastamonu Regiment Commandership. He says also, as if he was the advocate of Armenians, those officers who deported the Armenians were base and vile and they would be held strictly responsible for their acts by their superiors in the future. I propose that this personage, who seeks to satisfy his own resentment Against the government, be retired on the basis of his oppositional attitude and disobedience Against a policy executed compulsorily, for the salvation of the fatherland, by the government.

5 October 1332 (18 October 1916 in Gregorian calendar).

¹⁴⁸ *Ermenilerin Golgothası*, Krikor Balakyan, op.cit. p.164.

Pharmacist Krikor Efendi who gave testimony in the seventh session of the Responsible Secretaries trial, expresses that all of the one hundred families in Çankırı were deported, of the 180 people that were deported from Istanbul only thirty had survived. He recounts that İzzet Bey was very sad because of the actions of Special Organization gangs led by Cemal Oğuz and that he had cried near the Armenians that came to visit him because of his grief. In the trial of Cemal Oğuz and Nurettin Bey held in 1920, deportation survivor Mihail Ohannes explains that İzzet Bey investigated the killings of five Armenians that were sent to Ayaş. in *Tehcir ve Taktıl*, op.cit. p.154.

¹⁴⁹ Major Mustafa Şeref Bey’s testimony which was referred to in the verdict of the Katib-i Mesuller trial. in *Tehcir ve Taktıl*, op.cit. p. 659. We learn from the references in the verdict, handed down on 8 January 1920’de, that at this date İzzet Bey had already passed away. According to Mustafa Şeref Bey, İzzet Bey and Governor Atıf had fallen out with each other because he thought the deportation would not have good results.

¹⁵⁰ BOA. DH.ŞFR 506/ 47, 09/Ks/1331.

¹⁵¹ BOA. DH.EUM.6.Şb, 6/1, 02/R /1334. In Balakyan’s memories it erroneously writes that Atıf appointed İzzet Bey to Diyarbakır. *Ermenilerin Golgothası*, op.cit. p.165

¹⁵² Celal Bey primarily, it is not possible to find traces of correspondences of the officials who claim to have sent telegraphs opposing the deportation to the Ministry of Interior.

In accordance with the request of the governor, İzzet Bey was made to retire on 3 September 1917.¹⁵⁴ After this date, we lose the trace of İzzet Bey. It is very likely that he deceased before the trial of Unionists, according to the testimony that Mustafa Şeref Bey gave in the Responsible Secretaries trial. Born in 1854 in Aleppo, İzzet Bey's family must have been from the Circassian people whose settlement into the Syria began at the time and whose young generation would later be employed in the Gendarme regiment. We could not reach any trace of his family other than the fact that he had a son named Mehmed Cemil Efendi¹⁵⁵. Yet, it can be affirmed that exactly the opposite of Hasan Fehmi's allegation came about, and that "history and future remembers İzzet Bey with kind sentiments".

Kastamonu Muslims: "Not a such thing in our region"

The main trial of the Party of Union and Progress emphasizes that some Kastamonu Muslims and notables stood up Against the deportations and massacres as well. "The mufti of the state and a crowd of people composed by sheikhs and notables" express the following words to Governor Reşid Pasha: "*Apparently they have been slaughtering Armenians with their children by taking them to hillsides. We do not want such a thing in our country. We shun the wrath of Allah. A blasphemous state may endure, but a tyrannical one may not. We kindly request that such treatment not be conducted in our city.*" "Upon announcement to them by the governor that such a state will not be allowed by any means, "*it is told that members of the commission shed tears of joy*".¹⁵⁶

According to the indictment, this event was confirmed by written statements. Judging from the testimony that was given by one of the persons who relayed this speech to the court, it is probable that it was Reşid Pasha. Since the indictment mentioned "statements", we may assume that more than one person –perhaps the aforementioned mufti, sheikhs and notables – gave testimony on this matter. Nevertheless once again, in trying to attain exact information in this regard, we stumble upon the obstacle that Istanbul trials investigation files are not open to access in the archives. For the very same reason, we can make assumptions on the identity of the sheikhs and notables mentioned in the accusation, but cannot reach precise information.

Hafız Osman Nuri who was **Kastamonu mufti** at the time is the only person whose identity we can determine without doubt. We did interviews in Kastamonu in order to find a trace of Hafız Osman Nuri, whose father was a mufti too. However, we observed that his oppositional attitude to the deportation had been erased from the collective memory of the city. The only memory that remained on Hafız Osman Nuri was the conversation he had with Mustafa Kemal during The Hat Act¹⁵⁷. We were able to reach his photograph in Kastamonu Mufti Office, but it was not possible to find traces of his family.

Are Hacı Tevfik of Kastamonu, Cevdet and Salim Efendi, Old Administrative Council Chief Clerk Besim, Hodja Mehmed Efendi, Trader Ahmed and attorney İzzet, who gave testimonies Against Unionists in the trials in 1919, among those who said "*We do not want such a thing in our country*"? We know that Hacı Tevfik and Müftü Hafız Osman Nuri's father Hafız Mehmed Emin and Hodja Mehmed Efendi were opposed to the Party of Union and Progress and that they established a foundation objecting

¹⁵³ BOA. DH.ŞFR 535/58, 05/Tş/1332. Transcription : Ömer Türkoğlu.

¹⁵⁴ BOA. İ.DUİT. 166/7, 16/Za/1335.

¹⁵⁵ BOA. DH.SAİDd, 116/203, 29/Z /1291

¹⁵⁶ *Tehcir ve Taktik*, op.cit. p.237-238

¹⁵⁷ Interviews in Atabey Mosque, where Hafız Osman Nuri served, and Kastamonu Mufti Office, April 2011.

to the fact that a portion of Kastamonu religious leaders supported the Unionists.¹⁵⁸ However, we do not have any more certain information about their attitude in 1915. We are obliged to consider that the Kastamonu Muslims who opposed the deportation and massacres were anonymous, except for Hafiz Osman Nuri.

V. Sivas Province

One of the most radical oppositions to deportations and massacres in 1915 were seen in Sivas Province. Similarly to Dersim district, the Righteous in Sivas Province would not only suffice with providing a refuge and food to the Armenians, but they would sometimes dare to face state forces in order to continue to save them.

Emir Pasha : “I might at least help the resistants”

The villagers in Akdağmadeni district heard that the Armenian towns near Yozgat Terzili were burnt down. Some Armenian young people from Akdağmağdeni took refuge in the hills of Mount Akdağ to avoid the same fate. Their numbers increased as days passed: those who escape from deportations and massacres in the villages around, those who fled labor regiments, whose conditions were close to the concentration camps, or those who decided to organize a resistance took refuge in Mount Akdağ. They formed a crowded group in which there were women and children as well. State forces were after them, they considered that they must bore arms in order to be able to protect their refuge. In this struggle, their greatest supporter would be Circassian Emir Pasha from Sivas.

Emir Pasha was born in Abkhazia. He was 3-4 years old during the Circassian exile. He lost his mother and father and took refuge in Ali Agha’s house in Sivas, far away from where he was born. One of the wealthiest persons in Sivas, Ali Agha raised Emir Pasha like his son, sent him to the Faculty of Law in Istanbul.¹⁵⁹ Returning to Sivas, Emir Pasha served as population registrar for some time. He was elected as Sivas Province Administration Council Member. During these offices, we see that he was first given the title of “rütbe-i salise” (Ottoman grade for officials) and then the title “Pasha”¹⁶⁰.

Emir Pasha was about 50 years old in 1915. The deportation of Armenians reminded him the Circassian exile during which he lost his family. He thought that the Ottomans deemed what the Russians had done

¹⁵⁸ Belleten, 70. cilt, 258. Sayı, p. 638, Türk Tarih Kurumu, 2006, Ankara.

¹⁵⁹ Concerning Emir Pasha’s life, Armenian sources, TBMM annals, information received from his family and the Ottoman Archive records show differences. Nazar Kapikian and Gulbenk Kalustian recounts how Emir Paşa supported their resistance, and that he was exiled when still a child, he had come to Sivas having lost all his family and everything else, and that Ali Agha had taken him under his wing. *La résistance héroïque d’Akdagh*, Nazar Kapikian, Gulbenk Kaloustian, Marseille, 1932 (Armenian print).

TBMM album states that Housing Executive Mehmet Ali Bey had adopted him. According to The Ottoman Archives of the Prime Ministry Emir Paşa is Ali Mahir Bey’s son. Since his birth record was not in the archive, it is possible that Ali Mahir Bey adopted him. On 20 May 1861 “the rank and badge” mentioned with respect to the deceased İbrahim Bey, who was one of the chiefs of Circassian immigrants and who received the rank of Kolagası (Ottoman army officer above a captain and below a major) and Mecidiye badge, were presented to his son Ali Mahir Bey. Then in 1895 we see that Emir Paşa was accused of “brigandage” for a period of time and was exiled to Harput. BOA. A.)MKT.MHM. 219/86, 10/Za/1277, BOA. BEO. 499/37380, 20/R/1312.

¹⁶⁰ According to Selçuk Duman, “it was easy within the regiment system for Emir Pasha, who established a close bond with Sadettin Paşa, to take the title of pasha”. *1. Dönem Sivas Milletvekilleri ve siyasi hayattaki yerleri*, Cumhuriyet Dönemi Sivas Semp. 2008. Kapikian and Kaloustian state that this title was given to him because of his help to the army during wartime. *La résistance héroïque*, op.cit. p.68. We see that he is mentioned with the title Pasha in the Ottoman Archives from 1909 onwards. BOA. BEO. 3545/265818, 19/R/1327.

to the Circassian people, to be proper for the Armenians¹⁶¹. He revolted against this injustice and decided to take action. He showed the Armenians working in the Kızılırmak Valley as employees in his farm in order to save them. He hid 150 young people in his large farm in Gemerek. When he heard of the presence of resisting Armenians on the hills of Mount Akdağ, he decided to support them. “*Since I am not able to stop this disaster, then I might at least help the resistants*” he thought. He contacted Mount Akdağ Fedais, told them that he could them guns and men.

One evening, a group of Fedais visited Emir Pasha in his house. Emir Pasha delivered them their new guns. He gave a sentimental and encouraging speech, as well as one that was rather unexpected given the circumstances of 1915. “*Promise me now my children. You will endeavor to save your unfortunate brothers and sisters. You will fight bravely. Those who refuse to take up arms and act selfishly while their people are going through difficult times and are struggling between life and death, those who abandon their people to suffering and cruelty, are dishonorable. My children, you are Armenians and I am a Muslim. May you be cursed if you do not protect your people !*” He received promises of all Fedais that they would remain loyal to their struggle and then saw them off by kissing their foreheads.¹⁶²

4000 people who hid in the caves of Mount Akdağ with their families resisted until 1917 with the help of Emir Pasha. They stayed in the region until 1922, then with the arrival of the Kemalist forces, they went to Samsun, and later to Istanbul.

Two of Mount Akdağ’s resistant, Nazar Kapikian and Gulbenk Kaloustian, settled down in France in 1930s and they published their memoirs where they depicted Emir Pasha’s story. Other witnesses confirm that Emir Pasha took great risks trying to help the Armenians. In a letter he wrote from Adana in 1919, S.M. Makaryan relays how Gemerek Armenians were massacred and how his family could survive for two years as Muslims. However, sometime later, attacks on Islamized Armenians started too. “*In the third year, they were taking me to be killed as well, I was saved from being killed thanks to Circassian Emir Pasha from Sivas*” he says.¹⁶³ He does not give details on how he was saved, but from his testimony it’s understood that Emir Pasha protected the Armenians in his region of influence after 1917 as well. Onnik Melikian, who was from Prapert village of Sivas, directly talks about Emir Pasha in his testimony by referring to him as “Circassian Governor” without giving his name.¹⁶⁴ After experiencing many calamities, Melikian managed to escape from the deportation convoy with a few other people. Emir Pasha provided them guns, food and clothing and told them about the situation of the surrounding villages, that the roads were full of corpses from Sivas to Prapert. He used the term “*Mad dogs*” to refer to those who executed the massacres. He calmed Melikian and his friends who felt desperate. He promised to help them in any way he could as long as he lived. In later times, he sent his men to aid them while Melikian and his friends were hiding in Hafik Castle.

¹⁶¹ Kapikian and Kaloustian describe Emir Pasha’s emotions and thoughts with quotations, quotations longer than him. It is understood that they had become very close friends with Emir Paşa for two years.

¹⁶² *La résistance héroïque*, op.cit. p.68-71.

¹⁶³ *Tsayn Darabelots (Acı Çekenlerin Sesi)*, B. Donabedian, p. 331, Hagop Turabian Basımevi, 1922, Paris.

¹⁶⁴ *Humanity in the Midst of Inhumanity*, Shahkeh Yaylaian Setian, p. 42-62, Xlibris, 2011. Confusing the positions of statesmen is a rather common occurrence in the witness accounts of genocide survivors. It is not surprising for people, especially those in rural areas, not to be familiar with the state hierarchy. Someone called “Pasha”, with hundreds of men at his command, may seem like the highest property official to their eyes. It is certain that the reference here is not to Sivas Governor Muammer who strictly obeyed orders of massacre. Some details from Melikian’s story, the manner of aid (providing men and guns) and the fact that there was no one in the region that provided such aid to the Armenians makes us think that the mentioned “Circassian Governor” was Emir Pasha.

While Emir Pasha mobilized all his means to protect the Armenians, his son Hamid took part in the massacres¹⁶⁵. It is hard not to be shattered while reading the father and son confrontation that Kapikyan and Kaloustian depicted.

“Emir Pasha had rejected his son who was literally a butcher. Once he called him, slapped him in the face and said the following: *“You murderous rascal! There will come a day when you will be hanged for what you are doing. You will go to the scaffold. Then I will be the one to pull your rope up. Then I will sit down near your corpse and drink a glass of raki. Only then will my heart be soothed.”*

Did this speech really take place, or is it a story that Kapikian and Kaloustian want to attribute to Emir Pasha, for whom they have a great respect; it is not possible to affirm a certain response. Nevertheless, we can guess that, being a hater of the Unionists, and a man who did not refrain from openly speaking his mind, often in a harsh manner, Emir Pasha must have had a serious conflict with his son Hamid who took part in the massacres.

When we tried to reach Emir Pasha’s family in order to get more information, we had some hesitations. Solmaz Marsan, whose trace we found, was the granddaughter of Hamid, Emir Pasha’s son, and neither she nor other members of the family knew anything of all of these events. This period was never narrated within the family. How could we tell Solmaz Marsan that her great grandfather protected hundreds of Armenians, but her grandfather had taken part in the massacres? During our interview, she listened to us with great maturity, in astonishment and by being greatly touched. Testimonials of genocide survivors were expressing aspects of her great grandfather that she never knew of. She did not know about the conversation we mentioned above with his son Hamid. She said that they did not possess anymore the great farms and houses where hundreds of people were hidden. She told us that the documents – among which his memoirs were likely to be too – that belonged to Emir Pasha were given years ago to Cemal Kutay, historian, but he had not done a research on this matter and neither had he returned the documents to the family. The family had made attempts to retrieve the documents, but they had not succeeded in that.¹⁶⁶ Bringing to light the aforementioned documents should clarify many points in Emir Pasha’s story.

Emir Pasha’s post-war life corresponded to a period that was more known to the public. While Mustafa Kemal was engaged in efforts to organize the Sivas Congress in 1919, Emir Pasha kept a distance to him and to the struggle he pursued. He was not pleased with the fact that members of the Party of Union and Progress were around Mustafa Kemal, therefore he first wanted to prevent the organization of the congress in Sivas. However, Mustafa Kemal found the subject that Emir Pasha was sensitive about in order to convince him: Circassian identity. Accompanied with persons of Circassian origin like Rauf Orbay and Bekir Sami, he convinced Emir Pasha that the rights of Circassian people would be protected. After that time, Emir Pasha would mobilize all his means for Mustafa Kemal. He was elected Sivas deputy in the first period in the Parliament. Nevertheless, contrary to what was promised, he was uncomfortable about the fact that no one paid attention to protecting the rights of Circassian people and that the word “Turkish” was dominant. The speech that he gave in the Parliament in which he said *“I kindly request that we do not use the Turkishness solely. We are not in this Parliament only in the name of Turkishness. I beseech you, not to talk only about Turks, but about Muslims, or even the Ottomans”* was a sign of this. After a while, because of a declaration written against The Hat Act –even though he was not related to the declaration and by showing his son’s membership to the Progressive Republican

¹⁶⁵ "Emir Pasha’s son Hamid" is the leader of the Uzunyayla gangs that rob deportation convoys and send them to death. *Le génocide des Arméniens*, Raymond Kévorkian, op.cit. p. 535, 544, 550. *Le livre souvenir de Sebastia*, p. 142.

¹⁶⁶ Interview with Solmaz Marşan, July 2014, Istanbul.

Party – he found himself on felon’s dock and was condemned to exile in Isparta for three years. All his property, including the large farms where he hid the Armenians, was seized. He passed away in 1940 in Sivas. Emir Pasha was known as wise and diplomatic man, who liked receiving guests and hunting. He will be remembered many years later with verses that he adopted as a life philosophy and which his friends often heard from himself:

“I wish that no one can hurt you, nor you might hurt someone
I wish you were never unhappy, nor you can make someone unhappy
Never hurt anyone and never be hurt by someone
Never hit anyone and do not be hit by someone”¹⁶⁷

Other Righteous figures in Sivas Province

Two Turks from Merzifon were sanctioned in order to discourage persons who could help to their Armenian neighbors. The two brothers, who were caught hiding Armenians in their houses, were arrested and then taken through the streets of the Muslim districts with their hands tied. This incident serves to intimidate the eventual persons who could protect Armenians in Merzifon¹⁶⁸. But the testimonies about Merzifon did not unfortunately mention the names of these two Turks.

Mesudiye notables tried to save Ordu Armenians who arrived at the city in a miserable state and who were ordered to be deported even though they were Islamized. They wrote a telegraph to the Sheikh Al-Islam saying “*There was no doubt they had embraced Islam*”, “*They would not allow these Ottoman citizens to be treated against sharia law*” and demanded “*they would be settled in a proper location*”¹⁶⁹.

Ali Çavuşzade İsmail, Serdarzade Mustafa, Müftü İbrahim, town imam Arif and Şer’iyye Head Clerk Raif’s signatures were present on the telegraph. Among these names, it was only Serdarzade Mustafa about whom we were able to find more information. Serdarzade Mustafa, who will take the surname Atay in Republican period, was a Parliament member as deputy of Şark-i Karahisar. Later, he would join Erzurum Congress and would become a deputy in the First Parliament. Even though some sources state that he was an independent deputy, he was known for his proximity to the Party of Union and Progress¹⁷⁰. Some newspaper reports expressed that Karahisar-ı Şarki Armenians considered Serdarzade Mustafa among the responsible of the 1896 massacres.¹⁷¹ Since there is no certain information concerning his attitude in 1915, we do not count his name among the “Righteous” ones. Still, based on the telegraph he sent, it could be said that he was opposed to the deportation of the Islamized Armenians.

Kadir Çavuş from Ödek village provided food to Harutyun Şigitsyan and friends, who were hidden in Divriği Mountains. He offered them help for a year and a half by taking great risks¹⁷². Another witness from Divriği, Artin Şigyan, tells how Karahisar and Ödek villagers offered them so much help and Kadir Çavuş was carrying them food for 21 people¹⁷³. Because of this, he was greatly pressured by state officials, and was constantly pressed to tell them the location of the hiding Armenians. He was forced to live as a fugitive in the mountains for a few months. But when the soldiers threatened to burn his house,

¹⁶⁷ Kapikian and Kaloustian cited this poem in Turkish written in Armenian letters. The verses show great similarity with a poem of Muvakkitzâde Muhammed Pertev who is known to be close to Mevlevi order.

¹⁶⁸ *Les Mémoires de Mgr Jean Naslian*, op.cit. II. Cilt p.71, not 26.

¹⁶⁹ The telegraph was first published by researcher Sait Çetinoğlu. *1915’te Mesudiye’den yükselen vicdanın sesi*, Taraf newspaper, 18.11.2010

¹⁷⁰ *Milli Mücadelede Kongreler Dönemi ve İttihatçılık Sorunu*, Derviş Kılınçkaya, Modern Türklük Araştırmaları Dergisi, sp. 103-133, Mart 2011, Ankara.

¹⁷¹ *The Revolution of 1908 in Turkey*, Aykut Kansu, p. 277, not 201, Brill, 1997.

¹⁷² *Tsayn Darabelots (Acı Çekenlerin Sesi)*, B. Donabedian, op.cit. p. 243

¹⁷³ *Ibidem*, p. 276.

he was compelled to submit and tell them the location. Some of Divriği Armenians hiding in the mountains reached Erzincan city controlled by Russian army and managed to survive. Kadir Çavuş's grandson Mehmet Rıza Yüksel told us that it was often spoken in the family how his grandfather carried food to hiding Armenians. He added that those people wanted to entrust their gold to his grandfather saying "You keep them, if we can return we can take it from you", but his grandfather refused.

Ali Efendi from Zara's story is a rare one about loyalty to friendship in 1915. Having served as mayor in Zara, Ali Efendi was at the same time an entrepreneur. To meet the needs of the regiment in the city, he established Zara's first flour factory.¹⁷⁴ He was a friend and business partner of Mihran Vartanian, who had large lands and farms in the region. Mihran Efendi's siblings Dr. Bagdasar Vartanian and pharmacist Vahan Vartanian were soldiers in Sarıkamış front line. In January 1915, Mihran Efendi heard that his brother having fallen ill with typhoid fever. He went to the front line, found his brother and brought him home to cure him. He managed to save his brother, but now he caught the same illness himself. He passed away in February 1915. At the end of March 1915, Bagdasar and Vahan were apprehended together with other notables in the city, and they were killed. Mihran Efendi's wife Rebeka was now left alone with seven children. Ali Efendi had made a promise to Mihran Efendi before he died, in the case of something bad happening to him, Ali Efendi would take care of his family. When he learned that the deportation would start in Zara, he told Rebeka to take the children and go with him without losing time. Acting in a hurry, Rebeka took with her four things: the thick cloak that Mihran Efendi wore in the snow, some cheesecloth, a heavy brass candle holder and some sugar.

Ali Efendi took them in a farmhouse close to the flour factory, outside of the city.¹⁷⁵ During the day they hid in the house without making any sound, only at night they could climb onto the roof in order to get some fresh air. The items that Rebeka chose to bring along would prove to be of great use to her. She used the cloak as a blanket, she broke small pieces of sugar with the brass candle holder and wrapped them in the cheesecloth, then she gave this to the babies as a pacifier so they would not cry and betray their location. Ali Efendi brought them food every day.

Rebeka's mother living in Sivas took two of the older kids, Muşeg and Armenuhi, to Sivas, considering that it was safer there. However, Sivas was not safe. When Ali Efendi learnt that they were in Sivas, he sent one of his trusted cartwrights to bring back the children to Zara. On the way to Zara, soldiers stopped the car. Upon the cartwright's firm statement "*Ali Efendi ordered me to take these children to Zara without harming a single hair on their head. That is what I am going to do. If you want to touch them you need to first trample down on me,*" they were allowed to pass. Ali Efendi saved the lives of the children by having them brought to Zara. All of the family members in Sivas were deported, only one among them survived.

When it was announced that those who hid the Armenians would be punished too, Ali Efendi proposed Rebeka to become a Muslim only in appearance. When Rebeka hesitated, he assured to her: "*My intention is not to increase the Muslim population. Their numbers are sufficient. You can appear to be Muslims until these dire times pass, you can remain Christians in your hearts and in your minds*". The family became Muslims in appearance, they took Muslim names. In this way, they could live in Zara until 1919 by speaking only Turkish.

After their conversion, Hamazasp from Vartanians saw an Islamized Armenian child being attacked. He helped the boy and saved him. But the next day, the same boys tried to attack Hamazasp with knives. Ali

¹⁷⁴ *Dünden bugüne Zara*, Adnan Mahiroğulları, 1999, Sivas.

¹⁷⁵ Interview with Ali Efendi's grandson Kenan Kurt, December 2014, Istanbul.

Efendi was informed of the situation and he spoke to the family of the boys. He told them the Vartanians were under his protection and whoever attempted to hurt them would pay a heavy price. After this event, no one ever again teased them by calling them “convert”.

During the time they lived in Zara, Ali Efendi continued to protect them. The family settled down in Istanbul in March 1919 and then in the USA in 1921. Hamazasp’s son Richard Vartanian, who told us the story, said that Ali Efendi’s name was remembered with respect and gratitude in the family. He said that he knew his story even when he was very young.¹⁷⁶

Richard Vartanian went to Zara in 1986 and met with Ali Efendi’s grandchildren, but later he lost trace of them. We found the trace Ali Efendi’s grandson Aydın Kurt, who, just like his great grandfather, was a mayor for some time in Zara. According to the information we received from Aydın Bey’s children Kenan and Yusuf Ziya Kurt, the way Ali Efendi protected the Vartanians was transmitted from generation to generation within the family. They expressed that Ali Efendi was attached to the multicultural way of life that was the characteristic of Zara. Both because of this reason and also to keep the promise that he had given to Mihran Efendi, he protected the Vartanian family.

Onnik Melikian and his acquaintances from **Prapert** (Günyamaç) village -who were protected by Emir Pasha- survived with the help of many people. **Vasfi Bey**, a soldier living in a nearby village, informed them that the men in the village would be deported, then they were able to escape on time. The richest man in the village, Nazaret Agha, was first saved from deportation by becoming a Muslim, but when they started to deport Muslims as well, he hid in the house of his neighbor **Karagilioğlu**. For some time Koçhisar Head Clerk helped Melikian, later Commander **Circassian Rıza Bey** made sure they reached Adana through Kayseri without problem.¹⁷⁷ It was not possible to determine the identity of the mentioned people, neither their relatives that live today.

¹⁷⁶ Richard Vartanian’s letter to Taner Akçam, August 2014.

¹⁷⁷ *Humanity in the Midst of Inhumanity*, Shahkeh Yaylaian Setian, op.cit. p.48 ve 58-59.

VI. Erzurum Province

Erzurum Province staged violent massacres in 1915, but it also hosted many resistances, even though some of them had a limited effect.

Bayezid sub-governor Bagh Efendi

We get the rare information about Bagh Efendi, who saved Bayezid (East Bayezid) Armenians by informing them of the coming massacre, from two different sources. According to Gevorg Burnazyan, whose family was saved in Bayezid, a meeting was organized in Erzincan with the participation of regional administrative officials and members of the Party of Union and Progress. The deportations and massacres were decided to be performed in the supervision of a Responsible Secretary of Unionist party. Bayezid sub-governor Bagh Efendi said he would take the necessary precautions and refused that the party sent a supervisor. As soon as he returned to Bayezid, he assembled notable Armenians in the city, informed them of the approaching danger, and advised them to escape to places close to the Russian border. According to Burnazyan, if Bagh Efendi had not informed them, the next day all the Bayezid Armenians would be massacred.¹⁷⁸

A similar testimony was given to us by Michel Marian we met in Paris. Bagh Efendi saved his family and the rest of Bayezid Armenians by informing them of the massacre before and giving them a chance to escape¹⁷⁹. In both accounts, the position of Bagh Efendi was “sub-governor”. However at the time, there was no administrative servant named Bagh Efendi. Considering it might have been mispronounced as Bağ, Bah, Bahi, Bahr, or even Bahri, we did not come across a governor with this name in the district.

Another problematic issue was the fact that Bayezid was controlled by Russia between the years 1914-1918. Because of this situation, the aforementioned protection may have happened before 1914 or after 1918. In 1918 the ex-Mardin sub-governor Hilmi Bey – who, as we saw earlier, opposed to the massacre – was appointed as Bayezid sub-governor for a short time.¹⁸⁰ If the mentioned sub-governor is Hilmi Bey, it is hard to understand why they remembered the names of two different witnesses as Bagh Efendi. We know that Hilmi Bey had a son named Bahri, and that it was common especially for Kurdish people to call some persons by the name of their sons or daughters—for example “Bavê Mıstefe” (Mustafa’s father). Still, we could not reach any information that shows that Bayezid Armenians in the same way called Hilmi Bey using his son Bahri’s name.

Another possibility is Bagh Efendi being referred erroneously as sub-governor. It is possible that he was a notable or a religious leader. We see a Naqshibandi Sheikh named Abdülbari (in other words Bari) that was influential in the region at the time. Was it Bari Efendi that gave notice of the massacres to the Armenians? We do not have enough information to be able to say that. Therefore, it seems that the identity of Bagh Efendi, who protected the Bayezid Armenians probably in 1920 when Kemalist forces arrived in the region, will remain anonymous for now.

Gumek villagers and İsmail Agha’s wife

Some of the Armenians in Herdif escaped towards Gümek, an Alevi village, when a raid was organized to their village. There are many testimonies affirming that some Gumek people, especially İsmail Agha’s

¹⁷⁸ *Les pratiques de sauvetage durant le génocide des Arméniens*, Hasmik Tevosyan, in *La résistance aux génocides*, p.195, Presses de la Fondation nationale des sciences politiques, 2008, Paris.

¹⁷⁹ Interview with Michel Marian, December 2014, Paris.

¹⁸⁰ BOA. İ.DUİT, 42/82, 15/B /1336

wife, protected them. Manug Medzigyan of Herdif tells that the villagers resisted the attacks for 3-4 hours, then some ran away towards Gumek, and others to Maskan. Those who ran to Maskan were killed. As for some Gumek people—the account testifies that some people from Gumek took part in the massacre—protected Herdif people. **İsmail Agha's wife** hid four people, including Manug Medzigyan, for seven days in her house. Later on, an old man named “*Kalişekh*” in the testimony, which means “old sheikh” in Kurdish, came and took the Armenians to his house. He found Medzigyan's daughter in law and two sons and brought them near the others. He hid them in his house for 18 months. Medzigyans later reached the region controlled by the Russians.¹⁸¹ We understand from Medzigyan's statement “*If I had not gone to Dersim they would not let me live for a single day. The Gumek or Maskan people would definitely shoot me*” that it was not possible for them to stay in İsmail Agha's house for a long time and that the mentioned “old sheikh” was from Dersim.

Another testimony tells of the massacre of the majority of the population of Herdif consisting of 150 families, of how a small number of Armenians took refuge in Gumek that was one hour away. Some of those that were saved reached Erzurum which was under Russian control in April 1917, the date when the witness account was written. The others were still in hiding in İsmail Agha's house.¹⁸²

Ali Haydar Selbuz from Gumek (its name today Bingöl's Çatalkaya village) relayed that the memory concerning those who protected the Armenians in that period was very lively. According to Ali Haydar Bey the militia made a raid to Herdif. The villagers hid Herdif Armenians who ran towards Gumek in the forest area for 7-8 days. Some Gumek people including **Yusuf Agha, his daughter Adile and from Bal Family Hasan Dede** carried food to the Armenians. According to Ali Haydar Bey, the protectors were villagers from Gumek, İsmail Agha only remained silent.¹⁸³ Sarkis Arsiguian of Herdif expresses that İsmail Agha's called them to the village by promising them protection, but he delivered them to the gangs.¹⁸⁴ Yet other Armenian accounts talk of İsmail Agha as a saver, they even link his protective attitude to a probable Armenian ancestry. Maybe the reason for the difference of how İsmail Agha was reflected in different stories is hidden in a matter emphasized in the first testimony: According to Manug Medzigyan it was not İsmail Agha who hid them in his house for seven days, but his wife. In our study we have come across other examples of how some individuals chose to protect the Armenians even their very close ones took part in the massacres. It seems that in Gumek İsmail Agha's wife, whose name is not mentioned, displayed an independent conscientious attitude. Herdif village lands were shared among some families from Gumek and Maskan after the massacre. This example is a sign of how some of the Alevi villages who greatly opposed to the massacres in 1915 were able to be integrated to the massacre process with certain promises.

Ergan villagers of Erzincan endeavored to save their neighbors from deportation. When they heard on 22 May 1915 that raids to other villages had started, women and children hid in the houses of their acquaintances, while the men ran towards vineyards. However, the groups that surrounded the village went into the vineyards too, everybody scattered away into many directions. Priest Arsen Arşaguni returned to their house in the village with his son and hid for 32 days in a room, with a secret entrance, where they stored provisions. A woman of villager, **Şehriban**, found them, she told while crying that all the Armenians in the village were deported and those who had taken refuge in the mountains were killed. **Yusuf**, who was referred to as her husband in the testimony, was carrying food to the Armenians at

¹⁸¹ *Tsayn Darabelots* (Acı Çekenlerin Sesi), B. Donabedian, op.cit. p.19.

¹⁸² *Kedername*, p. 358, 372, Belge Yayınları, 2014, İstanbul. It is stated that 193 people were saved from Herdif. p.375.

¹⁸³ Interview with Ali Haydar Selbuz, 2014, İstanbul.

¹⁸⁴ *Le genocide des Arméniens*, Raymond Kévorkian, op.cit.

nights. Priest Arşaguni asked Şehriban to inform Yusuf and to take them out of there. Yusuf came at night and took them home, hid them for two days and then let them move to Dersim¹⁸⁵. We see the Dersim section of the witness account, which Arşaguni ends as “*I was greatly respected by the Kurdish people there*”, in a different narration; in Boghos Vartanian’s story. Vartanian manage to reach Dersim and met Priest Arşaguni on 20 August 1915.¹⁸⁶ We tried to find traces of Yusuf and Şehriban, who made it possible for Arşaguni to reach Dersim by helping him. We learnt from their grandson Veysel Aydemir, who lives in Erzincan, that Yusuf and Şehriban were siblings. However, the memory about the Armenians, whom they protected in 1915, was erased from the village together with the migrations.¹⁸⁷

Others Righteous figures in Erzurum

Mgirditch Mouradian, who had been in the convoy sent from Bayburt in June, explains that the Muslims in the city were opposed to the deportation. According to Mouradian, the kaimakam had three Turks from Bayburt hung in order to intimidate everyone who intended to hide Armenians in their house.¹⁸⁸ We could not obtain any information about the identities of these three persons. It is hard to say whether this incident, which was not mentioned in Bayburt deportation trial, really occurred.

Notables in Erzurum wanted to stop the deportation and applied to Governor Tahsin, according to the memoirs of Mgr Naslian. Tahsin replied them that he had to “*unwillingly*” obey the orders¹⁸⁹. Unfortunately Naslian does not mention in his memoirs the names of the people from Erzurum who asked him to stop the deportation.

Halil from Kemah, Hovit village helped a group running away from Erzurum, brought them food and showed them how they would get to Dersim. When the Armenians reached the village on the peaks of Munzur Mountains they were, in Halil’s words, “*now free*”.¹⁹⁰

Arşak Terteryan who was from Aşkale first hid in Yenikent village and then in the house of an acquaintance named **Mollah from Atuncuğ village** together with his wife and two children. He stayed there for four months, carried on with his profession, shoe-making. Mollah suggests that he become a Muslim in appearance. Terteryan accepted it but after a while Islamized Armenians were ordered to be deported. Mollah first hid him in the highlands nearby, then when they returned to Atuncuğ for a while he hid him in the barn. But the gendarme broke into the house one day and arrested Terteryan. Mollah tried hard managed to have his friend released. He opened a shop for him in Aşkale and made sure he would stay there. Terteryan later went to the region under Russian control by taking his family with him with the help of **Sarıbabalı Ahmet Agha**.¹⁹¹

Tercan **Cali** (Sucuali) **villagers**, **Tomo’s son Hasan Çavuş** in Kilise Komu village, **Serko İsmail in Cer** village, **Küçük Agha** from Kiğı Karer region, **Mehmet Ali (son of Davut)** from Erzincan Kiştım village, a soldier in Eğin named **Lütfi Efendi**, are among other conscientious persons who tried to save the Armenians from deportations and whose names are listed in the witness accounts of Erzurum¹⁹².

¹⁸⁵ *Tsayn Darabelots* (Acı Çekenlerin Sesi), B. Donabedian, op.cit. p. 59

¹⁸⁶ Boghos Vartanian’s testimony, Fonds Andonian, P.J. 1/3, liasse 59, Erzerum, Bibliotheque Nubarian.

¹⁸⁷ Interview with Veysel Aldemir, Ocak 2015

¹⁸⁸ Mgrditch Mouradian’s testimony, Fonds Andonian, P.J. 1/3, liasse 11, Baibourt, f1, Bibliotheque Nubarian.

¹⁸⁹ *Les Mémoires de Mgr Jean Naslian*, op.cit., I. Cilt p. 152

¹⁹⁰ *Kedername*, op.cit. p. 313

¹⁹¹ Ibidem, p. 318-319

¹⁹² Ibidem, p. 328, 333-334, 363-364, 395-396. *Humanity in the Midst of Inhumanity*, op.cit. s 115-116.

VII. Ankara Province

Ankara Governor Mazhar Bey : “I am a governor, not a bandit”

Ankara Armenians were Catholic in majority, spoke Turkish in daily life and were detached from politics, therefore they were not seen as a threat by Ottoman authorities.¹⁹³ The city was also far from the battlefield. The deportation of Ankara Armenians was, however, ordered. In a short time, it was understood that the real aim of the deportation was not “a transfer at a new place”, but a massacre, as précised in oral orders.

Mazhar Bey who was Ankara Governor since June 1914 first pretended not to understand deportation orders. But it was not long before the Party of Union and Progress tried to make him obey. He recounted what happened after this period to Radi Bey, member of Ankara City Council, who asked him why he was discharged from his office. “*As you know, even though deportation process was started in some other provinces, I had not. Atif Bey came, he announced the oral orders from the Ministry of Interior concerning the massacre and the extermination of Armenians during their deportation. I thought ‘No Atif Bey. I am a governor, not a bandit. I cannot do that, I can get up from this chair, you can come and do it yourself!’ I said*”.¹⁹⁴

A short time after this conversation, the adjustments to discharge Mazhar Bey from office were made. On 17 May 1915, he was appointed back to Aleppo Governorship, where he served before and had expressed that he would like to return. This appointment could be like killing two birds with one stone for the Ministry of Interior. The exchange of offices between Mazhar Bey and Aleppo Governor Celal Bey was decided¹⁹⁵. In this way, Celal Bey who opposed the orders in Aleppo was sent away and the deportation would be almost complete until they both reached their new places of duty. However, Mazhar Bey did not accept this office. He understood in Aleppo a fait accompli concerning the “*The transfer and settlement of Armenians*” was awaiting him. Talat sent a telegraph to Mazhar Bey on 22 June 1915 trying to convince him to accept this office. Writing that “*Celal Bey is about to set out from Aleppo*” and thus making it an imposition is among his methods. The telegraph,¹⁹⁶ which we found in the Ottoman Archives of the Prime Ministry, with its left part rotten and darkened and some words erased, was sent by Talat to Mazhar Bey reads as follows:

DH.ŞFR. 54/94

*****To Aleppo Governor Mazhar in Ankara**

C. 9 June 331.

Considering the importance of the Aleppo Province because of the transfer and installation of Armenians, as well as your experience and knowledge of this province and your agreement on the aforesaid subject, your designation in Aleppo has been agreed. Being convinced that you could not refuse this office in a so important moment at such a critical topic, the ministry has not requested your prior approval.

9 June 331.

Minister

Talat

Note: Celal Bey is about to set out.

¹⁹³ *Le génocide des Arméniens*, Raymond Kévorkian, op.cit. p. 619-620. *A Textual Analysis of the Key Indictment of the Turkish Military Tribunal Investigating the Armenian Genocide*, Vahakn N. Dadrian, Journal of Political and Military Sociology, 22, p. 133-172, 1994.

¹⁹⁴ Radi Bey’s testimony, transcribed into Turkish in Latin alphabet, from the fragments of archive on Istanbul trials investigations, which we found in Nubarian library. Select copies from Jerusalem Armenian Patriarchate archives, Reel 3. The original of the testimony in Ottoman is not present among the documents. There is no information as to when and by who the transcription was done, but “Armenian Catholic Community, New York” has been noted down onto inscribed papers.

¹⁹⁵ BOA. MV. 240/56, 03/B /1333, BOA. İ.DH.. 1515/1333, 04/Ş /1333, BOA. BEO. 4360/326983, 06/Ş /1333

¹⁹⁶ BOA. DH.ŞFR. 54/94, 09/Ş /1333. Transcription: Ömer Türkoğlu.

What was the “*agreement on the aforesaid subject*” that Talat is talking about? Mazhar Bey announced openly everywhere that he refused to comply with orders of deportation. His attitude and the conflict he had with Atif became known among Ankara Armenians. A witness account that carrying the signatures of religious functionaries and civilians from Ankara, establishes that Armenians from other places had taken refuge in Ankara too.

“At the beginning of 1915, while Mazhar Bey was Ankara governor and while hundreds of women and children who had escaped the murders in nearby cities, the Governor received a massacre order via the Ankara Committee of Union and Progress. But in the face of the undeniable innocence of the Christians in his city, this law-abiding and truly conscientious government official gave his superiors in the capital a very firm response of refusal, risking to be dismissed from service. He was immediately discharged from his office. The Ministry of Interior appointed a 27 year old murderer named Atif and a very young Police Chief of 25 years old who was at least as strong a hater of Christians and as much full of greed to for their property.”¹⁹⁷

We are not familiar with the details of Mazhar Bey’s reply to Talat’s letter, because the mentioned telegraph is not present in the Ottoman Archives of The Prime Ministry. However, the archive records make us think that Mazhar Bey insisted on refusing the office. Two days after his correspondence with Talat, his appointment to Aleppo was cancelled, on 18 July 1915 he was retired with a sudden decision.¹⁹⁸ Celal Bey’s appointment in Mazhar Bey’s stead was cancelled too. This was around the same time Celal Bey went to Istanbul and expressed his opposition to the deportation to Talat in person. Then Atif, who could execute the planned “*massacre and extermination*” without hesitation was appointed in his stead. As soon as he came to office, Atif initiated the extermination plan by having Armenian notables of Ankara apprehended and killed.

Mazhar Bey recounted what he witnessed in Ankara and the process of his own discharge from duty in the testimony he gave to the investigation committee constituted for the trials of Union and Progress in 1918. In the indictment of the main trial, a reference was made to the following statement “*He was discharged from duty due to his refusal to implement orders concerning deportation and massacre*”.¹⁹⁹

Some sources allege that Ankara Governor Mazhar Bey was the same person who, in the fall of 1915, “*was appointed for the investigation and judgment in the Military Court of persons who violated the law during the transfer of Armenians*” and the chief of the commission in the region of the third legion, and even the same person that investigated the crimes of Union and Progress in 1918. Some other sources, mentions the name of Ankara governor as “Hasan Mazhar”. The reason for these wrong information, is greatly because of the presence of more than one persons called Mazhar Bey (and at least two of them were Macedonians) serving in similar offices in that period. The wrong news in the newspapers in Istanbul, prior to the trial of the leaders of The Party of Union and Progress, has encouraged this notion. We were able to overcome this difficulty in our study by carefully examining the records of the Ottoman Archives of the Prime Ministry and by managing to reach Mazhar Bey’s family.

¹⁹⁷ Religious functionaries G. Kassabian, P. Mergemekian, A. Ajdenian, L. Torbajian and civilians Jérôme Parseghian, Joseph Kanburian, Paul Ajenian, Hagop Mehterian’s witness accounts, 17 February 1919, Aleppo. *Angora, récit du massacre et de la déportation des Arméniens*, BNU Fonds Andonian, P.J. 1/3 liasse 7, Angora.

¹⁹⁸ BOA. DH.ŞFR. 54/131, 11/Ş /1333, BOA. MV. 241/12, 17/Ş /1333, BOA. MV. 241/39, 05/N /1333, BOA.İ.MMP. 198/1333, 06/N /1333, BOA. DH.ŞFR. 54/62, 09/N /1333

¹⁹⁹ *Tehcir ve Taktik, Divan-ı Harbi Örfi Zabıtları*, Vahakn N. Dadrian, Taner Akçam, op.cit. p. 242.

The full name of the Ankara Governor who opposed the orders during the Armenian genocide was **Ali Mazhar Bey**. He was born in 1868 in Nis. He was the son of Aleppo Telegraph and Post Director Bedri Bey. He was not a Mülkiye graduate (therefore his name is not included in the Mülkiye Annals, making the confusion to last till this day). However, he transformed his diploma from Ilmiye to Mülkiye and started to work in the Aleppo Post and Telegraph Office of General Directorate. Later, he was appointed as Head Clerk of Kosovo Administrative Council and began his administrative career. He gradually went higher up, becoming Kosovo city letterman, Pristina deputy sub-governor, Siroz and Beyoglu sub-governor, Kosovo, Edirne and Aleppo governor. Ankara governorship would be his last position. He would not accept the Bitlis governorship proposed to him while he was Aleppo Governor.²⁰⁰

The person who carried out an investigation in the region of the third legion in 1915, especially on Dr. Reşid's crimes, is **Hüseyin Mazhar Bey** from Ohri. Before he became chief of this commission, he had served in Kosovo and Bitlis (between 1913-1914) governorships²⁰¹. Contrary to the other inspectors who passed over the deportation and pursued only the embezzlements, he investigated Dr. Reşid's murders. He sent many reports to the Ministry of Interior in this regard, but none of them were taken seriously²⁰². Maybe because of this attitude, no other duty was given to him until 1920. Is Hüseyin Mazhar Bey the same person who was the leader of the famous "Mazhar Commission" in 1918 that investigated the murders of Union and Progress? Although we do not possess sufficient information in this respect, we think that it is highly probable that he was the person in charge of this investigation. Because of some news reports in Istanbul at the time, it was thought that the person leading the Mazhar Commission was Mazhar (Müfit Kansu) who was Izmit and Karesi governor during the deportation and governor of Bitlis in 1918. Therefore, La Renaissance newspaper published in French in Istanbul, wrote a very harsh article reminding the responsibilities of Mazhar Müfit in the deportations in Izmit and Balıkesir. But the next day, the newspaper noticed the mistake and corrected it.²⁰³

As for Ali Mazhar Bey, he went into trade after retiring from Ankara Governorship. He took the surname "Payzın" in the Republican era. We could only speak on the phone with Mazhar Bey's grand-daughter Münire Asuman Çevik on the phone, because her preference was in this way. She said that no one in the family had any information about Mazhar Bey - who was her maternal great grandfather- and his attitude in 1915. It is hard to say to what extent this ground of "no information" is about refraining from talking about a subject related to 1915. Yet we think it must play a role to a certain degree.

We come across a small observation on Mazhar Bey's personality in the memoirs of Mehmet Ali Ayni. In the time when Mazhar Bey had just finished Rüştiye (Ottoman junior high school), his father Bedri Bey asked Mehmet Ali Ayni for assistance in the "*appointment of his son to a teacher vacancy*". Ayni helped Mazhar's transfer to civil service, but did not forget to make a small negative note about him: "*Nervous, impatient and proud, therefore not successful in his affairs*"²⁰⁴. But Mehmet Ali Ayni was wrong. The

²⁰⁰ BOA. DH.SAİDd, 72/341, 29/Z /1284, BOA. DH.MKT. 1683/13, 24/R /1307, BOA. DH.MKT. 1701/63, 02/B /1307, BOA. DH.MKT. 288/39, 26/Ra/1312, BOA. BEO 1343/100668, 14/Ra/1317, BOA. BEO 2949/221130, 09/L /1324, BOA. BEO 3381/253550, 27/B /1326, BOA. ZB. 25/83 08/Ke/1324, BOA. DH.MKT. 2911/40, 09/Ş /1327, BOA. DH.MTV. 1/18, 30/Za/1328, BOA. BEO 3925/294325, 12/Ş /1329 , BOA. MV. 233/105, 19/Ra/1332

²⁰¹ BOA. DH.SAİDd, 180/275, 29/Z /1281, BOA. BEO, 4163/312176, 21/R /1331, BOA. MV. 234/53, 27/R /1332, BOA. DH.ŞFR. 56/179, 17/Za/1333

²⁰² *The Extermination of Armenians in the Diarbekir region*, Hilmar Kaiser, op.cit., p. 403-407.

²⁰³ La Renaissance, "*Qui est Mazhar Bey ?*", 11 décembre 1918 ve "*Il y a Mazhar et Mazhar*", 12 décembre 1918. In the correction article it clearly states that Mazhar Bey, head of the investigation commission, "*had become retired six years ago*" therefore could not have taken part in crimes committed during the deportation. His date of retirement does not agree with that of Hüseyin Mazhar Bey's. However, misexpressed information may be the case here.

²⁰⁴ *Profesör Mehmed Ali Aynî, Hayatı ve eserleri*, Ali Kemali Aksüt, p. 38, 1944, İstanbul.

“nervous and proud” response that Mazhar Bey gave to Atif in order to refuse extermination orders make his name marked in history.

Other Righteous people in Ankara Province

Mehmed Radi Bey : a permanent opponent

Ankara City Council Member Mehmet Radi Bey, as said above, gave a testimony in the trial of Union and Progress. We owe the details concerning the attitude of Mazhar Bey to his testimony which we were able to attain. Radi Bey also recounts his own attitude in the deportation in Ankara. After coming to office in the middle of July, Atif started having notable Armenians in Ankara arrested. Radi Bey learned that Ottoman Bank Director Şnorhokyan Efendi was taken a prisoner in Hürriyet Hotel. In order to ask for him to be pardoned, they went together with Ahmet Müfit Efendi from the city council to visit Governor Atif. As an answer to their request, Atif answered by saying, “*I received orders from my chief, they will go, Armenians will not live*”²⁰⁵. The next day, Şnorhokyan Efendi was taken away and killed outside the city together with about 1200 Armenians arrested in those days.²⁰⁶

In his testimony, Radi Bey recounts many details about how the deportation worked and the way investigation commissions focused only on embezzlement. We do not know whether his opposition to the massacres is limited to his efforts to save Şnorhokyan Efendi. However, we can infer that he was seen as an opponent for a long time by the government according to the records about him in the Ottoman Archives. He was a notable from Çorum-Mecitözü. Because of his relationship with Satvet Lütfü, Radi Bey’s correspondence was being tracked and he was arrested many times. It was even thought that he was in connection with Kör Dede gang from Çorum. However, after 1918, we lose track of Radi Bey. We could not obtain any information about him except that he had a son named Ali Suavi and a close acquaintance named “*Darulmuallimat Director Şahide Hanım*”²⁰⁷.

Hadji Ömer Efendi from Keskin : “The events that took place were so horrifying...”

Tateos Minassian of Keskin was in fabrics trade before 1915. His customers paid for the fabrics with the wheat and wool they produced, and he made a living by reselling these goods. He lost all his family in Gürün in 1895 massacres when he was 13 years old, his aunt in Keskin took him under her protection. He sensed the coming storm in 1915, therefore he planned to go to Ankara first, then to Istanbul. However, things did not turn out as he wanted them to. The day he came in Ankara, Orthodox Armenians, then three weeks later, Catholic Armenians began to be deported. Minassian found himself in the deportation convoy. While going through Kayseri, he sends news to Ömer Efendi whom he knew from Keskin and who worked with him in cattle trade. Ömer Efendi found a way to sort his friend from the convoy and save him. He hid Minassian in his house. In the meantime, Minassian’s wife and his children took refuge in a house in Keskin.

Ömer Efendi was a faithful, very religious man. He was known as an honest person. He could not accept the massacres, he could not reconcile them with the religion he believed in. “*One day he relayed to me an event that took place in Yozgat region*” says Minassian. “*The valley that he passed was full of naked women and child corpses. He went mad, he went up to the people in a village nearby and shouted: How could you do this? How can you kill women and children?*”

In 1916, Ömer Efendi showed Minassian as Muslim and took him along with himself on the journeys that he made for livestock sale. One day, they passed near Akdağ in Sivas. Ömer Efendi did not want to pass from there because he was worried about the Armenian Fedais that were hiding in Akdağ. Minassian tried

²⁰⁵ Radi Bey’s testimony, cf. supra note 187.

²⁰⁶ *Le génocide des Arméniens*, Raymond Kévorkian, op.cit. p. 621

²⁰⁷ BOA. DH.ŞFR. 80/132, 24/Z /1335, BOA. DH.UMVM, 66/10, 25/S /1337, BOA. DH.EUM.1.Şb 10/46, 29/C /1336

to calm him down, told them they would do nothing to him when he was with him. “*The events were so scary*”, said Ömer Efendi, “*They are full of rage. Even you can’t change it*”.

Tired of hiding, Minassian became a Muslim after some time in order to be free, he changed his name to Ahmed Hilmi. But this time, he had to pay a fine not to do military service. Ömer Efendi offered again to help him. Only in 1918, with the fall of the Unionists, Minassian could find a place to live without hiding himself. He came together with his family. He tried reestablishing his business until 1922. But after the Fire of Izmir in 1922, he decided that Turkey was not a safe place for Armenians. He settled down in Lyon, France in 1924. He published his memoirs in Armenian in 1957²⁰⁸.

Ömer Efendi managed a newly-established orphanage in Keskin in the next years. His son Rahmi Pehlivanlı would become a famous painter from 1950s onwards. Ömer Efendi’s historical mansion in Keskin, where Rahmi Pehlivanlı was born, has been given to the Ministry of Culture today to be turned into a museum.

We do not know whether Tateos Minassian remained in touch with Ömer Efendi, who helped him for three years, hid him in his house. Their relatives Pehlivanlı family, whom we reached to learn more about Ömer Efendi, refused to meet with us. As soon as we mentioned the subject, the phone was hung up. In a strongly nationalist and conservative district as Keskin, it was hard to talk about any kind of subject concerning Armenians.

Under these circumstances, it would be optimistic to expect a memory plaque about the Righteous attitude of Ömer Bey in the mansion where Minassian hid in 1915 and that the Ministry of Culture is planning to transform into a museum.

Yozgat sub-governor Cemal Bey : “I cannot act without my conscience”

When the deportation started, Yozgat sub-governor **Cemal Bey** and **Military Recruitment office chief Salim Bey** thought they could take the convoys safely to their destinations by not executing the orders in a fully way. But in a very short time, they realized they were wrong. Through the oral orders given by Necati, who was the Responsible Secretary of the Union and Progress, Cemal Bey and Salim Bey were asked to be the executors of the massacre. Cemal Bey rejected this orders with a clear response and he was removed from the duty. Boğazlıyan kaimakam Kemal was appointed instead of him. Salim Bey was forced to resign.

Cemal Bey and Salim Bey gave a testimony in Yozgat deportation trial. Cemal Bey’s testimony which was related by the newspapers at the time, shows how him and Salim Bey refused to obey inhumane orders by putting their conscience at the base of their attitude²⁰⁹ :

“Military Recruitment office chief was informed. He was a man of honor. He was saying that we should not abandon the path of God. And I affirmed that whatever the Party says, I cannot act without from my conscience. If the government found that a displacement was necessary it in the context of the war, it would look for a solution other than deportation. If a deportation is decided, the government must arrange a proper compensation. This was the way our minds were working. (...)

(*Meaning Necati*) This person came, he said ‘*There is a letter for you from the governor*’. ‘*Give it to me please*’ I said. ‘*Read it on my hand*’ he answered. It was written “*Act upon Necati Bey’s words*”. He put the paper back into his pocket. ‘*Armenian gangs and Kazakhs massacred the Muslim people in Azerbaijan. Let us do the same in return*’ he said. ‘*It is not right to riposte here.*

²⁰⁸ In this study, we used the Armenian originals of the memoirs. Varoujan Artin, director of the Aram Archive and Documentation Centre in Marseilles translated some parts for us. Golgotha des Arméniens d’Ankara et de Keskin, Tateos Minassian, 1957, Lyon.

²⁰⁹ *Yozgat Ermeni Tehciri Davası*, Nejdet Bilgi, p. 236-239, Kitabevi, 2006, Istanbul.

You are free of liability in this regard. The Governor did not write to me, that mean he does not rely to me, then I cannot rely on him. Besides, as a political official, you are responsible of what happened in Azerbaijan' I said. (...)

It was told to me that Kemal Bey, kaimakam of Boğazlıyan had been appointed instead of me. 'Upon the necessity that was exercised by the administration you have been removed from duty' was said to me. However, security must be unsatisfying in order to implement this. There was no such thing. Therefore the State Council was going to examine this situation. One month later either they would give me a return or they would decide against me. I stayed in Yozgat for one month in order to wait for this. Then the deportation took a different way. It got more violent. But I do not know what happened. I was not in contact with the people. (...) Everyone I knew, in person or otherwise, said Armenians were being massacred. (...) The people were saying it. I was disturbed and kept thinking that we were killing our own children if they were telling the truth. I considered them as my own children. Therefore, 'I am happy to have retreated' I said. Because the responsibility towards our conscience is the greatest of all."

In the same trial, Aznif Hanım, from Yozgat Armenians, gave a testimony concerning the conscientious attitude of Cemal Bey. She recounted that the Party of Union and Progress had decided to start a revolt in the city in order to get Cemal Bey to be dismissed. They even planned to shoot Cemal Bey during the uprising²¹⁰.

Cemal Bey was not only discharged from office, "*the continuation of his service was not seen appropriate*" and he was made to retire²¹¹. However after the fall of the Party of Union and Progress, his return to service was accepted in March 1919 and he was appointed as Antalya sub-governor. During this service, he would be accused of not giving support to the national struggle, then later he would be described by Mustafa Kemal as "*a man of the traitor old Konya governor*" Yet other sources express that Cemal Bey said to the People's National Defense Organization of Antalya "*I am with my people, whatever needs to be done let us do it by thinking together*" and supported them.²¹² It appears that Cemal Bey kept a little distance to the struggle organized by Mustafa Kemal, but he expressed his support to the group that came to visit him. It is a strong possibility that Cemal Bey's hesitation arose from seeing members of the Union and Progress around Mustafa Kemal. He was appointed as Izmit governor in July 1920.

Cemal Bey took the surname Nazikoğlu in the republican period. We found a trace of his family in Istanbul. First we reached Şanar Yurdatapan who is a relative to the family through marriage. He directed us to the singer Alpay, Cemal Bey's grandson. Alpay told us he did not know anything about his great grandfather except that he was the son of the Naziki Sheikh. His attitude in 1915 or his Yozgat sub-governorship had never been talked about in the family. We think that the reason such a fog has been woven around Cemal Bey in the family could be because he was shown as a target by Mustafa Kemal. Probably because he could foresee this erasure from the memories, Cemal Bey gave his name to all his children, boy or girl, as a second name. His name and his conscientious attitude wait to be commemorated in Yozgat or at birthplace, Istanbul.

Faik Bey, administrator of Talas

Before the trial of leaders of the Party of Union and Progress in 1918, the Armenian Patriarchate in Istanbul prepared lists and notes concerning those who bore a responsibility in the deportation and

²¹⁰ Ibidem, p. 166.

²¹¹ Ali Çankaya, *Yeni Mülkiye târihi ve mülkiyeliler*, op.cit. III. Cilt, p.365

²¹² *Bir zamanlar Antalya: tarih, gözlem ve anılar*, Hüseyin Çimrin, 1. cilt, p. 189, ATSO, 2007, Antalya

massacres. In one of those notes, we see that Faik Bey, *müdür* (town administrator) of Talas, was killed by Kayseri City letterman Sabri for opposing to the deportation and massacre of the Armenians.²¹³

Neither in the Ottoman Archives nor in any other source do we find information on Faik Bey. But there are two witness accounts that talk about the administrator without giving his name. Eduardo Eurnekian's grandfather Pakraduni, told that he was saved by "*Talas's political or military administrator*".²¹⁴ American missionaries who were in Talas between 1914-1919 state that the town administrator said referring to the Islamized Armenians "*The hodjas are very happy with the new conversions, but these new Muslims will be sent away a short time later*".²¹⁵

The person that the Patriarchate held responsible for Faik Bey's death must be former Kayseri Correspondence Manager Ali Sabri or Ankara City Letterman Sabri. We did not find any trace showing that Faik Bey's killing was brought to the fore in Istanbul trials. There is no mention of the killing of the town administrator in the memoirs of Herbert and Genevieve Irwin who were missionaries in Talas at that time. In Clara Richmond's memoirs, there is no mention of this murder. Whether Faik Bey, who saved Eduardo Eurnekian's great grandfather, really became victim to a murder or not, is still a matter that has not been clarified.

VIII. Mamuretül Aziz Province

Seyit Ali and other clan chiefs from Dersim : "Whoever escaped to Dersim would be saved"

Dersim, which the surrounding "*four mountains*" had guaranteed for a long time its autonomy, had been in conflict with all the governments who tried to govern the region. In Seyit Rıza's words, the difference between Alevi and Armenian people in Dersim was "*thin as an onion skin*". In Dersim, Armenians and Alevis shared a common culture and this was an only place where Armenians "*could be free*"²¹⁶ in 1915. Despite some clan chiefs the government managed to convince and the deportations and massacres that took place in towns like Çarşacak and Çemişgezek, Dersim mountains became an important hiding place for Armenians. For this reason, especially in the witness accounts of the survivors from Mamuretül Aziz province, the name of Dersim is equivalent to being saved. In most of these testimonies, references to clan chiefs of Dersim are made without mentioning a name or place. The witness account of Boghos Vartanian of Erzurum, which we found in the Nubarian library, was one of the rare accounts that contained names and detailed information.²¹⁷ We saw that some of the names mentioned by Vartanian were present in other accounts as well. However it was not easy at all to find a trail of them. Additional difficulties were the fact that the location names in the region were changed, that some places erased from the map and that there was many clan chiefs in the same name. Still, we managed to obtain information about most of the names.

In June 1915, Boghos Vartanian of Erzurum found himself in the second deportation convoy of the city. When they reached Kemah Strait, men were removed from the convoy and they were shut into the stables at first. Then they were taken to Kemah Bridge to be massacred. Four people would survive this massacre injured: Boghos Vartanian, Bedros Baghdassarian, Yervant Kloyan and Haroutiun Mnatsaghian were

²¹³ APC/PAJ, Bureau d'information du Patriarcat, P 427, notice sur Sabri bey, chef du bureau de correspondance de Kayseri, in *Le génocide des Arméniens*, Raymond Kévorkian, op.cit.

²¹⁴ Letter of Eduardo Eurnekian, August 2014.

²¹⁵ *Armenian Sebastia/Sivas and Lesser Armenia*, Richard G. Hovannisian, p. 393, Mazda Publishers, 2004, California.

²¹⁶ Cf. supra p. 46 Testimony of Halil from Hovit village.

²¹⁷ Raymond Kévorkian mentions Boghos Vartanian's testimony in *Le Génocide des Arméniens*. We were able to obtain the whole of the testimony which was in Nubarian Library and was written in 1916 in Armenian. BNU/Fonds Andonian, P.J. 1/3 liasse 59, Erzerum, f68v, témoignage de Boghos Vartanian, donné a Erzerum, le 5 août 1916. Translation : Krikor Tavitian.

saved by remaining under other dead corpses. After a four day walk, Vartanian and his companions reached Dersim. Kurdish people in Dersim gave them food and directed them to higher places that they considered to be more secure:

“Ali Seyit Agha²¹⁸ was the religious leader of the Kurdish people, he was Rayber (Alevi religious leader). He came on his horse and found us in a house. “*Do not stay there, because my brother Memli Agha promised to give the Armenians to the government. Come to my house. You can eat what you want there*”, he said. We thanked him, then we went to Ali Seyit Agha’s village, Zaruk.²¹⁹ They offered us bread and ayran there and we continued our journey to Kozan without losing any time. (...)

Later we went to Miho Agha in Balakan²²⁰. He gave us a warm welcome. The next day, he sent us to his village. There we met two Armenian families from Erzincan. Kevork Marian’s wife cleaned my wounds. We were their guest for a night. They looked for bread for us but they could only find barley. They made a bread with it.

The next day, we went to Budikan. They gave a new hat to my friend Bedros. We went to Badig²²¹ village. We stayed at the Pasha’s house. Two days later, we went to Bahe Agha’s tents. There we met a doctor, he treated our wounds. Unfortunately, the doctor said he did not have any place to take us with him. Then we went to the tents of another village and two Armenians from Erzincan accepted us wholeheartedly. On 20 August, we set out towards other tents and at that time we came across Arsen Arşaguni. (...)

In Veratz village²²² we went into **Ali Agha’s** village tents. He gave us bread with butter. “You cannot stay here, we do not have bread. Go to Aşkirek²²³, to the lands of Balyan clan” he said. (...) In the end, we went to Seyit Ali Agha’s village and we stayed for more than ten months there. There were Erzincan Armenians, Parseg and his family, and people from many other places too. When the Russians entered Erzincan, we surrendered to the Russians without losing much time. They gave us a document to be able to go to Garin (Erzurum). When we saw there that our friend’s houses had been destroyed”.

In the testimony of Boghos Vartanian, we see that Ovacık and Pülümür’s Zarug (Yakatarla), Badig (Çambulak), Veratz (Eğimli), Aşkirek (Kocatepe) villages and Bal, Keçel and Koçan clans living in Kozan region were the places of refuge for Armenians who were able to reach Dersim. Even the famine, that we see in Vartanian’s witness account, caused by thousands of people coming into the region, did not change the attitude of these clans, they continued to share the little food they had with the Armenians. Priest Arsen Arşaguni, whom Vartanian met and whose story we saw above, told about his stay in Dersim “*I was treated with great respect there by the Kurdish people*”.²²⁴

Seyit Ali Agha, who was worried that Vartanian and his friends might fall in to the hands of his brother and delivered to the officials and who hid them in his village for ten months, was a “Rayber”. In Alevi faith, this title means “guide”. Seyit Ali was a religious leader. Since he lived in Zarug, we understand that he came from the Seyit Kemal branch of Bal clan that lived in this village.²²⁵ The Pasha mentioned in

²¹⁸ In the original text it is as “Ali Said Agha”. When the definition of “Rayber” is taken into account we think this name was Seyit and not Said.

²¹⁹ Zarug (its name today Yakatarla village in Ovacık district) is the place of settlement of Keçel and Bal clans.

²²⁰ Bal clan.

²²¹ Budikan and Badig today are the arable fields in Çambulak village in Ovacık District. It is a settlement location of Keçel and Bal clans.

²²² Veratz/Meraş (today its name is Eğimli village in Ovacık district), It is a settlement location for Keçel clan.

²²³ Aşkirek (its name today Kocatepe village in Pülümür district) a settlement location for Bal clan.

²²⁴ Cf. supra p. 45

²²⁵ Interview with İbrahim Karakaya from Sultanbaba Köyleri (Villages) Association on Zarug, Badig, Veratz and Aşkirek villages clans. November 2014, Istanbul. *Dersim Raporu*, p.112-113, 118, İletişim Yayınları, 2011, Istanbul. *Dersim*

Badig village must be from Bal clan **Paşa Timur**, Bahe Agha must be **Bake Agha** from Keçel clan, controlling Budikan. **İdare İbrahim Agha** was the leader of Koçan, where they took refuge. In the report that Kazım Karabekir wrote in 1918 on Dersim clans, he makes it clear why the government had a negative view of İdare İbrahim Agha. The reason was his protection of Armenians. In the report, Karabekir talks about İdare Agha as follows : “*He always protected Armenians and robbers, he even protected an Armenian named Nalbant Nasûhi who is believed today to have been a spy. His dependence and loyalty to the state was always superficial. He is the most evil and cruel robber of Dersim, who by any means is religiously legitimate to kill without mercy.*”²²⁶

Bal and Keçel, clans that protected the Armenians, are said to be relative clans, coming from a common ancestry. In the same way, Koçan clan is considered to be relative to Kalan group. Therefore it is not surprising that Boghos Vartanian and his friends always remained within the Bal-Keçel-Koçan triangle in their journey during which they constantly moved from one place to another. It is well-known that up to present day, Bal and Keçel members have perpetuated the custom of taking refuge in Koçan region in any sort of disagreement.²²⁷

In this region, there were many religious centers like Sultan Baba and “Land of Saints” in the Alevi faith. But today, in the place of these towns, there is nothing but blowing winds. Zarug, Badig and Veratz villages were first demolished during 1937-38 Dersim massacre and declared “forbidden territory” for ten years. A great portion of the population was victims of massacre in 1937-38 and those who survived were exiled. The villages that were revived by those who could return were destroyed in the 90s by the government for a second time, and settlements was forbidden again²²⁸. Today it is a ghost land, a “forbidden territory” where even the trees have dried. Settlement ban appears to have been lifted in the last two years, yet the work of those who may want to return into these villages is still difficult.

In 1915, Dersim clans did not only provide a place to stay to Armenians. They also organized the escape of Armenians from many regions, primarily from Mamuretül Aziz Province, to Dersim. **Kangozade Mehmet** from Karabal Clan became the most known name in these “escape operations”. In various witness accounts it is said that those who organized the escape to Dersim were paid a sum of money. Saving people for money cannot be regarded within the definition of “Righteous attitude”. However, the surprising dimension of the activities that Kangozade Mehmet carried out in that period and his tragic end make it necessary at least for his name to be remembered. According to the witness accounts of the Armenians who survived the genocide, in the Ağzunik village where Kangozade Mehmet Agha ruled, thousands of people took shelter in 1915 and after that. Misak Babacanyan of Harput tells that Mehmet Agha hid 500 Armenian youth and 700-800 women and children.²²⁹ According to another witness account, there were so many Armenians in Ağzunik that they called the village “Paris”.²³⁰ According to Galust Galustyan’s, from Arapkir, witness account, even after 1915, Armenians continued to take shelter with Kangozade Mehmet. In January 1917, he saw that there were about 2000 Armenians who “had fled” in Ağzunik. He stayed there for ten days. Then, he set out to go to Erzincan with 54 people.²³¹

We see in all of these accounts that a certain sum of money was paid for escaping, but nothing was demanded for the stay in Ağzunik. We can learn from the accounts that the escapes in some regions –

Raporları, Faik Bulut, p.140-142, Evrensel Basım Yayın, 2005, İstanbul. *Aşiretler Raporu*, p. 289, 295, 296, Kollektif, Kaynak Yayınları, 2014, İstanbul.

²²⁶ *Dersim Raporları*, Faik Bulut, op.cit., p. 215-216. Kazım Karabekir claims that İdare Agha helped Armenians escape to Erzincan in exchange for money. Even though there are various people who are mentioned in the witness accounts of the survivors as having saved people by taking money, there is no account of this kind whatsoever concerning İdare Agha.

²²⁷ Interview with İbrahim Karakaya op.cit.

²²⁸ *Paga Khalik: bir Dersim yaşar Dersim içinde*, İbrahim Karakaya, Çıla newspaper, July 2014.

²²⁹ Kedername, op.cit. p. 405.

²³⁰ Ibidem, p. 421

²³¹ Ibidem. p. 454

especially if the commute chosen was hiding in the post-cart – were made possible by bribing the cartwright or the officials. These reasons can to a certain extent explain why money was asked for escape organizations, even though it may not justify it. Historian Raymond Kévorkian underlines that it is also necessary to take into consideration the famine that was lived: “*Dersim was a place that the Ottoman state could not properly control. They saved about 15 000 people. They helped them take refuge with the Russian army. In this period, so many people came to Dersim and problems started. There was not enough food for everyone. Some helped the Armenians in exchange for money. But one should not blame those people for that, it is in any case a poor region*”.²³² Even though the circumstances of the period made some reasons understandable, we cannot put the activities of Kangozade Mehmet on the same scales with those that were made outright. The only right we can deliver to him, is that, contrary to tens of examples during the genocide, at least he conducted an “honest” relationship with the Armenians. Despite those who took the last coin with promises of saving them and then massacred all the family, Kangozade Mehmet Agha, albeit in exchange for money, kept his promise, made sure thousands of Armenians reached Dersim and survived. Even though he did not join any uprising, he was among the victims of 1938 Dersim massacre, and was killed near Lavo River with all his family.

Seyit Rıza’s closeness with Dersim Armenians and his search for creating alliances with them is related by researchers. We found a witness account about his attitude in 1915 in an interview we had in Muş. “*We could not have been saved if it weren’t for Seyit Rıza. He was transferring Armenians through Erzincan and Erzurum to Russia*”, told his relatives living in Armenia to Armen Galust, from Muş. Galust’s grand-uncles get to Armenia by way of Dersim. Seyit Rıza sent his men to Bingöl Solhan in order to meet them.²³³ Despite this attitude, we see that later in 1918 Seyit Rıza attacked the Armenian fighters remaining in Erzincan and Erzurum while the Russian army was retreating.²³⁴ At this stage, it was suggested that he was deceived with speculations such as the lives of Kurdish people living near Erzincan were in danger.²³⁵

In many witness accounts of Armenians who survived the genocide, it is said that they were saved with the help of “Dersim Kurds” and with no mention of a name.²³⁶ As Agop Krikoryan from Merho village mentioned “*Those who escaped to Dersim were saved*”.²³⁷ The sign of the rage that the Righteous attitude of Dersim people caused to the government can be seen in the following lines of Kazım Karabekir:

“Even though not a single Turk can spend time around the clans without being attacked, the most ordinary Christian can hang and does trade among the clans for months. They never get attacked because of their religion. On the contrary, they are protected and aided by these clans. In fact during the deportation, many Armenians from Kharpert, Arapkir, Egin etc. escaped to Dersim. After being protected by the clans for a long time, they were transferred to Russia. During the rest of the war, these clans provided aid and guidance to the Armenian committees Against the Turks”.²³⁸

²³² *Celal Bey ve diğerleri*, Interview with Raymond Kévorkian, Burçin Gerçek, Radikal newspaper, 26.02.2006.

²³³ Interview with Armen Galust, January 2014, Muş.

²³⁴ *Hatıratım*, Nuri Dersimi, p. 57-58, Dam Yayınları, 2014, İstanbul. In his report written in 1918, Kazım Karabekir says for Seyit Rıza “This man has understood the greatness of the Russians and he is a pig against the Ottoman Government”, then he adds, “Even though he has (...) correspondence with the Armenians, he also has services like defending Hozat and acting in favor of the government”. *Dersim Raporları*, Faik Bulut, op.cit., p. 218

²³⁵ *1915’in denek taşında Türk ve Kürt siyaseti*, 2.Bölüm, Hovsep Hayreni, Hayastan Info, 27 March 2013.

²³⁶ For one of the anonymous people who saved the Armenians, Kalê Şêx’s story cf. supra p. 45.

²³⁷ *Dersim 1937-38 Sözlü Tarih Proje Raporu*, testimony of Agop Krikoryan, Avrupa Dersim Dernekleri Federasyonu, 2015

²³⁸ *Dersim Raporları*, Faik Bulut, op.cit., p. 222

This rage would be a determining factor in the intensity of the violence that the state directed at Dersim people in 1937-38.²³⁹

Other Righteous persons in Mamuretül Aziz Province

Mustafa Agha from Karaçan

Mıgırdiç Boğosyan from Çanakçı village in Kiği lost his family during the deportation. Himself and “Boğos’s grandson Sogomon” were hiding for six months in the house of Mustafa Agha from **Karaçan village**. Later, they went to “**Karaman Afdara**”’s village, after staying there for 18 months, they reached Erzurum, which was under Russian control²⁴⁰. We contacted people in Karaçan village in order to get information about Mustafa Agha. We learnt that Mustafa Agha had gone to America after 1915. However, we could not obtain any information on hiding Boğosyan and his friend. We can only make guesses about Boğosyan’s savers, about whom he says “*Both of them helped me a great deal*”. Kahraman Afdara’s village and region have not been mentioned. We can suggest that Kahraman Afdara was from Dersim since he helped them to get to Erzurum; it is within possibility that he was Kahraman Agazade Mehmet from Keçel clan.

Huleköy Aghas

The convoy deported in the first half of June was attacked by many gangs on the Erzincan-Kemah bridge-Arapkir road. About 80 women could take refuge in Huleköy. (Elazığ, Şahinkaya village) Aghas take them to Dersim²⁴¹.

The opposite shore of Asvan village

As deportation started in Asvan (Muratçık, Elazığ), the village was surrounded by gangs. Zaven Gugasyan’s uncle managed to escape from the village and reach Dersim. He sent Kurdish people from Dersim many times to get his family and bring them back. Finally, a Kurd known by the family reached the village and saved them. They had to cross the river if they wanted to get to Dersim. They crossed the water with difficulty, but their mother could not continue with the journey. Gugasyan’s uncle crossed the river in order to save his mother, but he saw that the whole village was being deported. He sent Havgaklı Ali Bey after the convoy, but he could not reach them either.²⁴²

Gugasyan’s village Asvan (Aşvan/Muratçık) is at the juncture where Murat river and Karasu stream unite and mix into Fırat.²⁴³ Asvan’s opposite side is the Kangozade Mehmet Agha’s Ağzunik village mentioned above. We may assume that the persons mentioned in the account as “Dersim Kurds” were Kangozade Mehmet’s relatives. Gugasyan recounts their escape by saying “*We set out to go to the Kurdish people, near Mahmut Agha*”, who must be Kangozade Mehmet.

Mehmet Agha from Kesrik and other persons

The deportation started in June 1915 in the towns close to Kharpert. Akabi’s family was living in one these towns (the testimony didn’t mention the name of the village). Men older than 12 years old were gathered in the center of the village. Akabi, with her mother and uncle’s wife, fled to Çiftlik village. They learned that women and children would be deported too. They went to Mehmet Agha in Gezereg²⁴⁴. “*He met us with gratitude and hid us from the Turks for almost a year without asking for any money. He looked after us like a father until Erzincan was taken. We are indebted to this man for a lifetime, his good*

²³⁹ On the way the soldiers who took part in the Dersim massacre were tried to be provoked by saying “*These are the ones who hid Armenians*”: “*Dersim araştırmacısı Cemal Taş : Dersim’deki toplu mezarları savcılara göstermeye hazırım*”, T24, 28.11.2011.

²⁴⁰ *Tsayn Darabelots* (Acı Çekenlerin Sesi), B. Donabedian, op.cit. p. 109

²⁴¹ Mgrditch Mouradian’s testimony, Fonds Andonian, P.J. 1/3, liasse 11, Baibourt, f1, Bibliotheque Nubarian.

²⁴² *Tsayn Darabelots*, op.cit. p. 93

²⁴³ The village has been under dam waters today.

²⁴⁴ *Tsayn Darabelots*, op.cit. p. 135

deed cannot be forgotten, we could not have survived without him” says Akabi in her testimony. Gezereg/Kesrik where Mehmet Agha was living was a village of Kharpert in 1915. 2280 Armenians were living in the town before 1915. Kesrik became later a district of Elazığ city and called Kızılay. We were not able to find any trace of Mehmet Agha.

In Mamuretül Aziz Province other Righteous persons saved their neighbors or the unknown people. Their names are mentioned in the witness accounts but there is not enough information to find any trace of them: **Harputlu Sadık, Mustafa and Musa Efendi, In Goşan (Uzun Hüseyin) village ‘a nameless old man, Kesrikli Babacan Paşa, from Tadem (Tadım) village ‘a widower’ and her step-son Hafız, Mezreli Berber Şakir.**²⁴⁵

IX. Kütahya sub-governorship

Faik Ali Bey, Kütahya sub-governor

In Kütahya, which became an independent sub-governorship in May 1915,²⁴⁶ the most well-known conscientious attitude was that of **Faik Ali Bey**. In 1915, he would manage prevent the deportation of Kütahya Armenians without being attacked or risked his life, he also made sure that those who came from other provinces were able to stay in Kütahya.

Faik Ali preferred to be known as a poet, rather than his administrative identity²⁴⁷. There is little information in the Ottoman Archives as to how he managed to do this exceptional resistance. However, we see that in August 1915, the government began to worry about Armenians deported from other places gathering in Kütahya and remaining there for long a time. First, the Ministry of Interior reminded that *“The Armenians arrived in Kütahya should be sent to Aleppo”*²⁴⁸. Later, Faik Ali was asked to explain *“the reason why Armenians, which were brought from Izmit and other places, were located in Kütahya, and not sent to the dedicated regions”*²⁴⁹. In a telegraph sent on 28 August 1915 to Faik Ali as a reply, it is seen that the sub-governor tried to play for time by putting forth some pretexts, but the government affirmed his intention to prevent Armenians from settling in Kütahya: *“The coming Armenians are not meant to stay there”*²⁵⁰

It is not possible to find traces of the telegraphs that Faik Ali sent to the government on this matter in the Ottoman Archives; just like in the cases of other state officials who resisted to the orders.

Similar correspondence with reminders and reproaches continue until 9th September 1915. But after that date, something, and we can only see the results in the archives, happens: the government accepted that there was no need to make records about Armenians *“Since none of the Armenians in Kütahya were sent out”*. In November 1915, the Ministry asked information about *“The Armenians who were decided not to be sent and for those that were settled into neighborhoods.”*²⁵¹ On 4 February 1916, the Ministry *“allows Armenians that were staying in some neighborhoods temporarily, not to be sent anywhere but to settle*

²⁴⁵ Ibidem, op.cit. p. 244-254, 270-273, *Humanity in the Midst of Inhumanity*, Shahkeh Yaylaian Setian, op.cit. pp. 89-89, 95-105, 168-169.

²⁴⁶ BOA, DH.İ.U.M.EK. 6/76, 16/R/1333.

²⁴⁷ On the tombstone of Faik Ali, who would take the surname “Ozansoy” in the Republican period, the unique inscription is the title “Poet”.

²⁴⁸ BOA. DH.ŞFR. 55/106, 08/L /1333

²⁴⁹ BOA. DH.ŞFR. 55/204, 14/L /1333

²⁵⁰ BOA. DH.ŞFR. 55/278, 17/L /1333

²⁵¹ BOA. DH.ŞFR. 58/53, 09/M /1334

down to where they are located.²⁵² After this date, at least until November 1916, the government gave up tracking Kütahya and the Armenians settled down in the city.²⁵³

How Kütahya could become a shelter for Armenians from cities far away such as Merzifon?²⁵⁴ What was the reason of renunciation of the government from insisting on the deportation of Kütahya Armenians? Jamanag newspaper editor Sebuğ Aguni asked the same questions to Faik Ali, when he met him in Istanbul after the war. Sebuğ Aguni was among the intellectuals that were deported from Istanbul on 24 April 1915. He survived the deportation and wrote a book named “The documented history of the massacre of one million Armenians” in 1920. According to Aguni “*Even Faik Ali himself does not exactly know how he managed to do this*”.²⁵⁵ Faik Ali does not want to place himself to the fore. As an answer to Aguni’s questions, he says that “*Kütahya Armenians do not owe their salvation to anyone, only to their luck, to their fate and maybe to the momentary good will of the government.*” According to Faik Ali, in this case, “*Kütahya Turks who strongly opposed to the deportation Armenians*” played an important role. **Germiyanzade family, Hocasade Rasih Efendi and other notables in the city** -whose names were not mentioned- displayed an especially firm attitude in this direction. Aguni reminds us that the government still threatened to discharge the governor from his office and to punish the Turks that protected the Armenians, but Faik Ali “*weakened the stern attitude of the government with a cunning strategy*” he says. We do not have any details concerning Faik Ali’s “cunning strategy”, but it is understood that Germiyanzade family and Hocasade Rasih Efendi were strong enough to influence the Party of Union and Progress and they used this power to protect the Armenians.

Germiyanzade Ali Bey and Hocasade Rasih Efendi

Kütahya became a place of refuge for Armenians from Adapazarı, Bandırma, Tekirdağ, Bursa and many other cities in 1915.²⁵⁶ We tried to find a trace of the Righteous persons in Kütahya. However, in this city where everything related to Armenians has been erased, it seems that the traces of those who tried to save them have been also deleted. We saw the statues of governors who were in service before Faik Ali, but we couldn’t see any trace of his name in the city²⁵⁷. Even the fact that the city’s famous ceramics were fabricated by Armenian craftsmen – especially by Hacı Minas – was erased from memories.²⁵⁸ All craftsmen of ceramics were Armenians until 1890s, but in the republican period Kütahya ceramics was shown as a “Turkish-Islamic art”. At the same time, the Armenian churches in Kütahya, except one, were destroyed; mosques and post offices were built in their stead²⁵⁹. The Armenian graveyard in the city was destroyed and some gravestones were thrown into the garden of the Archeological Museum.

The Şhreküstü, Meydan and Pirlar districts, where Armenian and Muslim people lived in 1915 in Kütahya, are today full of abandoned historical wooden houses, the numbers of which surpass the numbers in any other city. With their look of a “ghost city”, these houses are the only remains from Armenians – and those who protected them – in Kütahya. As for the three floor mansion of Hocasade Rasih Efendi in Meydan district, despite its ruined state, says a lot about the power of the family at that period. We learn from the Ottoman Archives that Hocasade Rasih Efendi was a responsible for collecting

²⁵² BOA. DH.ŞFR. 60/196, 26/Ra/1334

²⁵³ In November 1916, “since it was not religiously appropriate for Armenians to be settled down into the region” an order for their abduction was sent. BOA. DH.ŞFR. 70/92, 29/M /1335

²⁵⁴ “It talks about Fenerciyan Ohannes who was one of Merzifon people and who during the deportation of the Armenians to the interiors escaped to Kütahya and still is there and helps Armenians with their return”. BOA. DHEUM.2.Şb 74/21, 13/L /1334

²⁵⁵ *Milion me hayeru charti badmutyune*, Sebuğ Aguni, pp. 251-253, 1920, Istanbul. Megerditch Basma from Nubarian Library translated relevant parts from Armenian.

²⁵⁶ Ibidem, p. 253.

²⁵⁷ A street and a primary school that bear Faik Ali’s name are in his hometown Diyarbakır.

²⁵⁸ Interview with Ali Kehribar, news reporter and local historian from Kütahya, October 2013, Kütahya.

²⁵⁹ In the visit that we made in October 2013, the last Armenian church that was left standing in Kütahya was stopped from being used as a wedding saloon a short time ago. “Its owners” were planning to have the building demolished and have an apartment building constructed in its stead.

taxes²⁶⁰. Hocasade Rasih was influential as to be able to “*have old and new governors exiled from the region.*”²⁶¹ He was elected deputy from “monarchist” group in 1908 elections.²⁶² In 1920, he was elected for a second time, but this time from The Party of Freedom and Understanding²⁶³. It is possible to assume that the distance of Hocasade Rasih with The Party of Union and Progress was greatly influential in his attitude in 1915.

While looking for people that may know Hocasade Rasih’s family in Meydan district, we met 80 year old Mehmet Emin Ilgat. He told us that there used to be large lands belonging to him and to Hocasade family in the area where there is a Sugar Factory today. Then we could find Azmi Özütemiz, a descendant of Hocasade. However, even though we talked on the phone many times, Azmi Bey abstained from the family history and did not want to meet with us. The reason for his reservation, even though he did not reveal it, was probably because Hocasade Rasih Efendi’s son Rasihzade İbrahim was stigmatized during the Republican period as a “traitor”. Between 1921-1922, Rasihzade İbrahim was sub-governor when Kütahya was controlled by the Greek army. He did not support the struggle organized by Mustafa Kemal; this caused him to be accused of treason. In this process, Hocasade Rasih Efendi’s influence, which once was effective even on the Party of Union and Progress, was of no use anymore. His son İbrahim was exiled and then he continued to live his life in difficult circumstances in Lesbos Island.²⁶⁴

Behind the events that led to mark Hocasade Rasih and his son as “traitors”, was there a reaction to the fact that the Unionists were gathering around Mustafa Kemal? How did Hocasade Rasih make it possible for Kütahya Armenians to not be deported? In the interviews that we held in Kütahya, we could not find answers to these questions.

Germiyanzade family was the descendants of Germiyanogulları Dynasty, who founded a Principality before Ottoman Empire. They preserved their influence during the Ottoman times as well. Faik Ali considered them to be among those who “*strictly opposed the deportation of the Armenians*”. Known with the title “Hanedan-ı belde” (dynasty of the province), the prominent personage of the family was Germiyanzade Ali Bey who would serve as Kütahya mayor between the years 1915, 1916-1919 and 1922-1929. Germiyanzade family was at the same time relatives with the Ottoman Dynasty. A member of the family, Abdurrahman Paşa’s son Arif Hikmet Paşa was married to Naile Sultan.

Today, even though there is a touristic “Germiyan Street” in the city, there is no sign in memory of Ali Bey. Ali Bey’s mansion in Pirlar district is in shambles and its owner has changed long time ago. We do not know how Germiyanzade Ali Bey dissuaded the government from deporting Armenians in 1915. We could not obtain any information on this subject from members of the family. However, according to Faik Ali’s talk with Aguni, it can be affirmed that the family used its influence for a Righteous attitude.

²⁶⁰ BOA. BEO. 4285/321358 17/C /1332

²⁶¹ BOA. DH.MKT. 2701/76 14/Z /1326

²⁶² *1908 Devrimi*, Aykut Kansu, p. 380, İletişim, 1995, İstanbul.

²⁶³ *İlk Meclis'in vekilleri: Millî Mücadele döneminde seçimler*, Ahmet Demirel, p. 206, İletişim, 2010, İstanbul.

²⁶⁴ *150'likler meselesi: bir ihanetin anatomisi*, Sedat Bingöl, p. 278, Bengi Yayınları, 2010, İstanbul.

X. Righteous figures in other cities

During the Armenian genocide there were people, in Izmir, Trabzon, Adana, Aleppo, Syria, Bitlis and Van provinces, who opposed orders and tried to prevent deportations and massacres or provided a refuge to Armenians. We have little information as to the identity or the extent of their saving efforts.

Izmir Province

French Marine Archives describe how **Manisa sub-governor Tefvik** executed orders only superficially and saved Manisa Armenians.²⁶⁵ In the same way, it was mentioned that **Aydın Gendarme Commander Nuri** tried to prevent the deportation.²⁶⁶ It was not possible for us to reach any other witness accounts or detailed information on their attitude.

Brigitte Balian with whom we met in Marseilles, expressed that her family was protected in İzmir by **Tabbah Dede**. Brigitte Balian's grandfather had a pharmacy in Izmir. Tabbah Dede was an acquaintance of the family. In front of their house, Tabbah Dede announced that no one could touch that family unless they trampled over his body.²⁶⁷

Trabzon Province

Muslim notables of Ordu District applied to the governor to allow the Armenians to remain in their own locations. However, their efforts proved to be in vain, The Mayor did not listen and threatened them.²⁶⁸ Mgirdiç Artun from Ordu and the twenty people together with him escaped from the deportation convoy, and hid in caves. **An anonymous postman from Mesudiye** protected Artun's sister and mother. After hiding in caves for six months, Artun and his friends escaped to Georgia with the help of **Hakki Gürsoy**.²⁶⁹

When the deportation was announced in **Trabzon**, the **gentry** generally tried to resist, lighten the orders, get exceptions, drown the “deportation”. However the central government firmly confirmed the orders.²⁷⁰ In order to save Apik Messerlian, who worked in **Trabzon** French Consulate, from deportation, many Turkish people exercised all their means, but they could not do this.²⁷¹ Antoine Köyliyan who worked in Messageries Maritimes agency hid in the house of an old Turkish lady in Amasya. Later he would be caught and deported.²⁷² **The Muslim gentry in Samsun** made efforts to have a regulation favoring the Armenians issued, but the orders were firm.²⁷³

Adana Province

The mufti of Hacin refused the **Regiment Commander** asking him for a fatwa approving the deportation. He told him that he saw “nothing good in what he wanted to do”. The mufti had a close Protestant Armenian friend. He tried every means in order to be able to protect him from the deportations, but he could not succeed.²⁷⁴ **Feke and Yerebakan Muslims** opposed also to the deportation. They said that the Armenians in their cities never committed a crime, they did not have guns, they lived in peace,

²⁶⁵ Service historique de la marine, 1BB7245, doc. No 109, in *Le Génocide des Arméniens*, op.cit. p. 709.

²⁶⁶ Ibidem

²⁶⁷ Interview with Brigitte Balian, June 2014, Marseille.

²⁶⁸ *Tehcir ve Taktil, Divan-ı Harbi Örfi Zabıtları*, Vahakn N. Dadrian, Taner Akçam, op.cit. p. 35

²⁶⁹ *Harut Usta'nın dilinden Ordu'nun gayrı resmi tarihi*, Ferda Balancar, Agos, 18.07.2014, Istanbul

²⁷⁰ The interview of Trabzon Italian Consul M. Gorrini in *Messagero* newspaper. in *Les Mémoires de Mgr Jean Naslian*, op.cit. I. Cilt p. 171

²⁷¹ *Les Mémoires de Mgr Jean Naslian*, op.cit. I. Cilt p. 173

²⁷² Ibidem, p. 184

²⁷³ Ibidem, p. 190

²⁷⁴ *The Treatment of Armenians in the Ottoman Empire 1915-16*, op.cit., p. 497. In the uncensored version, the testimony appears to belong to Hacin. *The Treatment of Armenians in the Ottoman Empire*, p. 507, Gomidas Institute, 2000, London.

they had friends, shopkeepers and craftsmen. In this way, they could postpone the deportation for three months.²⁷⁵

Aleppo Province

Cemil Könne was a graduate of Mekteb-i Bahriye (Naval School) and he studied mechanics in England. He was in charge of the ‘şahtur’ (a kind of boat) dockyard in Euphrates Commandment. During this office, he manages to save many Armenians deported from Antep by registering them as workers or craftsmen in the dockyard.²⁷⁶ He provided food, clothing and medicine to Armenian families.

There are many Armenian witness accounts testifying that Cemil Könn saved many people’s lives by employing them in the dockyard. However, the data we have found in the Ottoman Archives of the Prime Ministry state that Cemil Könn – at least in the beginning – did not engage these savings with his own initiative. We see that it was the order of the Ministry of Interior in July 1917 to have Armenians work in Birecik in the dockyard²⁷⁷.

The time when Cemil Könn protected the Armenians in Birecik – which was not mentioned in the witness accounts – was probably after 1917. Even though employing Armenians in the dockyard was not done on his own initiative, he applied the order that came from the Ministry in its widest sense and it is possible that he registered many people as craftsmen, whether they were “competent craftsmen” or not. The grateful comments made about him in the witness accounts and the fact that he saved photographer Hagop Muradyan from Antep by registering him to be employed as a carpenter, reinforce this possibility.²⁷⁸

Filomen Hekimian and his family who were deported from Samsun reached Suruç by witnessing the massacres. For the first time in the deportation, they received some bread from **Suruç Muslims**.²⁷⁹ The clothes of the convoy, which approached Syria and in which Yeghisapert Berberian happened to be, were stolen and they were left naked. **Arab women living in areas close to the border** prevented those who came to steal the women from the convoy, they took the women home, fed them and gave them Muslim clothes. Berberian and the women near him survived in this way.²⁸⁰

Syria Province

Loytved Hardegg, the German Consul in Damascus, wrote on 30 May 1916 that Cemal Paşa formed an aid organization for the Armenians who were deported to the region and that **Hüseyin Kazım Bey**, who had served as Thessaloniki and Aleppo governors and was known to be a reliable, trustworthy and hardworking person, was appointed as its head. After some time, Hüseyin Kazım Bey told Loytved Hardegg that he wanted to resign from his duty. He expressed that the precautions he recommended were not taken, officials were working Against him and the government was not earnest in its willingness to aid the Armenians, on the contrary it wanted systematically exterminate them.²⁸¹ He believed that “*This horrible extermination policy was very shameful on Turkey’s part, and that it would prove to be very harmful to Turkey after the peace*”.

Even though Hüseyin Kazım Kadir that Hardegg mentioned was formerly a member of the Party of Union and Progress, he had resigned from the party and from government service. Hüseyin Kazım Bey was also the writer of strong articles supporting the economic boycott that the Party of Union and

²⁷⁵ Ibidem, p. 507

²⁷⁶ For more detailed information on Könn “*Birecik’te Ermeni sürgünlerini ölümden kurtaran Cemil (Bahri) Könn*”, Ümit Kurt, Toplumsal Tarih, January 2015, p. 84-87, Istanbul.

²⁷⁷ BOA. DH.ŞFR. 78/4, 11/N/1335, BOA. DH.ŞFR. 558/80, 05/Te/1333. Transcription from Ottoman: Ömer Türkoğlu.

²⁷⁸ *Birecik’te Ermeni sürgünlerini ölümden kurtaran Cemil (Bahri) Könn*, op.cit. p. 86

²⁷⁹ *Les Mémoires de Mgr Jean Naslian*, op.cit. I. Cilt p. 204

²⁸⁰ *Humanity in the Midst of Inhumanity*, Shahkeh Yaylaian Setian, op.cit. p. 73-74.

²⁸¹ From the Consul in Damascus (Loytved Hardegg) to the Embassy in Constantinople, Damascus, 30 May 1916, DE/PA-AA/R14092, in *The Armenian Genocide : Evidence from the German Foreign Office Archives*, Wolfgang Gust, op.cit. p. 589

Progress wanted to implement against Greek people between 1913-1914.²⁸² Nevertheless, from his conversations with Hardegg, we can understand that he changed his attitude after 1915, and reacted to the atrocity that the Armenians were subjected to. For this reason, he tried to help the Armenians who were able to reach Aleppo and Damascus in 1916, but his efforts would prove to be in vain because of the sabotage of the officials.

Bitlis Province

Bitlis American Girls College students were saved from deportation and from forced marriages by the **military hospital chief Mustafa Bey**. He expressed that the students were giving him assistance and their presence was absolutely necessary for the proper functioning of the hospital.²⁸³ Aside from the information that he studied in France and Germany, there is no other trace about Mustafa Bey in the Ottoman Archives or in any other sources.

In Sassoon, in a village whose name is not mentioned, **Selim Agha** bribed an official to save the Armenians from deportation. He registers many families in this way as his own employees. However, the administrator understood that he was protecting Armenians and he was executed because of this. His severed head was sent to Muş in order to intimidate other Aghas who may have been intending to save the Armenians.²⁸⁴

In Siirt's Tanze village Osman Agha hid about 500 Assyrians in order to save them from deportation. But when the soldiers made a raid, he could not save them. His own life was in danger, he barely fled to Mosul. In 1926, he was able to return to his town, but he was targeted again by officials and he was killed.²⁸⁵

Bulakçıbaşı family hid Abkar Galust from Muş in their house in Hazro, then later in Muş.²⁸⁶ **A notable of Deştadem village in Muş, Curo** decided to help women and children who had taken refuge in mountains, forestlands. He saved the women and children of seven villages and helped them reach the Armenian border. Yet he was denounced because of this and was executed on Taşo bridge.²⁸⁷ In Bitlis, **Safer, Agha of Şen town, in Motkan**, protected the Armenian villagers, did not allow a massacre happen.²⁸⁸

Van Province

Part of Perkri (Muradiye) Armenians was protected by **Tahar Bey** who was ruling in the region. Administrative offices asked Tahar Bey to either kill the Armenians or to hand them over. However, Tahar Bey, contrary to K r H seyin Pa a from Haydaran clan, was not sided with the state forces in 1915. He considered that handing over those who took refuge with him as dishonor. Different witness accounts express different fates for Tahar Bey. According to one account, Tahar Bey was killed because of his opposition to the massacres of the Armenians in labor battalions.²⁸⁹ According to Davit Farmanian from Khachan (Altıyol) village, the officials poisoned him because he did not hand over those who had taken refuge with him.²⁹⁰ According to the account of Egedzor (G m şd ven) villagers, Tahar Bey took them

²⁸² *The Young Turks and the Boycott Movement: Nationalism, Protest and the Working Classes in the Formation of Modern Turkey*, Doğan  etinkaya, p. 174, I.B. Tauris & Co., 2013, London.

²⁸³ Grace H. Knapp's testimony, in *Le G nocide des Arm niens*, op.cit. p. 418

²⁸⁴ *Les pratiques de sauvetage durant le g nocide des Arm niens*, Hasmik Tevosyan, in *La r sistance aux g nocides*, op.cit. p.194

²⁸⁵ Interview with İskender Debbaso, op.cit.

²⁸⁶ Interview with Armen Galust, op.cit.

²⁸⁷ Ibidem.

²⁸⁸ Kedername, op.cit. p. 209

²⁸⁹ *Le G nocide des Arm niens*, op.cit. p. 396

²⁹⁰ *Armenian Genocide by Ottoman Turkey*, p. 68, Zangak, 2013, Yerevan

home to save them. But Haydaran clan members came, they killed everyone and burned Tahar Bey's house.²⁹¹

According to other sources Tahar Bey (Tahar/Tahir Han or Mir Tahir) belonged to Mala Şero branch of Haydaran clan and lived in Iranian Kurdistan. In 1906, he was killed in a conflict with Hüseyin Bey.²⁹² However, The Ottoman archives only mention him as "deceased" in 1917.²⁹³ Even though the manner and date of death remain uncertain, by making inferences from the many accounts on him, it is possible to say that Tahar Bey was trying to save the Armenians in Muradiye villages in 1915.

Ercek town administrator advised villagers to take women and children to faraway places. Many people who heeded her advice managed to save their families.²⁹⁴ The town administrator also tried to help Armenians deported from other places and passing through Ercek by giving them food.²⁹⁵ **Mihe** from **Sosrat (Susurat/Tabanlı)** village tried to explain to the Armenian villagers that the Aghas who were promising protection, were lying. But he could not convince the villagers. He only managed to save a few people, by helping them to get to Lim island.²⁹⁶

In Erciş, Muhtar Ali Çavuş's wife Hamayil hid her neighbor Mgirdiç Alsanian in her house.²⁹⁷ In **Aghasav (Bayramlı) village Raşit Agha's wife Fatê** gave her son Nuri Mehmed a gun and told him to save two Armenians by helping them to reach the Russian army. Those who remained in the village were also saved from massacre thanks to Fatê.²⁹⁸

In Gradz Kar (Kadirasker) village, about 40 Armenians take refuge in **Murat Agha's** house. But the gangs took away the men hiding in the house, Murat Agha could only protect women and children. After a while they pressured Murat Agha to deliver women and children. "Kill me, I cannot give you these families" he answered. At the end of May, with the approaching of the Russians, those who were hiding in the house were saved.²⁹⁹

²⁹¹ Ibidem. p. 83-84

²⁹² *Haydaran Aşireti*, Abdurrahman Kedali, <http://www.semskiasireti.com/?Syf=18&Hbr=423703&/> Hayderan-yada-Heyderi-Aşireti

In the novel where Mehmet Uzun narrates the life of Evdale Zeynike by using realistic and fictional elements together, Tahar Han is depicted. According to Mehmet Uzun, Tahar Han formerly lived in Van, then he was exiled to Iran Kurdistan. *Abdalın Bir Günü*, Mehmet Uzun, İthaki Yayınları, 2006, İstanbul.

²⁹³ BOA. İ.DUİT, 116/91, 07/Ca/1335. His name goes by "Vanlı Mir Tahir" in the Ottoman Archives.

²⁹⁴ *Armenian Genocide by Ottoman Turkey*, op.cit. p. 25

²⁹⁵ Ibidem, p. 31

²⁹⁶ Ibidem, p. 40

²⁹⁷ Ibidem, p. 72

²⁹⁸ Ibidem, p. 73

²⁹⁹ Ibidem, p.77

Annex : List of Righteous administrators, clan chiefs, religious leaders, notables and ordinary persons during Armenian genocide

In this report, we mentioned the story of 80 Righteous persons which we could reach more information about. But we could reach in total the stories of around 200 persons, including people whose names and detailed information were nonexistent.

Diyarbakir Province

- 1) Diyarbakir vice-governor Hamid Bey
- 2) Salkan family in Derik
- 3) Mardin sub-governor Hilmi Bey
- 4) Lice kaimakam Hüseyin Nesimi
- 5) Mala Sino family from Midyat
- 6) Temir family in Binkelb and Erde villages
- 7) Ali Batte, leader of Heverki clan
- 8) Zahrani Haco, from Heverki clan
- 9) Sheikh Fethullah
- 10) Mihellemi community from Hebsinas village
- 11) Salimo, Kurdish shepherd from Midyat
- 12) Hinde hanım from Ayn Sare village
- 13) Nuri Aslan's family who saved Karapete Xaço
- 14) Nuriye Yusuf (Temir family) from Kefre village
- 15) Süleyman Abbas from Nusaybin, Tel Aryaman village
- 16) Sarohan, from Heverki clan
- 17) Hasan Agha from Nusaybin Grebya village
- 18) Hasan Abbas (Hacı Sülemani clan), chief of Selamiye village
- 19) Rıfat Efendi, civil servant in Mardin
- 20) Mele Abdullah from Silvan
- 21) Mele Hasene Tawiki from Derik
- 22) Sheikh Abdi, from Idil Azak village
- 23) Azak Kefşin village Muslims
- 24) Osman Agha from Sırnak
- 25) Maro Oro, Azar, Süleyman Berho Aghas from Cizre
- 26) Vehbi Efendi from Savur
- 27) Beşiri deputy Kaymakam Ali Sabit
- 28) Beko's wife in Kefre village
- 29) Mala Cibo in Becirman village
- 30) Mala Şahbin, Mala Hüseyne İbrahim, Imam Mala Halil from Narlı (Xalah) village of Midyat
- 31) Muhammed Aghaya Bolinde, chief of Reskotan clan
- 32) Ahmede Kasım (Osman Agha's son) from Cizre Dergul village
- 33) Halil Sami, Cizre kaimakam
- 34) Abdullah Hüsrev Guleman, mine engineer from Ergani

Ankara Province

- 35) Ankara Governor Mazhar bey
- 36) Stanos village administrator İbrahim Şahin

- 37) Mehmet Radi bey
- 38) Kayseri Talas village administrator Faik
- 39) Yozgat sub-governor Cemal bey
- 40) Lawyer Refik or Rıfat bey from Yozgat
- 41) Mufti Abdullah efendi of Yozgat Boğazlıyan
- 42) Hacı Ömer Efendi from Keskin
- 43) Salim bey, Military recruitment chief
- 44) Kayseri Fırka Kumandan Vekili Şahabeddin Bey
- 45) Şakir bey, deputy of Yozgat
- 46) Ali Muhittin Pasha and his son Refi Cevad Ulunay
- 47) Mevlut, Agha of Kayseri Efkere village
- 48) Şevket, from Kayseri Hüreç (Konuklar) village

Kastamonu Province

- 49) Kastamonu governor Reşid
- 50) Kastamonu Muslim notables
- 51) Hafız Osman Nuri, mufti of Kastamonu
- 52) Kastamonu Gendarmerie Commander İzzet bey
- 53) Kastamonu notables Hacı Tevfik, Dursunzade Hilmi, Atabey religious school teacher Mehmed efendi, Salim efendizade Namık, Cevdet ve Salim efendi, Besim, Hoca Mehmed efendi, Trader Ahmed, Lawyer İzzet
- 54) Bolu civil servant Ali İlmi
- 55) Çankırı sub-governor Asaf
- 56) Çankırı soldier Mehmed İzzet
- 57) Çankırı Turkish people
- 58) Three anonymous Muslims who were hung in Bayburt

Erzurum Province

- 59) Ali bey from Sürmene
- 60) Şehriban and Yusuf from Erzincan Ergan village
- 61) Bayezid sub-governor Bagh efendi.
- 62) Turk in Aşkale who hid Rupen Toroyan in his house
- 63) The wife of İsmail Agha from Gumek
- 64) Gendarme who saved Priest Vahan Kiçuryan in Erzincan mountains
- 65) Halil from Kemah Hovit village
- 66) Molla from Aşkale Atıncığ (Hatuncuk) village
- 67) Cali (Sucuali) villagers
- 68) Hasan Çavuş from Tercan Kilise Komu village
- 69) İsmail from Çer village
- 70) Küçük Agha (Zeynel Abidin) from Karer
- 71) Davut oğlu Mehmet Ali from Kiştım village

Mamuretül Aziz Province

- 72) Seyit Ali from Dersim Ovacık Zarug village
- 73) Paşa Timur
- 74) Bake Agha
- 75) Idare İbrahim Agha

- 76) Ali Agha from Veratz village
- 77) Kangozade Mehmet Agha
- 78) Seyit Rıza
- 79) Havraklı Ali Bey
- 80) Kahraman Afdara (Agha)
- 81) Hacı Agha from Pilvenk clan
- 82) Pacha, Agha of Dersim Merho village
- 83) Zeynal and Süleyman Aghas from Koçan clan
- 84) Mıze Agha
- 85) Ali Çavuş from Kureyşan clan
- 86) Anonymous majour from Mezreh
- 87) Anonymous neighbor from Mezreh
- 88) A Turk from Hüseyinik
- 89) A Kurd from Mıze village
- 90) Mustafa Agha Azizoğlu, mayor of Malatya
- 91) Ağcazade Mehmed Efendi
- 92) Kudish people from Çilapur
- 93) A policeman from Malatya
- 94) Arap Osman from Malatya
- 95) Hacı Sheikh Agha, Adıyaman Bezike clan chief
- 96) Mufti of Arapkir
- 97) Harput Huleköy (Khulevank / Şahinkaya) Aghas
- 98) Dayioğlu Nuri bey from Harput Veriköy
- 99) Mustafa Agha from Karaçan
- 100) Mehmet Agha from Kesrik
- 101) Sadık, Mustafa and Musa Efendis from Harput
- 102) An old man from Goşan (Uzun Hüseyin) village
- 103) Babacan Pacha from Kesrik
- 104) A woman and his son Hafız from Tadem (Tadım) village
- 105) Barber Şakir from Mezreh
- 106) Lütfi Efendi, soldier from Egin

Konya Province

- 107) Konya and Aleppo Governor Celal Bey
- 108) Konya railway chief Hariri Bey
- 109) Ex-sheikh of the Mevlevi Order Abdülhalim Çelebi
- 110) Albanian major who gave food to labor bataillon and their families in Sultaniye
- 111) Sultaniye Kaimakam

Kütahya Sub-governorship

- 112) Kütahya sub-governor Faik Ali bey
- 113) Germiyanzade Ali bey
- 114) Hocasade Rasih efendi

Izmir Province

- 115) Manisa sub-governor Tevfik bey
- 116) Aydın Gendarmerie commander Nuri bey

117) Tabak (Tabah ?) Dede from Izmir

Trabzon Province

118) Ordu Muslim notables

119) Hakkı Gürsoy from Ordu

120) Trabzon Muslim notables

121) Samsun Muslim notables

Sivas Province

122) Çerkes Emir Pacha

123) Mesudiye Muslims

124) Tokat Erbaa kaimakam Abdelsettar Bey

125) Two Turks who hid Armenians in Merzifon

126) Gemerek village administrator Seyfettin Bey

127) A Turk from Alucra Koman district

128) Kadir Çavuş from Sivas Divriği Ödek village

129) Ali Efendi from Sivas Zara

130) Drivers from Şebinkarahisar Suşehri

131) Police chief from Harput and in service in Sivas

132) Commander living near Sivas Prapert (Günyamaç) village

133) Mahmut from Kükülbaş village

134) Nazaret's neighbor Karagilioğlu from Prapert village

135) Commander Çerkez Rıza Bey

136) Kurdish workers of Avedis Tayken in Khorsanak (Dikmencik) village

Adana Province

137) Mufti of Hacin

138) Feke and Yerebakan Muslims

Aleppo Province

139) Tapo Agha from Pazarcık, Sinemili clan chief

140) Cemil Köne, soldier in Birecik

141) Hacı Halil from Urfa

142) Major Sıtkı bey in Urfa

143) Muslims from Suruç

144) Arab women close to the Syrian border

Syria Province

145) Hama district Selimiye kaimakam Necmettin bey

146) Hama sub-governor Ali Firuzan

147) Hüseyin Kazım Kadri

Bitlis Province

148) Selim Agha from Sason

149) Bitlis Military hospital chief Mustafa Bey

150) Farmers who protected Anna Barseghian's family in Muş

151) Bulakçıbaşı family in Muş

152) Mele Ego

- 153) Curo from Deştadem village
 154) Osman Agha from Tanze village of Siirt
 155) Halaf Efendi, Agha of Muş Bulanık Pionk (Yemişen) village
 156) Sifo Mıstafi, Agha of Muş Dırmerd village
 157) Kurds from Khiartong village
 158) Hacı Ferho, Agha of Bitlis Motkan kazası Mıtsi village
 159) Safar Bey, from Bitlis Motkan kazası Şen (Kaşıklı) village
 160) Cangir Agha, from Siirt Nivla /Çizmeli village
 161) Dahr Agha from Dorham /Bayramlı
 162) Avdilla bey and Hüseyin bey, sons of İbrahim bey from Muş Malazgirt
 163) Sheikh, Agha of Muş, Malazgirt, Marmus köyü(Patnos, Koçaklar) village
 164) Çerkes people and Musa bey from Muş, Bulanık, Simon (Simo/Kurganlı) village
 165) Halil from Muş, Kirtakam/Tabanlı village
 166) Zikan and Derviş brothers from Muş, Sasun, Pırşenk village, Zıpotın clan

Van Province

- 167) Tahar bey from Perkri (Muradiye)
 168) Agha of Attil village
 169) Administrator of Erçek village
 170) A Kurd from Darabek (Derebey) village
 171) Mihe from Sosrat (Tabanlı) village
 172) Nuri, son of Tahir Agha from Seyvan Kale and Abdul Aziz, son of Karavanlı Ali
 173) Mollah who was opposed to the forced islamization of Armenians in Köşk (Yeniköşk) village
 174) Spayert (İspayert, Sürücüler village, Hizan) Seigneur Malabathlı Hurşit bey
 175) Hamayil, the wife of Muhtar Ali Çavuş in Erciş
 176) Fatê, the wife of Raşit Agha in Erciş Ağsraf /Bayramlı village
 177) Murat Agha from Erciş Gradz Kar/ Kadirasker village
 178) Bahram Bey from Gevaş, Harberd village
 179) Kırel villagers from Hakkari Hoşab district
 180) Hıdır from Hakkari, Ağbak district, Kharatun village

Der Zor Sub-governorship

- 181) Rasulayn kaimakam Yusuf Ziya bey
 182) Der Zor sub-governor Ali Suad bey
 183) Der Zor notables Hacı Feroz and Ayial

Beirut Province

- 184) Beirut Director of Post and Telegraph Galib Bey