

ՎԵՐԺԻՆԵ ՍՎԱԶԼՅԱՆ

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**ԱԿԱՆԱՏԵՍ ՎԵՐԱԴՐՈՂՆԵՐԻ**  
**ՎԿԱՅՈՒԹՅՈՒՆՆԵՐ**



**VERJINÉ SVAZLIAN**

**THE ARMENIAN  
GENOCIDE**

**TESTIMONIES  
OF THE EYEWITNESS SURVIVORS**



**THE ARMENIAN GENOCIDE  
ACCORDING TO THE TESTIMONIES OF THE EYEWITNESS SURVIVORS**

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*From 1955, during about 60 years, in the beginning on my own initiative, and, subsequently, under the auspices of the Institute of Archaeology and Ethnography, and later of the Museum-Institute of the Armenian Genocide of the National Academy of Sciences of Armenia, I have written down, and later, audio- and video-recorded the memoir-testimonies [700 units], as well as popular Armenian song-testimonies of historical character (in Armenian and Turkish-language) of the eyewitness survivors of the Armenian Genocide. This research has been carried out by me not only in the various regions of Armenia, but also in the Armenian Diaspora during my short-term personal or scientific trips in Syria, Lebanon, Egypt, Greece, France, Canada, the USA and Turkey. These memoir-testimonies have been published in various languages in my 16 volumes<sup>1</sup>.*

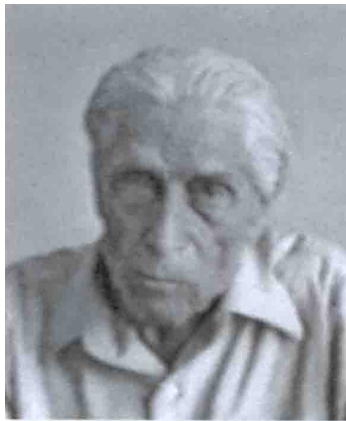


Verjiné Svazlian writing down the tragic memoirs and songs narrated by the Genocide survivor, Mariam Baghdishian (b. 1909, Moussa Ler).

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<sup>1</sup> The popular testimonies in the present article are quoted from my last publication: **"The Armenian Genocide. Testimonies of the Eyewitness Survivors,"** "Gitoutyoun" Publishing House of NAS RA, Yerevan, 2011, 850 p. – henceforth: Sv. 2011.

Following the overthrow of Sultan Abdul Hamid's regime the party of the Young Turks, "Ittihat ve Terakki" (Unity and Progress), which formed the government, adopted Sultan Hamid's massacre (1894-1896) policy and, professing the Pan-Turkish and Pan-Islamic ideologies, endeavored not only to preserve the Ottoman Empire, but also to brutally annihilate or to amalgamate and forcefully Turkify the Armenians and the other subject Christian peoples and to create a universal Pan-Turanic, Pan-Islamic state extending from the Mediterranean Sea to the Altai territory.



Hmayak Boyadjian  
(1902, Bitlis)

The eyewitness survivors of the Armenian Genocide (1915-1923), who, for the most part are no longer alive presently, remembered in every detail, during my recordings, the historico-political circumstances of the first genocide perpetrated in the 20<sup>th</sup> century. The representatives of the senior generation even remembered adoption (in the atmosphere of false freethinking of the Young Turks party) of the Turkish Constitution in 1908, accompanied by motto: "Freedom, justice, equity, irrespective of nationality and religion". A nationwide exultation prevailed in the country, since "equal rights" were to be secured by law to all the nations living in Turkey. While a survivor from Bitlis, **Hmayak Boyadjian** (born in 1902), has testified in his memoir: *"...When Hurriyet was declared in 1908, everybody, in the beginning, was of the opinion that Armenians and Turks would live like brothers. There were even festivities in our village and fusillades were performed"*. [Sv. 2011: Testimony<sup>2</sup> 19, p. 114] Nevertheless, a year had not elapsed since the declaration of the Turkish Constitution, when the town of Adana and the neighbouring Armenian-inhabited villages [which had been saved from Abdul Hamid's massacres] became the target of the hatred and genocidal actions of the Ittihat officials and brutalized Turkish mobs. During the Holy Week of 1909, from the 1<sup>st</sup> to the 3<sup>rd</sup> of April, Adana and its environs were on fire. The blood-thirsty Turkish crowd attacked the Armenian-inhabited quarters of Adana and the neighboring villages, plundered all the shops, slaughtered the unarmed and unprotected Armenians, not sparing even the women and the children.

The eyewitness of that turmoil historian-novelist, Smbat Byurat, has, under the immediate impressions of those sad events, created the following poem of great popularity as a truthful reproduction of the event, which has been communicated to me by the eyewitness survivor from Zeytoun, **Karapet Tozlian** (b. 1903):



Karapet Tozlian  
(1903, Zeytoun)

<sup>2</sup> Testimony – henceforth: T.

*“Let the Armenians cry, the cruel massacre  
Turned magnificent Adana into a desert,  
The fire and the sword and the merciless plunder  
Ruined, alas, the House of Roubinians!*

*Unarmed Armenians, in a moment  
Fell before the mob under the swords,  
Churches and schools were lost in flames,  
Thousands of Armenians ruthlessly died.*

*The merciless Turks deprived  
The child of his mother, the bride of her groom,  
Smashed everything on their way,  
Swallowed and got repleted with Armenian blood.*

*Three days and nights the fire from inside,  
The enemy's sword and bullet from outside,  
Wiped out the Armenians from the face of the earth  
Blood ran down the Armenian streets...” [Sv. 2011: T. 436, p. 563]*

The massacre of Adana was premeditated. This fact is testified by the telegram from Constantinople sent by the permanent under-secretary of the Ministry of Internal Affairs, Adil bey to all Turkish authorities in Cilicia, where it was written: "Utmost care should be taken that no harm is inflicted on foreign religious institutions or consulates"<sup>3</sup>. As noted H. Simonyan, "This was, in essence, an order to massacre Armenians"<sup>4</sup>.

During the massacres of Adana, dozens of Armenian towns and villages were ravaged and burnt down, while Moussa Ler (Dagh), Deurtyol, Hadjn, Sis, Zeytoun, Sheikh Mourad, Fendedjak and a number of other localities were saved from the slaughter due to the organized heroic self-defense against the attacks of tens of thousands of Turks.

In actual fact, that was the beginning (when the Young Turks had been feverishly preparing the total extermination of the Armenian nation) of the Great Genocide. When the First World War broke out Turkey entered into the war, having expansionistic objectives and a monstrous scheme of realizing the annihilation of the Armenians - the Armenian Genocide.

In February 1914 the party of "the Unity and Progress" formed a committee (Behaeddin Shakir, Doctor Nazim, Midhat Shukri). The so-called "Young Turk

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<sup>3</sup> Թերզեան Հ., Կիլիկիոյ աղետը, Կոստանդնուպոլիս, 1912, էջ 38-39: The author of the memoirs "The Calamity of Cilicia", a pharmacist from Hadjin, Hakob Terzian, was one of the leaders of Armenian resistance. He was a martyr of 1915 Armenian Genocide (Simonyan H., The destruction of Armenians in Cilicia, April, 1909, London, 2012, p. 7).

<sup>4</sup> Simonyan H., op. cit., p. 46.

triumvirate" (Talaat - Minister of the Interior, Enver - Minister of War, and Jemal - Minister of the Marine) operated the genocide against Armenians together with this committee. They were responsible for the organized implementation of the deportation and massacre of all Armenians in Western Armenia, Cilicia and the Armenian populated areas of Asia Minor<sup>5</sup>. It was committed by a secret order signed by Talaat pasha, Enver pasha and Doctor Nazim and sent to the authorities concerning the deportation and the extermination of the Armenians. Talaat pasha warned with violent hatred: "We have to square accounts with the Armenians"<sup>6</sup>, and-promised to spare nothing for that purpose.<sup>7</sup> Talaat pasha had issued a special order (9 September, 1915): "The right of living and working of the Armenians on Turkish soil is completely removed. In accordance with this, the government orders not to spare even the infants in the cradle..."<sup>8</sup>.

On the 2<sup>nd</sup> of August 1914 the Secret Treaty of Alliance was signed between Germany and Turkey in Constantinople. On the 6<sup>th</sup> of August 1914 a supplementary agreement was signed, the fifth clause of which stipulated: "Germany will use pressure to adjust the eastern frontiers of the Ottoman Empire so as to secure the immediate contact of Turkey with the Mohammedan population living in Russia"<sup>9</sup>.

During one of the sessions of the executive committee of Ittihat, Behaeddin Shakir had declared that it was necessary to immediately begin and finish the deportation of the Armenians and, in the meantime, massacre the people. "We are at war", he had cinically added, "there is no fear of interference from Europe and the Great States, the world press also cannot raise any protest and, even if it does, it will be without much result and, in the future, it will be considered as a fait accompli"<sup>10</sup>.

The general mobilization (*Seferberlik* - Turk.) had become the greatest evil for the Christian nations living in the Ottoman Empire, including the Armenians. Under the pretense of recruitment to military service, Armenian males aged 18-45 were drafted to serve in labor battalions (*Amelé tabour* - Turk.) and according to the special order of the war minister, Enver pasha, were taken to secluded places and were killed out of sight of viewers.

<sup>5</sup> Կիրակոսյան Զ., Առաջին համաշխարհային պատերազմը և արևմտահայությունը. 1914-1916 թթ., Երևան, 1965, էջ 237: Safrastyan R., Ottoman Empire: The Genesis of the Program of Genocide (1876-1920), Yerevan, 2011, pp. 119-121.

<sup>6</sup> Անտոնեան Ա., Մեծ ոճիրը, Բոսթոն, 1921, էջ 232:

<sup>7</sup> Կիրակոսյան Զ., op. cit., 1965, p. 245.

<sup>8</sup> Ներսիսյան Մ., Հայերի ցեղասպանությունը Օսմանյան կայսրությունում (փաստաթղթերի և նյութերի ժողովածու), Երևան, 1991, էջ 564-565:

<sup>9</sup> Ключников Ю., Сабанин А., Международная политика новейшего времени в договорах, нотах и декларациях, ч. II, Москва, 1926, N. 10. See: Կիրակոսյան Զ., op. cit., 1965, p. 202.

<sup>10</sup> Մեսրոպ Լեւոն, Տէր Զոր, հ. Բ, Բարիզ, 1955, էջ 258:





Sargis Khachatrian  
(1903, Harpoot)

*“...In 1914 Turkey declared a general mobilization”, - a survivor from Harpoot, **Sargis Khachatrian** (born in 1903), has narrated, - “and drafted the Armenian young men into the Turkish army. They took them and made them work in the ‘Amelé tabour’ and then they killed them all”.* [Sv. 2011: T. 116, p. 264]

The mobilization in Turkey was followed by the arms collection. That was accompanied by ubiquitous round-ups, during which, on the pretext of collecting “arms”, the Turkish policemen ravaged the houses of the Armenians, plundered their properties, arrested and killed many of them.

The arrest of the Armenian intellectuals followed the mobilization and the arms collection; it pursued the purpose of depriving the Armenian nation not only of its fighting force, but also of its leading minds. On Saturday, April 24, at midnight, 600 Armenian notables (political leaders, educators, writers, clergy and dignitaries<sup>11</sup>) were forcibly taken to police quarters in Constantinople and subsequently were sent to the deserts of Mesopotamia and exterminated. Among those who were deported to the deserts of Changhere and Ayash and exterminated were the well-known lawyer, member of the Ottoman Parliament and writer, Grigor Zohrap, the poets, writers and physicians Daniel Varouzhan, Siamanto, Ruben Zartarian, Ruben Sevak, Hovhannes Telkatintsi, Melkon Kyurdjian, Yeroukhan, Smbat Byurat, Tigran Chyokurian, Nazaret Taghavarian and numerous celebrated people from Istanbul, Svaz, Diarbekir, Marzvan, Erzroum, Kayseri, Izmir and other Armenian-inhabited localities. During the following days, weeks and months their number tragically increased.

Everywhere the Armenian schools and colleges were being closed and demolished.

Besides the Armenian educational institutions, the Armenian churches were also ravaged. The Armenian Patriarchate of Constantinople was incorporated into the Catholicosate of Sis, and Catholicos Sahak II Khabayan was recognized as the spiritual leader of Western Armenians.

On March 15 and April 3, 1915, the Russian Intelligence informed about the Ottoman empire that Armenians were arrested throughout the country, systematic massacres were committed in Karin (Erzroum), Deurtyol and Zeytoun; bloody clashes took place in Bitlis, Van and Moush; atrocities, plunder and murders occurred in Akn; economic collapse and a general massacre of the population were noted all over Asia Minor.

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<sup>11</sup> Berwick A., A European Declaration of Independence, London, 2011, p. 161.  
<http://www.tagesspiegel.de/downloads/4430082/4/manifest>



Sirak Manassian  
(1905, Van)

A survivor born in 1905 at the village of Kem of the Hayots Dzor (Armenian Valley - Arm.) of Van, **Sirak Manassian**, has testified about the horrible state of the Western Armenians: *"On the 4<sup>th</sup> of March 1915, we heard that they had killed the public servant-educator, Mr. Ishkhan<sup>12</sup> in the neighboring village of Hirj. That was at the time when the Turks were summoning, through Djevdet pasha, all our eminent leaders and were slaughtering them. In those dreadful days they unexpectedly killed Mr. Iskhan and threw him in the well. Not satisfied with this crime, they also threw his two children alive into the well. When we heard that, we and all our compatriots got much alarmed and started to get ready for the attack of the Turks.*

*On March 5, 1915, a strong artillery bang was heard. The people assembled in the square and then crowded in the church. The Turks had already mobilized and taken away the young men.*

*...After staying there for a month or two, we fled and approached Van. We were always moving at night, since we were pursued in the day-time. When we approached Van and were about to enter the town, the Turks stopped us and started to look for males. The heroes of Van, who were probably watching with field glasses, began to fire. Some of the Turks fell, others fled and we were saved and entered Van. We were lodged in Van in the school building. Every morning the brass band marched, playing, in the streets of Van, followed by the children. The self-defense of Van had already begun. An Armenian told us: 'Children, go and collect the used bullets so that they can prepare new ones.' We went and collected the bullets and handed them to the workshop. The day came when the battle became more intense in Van and Aygestan. The Vaspourakanis, who had gathered there, defended with unyielding will and determination Aygestan and the center of Van, Kaghakamedj, where violent combats took place. Hearing that the Russian army was advancing from Salmast to Van, the Turks departed panic-stricken. Our heroes attacked and not only did they liquidated the Turks, but also acquired a considerable amount of artillery units, bullets, etc.*

*On the 6<sup>th</sup> of May the Armenian flag waved over the citadel of Van. The Vaspourakanis welcomed with great love the Russian soldiers and the Armenian volunteers under the leadership of General Andranik Ozanian". [Sv. 2011: T. 35, pp. 142-143]*

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<sup>12</sup> Ishkhan – Nikoghayos Poghos Mikayelian (1881-1915), an active leader of the Armenian self-defensive movement. Opposing the Turkish rulers, he has defended the interests of the Armenians of Van, has given an impetus to education. He was killed on the eve of the self-defensive battles of Van in April by order of the vice-regent Djevdet pasha.



In the villages surrounding Van, the Turks had time to exterminate on the spot thousands of Armenians and, when the Russian army entered Van, accompanied by the Armenian writers Hovhannes Toumanian and Alexander Shirvanzadé, they became witnesses of bewildering scenes. "...Wherever Turks had the opportunity, they had massacred the Armenians," wrote H. Toumanian in his memoirs, "and mainly the males, and had taken away the beautiful women. And when if they had had sufficient time and when the terror of the Russian army and the Armenian volunteers had not been close, they had invented barbaric amusements: they had crucified people, various body parts of live people had been cut and arranged in different patterns; games had been invented: people had been put below the waist in cauldrons and boiled so that the live half could see and feel...; they had cut with red-hot iron bars the various parts of the body and roasted them on fire; they had roasted live people; they had massacred children before the eyes of parents and parents before the eyes of their children"<sup>13</sup>.

Naturally, if the Armenians had not had recourse to self-defense in Van, they would have been martyred in the same manner. It is appropriate to mention here the following



Ardsroun Harutyunian  
(1907, Van)

words of a survivor from Van, **Ardsroun Harutyunian** (born in 1907): *"Self-defense is born when there is violence against the people..."* [Sv. 2011: T. 40, p. 150]

And therefore, the heroic self-defensive battles fought in Van, Shatakh and other localities constituted the noble outbreak of the Western Armenians revolting against the acts of violence committed by the Ittihat government, their voice of protest addressed to the Great States of the world. This is also attested to by the following fragment of a popular song:

*"Van, a little town with its districts,  
Full of corpses in hundreds and thousands,  
The field was colored red with blood,  
The clouds, the sky and the stars raised their voice  
And roared and ordered loud enough  
To be heard in Europe and America."* [Sv. 2011: T. 628, p. 599]

However, neither Europe nor America interfered and only the national heroes succored the helpless people.

From the beginning of the First World War all the Western Armenians, including also the Sassounis, were subjected to new and brutal pursuits, plunders and murders.

In March 1915, the Turkish hordes also invaded Sassoun. In April-May, the first combats of the Sassounis took place. Exhibiting a heroic resistance to the Turkish army,

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<sup>13</sup> Թումանյան Հ., Երկերի ժողովածու, հ. 6, Երևան, 1959, էջ 212-213:

but suffering great losses, the Armenian fighters retreated to the slopes of the Andok Mountain and continued the self-defense. In June, unyielding fights took place in the region of Assank. The combatants of the Monastery of Gomuts and of Talvorik provoked confusion among the Kurdish hordes and seized the Satan bridge; the inhabitants of Ksak came to their rescue. On the 30<sup>th</sup> of July, the Sassounis liberated Shenik, but the enemy occupied the stables situated on the slopes of Andok with a new assault. The Sassounis heroically defended themselves from the attacking Turks and Kurds in the mountains of Andok, Tsovassar and Gerin. The survivors rescued from the massacres of Moush and its environs, about thirty thousand in number, who had taken refuge in the mountains of Kana and Havatorik, displayed a heroic resistance. However, that heroic self-resistance was cruelly suppressed.

*“The Turks attacked and began to massacre”, a survivor from Sassoun, Arakel Davtian (born in 1904), related. “They took away the beautiful girls and women. There was a freedom-fighter in our village, named Missak, who had a gun. He went into the monastery and started to fight. We had no arms. Sassoun resisted for two months. The Turkish soldiers came and besieged us. We had no help whatsoever and they slaughtered many of us”. [Sv. 2011: T. 4, p. 91]*



Yeghiazar Karapetian  
(1886, Sassoun)

Another eyewitness survivor from Sassoun, **Yeghiazar Karapetian** (born in 1886), has related these historic events in more detail: *“The attacks of the Kurds on the Armenians were, seemingly, of an unofficial character, but there was a general belief that they were all performed according to the instructions of the government, something which was proved by the fact that the Armenians' protests were not heard and their appeals remained unanswered...*

*On the 22<sup>nd</sup> of June, one hundred Kurdish horsemen from Bakran settled on the slopes of the Krenkan Mountain. On the following day, ten horsemen came to our village and claimed from the village notables ten sheep, ten measures of flour and ten felt-gowns. They received all this free of charge and without any objection and, being well-acquainted for a long time with the denizens of Havatorik or being conscience-stricken, Ali of Tamo said: 'Armenians, I have often eaten your bread and salt, now I have to tell you a truth. An order has come from the Sultan that we have to mercilessly massacre all the Armenians living on the Ottoman soil. Now if you stand up and have a look at the Slivan field, you will see that the wheat fields have ripened and the spikes have fallen one upon the other, but there is not a single sparrow there. It is deserted. We have completely exterminated the Armenians of that locality and the government has called us here with the purpose of slaughtering the Armenians of the Moush plain and of Sassoun. In a few days, massacres will begin here also and it should be so that men giving the name of Jesus Christ will not remain alive on this land.'*

*The Kurds took away what they demanded, while we remained pensive. ...Thus, this Armenian-populated province, which was bound to the land and the plough for centuries, became, in the course of one day and one night, deserted and uninhabited, while its real owners were slaughtered with swords, burned in fire, drowned in water by the hands of the ruthless Turks and Kurds in a monstrous operation; its victims were the Armenian dwellers, of both sexes, of one hundred and five villages, totaling seventy to eighty thousand souls in number. Their wealth, worth millions, was pillaged. ...The 28<sup>th</sup> of June was the Sunday of Vardavar (the Transfiguration of Christ - Arm.), the merry holiday of the Armenian nation, which, alas, was converted into the Sunday of Mardavar (burning of people - Arm.) for the Armenians of the Taron plain". [Sv. 2011: T. 1, pp. 81-82]*



Shogher Tonoyan  
(1901, Moosh)

**Shogher Tonoyan** (born in 1901), from Moush, has also given an account about the above-cited Vardavar holiday: *"...On the day of Vardavar, 1915, the Turkish askyars (policemen - Turk.) brought Chechen brigands from Daghestan to massacre us. They came to our village and robbed everything. They took away our sheep, oxen and properties. Those who were good-looking were taken away. My aunt's young son, who was staying with me, was also taken away, together with all the males in the town. They gathered the young and the elderly in the stables of the Avzut Village, set fire and burned them alive. They shut people in the stables of Malkhas Mardo, they piled up stacks of hay round them, poured kerosene and set on fire. Sixty members of our great family were burned in those stables. I do not wish my enemy to see the days I have seen, lao!"<sup>14</sup> Only my brother and I were saved. From the beginning, they took away the young pretty brides and girls to Turkify them and also they pulled away the male infants from their mothers' arms to make them policemen in the future. The stable was filled with smoke and fire, people started to cough and to choke. Mothers forgot about their children, lao! It was a real Sodom and Gomorrah. People ran, on fire, to and fro, struck against the walls, trod upon the infants and children who had fallen on the ground. ...What I have seen with my eyes, lao, I don't wish the wolves of the mountain to see! They say that the Turkish mullah hung himself at the sight of these distressing scenes. During that turmoil, the majority of the people choked and perished. The roof of the stable collapsed and fell upon the dead. I wish my little brother and I had been burned in that stable and had not seen how sixty souls were burned alive. I wish I had not seen the cruel and ungodly acts of those irreligious people. The Armenians of the neighboring villages of Vardenis, Meshakhshen, Aghbenis, Avzut, Khevner and others were burned*

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<sup>14</sup> "Lao" (my child) – an affectionate expression in the Sassoun dialect of the Armenian language used when speaking to a daughter or son.

*in the same manner in their stables. I do not wish my enemy to see what I have seen.... When the roof of the stable collapsed, the flames and the smoke escaped from the opening and air penetrated in the stable. My uncle's daughter, Areg, and I took my unconscious brother by the arms and legs and, treading on burnt logs and corpses, we came out through the breach. There we saw the Turkish soldiers dancing in a circle, swinging and striking their sabres and singing merrily 'Yürü, yavrum, yürü!' (Walk, my child, walk! - Turk.). Up to this day that song resounds in my ears..." [Sv. 2011: T. 9, p. 98]*



Hrant Gasparian  
(1908, Moosh)

**Hrant Gasparian** (born in 1908), from Khnous, has testified: *"I told you what I have seen. What I have seen is in front of my eyes. We have not brought anything from Khnous. We have only saved our souls. Our large family, as a whole, was composed of one hundred and forty-three souls. Only one sister, one brother, my mother and I were saved..."* [Sv. 2011: T. 13, p. 108]

If only four people were saved out of a large patriarchal family of 143 souls, then it is possible to imagine how many thousands of Armenians were sacrificed in the prototypes of Nazi gas-chambers, the stables and barns set on fire, long before the Jewish Holocaust. The following popular song has been woven with reference to

these historic events:

*"...The province of Sassoun with its forests,  
With its high mountains as ramparts  
Always withstood the Turkish army,  
Sassoun smells now of hot blood".* [Sv. 2011: T. 627, p. 599]

The smell of *"hot blood"* was spread also in the heroic Western Armenia's towns of Shapin-Garahissar, Shatakh, Karin, Pontos, Moush, Svaz, Harpoot, Diarbekir (Amid), Malatia, and in the Armenian-inhabited localities of Western and Central Anatolia (Asia Minor), Izmit, Bursa, Ankara, Konia and elsewhere. They exterminated, with unspeakable cruelty, all the Armenians, not sparing even the infants.

And when the Russian troops retreated, a great number of Armenians, who had heroically fought in the self-defensive battles of Van, Sassoun, Shatakh, Shapin-Garahissar, Moush, Bitlis, Alashkert, Bayazet, Babert, Erzroum and other localities, were obliged to migrate after them to Eastern Armenia. They left, in despair and in tears, their Homeland, their native millennia-old historical cradle and started, whimpering, on their exile journey. That indescribable, great national grief has been expressed, in a condensed form, in the following dirge composed by the talented survivor from Moush, **Shogher Tonoyan** (born in 1901):

*"We abandoned the sweet plains and meadows of Moush,*

*Our sacred lodges, houses, roofs and Homeland,  
Chapels and monasteries, books and canons, Bibles  
Were abandoned and remained in the hound's muzzle.” [Sv. 2011:  
T. 653, p. 609]*

The road of exile was a real tragedy.



Vardouhi Potikian  
(1912, Van)

**Vardouhi Potikian** (born in 1912), from Van, has painfully recalled that horrible turmoil. *“...May my enemy not see that day. Woe! Let it be a black day! We had come and reached the bridge over the Berkri River. Suddenly the people began to yell: 'Flee.' We saw in the dark: the Berkri Valley was narrow and the Armenians hadn't reached the river yet, when the Turks and the Kurds attacked. As the Armenians tried to escape, their feet slipped and they fell into the river and got drowned. Some tried to cross the river on animals, some entered the water all by themselves and the current carried them down the river. They were yelling, screaming and crying. The Kurds were firing on us. Mothers forgot about their children”.* [Sv. 2011: T. 54, p. 168]

The following popular vivid song has been created under the immediate effect of those distressing scenes of exile:

*“The Turks came down the black Berkri Mountain,  
Corpses were scattered in thousands and thousands,  
May you be ravaged, you, ruthless Berkri River,  
You drank the blood of thousands and thousands!”* [Sv. 2011: T. 438, p. 564]

Suffering countless victims, the exhausted and agonizing human flood moved forward, sad and wistful, through clouds of dust.



Aghassi Kankanian  
(1904, Van)

When I asked an eyewitness-survivor from Van, **Aghassi Kankanian** (born in 1904), who had become a well-known chemist, to tell me about his deportation, he said, reliving with great emotion and tearful eyes, his sorrowful past: *“...Till we got to Igdir we marched under the rain and the sun, in the mud, half-starving and thirsty, for ten days. On the roads, the Kurds often attacked us, killed people and plundered. The most terrible attack took place near the Bandimahu bridge over the Berkri River, where there was an accumulation of deportees. Numerous mothers, clasping their infants in their arms, threw themselves into the river, so as not to fall into the hands of*



*the Turks. Those who were killed or died during our march were left on the roadside, mostly unburied. Seeing so many unburied corpses, I was so much affected that I became melancholic and that state continues up to the present day. I cannot feel completely glad".* [Sv. 2011: T. 33, p. 139]



Hayrik Mouradian  
(1905, Shatakh)

Destitute, exhausted and leaving their dead kinsfolk unburied on the roadside, the remaining Western Armenians arrived, after great difficulties, in Igdir (Surmalou), which would suffer the same fate. The words of the following popular song about Surmalou have been communicated to me by the well-known and beloved singer, **Hayrik Mouradian**, a survivor from Shatakh (born in 1905):

*"Eh, Surmalou, dear Surmalou!*

*There's no sound of bells and no Armenian speech,*

*You've become a forest of nest-destroying wolves,*

*You, that were rich in schools, you, populous province."* [Sv. 2011: T. 655, p. 609]

The life of the Armenians in Cilicia had also become a nightmare.

The Berlin-Baghdad railway, which had a particular economic importance, passed through Armenian-populated Cilicia. This circumstance troubled the Turkish government, since the laborious and active Armenians living in Cilicia could, by their prosperous state, become predominant in Turkey's economy. The Armenian villages and settlements were scattered in mountainous Cilicia from Hadjn, Zeytoun to Deurtyol; and their populations, although engaged in silk-production, carpet-making and other national handicrafts, had a sufficiently enlightened new generation, owing to the presence of Armenian and foreign schools and colleges, which had played an important role in the formation of their mental-conscious outlook. Besides, the outrages and the massacres, which had started in many provinces of Turkey, coupled with the promised, but not realized, "Reforms" following the Russo-Turkish war of 1877-1878, had not completely exterminated the naturally freedom-loving Cilicians. Zeytoun, the eagle-nest of Cilicia, had, for a long time, become the flash point of Turkish tyranny and it was high time to square accounts with the bold inhabitants of Zeytoun as well.

THE ARMENIAN GENOCIDE  
ACCORDING TO THE TESTIMONIES OF THE EYEWITNESS SURVIVORS

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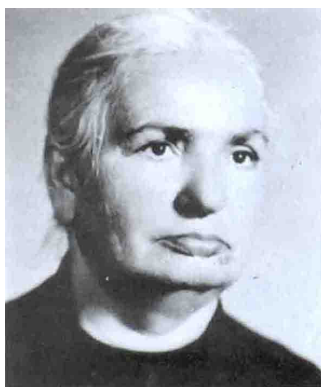
Gyurdji Keshishian  
(1900, Zeytoun)



Hovsep Bshtikian  
(1903, Zeytoun)



Sedrak Gaybakian  
(1903, Zeytoun)



Gayané Adourian  
(1909, Zeytoun)



Karapet Tozlian  
(1903, Zeytoun)



Eva Choulian  
(1903, Zeytoun)

The details of these events were divulged in the narratives of the eyewitness survivors from Zeytoun, **Gyurdji Keshishian** (born in 1900), **Hovsep Bshtikian** (born in 1903), **Karapet Tozlian** (born in 1903), **Eva Choulian** (born in 1903), **Sedrak Gaybakian** (born in 1903), **Samvel Ardjikian** (born in 1907) and **Gayané Adourian** (born in 1909). [Sv. 2011: TT. 252-258, pp. 432-446]

The Cilicians, who were the worthy inheritors of the Armenian kingdom of Cilicia (1198-1375) and had glorious traditions of the national-liberation struggle, could once again fight in self-sacrifice, but this plan was hindered by the Catholicos of Cilicia, Sahak Khabayan, and some Armenian notables, who, deceived by the false promises of the Turkish government, called the Armenians to obedience, arguing that "a little movement could endanger all the Armenian population of the provinces of Turkey".

The Turkish government had already, as in the other localities, collected the Armenians' weapons and drafted the young men into the Turkish army, although many of them had been able to escape from the army and hide themselves in Zeytoun. Khurshid pasha came with an army of three thousand soldiers to claim the deserters who had taken refuge in the ancient St. Astvadsadsin (Աստվածածին - Holy Virgin) Monastery, built on the top of the Berzenka Mountain. On the 25<sup>th</sup> of March, the enemy started to shell the monastery. The self-defensive fighters of Zeytoun, under the leadership of Panos Chakerian, responded to the enemy's attack, sparing their scanty bullets.

**Karapet Tozlian** (born in 1903), from Zeytoun, has told me: "...*The monastery was just opposite the town of Zeytoun and we, the Zeytounis, were standing and watching. Suddenly we saw a few [Turkish] policemen who were carrying gazyagh (kerosene - Turk.) in tin containers to burn the monastery, but the [Armenian] eshkhies (gunmen - Turk.) fired at them from inside the monastery and killed them*". [Sv. 2011: T. 254, p. 439].

On the 9<sup>th</sup> of April, 300 notables of Zeytoun were taken to the military barracks, followed also by their families, who were all deported to unknown places. These were the first exiles. The forcible deportation from Zeytoun started. First, the district of the monastery was deprived of its inhabitants and subsequently all the villages surrounding Zeytoun were deserted. Then the eagle-nest Zeytoun was ravaged.

The deportation and massacre of the Armenian population of Cilicia started in the spring of 1915. One after the other, Marash, Ayntap, Hadjn, Antioch, Iskenderun, Kessab and other Armenian-inhabited localities were deserted.

"The forcible deportation of the Armenians was only a fraudulently veiled death sentence", the French publicist René Pinon has written in his published work entitled "La suppression des Arméniens. Méthode allemande - travail turc" (*"The Extermination of the Armenians: German Method - Turkish Work"*)<sup>15</sup>.

On the roads of exile, the ruthless policemen and the criminals and murderers, set free from the prisons and wearing military uniforms, plundered and robbed everybody, ravished and dishonored the women and the girls. The disarmed, leaderless and helpless Armenian people were driven, with tearful eyes, from their native homes under the strokes of whips and bayonets. The genocidal policy initiated by the Turkish government had embraced almost all the Armenian-inhabited localities.



Ishkhan Haykazian  
(1909, Erzroom)

A survivor from Bassen (Erzroum), **Ishkhan Haykazian** (born in 1909), shared his meditations with me: "...*Sometimes I think of my past life: how could the Turks massacre the unarmed Armenian people so brutally... While, at that time, the Armenian people were completely defenseless and had no weapons...*". [Sv. 2011: T. 93, p. 226]

The extermination of the Armenians was realized both on the spot and in the places of exile, in the vast deserts of Mesopotamia, especially in Rakka, Havran, Ras-ul-Ayn, Meskené, Suruj, Deir-el-Zor and elsewhere.

"...*Only I remained alive in our village,*" informed the 80-year-old

**Eva Choulian** (born in 1903), a survivor from the region of Zeytoun: "*The Turks came and drove us all out of the village. They were forcing us to march with whip strokes. They tied our hands behind and gathered us in a high place resembling*

<sup>15</sup> Pinon R., La suppression des Arméniens. Méthode allemande - travail turc, Paris, 1916, p. 27.

*military barracks. They disrobed us totally and we stood completely naked as the day we were born. Then they broke one's hand, another's arm, still another's leg with axes and daggers. Behind us a little boy, whose arm was broken, was crying and calling for his mother, but the mother had already died by an axe. That place was Der-Zor. It was very cold; we lay on each other to get warm. ...They came in the morning, assembled us and started once more to kill and drop the bodies in water. Below the cave, the River Khabur was flowing. They cut someone's head, another's leg, still another's hand and all these human parts were piled one upon another on the ground. Some were not yet dead, but had their bones shattered or their hand severed. Some were crying, others squeaking. There was the odor of blood on the one hand and hunger on the other. People who were alive started to eat the flesh of the dead..." [Sv. 2011: T. 255, pp. 443-444]*

**Aram Kyosseyan** (born in 1908), from Harpoot, has also testified: *"I was seven years old in 1915 when the order of deportation from Harpoot came. We set out duly dressed as if we were going to a wedding ceremony. The plunder started on the road, not once, but repeatedly; they robbed us in every possible manner. At the end, we were left with our underclothes, which were torn to pieces. I was in the cart. My mother used to close my eyes so that I would not see the dead people lying on the ground. Eventually, my mother and my brother were unable to walk and remained on the road. I do not know whether they died or not... The Turks were coming behind us and were collecting the children. We did not know if they would kill us or take us as their children. ...We had walked so much that we were exhausted. At last they ordered us to come to a halt. We stopped in a valley. They began to ask the adults: 'Are you Turkish or Armenian?' Those who replied, 'I am an Armenian,' were set apart and those who said, 'I am a Turk,' were put on another side. The ones that did not deny their Armenian origin were taken to a remote place and slaughtered. The others who agreed to become Turks were saved. At night, they gathered us, the children, on top of a small hill. We were so tired, that we lie down and fell asleep. At daybreak, we found out with horror that we were surrounded by innumerable cut human heads, which formed a hill; we had ignorantly slept all night on that hill of cut heads..." [Sv. 2011: T. 123, p. 273]*

The below-cited heart-rending dirge of the afflicted people has been woven under these ghastly impressions:

*"The nightingale sings, it's spring,  
Don't uncover our wound; it's deep, deep,  
Oh! Merciful Lord, what is this Der-Zor?  
Weeping and weeping our eyes got blind!" [Sv. 2011: T. 458, p. 567]*

And since it was violently prohibited to speak Armenian, they had to express their sorrow and affliction mostly in the Turkish language.

I have written down these popular songs,<sup>16</sup> which have a great historico-factual value, in different periods, from survivors of different localities and in different variants, a fact which testifies that the said songs, being the immediate reflection of those tragic events, were of a nationwide character. Meanwhile, those quatrains of epic character entitled “*In the Desert of Der-Zor*” (more than 90 in number) are linked to each other by their thematic similarity and their refrains, objectively depicting the inexpressible sufferings endured by the Armenians.

The Genocide survivor, **Yeghissabet Kalashian** (born in 1888), from Moussa Ler, who is my first Turkish-language song performer, has narrated her mournful past: “*At the time we were in the Arabian desert; we were living like animals - no clothes, no manner of life, no washing, no drinking. Even during the fulfillment of our natural needs the gendarmes stood by, showing an indecent behavior to women and girls. Food? What food? We gathered grass, we grazed on grass like animals. If we found salt, we ate grass with salt. Sometimes Arabs were seen in the distance. The Arab Bedouins had a lot of sheep, but they had no houses and lived in tents... My three little children died on the roads of exile. That is why I am all alone at this age...*”. [Sv. 2011: T. 282, p. 465]

This woman, aged seventy in 1956, who lived in the district of Vardashen, in Yerevan, was the first to communicate us quatrains of the Turkish-language Derzorian series of songs created by the Western Armenians. She sang these, recalling her miserable past, the children she had lost, while the tears ran down incessantly from her eyes, her voice coarsened and she could not sing; she took a breath, started to sing anew and cry again.

According to the information provided by my narrators, the massacre began in April, on Easter Sunday, so that the Armenians, too, would be worthy of the Passion of Christ. “The Armenians will dye their Easter eggs with their own blood”, said the Turks, while the affliction of the Armenians, turned into a song, resounded in a heart-breaking manner:

*“They dismantled the tents on Zatik-Kiraki,<sup>17</sup>  
They drove all the Armenians into the desert,  
They slaughtered the Armenians like goats,  
Armenians dying for the sake of faith!”* [Sv. 2011: T. 480, p. 571]

And the indescribable tortures of the Armenians began:

Since the desert of Deir-el-Zor had become the living cemetery of the Armenian Genocide, where there was no hope of salvation:

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<sup>16</sup> The English translation of those Turkish-language songs are presented here.

<sup>17</sup> The Armenian words “Zatik-Kiraki” (Easter Sunday) have been used in the Turkish-language song.





Garnik Stepanian  
(1909, Yerznka)

The countless corpses of the “*Armenians dying for the sake of faith*” were scattered everywhere, since the Ottoman soldiers had become “*butchers*”:

*“The place called Der-Zor was a large locality,  
With innumerable slaughtered Armenians,  
The Ottoman chiefs have become butchers,  
Armenians dying for the sake of faith!”* [Sv. 2011: T. 467, p. 569]

It is sufficient to cite here a quotation from the narrative of the well-known specialist in literature, **Garnik Stepanian** (born in 1909), a native of Yerznka: “...*We came out of Yerznka. There was a bitter frost. My grandmother Vardanush was walking on the road of exile with great difficulty. Suddenly she stopped and said: 'Shoot me! Kill me! I can walk no longer.'* She sat on the ground. The gendarmes tried to drag her and finally left her on the road. They drove us forward.... We were marching and looking behind every now and then. It was snowing heavily and the snow was covering her entire body. Soon my grandmother became a statue of snow. ...We reached Malatia. It was already spring. They had massacred all the Armenians. There were mounds everywhere, under which fifty to a hundred people were buried. Some of them were still alive, since the earth over them was moving...” [Sv. 2011: T. 95, pp. 226-227]



Geghetsik Yessayan  
(1901, Nicomedia)

A 96-year-old survivor from Nicomedia, **Geghetsik Yessayan** (born in 1901), also recollected the inconceivable sufferings of the roads of deportation and exile: “*At the time*



Souren Sargsian  
(1902, Sebastia)

*of the Armenian Genocide, in 1915, I was fourteen years old. The exile started. Our family was composed of twelve people when we set out. Only two survived. They beat us on the roads with whips, they tormented us, they did not give us water. We traversed, on foot, through the towns of Devlet, Eskişehir, Konya, Ereğli, Bozanti, Kanlı Geçit (Bloody Pass - Turk.), Aleppo, Bab, Meskené, Dipsi, Abou-Harar, Der-Zor”.* [Sv. 2011: T. 231, p. 414]

An 80-year-old eyewitness survivor from Sebastia, **Souren Sargsian** (born in 1902), recalled, in detail, his past days: “...*After two days we arrived at the village of Ferendjeler, which was a small negligible village, but which became notable in the history of the Armenian nation. According to the governmental plan, the people had to*

*climb, on foot, up the Tauros Mountains and surmount a height of 3900 meters on their road of exile. Hundreds and thousands of caravans came here to their crucifixion, whence they went to their death. Women, children, newly born babies were being abandoned, forsaken and helpless. My sister Knarik remained there with her newborn infant. She was ill and was unable to walk. Ferendjelar (name of a locality - place of concentration of deportees)! Ferendjelar! Abandoned children, old, lonely women, diseased people lying here and there in agony, putrefied corpses under rags or in the streams". [Sv. 2011: T. 155, pp. 319-322]*



Mkrtich Karapetian  
(1910, Tigranakert)

**Mkrtich Karapetian**, from Tigranakert (born in 1910), narrated: *"...Finally we came and reached the northern part of the desert of Der-Zor, the town of Merdin, where the train passed on its way to Aleppo. They made us stop there in a green field. There was a valley below. They separated us, the children, and took the adults towards the valley and made them stand in a line. There were about three to four hundred adults and we, the children, were nearly as many. They made us sit on the green grass, and we didn't know what was going to happen. Breaking from the line, my mother came several times to us, she kissed and kissed us and went back. We, my elder brother, I and my one-year-old*

*brother, saw from afar a line of women moving forward; our mother was among them. On coming out of our house, mother was dressed in her national costume - a velvet dress, embroidered in gold thread; her head was adorned with gold coins; on her neck was a gold chain; twenty-five gold coins were secretly sewn inside her dress on both sides. When our mother came for the last time and kissed us madly, I remember she was clad only in her white underwear; there were no ornaments, no gold and no velvet clothes. We, the children, were unaware of the events happening there. In reality, they had taken off their clothes, one*

*after the other, had arranged the garments on one side, had stripped the women completely, had cut their heads with axes and had thrown them into the valley..."*. [Sv. 2011: T. 139, p. 289]



Sirena Alajajian  
(1910, Adabazar)

Although the Armenian orphans, deprived of their fathers and/or mothers, who had taken refuge with foreign families, had forgotten their mother tongue, they had not, however, forgotten to cross themselves as Christians.

A 90-year-old survivor, an inhabitant of the Armenian national St. Prkich (Savior - Arm.) hospital-old-age home in Istanbul, **Sirena Alajajian** (born in 1910), from Adabazar, whose beautiful face had been tattooed with blue ink by the

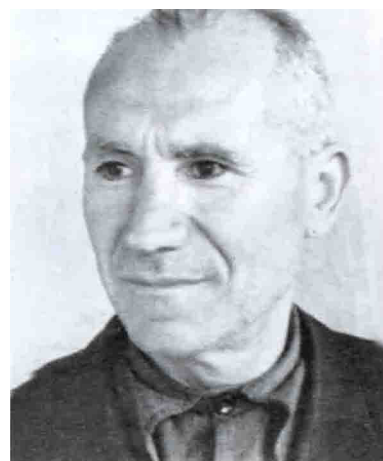


Rober Galenian  
(1912, Harpoot)

desert Arabs, described to me how the orphan-collectors had, after the armistice, ascertained her Armenian origin by making her cross herself and had taken her to the Armenian orphanage. [Sv. 2011: T. 225, p. 410]

**Rober Galenian** (born in 1912), from Harpoot, also alluded to the policy of Turkification and forcible apostasy conducted by the Young Turks: “...*The Turks apostatized the small children. They made them say: 'Mohamed Rassul Allah (Mohammad is God's Apostle - Turk.),' they circumcised them, they changed their names and forced them to speak Turkish...*” [Sv. 2011: T. 127, p. 276]

An 81-year-old survivor, **Harutyun Alboyadjian** (born in 1904), from Fendedjak, also recalled with bitterness his sorrowful childhood: “...*When they killed my parents they took me and other under-age children to the Djemal pasha<sup>18</sup> Turkish orphanage and Turkified us. My surname was '535' and my name was Shukri. My Armenian friend was renamed Enver. They circumcised us. There were many others who did not know Turkish, they did not speak for weeks, with a view to hiding their Armenian origin. If the gendarmes knew about it, they would beat them with 'falakhas' (heavy club used as an implement of torture - Turk.); the punishment consisted of twenty, thirty or fifty strokes on the soles or looking directly at the sun for hours. They made us pray according to the Islamic custom, after which we were compelled to say three times 'Padişahım çok yaşa!' (Long live my King! - Turk.). We were clothed in the Turkish manner, a white robe and a long black, buttonless coat. We had a müdür (head-master - Turk.) and several khojakhanums (women-teachers - Turk.). Djemal pasha had ordered that we should be given proper care and attention, since he appreciated the Armenians' brains and graces and hoped that, in case of victory, thousands of Turkified Armenian children would, in the coming years, ennoble his nation and we would become his future support...*” [Sv. 2011: T. 247, p. 426]



Harutyun Alboyadjian  
(1904, Fendedjak)

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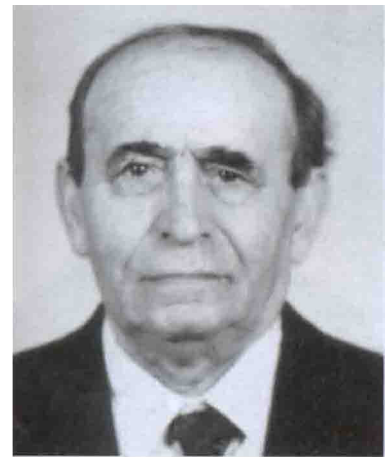
<sup>18</sup> Djemal pasha (1872-1922) - Turkish statesman, one of the leaders of the party “Unity and Progress”, a member of the “Triple leading committee” (Talaat, Enver, Djemal) of the Young Turks, one of the principal criminals of the Armenian Genocide.



Soghomon Yetenekian  
(1900, Mersin)

Meanwhile, **Soghomon Yetenekian** (born in 1900), from Mersin, has recalled with the same deep emotion what he had seen: *"...I do not wish my enemy to see what we have seen on our way to Der-Zor. My heart stops beating when I remember all that... Girls and women, three to four hundred in number, united their belts, fastened themselves together and, one after the other, jumped into the Euphrates River, in order not to fall in the Turks' hand. The current of the river could not be seen then, the corpses had risen to the surface and were piled up one upon the other like a fortress; the dogs got enraged by eating human flesh..."* [Sv. 2011: T. 237, p. 420]

**Aharon Mankrian** (born in 1903), from Hadjn, also, confirmed the same fact, remembering the scenes he had witnessed: *"...The water of the Euphrates was bloody, it was impossible to drink it; the corpses floated down the current..."* [Sv. 2011: T. 248, p. 428]



Aharon Mankrian  
(1903, Hadjn)

The Armenian people were martyred in the cruelest manner; few people miraculously returned from the roads of forcible deportation and exile.

The deportation and massacre initiated by the tyranny of the Young Turks had, within a few months, attained enormous proportions, involving the regions of Western Armenia, Cilicia and Anatolia (Asia Minor). The towns of Svaz (Sebastia), Shapin-Garahissar, Harpoot, Malatia, Diarbekir

(Amid), Izmit, Bursa, Ankara, Konia and the other Armenian-inhabited localities of Central and Western Anatolia (Asia Minor) were being deserted one after the other.

During these tragic days, however, the bold spirit of heroism, coming from the depth of centuries and inherited with the blood, reawoke in the soul of the Armenian people, who preferred "cognizant death" to slavery and decided to withstand violence with joint forces.

Under the circumstances of the extensive slaughter organized by the Young Turks, the Armenians were able to organize, in a number of regions, an uneven combat against the superior forces of the Turkish army, but these self-defensive battles were fought without a definite plan, in a spontaneous manner and isolated from one another. Nevertheless, as a result of those heroic battles, tens of thousands lives were saved from the Young Turks' atrocities in Van, Shatakh, Moush, Sassoun, Shapin-Garahissar and elsewhere.



On the 18<sup>th</sup> of July, an order for the deportation of the Armenians of Kessab arrived. During these very days, the Very Reverend Tigran Andreassian, a preacher, escaping from the group of people deported from Zeytoun, had returned to his native Moussa Ler (Dagh) and had told about the inexpressible sufferings of the poor exiles. Seeing that their turn would come soon, nearly all the inhabitants of the seven villages of Moussa Ler united together, on the 19<sup>th</sup> of July, and decided to disregard the disastrous order of deportation.



Movses Panossian  
(1885, Moussa Dagħ)



Hovhannes Ipredjian  
(1896, Moussa Dagħ)



Tonik Tonikian  
(1898, Moussa Dagħ)

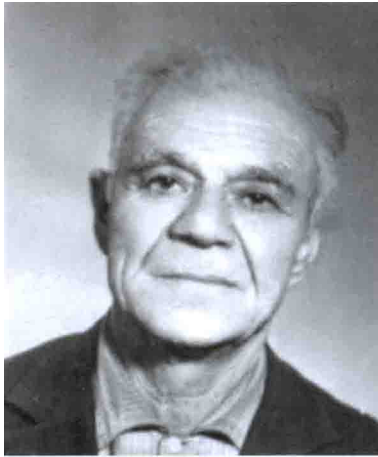
**Movses Panossian** (born in 1885), a 106-year-old participant of the heroic battle of Moussa Ler, narrated those events to me with a juvenile ardor peculiar to him, recalling the oath of the inhabitants of Moussa Ler: *“I was born here, I will die here. I will not go as a slave to die with tortures under the enemy's order; I will die here, with a gun in my hand, but I will not become an emigrant”*. [Sv. 2011: T. 281, p. 463]

The details of that historical event have been related to me by the participants of the heroic self-defensive battles of Moussa Ler, **Movses Balabanian** (born in 1891), **Hovhannes Ipredjian** (born in 1896), **Tonik Tonikian** (born in 1898) and many other natives of Moussa Dagħ. [Sv. 2011: TT. 281-297, pp. 463-471]

Everybody was filled with the feeling of protest and vengeance. Men and women, children and old people left their homes and orchards and ascended the inaccessible summit of Moussa Ler to defend their honor and dignity, to withstand the attack and to fight against the innumerable soldiers of the enemy. All, without exception and without delay, started, in an orderly manner, to set up tents, to dig trenches, to build ramparts with solid walls, leaving small embrasures from inside. In some places, they cut down the thick forest to enable them to see the enemy. Even the little boys, the so-called *“telephone boys”*, worked as signal men. The women organized the food, the girls and the young brides carried water for the fighters from afar. Step by step, the enemy approached the positions of the Moussa Ler fighters, but gunfire opened from different spots created the impression of a complete encirclement and the Turks fled, terror-stricken, leaving hundreds of dead soldiers.



During fifty-three days, violent battles were fought under the command of Yessayi Yaghoubian, Petros Demlakian and the Very Reverend Tigran Andreassian. During this period, four serious battles took place on the heights of Kezeldja, Kuzdjeghaz, Damladjik and Kaplan-Duzagh. On this occasion, the following imposing popular historical-epic song has been woven:



Gevorg Chiftchian  
(1909, Moussa Dagh)

*"We are courageous Moussadagh braves,  
We are all well-trained gun-carriers,  
The Turks want to deport us  
And exterminate us in the deserts.*

*We do not wish to die like dogs,  
We wish to leave a good memory,  
To die with glory is an honor for us,  
To be martyred is our nation's praise..."* [Sv. 2011: T. 635, p. 601]

The enemy concentrated new forces to chastise the rebellious Armenians. The provisions and armaments of the Moussa Ler people were exhausted. The heavy rain had rendered the three hundred shot-guns they had, all in all, unfit for use. Being in despair and hoping to receive aid from the sea, they tied white bedsheets together, they wrote on one of them *"The Christians are in danger, save us!"* and on the other they drew the sign of the Red Cross and displayed them on the mountain slope overlooking the sea.

On the 5<sup>th</sup> of September, the French battleship "Guichen" passing off-shore in the Mediterranean Sea noticed them and slowed down its course. With a metallic box, containing a petition written in foreign language and hung from his neck, Movses Gereguian jumped into the sea. He reached the ship swimming and, crossing himself, presented the letter to the captain. On the 14<sup>th</sup> of September, the French steamship "Jeanne d'Arc", escorted by British battleships, approached Moussa Ler and, taking on 4200 inhabitants of Moussa Ler, transported them to Port-Saïd, where they were sheltered under tarpaulin tents.

The Moussa Ler people lived in Port-Saïd for four years, during which they earned their living by comb-making, spoon-making, rug-making, embroidery and other national handicrafts.

When relating their childhood memoirs, the survivors still remembered the way they had learned the Armenian alphabet by writing the letters on the hot sands of the desert with their fingers, up to the time when the Siswan School, established by the Armenian General Benevolent Union, began to operate in some tents, in addition to the hospital and the orphanage.

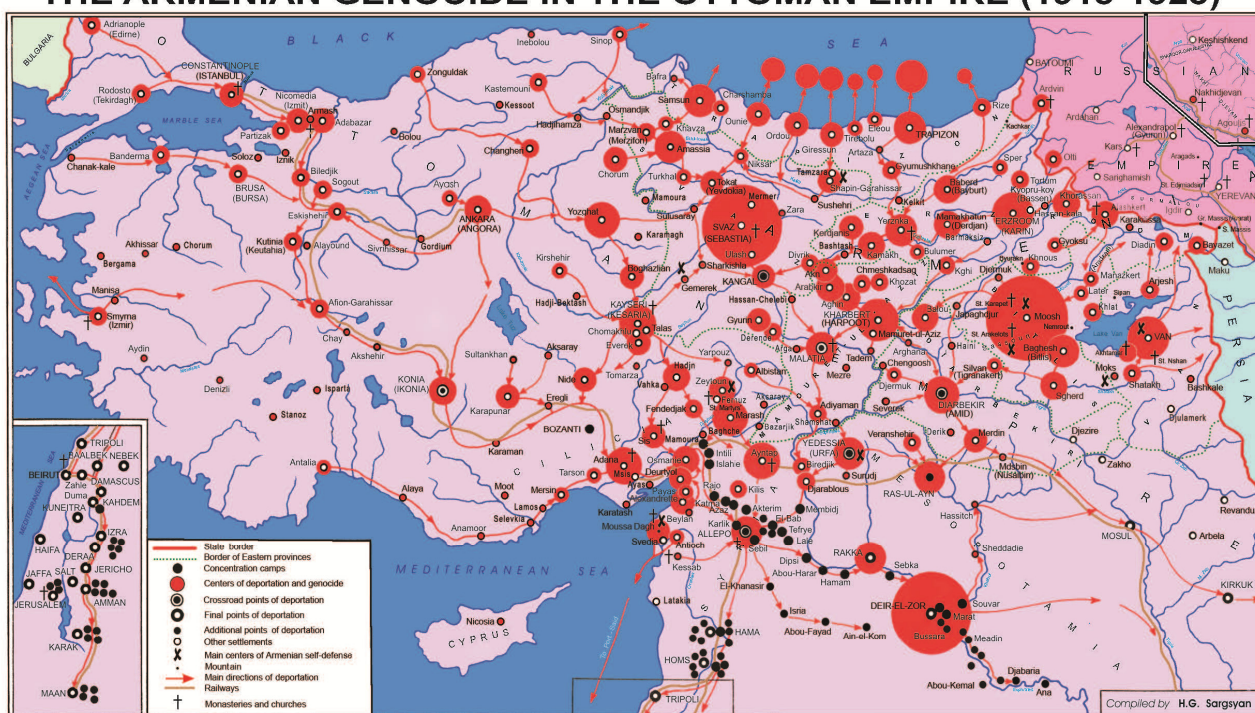
THE ARMENIAN GENOCIDE  
ACCORDING TO THE TESTIMONIES OF THE EYEWITNESS SURVIVORS

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The heroic battle of Moussa Ler shook the world; it demonstrated to the world the immense capabilities of a handful of people who have heroic traditions and unanimous will power.

In his book “The Forty Days of Moussa Dag”, the notable Austrian writer Franz Werfel has artistically depicted in vivid colors the exploit of the Moussa Ler people. However, the world did not pay attention in due time to the alarm raised by the great Austrian writer and a greater evil, Fascism, was born, as a consequence of which 6 million innocent Jews and millions of people of other nationalities were martyred.

**THE ARMENIAN GENOCIDE IN THE OTTOMAN EMPIRE (1915-1923)**



In May 1915, the new mutasarrif (governor - Turk.) of Yedessia (Urfa), an Ittihat member, Ali Haydar organized the arrest of forty local Armenian notables and demanded from all the Armenians to hand over their arms in forty-eight hours. At the end of July, the enlightened primate of the Armenian Diocese of Yedessia, the Very Reverend Artavazd Galenterian, was put under arrest. In August, one thousand five hundred young Armenian recruits from Yedessia were slain in the localities of Gutemé and Karaköprü. Subsequently, they apprehended one hundred Armenian tradesmen and collected bribes from their kinsfolks saying that they would let them free, but they killed them all. They captured also one hundred others, who were destined to the same lot. In those days, the caravans of the exiled Zeytounis and of the poor Armenians deported from the other provinces of Turkey, all, dispossessed of their valiant youths, arrived in Yedessia, together with the sobs and laments of the child-deprived mothers, the horrifying stories about the young girls and innocent infants. The thirty-five thousand denizens of Yedessia

decided, after a special deliberation, to have recourse to arms similar to the inhabitants of Moussa Ler.

In October 1915, the heroic self-defense of Yedessia was organized, under the command of Mkrtich Yotneghbayrian and Harutyun Rastkelenian. The whole Armenian population of Yedessia rose up. Children and old people, boys and girls fought like one man, in self-oblivion, during twenty-five days and nights uninterruptedly. The Armenian quarters were divided into six fighting regions, where eight hundred fighters were positioned. The Yedessians (Urfans) took an oath: "We are ready to die the arm in our hands"<sup>19</sup>.

However the Turkish policemen and the rabble made a new attack and occupied the Armenian Catholic Church. The Yedessians (Urfans) let the enemy soldiers invade the Armenian quarter and, lying in ambush, annihilated them. Their intrepidity had become proverbial.

*"Urfa is large; it cannot be separated,  
Its ground is firm; it cannot be dispersed,  
The braves of Urfa  
Are alone of their kind."* [Sv. 2011 T. 638, p. 602]

Meeting an obstinate resistance, a regular army composed of six thousand soldiers under the command of Fakhry pasha was sent to Yedessia (Edessa-Urha), to which were joined twelve thousand brigands. The defenders of Yedessia opposed a heroic resistance and inflicted heavy losses on the Turkish murderers. Fakhry pasha, enraged, declared in a worried tone: "What will our situation be if, in these critical days, several Urfas stood against us?"<sup>20</sup>.

Seriously wounded in the knee and lying on a stretcher, Mkrtich Yotneghbayrian passed from one position to another and encouraged the fighters. Fakhry pasha sent a mediator, the German factory-owner M. Eckart, to M. Yotneghbayrian, exhorting him to stop the battle and to surrender. But the heroic son of Yedessia answered him: "If you have the feelings of a civilized and Christian man, save the innocent Armenian nation, which is being massacred in the deserts!"<sup>21</sup>.

The next day, the enemy tightened the siege and destroyed the Armenian quarter with a heavy cannonade. The condition of the Armenians became more critical day after day. On the 23<sup>rd</sup> of October, the Turks invaded the Armenian quarter and cruelly slaughtered the devoted heroes of Yedessia and deported the surviving eight hundred families of the neighboring Armenian-inhabited village of Kamurdj to Deir-el-Zor and ruthlessly massacred the majority of them on the road.

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<sup>19</sup> Սահակեան Ա., Դիւցազնական Ուրֆան եւ իր հայորդիները, Պէյրուս, 1955, էջ 818:

<sup>20</sup> Արզումանյան Մ., Հայաստան. 1914-1917, Երևան, 1969, էջ 453:

<sup>21</sup> Յուշամատեն Մեծ եղեռնի, խմբ. Գերսամ Ահարոնեան, Պէյրուս, 1965, էջ 804:



Khoren Ablapoutian  
(1893, Yedessia)



Khacher Ablapoutian  
(1893, Yedessia)



Nvard Ablapoutian  
(1903, Yedessia)

These historical events were narrated to me by three of the survivors of Yedessia, **Khoren** (born in 1893), **Khacher** (born in 1893) and **Nvard** (born in 1903) **Ablapoutians**. [Sv. 2011: TT. 143-145, pp. 294-302]

Thus, the deportation and the massacre had already embraced the entire Ottoman Turkey. As a consequence of the inhuman and Armenian-annihilating policy conducted by the government of Young Turks, more than one and a half million Armenians became the victims of the Armenian Genocide.

The Armenian exiles, dispossessed of their dwellings and properties, of their beloved kinsfolk, who had experienced all the afflictions of the deportation and the genocide, have, on their road to death, expressed their indignation with curses:

*“...May the person who planned this exile  
Be sacrificed on the road to hell!”* [Sv. 2011: T. 528, p. 577]

The eyewitness survivors have referred in their memoirs to the leaders of the Ittihat government, who organized that massive carnage. According to **Yervand Karamian** (born in 1903), from Hadjn: *“In 1915, Talaat, Djemal and Enver pashas had come to an agreement and had schemed their plans together. Hence, when they deported us, they plundered us from all sides and took away all our properties. They attacked us with daggers and brutally slaughtered everybody...”* [Sv. 2011: T. 249, p. 428]

During the years of his office as the Ambassador of the United States of America in Turkey (1913-1916), Henry Morgenthau condemned the Minister of Internal Affairs of the Ittihat government, Talaat pasha, exhorting him to discontinue the violence with regard to Armenians and declared: “...The Americans are outraged by your persecutions against the Armenians. You must base your principles on humanitarianism, not on racial discrimination, otherwise the United States will not regard you as a friend and an equal... You will find the public opinion against you everywhere and particularly in the United States. Our people will never forget these



massacres. The Americans will always bear the Turks a grudge for the massive extermination of Christians in Turkey. They will look upon it as nothing but willful murder and will seriously condemn all the men who are responsible for it. You will not be able to protect yourself relying on your political regulations and say that you acted as Minister of Interior and not as Talaat. You are defying all ideas of justice as we understand the term in our country...”<sup>22</sup>.

While Talaat pasha had declared boastfully: "In solving the Armenian problem, I did more work in three months than Abdul Hamid had done during thirty years"<sup>23</sup>.



Verginé Nadjarian  
(1910, Malatia)

An eyewitness-survivor from Malatia, **Verginé Nadjarian** (born in 1910), also testified to that fact: “...*The Turks took into consideration neither children, nor adults. The Turks said: 'We will exterminate the Armenian nation, so as to leave one Armenian in the museum...'*” [Sv. 2011: T. 134, p. 285]

Referring to the historical events, it should be pointed out that in the days of the First World War, in 1916, two of the Allied countries, England and France, had signed a secret agreement (Sikes-Picaud) that, in case of the defeat of Turkey, Cilicia, having two million six hundred thousand hectares of arable and fertile lands, would pass under the supervision of France. The English and French authorities had agreed with the Armenian National Delegation that, if the Armenian volunteers fought against Turkey, the Armenians would enjoy ample political rights after the victory and the Armenian volunteers would constitute the garrison of the towns of the newly formed Autonomous Armenian Cilicia.

Consequently, Armenian young men from the Turkish army, from the roads of exile, from various places and even from America (natives of Moussa Ler, Ayntap, Marash, Kessab, Hadjn, Hoosenik, Chengoosh, Sebastia, Harpoot, Arabkir and other localities) were enlisted in the French Army, creating the Oriental (Armenian) Legion.

The Armenian volunteers, filled with a feeling of vengeance for their numerous innocent martyred kinsfolk and defying death, defeated the Germano-Turkish armies and won the magnificent victory of Arara, near Nablous - Palestine. These historical events, too, have found their artistic reflection in popular Turkish-language songs:

*“One by one I counted four years,  
The Armenian soldiers occupied Nablous,  
They were one thousand five hundred in number,  
The English and the French were amazed”.* [Sv. 2011: T. 545, p. 579]

<sup>22</sup> Ամերիկյան դեսպան Հենրի Մորգենթաուի հուշերը և հայկական եղեռնի գաղտնիքները, Երևան, 1990, էջ 278-279:

<sup>23</sup> Ibid., p. 284.



And indeed, the French and the British commanders-in-chief praised the brave Armenian legionaries. On the 12<sup>th</sup> of October, 1918, General Allenby sent a telegram to the President of the Armenian National Delegation, Poghos Noubar, saying: "I am proud to have the Armenian regiment under my command. They fought courageously and had a great share in the victory"<sup>24</sup>.

When the government of the Young Turks was overthrown, their activities, in general, and their anti-Armenian crimes, in particular, were condemned both in Turkey and in the whole world. The new rulers, who were subject to the Entente States, adopted the position of condemning the leaders of the Young Turks' regime. The eminent Armenian historian, the political figure and former Minister of Foreign Affairs of Armenia, John Kirakossian, in his book "The Young Turks Before the Judgement of History" has cited the testimonies of newspapers and political men, as well as documents of the Turkish archives, which also confirm the absolute truthfulness of the testimonies communicated by the eyewitness survivors. Here are a few quotations:

"...Thus, by November-December 1918 the Constantinople periodicals were full of testimony that helped to lay bare the truth. The newspapers published copies of the anti-Armenian documents and circulars by Talaat, Behaeddin Shakir, and Nazim Bey<sup>25</sup>. One of them contained the following citation: "Carry out exactly the orders given to you concerning the murder of the Armenians" ("Zhamanak", newspaper, Constantinople, 11.12.1918) In the same issue of that newspaper there was also published Behaeddin Shakir's ciphered circular written in verse and addressed to the provincial governors as a signal:

No gun should be fired!  
No soldier should be involved!  
No Armenian should remain!  
Slaughter the adults!  
Choose the pretty ones!  
And exile the rest!"<sup>26</sup>

"In its turn newspaper "Alemdar" wrote about Talaat and his adherents: "[They] hanged, murdered, deported, massacred and made others massacre, deport, and slaughter the Armenians. They are twice assassins, because they gave orders to murder and themselves murdered" (see: "La Renaissance" No. 127, 4.30.1919). *Istiklal* admitted that: "World War I awakened in us bestiality and immorality. To renounce the bitter truth is to renounce the sunlight" (see: "La Renaissance", newspaper, Constantinople, No. 173, 22. 06.1919)<sup>27</sup>.

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<sup>24</sup> Քելեշեան Մ., Սիս-Մատենան, Պէյրուս, 1949, էջ 592:

<sup>25</sup> Kirakosyan J., The Armenian Genocide: The Young Turks Before the Judgment of History. Translator-Shushan Sltunian, 1992, p. 160.

<sup>26</sup> Կիրակոսյան Ջ., Երիտթուրքերը պատմության դատաստանի առաջ, Երևան, գիրք 2-րդ, 1983, էջ 163:

<sup>27</sup> Kirakosyan J., The Armenian Genocide, p. 163.

Ahmed Riza, Chairman of the Parliament (a former political figure of the Young Turks) made a declaration on December 2, 1918, at the opening of the trial of the Young Turk criminals. It read: "For all the crimes and misdeeds committed by the government, for the outrages, public crimes..., confiscation of estates and buildings ... oppression perpetrated from the day we entered the war (October 30, 1914) and until the fall of Talaat Pasha's government (October 7, 1918)... I demanded the criminals be revealed as quickly as possible and brought to justice". Ali Bey, Minister of Justice, replied to this that: "those who organized massacres during the deportation or took part in it, whether they are governors or soldiers, must be tried as ordinary citizens and by an ordinary court" ("Zhamanak", newspaper, Constantinople, 7. 25. 1918)<sup>28</sup>. When they started to arrest the governors and other officials, the Turkish newspaper "Tasfiri Evkyar" published the following article entitled "From the palace to the prison dungeon", where the following lines were printed: "It is really sad that many of these personalities were enjoying, two months ago, glory and honor in our provinces and today they are taken to prison as ordinary criminals. It is difficult to comprehend why these people did not think that one day they would also be called to account for all the crimes perpetrated by the government of Talaat pasha, even if we were triumphant in the war" (No. 7, 15.12.1918)<sup>29</sup>. "We have no doubt, that, if requested, the libraries of Istanbul or Ankara can immediately put at the disposal of the Turkish State officials the collections of "La Renaissance", "Tasfiri Evkyar" and other newspapers. Let them read and study their own country's history ... and stop lying"<sup>30</sup>, concluded John Kirakossian and continued, "at the end of 1918, the "Ittihat Party" [and] the Young Turks were outlawed in Turkey. The European public opinion was strictly anti-Young Turk. The eminent orientalist, the German Josef Markwart and the French Jacques de Morgan demanded publicly to take into the International Tribunal for trial the principal criminals who committed the policy of massacres against the Armenians. In his speech delivered in January 1919, the German scientist Josef Markwart demanded from his government to make every effort to find Enver, Talaat and the other criminals, to hand them over to the Entente, to bring them to trial in the International Tribunal"<sup>31</sup>.

...The international public opinion was following and was commenting, on a large scale, the different aspects of Turkish life after the end of the war. The newspapers published testimonies of eyewitnesses relating about the anti-Armenian policy of the Turkish criminals<sup>32</sup>.

...Numerous books were published after the end of the war; not only were the Young Turks condemned as criminals, but there were also demands that action be taken against them with the participation of the representatives from the Entente and

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<sup>28</sup> Ibid.

<sup>29</sup> Կիրակոսյան Ջ., Երիտթուրքերը պատմության դատաստանի առաջ, էջ 171:

<sup>30</sup> Ibid.

<sup>31</sup> Ibid., p. 172.

<sup>32</sup> Ibid.

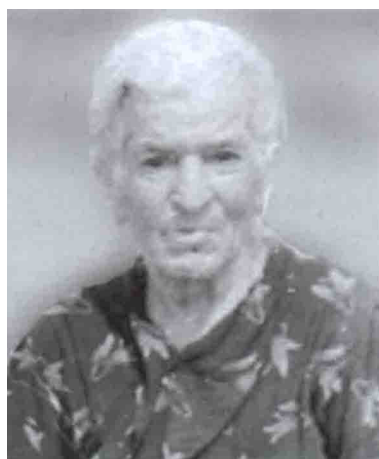
the United States<sup>33</sup>. ...On July 13, 1919, the “New York Times” informed that “Turkey had condemned its military leaders of the period”, that the military tribunal had sentenced to death Enver pasha, Talaat pasha and Djemal pasha and that “the three of them had taken to flight”. The paper informed also that Djavid bey and several others (including the Sheikh-ul-Islam) had been condemned to fifteen years of penal servitude<sup>34</sup>.

...The court sessions continued for months. ...Two charges were imputed to the Young Turk leaders: the involvement of Turkey in the war and the extermination of the Armenian nation. **This was already the official recognition** of the monstrous crime perpetrated by the government officials of the Young Turks”, concluded J. Kirakossian<sup>35</sup>.

The Treaty of Sèvres, signed after the war, provided that the Entente countries should establish a supervision over Cilicia and that the Turkish troops should have already been evacuated from Cilicia. Numerous Armenian deportees, miraculously rescued from Deir-el-Zor, Ras-ul-Ayn and other living cemeteries, exhausted, emaciated and destitute, gradually returned and resettled in Cilicia. With hope and faith with regard to the future, they began to restore the ravage and to cultivate the abandoned orchards. The Turks, however, succeeded in coming to an agreement with the Allied States and urged the French to evacuate their peace-maintaining forces from Cilicia.

Not only did the French military administration not undertake serious measures to ensure the security of the Armenians, but they left the local authority in the hands of the Turkish military officials, who, furthermore, were not disarmed.

Ignoring the Treaty of Sèvres and taking advantage of the indecision and weakness of the French military administration, the Turkish forces and the local bandits directed their arms towards the Armenian population of Cilicia.



Verginé Mayikian  
(1898, Marash)

Starting from January 1920, the Turkish forces launched an attack on the Armenian localities of Cilicia. During the violent battle, which lasted for twenty-two days, the Armenians of the town of Marash were slaughtered and burned to ashes.

A miraculously saved eyewitness from Marash, **Verginé Mayikian** (born in 1898) narrated us in detail the horrifying events she had seen, bitterly reliving her grievous past: “...*Karapet agha was very rich, he was a very skilled shoemaker. He made the shoes of the Turk leader of Marash, Jutki efendi* (sir - Turk.) *and felt very safe, but as he had no weapon, he*

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<sup>33</sup> Kirakosyan J., The Armenian Genocide, pp. 163-164.

<sup>34</sup> Կիրակոսյան Ջ., Երիտթուրքերը պատմության դատաստանի առաջ, էջ 208.

<sup>35</sup> Ibid., p. 176.

couldn't defend himself. One night, breaking the gate of the garden, the Turk rabble rushed in, entered his house, killed every member of his family, from old to infant, threw them into the well of the garden; they plundered his property and shared it among themselves. After this event the Armenians began to think about self-defense. They transferred, for safety, the women and the children to the church of Karassoun Mankants (Forty Holy Martyrs' - Arm.). The Karassoun Mankants Church was the largest and safest church, since it was surrounded by ramparts. They transferred there all the women, the young brides and the children of our region, on the whole, more than two thousand people. It was simply crammed. The altar, the vestibule and the upper hall were full of people. Our freedom-fighters guarded the church on all sides. But the Turkish rabble was enraged and was thirsty for Armenian blood. From every side the voices of the Turks were heard: 'In the name of Muhammad's sacred vow, we'll slaughter all the Armenians.' The Turkish armed mob surrounded the Karassoun Mankants Church and encircled it like a chain. They didn't even let the doors be opened, saying that they would open it at night. That was the order. The Karassoun Mankants Church was built on a hilltop. The road leading to it was a few hundred meters in length and its width was almost four meters, and there were trees on both sides. The Armenians inside the church waited for the doors to be opened at night. Ten o'clock in the evening came, then eleven o'clock, then midnight, but nobody opened the door. People were overcrowded inside. There was no water and no light inside the church, there was ordure everywhere, one was crying, another lamenting, still another praying. In one word: a complete commotion. We heard their voices from the cellar of our house where we were hidden. At half past one after midnight, we noticed from our narrow casement that a few Turks were climbing over the arched roof of the church and were throwing kerosene-soaked burning rags through the church cupola. The smell of burning spread all over. The voices reaching from the church were heart-breaking. People were crying, shouting, screaming and entreating to open the door. Their voices seemed to come from under the earth. They were sighing and moaning so loud that their echoes reached us; these echoes diminished with every passing hour. But the smell of burning flesh and bones remained. The monsters had realized their plan. Nobody was alive any more in the church and in the neighborhood. The space of several hundred meters around the church, which was paved with large stones, was apparently covered with a thick layer of soap: it was, in reality, the grease of the burned Armenians, two inches in thickness, which had flowed down the threshold of the church and had hardened. The footsteps of the first passersby were printed on that layer of grease, like on the snow. Suddenly we saw Turkish women, everyone with a sieve in her hand, running toward the church. We were watching from afar, but I couldn't hold myself back; I wanted to go and see what had happened there. I put on something like a

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*robe, wrapped my head with a bed sheet and covered my nose and mouth. I already spoke Turkish very well and was sure that I would not betray myself. I set out to go to the Karassoun Mankants Church, the sooty walls of which were in a dilapidated state, while the molten grease of the burned people had flown from under the door down the hill. I trod on it and my feet clung to the ground. At last I saw a Turkish woman passing by, with a sieve in her hand, who asked me: 'Badji (sister - Turk.), why didn't you take a sieve with you?' Without getting confused, I said: 'I'll come back and fetch one.' She smiled and replied: 'Do you think anything will remain when you come back?' It was already the third day, the walls of the church were still hot and reddened like a potter's oven. I went into the church and what did I see? Every one of the Turkish women had appropriated a section of the church and did not allow the others to trespass on her property; they shouted at each other: 'I'll kill the one who crosses my borderline...' It was worth seeing how those monstrous-looking women rejoiced when they found a molten piece of gold in the sifted ashes...". [Sv. 2011: T. 259, pp. 446-447]*

The following concise, though figurative, popular song has been composed under the direct impressions of those bewildering historical events:

*"Marash is called Marash, alas!  
Marash, how do they call you Marash?  
When they burn a church in Marash,  
And they burn Armenians in the church!"* [Sv. 2011: T. 550, p. 580]

Thirteen thousand Armenians perished during the massacres of Marash. Subsequently, the surviving eight thousand residents of Marash, together with six thousand Armenians from Yedessia, were forcibly deported to Aleppo, Damascus, Beirut, Jerusalem, Baghdad and to the regions of Anatolia (Asia Minor) found under Greek domination.

On the 1<sup>st</sup> of April, 1920, the Turks besieged Ayntap. The life of about ten thousand Armenian refugees from Ayntap and eight thousand from Sebastia, who had



Gevorg Hekimian  
(1937, Beirut)

just re-established and found peace there after the end of the war and the Armistice, became once more turbulent. The Armenians of Ayntap took up a self-defensive position. A central military committee adjoining the National Union was created on the spot under the leadership of Adour Levonian. The latter took stock of the arms and the ammunition of the 750 fighters and organized the manufacture of shells.

These historic events have been recounted to us with inspiration by **Gevorg Hekimian** (born in 1937) who had heard the narrative from his mother: *"In 1920, Ali*



*Kelendj attacked Ayntap with a tremendous army. The leader of the self-defensive committee of Ayntap was Adour Levonian. Adour pasha collected the copper cauldrons from the inhabitants of Ayntap and had them melted to make shells. He and his volunteers attacked the enemy and broke through the siege, forcing the twenty-four thousand soldiers commanded by Ali Kelendj to flee in dismay in one night shouting: The Armenians are filled with vengeance. 'They had composed this song about Adour Levonian in our Ayntap,' said my mother and sang: [Sv. 2011: T. 269, p. 454]*

*"Adour pasha, get up!  
Light your kindlings!  
The Turks are attacking:  
Charge with your volunteers!" [Sv. 2011: T. 641, p. 604]*

In the meantime, the commander-in-chief of the occupation of Cilicia, Gozan oghlu Doghan bey, with his innumerable soldiers laid siege to the town of Hadjn; the town initially had an Armenian population of 35,000, of which only 6,000 had been rescued from the Genocide.

*"Doghan bey came and entered Hadjn...  
How regrettable for you, immense Hadjn!...  
Our possessions were pillaged there...  
The Armenians were trampled down there!" [Sv. 2011: T. 551, p. 581]*

In the enemy's opinion, "the complete destruction and extermination of the Armenian citadel of Cilicia, Hadjn, was an hour's job and that they would be capable of burying the six thousand Armenians with a slight attack"<sup>36</sup>. The inhabitants of Hadjn, however, were resolute. They formed the superior council of the self-defense of Hadjn under the leadership of their governor, advocate Karapet Chalian, and elected as the defense commandant officer Sargis Jebejian, General Andranik's comrade-in-arms. Four military companies and a squadron composed of sixty cavalymen were organized. Hadjn and its environs were divided into four defense regions. Trenches were dug. Everybody was in fighting trim. The available 132 rifles were distributed to the 1200 males aged 16-50, who were capable of taking up arms.

That is why the Hadjn people, who were in great need of arms, waited impatiently for the help expected from abroad through the National Union of Adana; the help included not only arms and ammunition, but also new fighting forces. Nevertheless, no help was received and the condition of the population of Hadjn became desperate, since the French high-ranking military representatives conducted an equivocal policy and, though they had promised to provide provisions and ammunition for the self-defense of Hadjn, they not only broke their word, but informed also the Turks about the

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<sup>36</sup> Թէրզեան Ա. Յ., Հաճընի ութամսեայ դիւցազնամարտը, Պուենոս-Այրես, 1956, էջ 241:

organization of the self-defensive plan of the Armenians. The freedom-fighters of Hadjn seized the enemy's enormous cannon with great difficulty, but they could not use it to defend themselves for the lack of shells. Starvation caused a great distress to the



Aharon Mankrian  
(1903, Hadjn)

inhabitants of Hadjn. "People were obliged to eat cats, mice, dogs, leather, the bark of trees, moccasins."<sup>37</sup> These facts were confirmed also by **Aharon Mankrian** (born in 1903), a survivor from Hadjn, in the memoir he related to me. [Sv. 2011: T. 248, p. 428]

The enemy reinforced the army with new cannons and innumerable regular armed forces. After prolonged and obstinate battles and a heroic resistance, which lasted for eight months, the Turkish forces were able to destroy and to burn down all the stone houses of Hadjn by cross-point heavy cannonade. Hundreds of valorous combatants fell on the fortifications; thousands of Hadjn denizens were cruelly massacred. Only 380 people succeeded in accomplishing a breakthrough by fighting and came out of the terrible encirclement of fire.

This heroic self-defensive battle has also been praised in various songs, which are sung by the people:

*"...Three hundred Armenian braves,  
All armed with rifles,  
Gave a blow to Doghan bey's army,  
Hadjn fell, shouting "Vengeance!"*" [Sv. 2011: T. 649, p. 607]

With yells of "*Vengeance*" the town of Ayntap also fell; it heroically resisted, fighting intermittently for 314 days, as well as the ancient capital of Cilicia, Sis, the valiant eagle-nest, Zeytoun, the town with a historic past, Tarson, the commercial center Adana and various other Armenian-inhabited localities of Cilicia.

**Verginé Mayikian** (born in 1898), from Marash, also referred in her memoir to the political events of that period, which had disappointed the Armenians: "*...We led our comparatively peaceful life until 1918-1920, when the French authorities were still in Cilicia. The French and Armenian newspapers always wrote that the French forces would eternally remain in Cilicia, because the prestige of France had grown after the First World War, while that of Turkey had, on the contrary, decreased. But that peace, alas, did not last long. We felt gradually that the Turks began to hate us. And one day, we woke up and knew that the French had covered the hoofs of their horses and had left Marash silently. We got up in the morning and were astonished, since nobody knew*

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<sup>37</sup> Արամ Ասպետ, Դրուագներ Հաճընոյ հերոսամարտէն, Պէյրուս, 1961, էջ 242:

*anything about it. Even the famous Hakob agha Khrlakian, who supplied the French army with rations free of charge, had heard nothing from General Dumont concerning their departure. Thus, the French army was no longer in Marash in September 1920. It seemed that the Turks knew about it beforehand; at night there were some gun-shots here and there to frighten us...". [Sv. 2011: T. 259, p. 446]*

The French government, breaking its obligations as an ally, handed Cilicia over to Turkey by an agreement signed on the 20<sup>th</sup> of October, 1921, in Ankara, condemning the Armenian population of Cilicia to the danger of massacre.

Although the Turkish government cruelly suppressed the heroic resistance and the self-defensive battles started in various localities, nevertheless, the devoted Armenian heroes, who struggled for their elementary human rights and for the physical survival of their nation, recorded brilliant pages in the history of the national-liberation struggle of the Armenian people.

It was at that time that the national hero Soghomon Tehlerian took revenge for the millions of victims of the Armenian Genocide by killing Talaat pasha in Berlin.

On June 2-3, 1921, the regional law court of Berlin heard the case of Talaat's murderer, Soghomon Tehlerian, and acquitted the Armenian avenger, since he had carried into effect the death sentence passed by the Turkish tribunal.

The Armenian nation has also imparted a poetic tinge to that startling event:

*"Talaat pasha fled to Berlin,  
Tehlerian caught him up,  
He shot him in the forehead, knocked him down,  
Fill your cup with wine, brother!  
Fill your wine and drink to our health!..." [Sv. 2011: T. 650, p. 607]*

Although the German judges acquitted the Armenian avenger showing an understanding attitude, nevertheless, the condition of the Western Armenians did not improve therewith...

In 1921, after the forcible deportation of the Armenian population of Cilicia, it was the turn of the Armenians of Anatolia (Asia Minor), whose majority had been ruthlessly massacred during the Genocide and those who were miraculously rescued continued their existence in the Armenian-inhabited localities under Greek domination and especially in the port of Izmir.

In 1922, the Turks also burned down the Armenian and Greek quarters of Smyrna (Izmir), driving the Christians to the seashore. That horrible event has been recorded in the memory of the Western Armenians as "the calamity of Izmir".

According to the statement of a survivor from Yerznka, **Garnik Stepanian** (born in 1909): *"...In 1922, Mustafa Kemal's soldiers burned Izmir, they poured petrol and kerosene and burned the Armenians and the Greeks gathered in the churches..." [Sv. 2011: T. 95, p. 228]*



Arpinn Bartikian  
(1903, Afion-Garahissar)

A survivor from Afion-Garahissar, **Arpiné Bartikian** (born in 1903), remembered with emotion the ghastly scenes she had witnessed and told me: *"...And then the Milli (Nationalistic - Turk.) movement started, Izmir was committed to the flames. They burned the Armenian quarter, Haynots, in the first place and set fire to the St. Stepanos Church, since all the Armenians had taken shelter in it; we fled and ran to the seashore. There were numerous boats in the sea, but the Turks had drilled holes in all the boats in order to prevent the Armenians from escaping. The poor Armenians sat in the boats and sailed to the open sea, but, after some time, the boats were filled with water and sank. The swollen bodies of the drowned people floated on the surface of the sea. They took us with the rest to Baldjova and lodged us in wooden huts near the shore. They started to inspect us. They dragged and forcibly took away the pretty girls. I was a puny, undersized girl and hid myself under the skirts. Our Mary had her face blackened with soot and her hair was shorn and she had an ugly appearance. They looked at her and left her saying: 'she is useless'. A little farther we heard the voices of the Turks who were sharpening their knives to slaughter us. An Armenian girl saw that her turn was approaching, she threw herself down from the window, but she did not die. Other gendarmes had been standing under the window ... they brought her after a few days in an unrecognizable state..."*. [Sv. 2011: T. 195, p. 382]

An eyewitness survivor, familiar to us from the deportation episodes of Deir-el-Zor, **Smbyl Berberian** (born in 1909), from the town of Afion-Garahissar, also remembered with equal emotion and tearful eyes what she had seen during the calamity of Izmir: *"...Somewhere, the Turks had made a bonfire, and they were throwing the Armenians into the flames. They caught my mother and cast her into the fire. I and my sister began to shout and cry, but we could not rescue our mother from the fire... Then other Turkish soldiers came and found us. They made us stand in line, selected two men among us; they made them lie down on the ground and began to flay them, laughing and saying: 'We are slaughtering cows.' They skinned the men with difficulty. Those two poor men were being tortured alive; they were shouting and screaming painfully. In the end, they skinned them completely... The Turkish gendarmes pierced everyone, the Armenians and the Greeks, with bayonets and threw them into the sea without distinction of age: infants, children, old people and mothers. You could not see the water because of the human corpses..."*. [Sv. 2011: T. 198, pp. 384-385]

Then the survivor sobbed and, with tears running down her eyes, sang with deep emotion the long dirge she had composed herself, of which two verses are given below:



Mary Yerkat  
(1910, Adabazar)

*"We came out of Afion"<sup>38</sup>*

*And came to the town of Izmir,  
I didn't find my dear mother  
And sobbed my heart out.*

*Ah, dear mother, they deceived us,  
They separated me from you,  
They threw you in the fire,  
They burnt you and charred you..."* [Sv. 2011: T. 563, p. 586]

The situation was fatal and inextricable. There was fire behind and water in front. Only those who gave their last gold coins and ornaments to the Turks to save their lives were rescued from the hell-like turmoil, while those who had no means, threw themselves into the violent sea-waves and, defying death, tried to swim to the ships anchored at a distance and bearing European flags, which would carry the homeless Armenians to unknown destinations:

*"...We fled from there to Greece,  
Many others – to France,  
Still others – to Egypt,  
Thus, we're dispersed in all directions".* [Sv. 2011: T. 564, p. 586]

Thus, the Armenian Diaspora was created as a historical reality.

Uprooted from their paternal land, the Armenian exiles were in foreign lands, unaware of foreign languages and laws, only fit to work as cheap labor, despite the fact that the talented skill of the Armenian artisans and the elegant handiwork and carpets of the diligent Armenian women had won the admiration of foreigners. Moreover, the dread of assimilation, degeneration and, particularly, unemployment gave the wandering Armenians no rest.

*"...We found ourselves in foreign lands,  
I yearn and long and cry,  
May the Armenian Problem be solved soon,  
Have patience, my soul, have patience!*

*Rejoice and do not cry in grief,  
Stand firm on your feet,  
You will soon hear about Repatriation,  
Have patience, my soul, have patience!"* [Sv. 2011: T. 663, p. 612]

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<sup>38</sup> The town of Afion-Garahissar.



The caravans of the Western Armenian repatriates deprived of their homes and native cradle, followed each other to Eastern Armenia, first, in the 1920-1930s from Constantinople, France and Greece and, subsequently, in 1946-1948, a mass Repatriation was organized from Syria, Lebanon, Egypt, Iraq, France, Greece, the Balkan states and from distant America...

The Western Armenians resettling in a territory 10 times smaller than that of historic Armenia they had lost, created new boroughs and districts with the names symbolizing the memory of their historical native cradle. Nevertheless, the anguish of the former ruined house and of the extinguished native hearth continued to fume in their memory and the vision of the lost homeland, transformed into a call of the soul, was transmitted from generation to generation:

*“When the doors of hope will be opened,  
And we shall return to our country again,  
Our Homeland, our magnificent country,  
Which was taken from us with violence.*

*I wish to see my Cilicia,  
Its air is pure, its water - clear,  
I wish to see my Cilicia,  
Monasteries and fortresses are plenty there.*

*When the Armenian Problem will be solved,  
And our ancestors' land will be given to us,  
We will cultivate our fields  
And will populate our villages.*

*I wish to see Sassoun and Van;  
Zeytoun, Hadjn and Moussa Dagħ,  
Tarson, Marash, Sis and Ayntap,  
We, certainly, will embellish”. [Sv. 2011: T. 658, p. 611]*

The repatriates came to Soviet Armenia full of hope and faith. They came in dense caravans encouraged by the victory of the Soviet Union in the Second World War and, particularly, by its official claim for the Armenian lands presented to Turkey on the 1<sup>st</sup> of November, 1945.... And together with the great expectations, the popular song was woven from mouth to mouth:

*“I want to go to Armenia,  
I want to see Yerevan,  
I want to hoist the flag  
On the top of Mount Ararat!” [Sv. 2011: T. 666, p. 613]*

And the song of the people resounds as a claim:

*“...We want them, we want them,  
Kars and Ardahan are ours...*

*Kars and Ardahan will  
Soon be returned to us,  
So that we transform  
These waste lands into a paradise”.* [Sv. 2011: T. 672, pp. 614-615]

The Turkish diplomats, however, burying in culpable oblivion all those historical events that happened not long ago, and denying the Armenian Genocide, have declared: "We have no debts to anyone in terms of Turkish lands and rights. We shall live as honorable people, we shall die as honorable people"<sup>39</sup>.



Hakob Holobikian  
(1902, Harpoot)

On the other hand, according to the authentic historical facts of the Armenian Genocide and the testimonies we have recorded from the eyewitness survivors and thousands and thousands other evidences, the past of Ottoman Turkey and Young Turks regime has never been “honorable”.

As **Hakob Holobikian** (born in 1902), from Harpoot, has concluded, after describing in detail the afflictions he and his compatriots had suffered: *“...This crime committed by the Turkish Ittihat members will never be forgotten and should never be forgiven...”*. [Sv. 2011: T. 115, p. 264]

The painter **Elena Abrahamian** (born in 1912), from Kars, has, after narrating her sorrowful memoir with tearful eyes, come to the conclusion: *“...The Turks don't admit that they have massacred the Armenians. ...The Turk is a Turk. Whatever shirt he puts on himself, he will remain the same Turk. Granting that they do not admit the Armenian Genocide, then what was it that we saw with our own eyes and heard with our own ears? And what I have seen in only a drop of what the Turks have done. If the Turks do not admit what they have done, there can be no reconciliation with them”*. [Sv. 2011: T. 77, p. 193]



Elena Abrahamian  
(1912, Kars)

<sup>39</sup> Լազեան Գ., Հայաստան եւ Հայ դատը (Վաճառագրեր), Գահիրէ, 1946, էջ 372-373:



Evelina Kanayan  
(1909, Igdir)

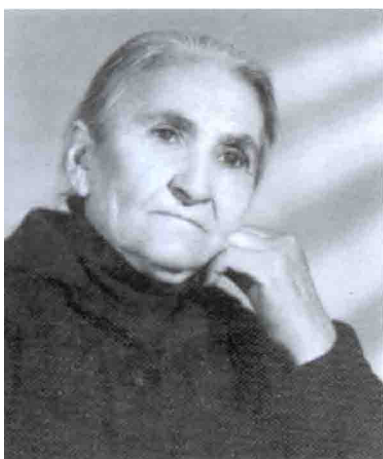
At the end of her narrative, **Evelina Kanayan** (born in 1909), from Igdir, has declared with deep emotion, but self-confidently: *"...Even if the representatives of the United Nations come, I'll tell them all I have seen..."* [Sv. 2011: T. 59, p. 176]

**Ghoukas Karapetian** (born in 1901), from Moks (Mokk), has summed up his memoir as follows: *"...What happened in 1915 will never be forgotten. The Turks want all that to be forgotten and they don't admit it, but may God help us and be a righteous judge for us, the Armenians"*. [Sv. 2011: T. 57, p. 170]



Ghoukas Karapetian  
(1901, Moks)

Meanwhile, **Dsirani Matevossian** (born in 1900), from Harpoot, has proposed in a simple popular language:



Dsirani Matevossian  
(1900, Harpoot)

*"May the Turks die, they brought all this disaster upon us; we got deprived of our country, of our riches, of our kin. And now, they declare impudently that the Armenians have slaughtered the Turks. Our gold, our houses and lands were left to the Turks. I am surprised how the Armenians can't make short work of the Turks. Let all what we have told be written in a book and let all the peoples of the world read it and know who is guilty, who is righteous and who is the aggrieved party..."*. [Sv. 2011: T. 113, p. 259]

The Turkish propaganda and official historiography of today are not sparing any efforts to distort the historical evidences with a view to carefully concealing from the coming generations the Armenian Genocide perpetrated by the Turkish state. They are trying to sidestep the truth that the Turkish authorities themselves undertook, from the beginning of 1919, the organization of the trial of the Young Turk criminals.

So, the deplorable historical reality is an irrefutable fact and is not subject to any doubt.

Having this circumstance in view, **Hakob Papazian** (born in 1891), from Sivrihissar, a graduate from the



Hakob Papazian  
(1891, Sivrihissar)

Istanbul Medical University, who had served in the Turkish army as a medical officer and had seen all these inhuman cruelties with his own eyes and thoroughly analyzed them, has concluded: *"...When I recall all that I think to myself: none of the civilized countries took any step towards humanism. Therefore, willy-nilly they encouraged the Turks to annihilate millions of unarmed and defenseless, innocent Armenians of Western Armenia, a whole nation, from the old to the young with such cruelty that hadn't been heard or written in the history of mankind: people were tortured and tormented to death, held captive, kidnapped, raped, forcibly turned into Turks, slaughtered, sent to the gallows, some were hanged head-down and left to die in torments. They imprisoned hundreds of people in churches and barns, hungry and thirsty, for several days and then they poured kerosene on them and burned them to ashes. Countless, innumerable people were drowned in the Euphrates River. On both sides of the road of exile they buried small children alive up to their neck and left them to die, and the deported people were led by the same road to see these atrocities and to feel violent grief. The Turks cut open the bellies of pregnant women with swords, they violated the young virgin girls, kidnapped young women to make them concubines in their harems, they forced aged and young people to become Turks and speak only Turkish... The Armenian nation was isolated and was in a tragic situation. The Armenians lost their historical native land, millions of Armenians were martyred ruthlessly. And all that took place before the eyes of civilized humanity, by their knowledge and permission. The Great States acted as Pilates for their future material interests and willy-nilly allowed the Grey Wolf - the Turks - to torture and devour an unarmed and defenseless nation. They encouraged the Turks, thus becoming accomplices in the Armenian Genocide..."* [Sv. 2011: T. 200, p. 387]

And **Pargev Makarian** (born in 1915), from Ayntap, has added: *"...The Great Powers deceived the Armenians; they gave Cilicia to the Turks. The Armenians of Zeytoun, Adana, Sis, Marash, Kilis, Ayntap, Yedessia, Kamourdj and other towns left their native lands. We were forced to leave Cilicia. We were obliged to abandon our country. And in 1922 they incited the disaster of Izmir; the Armenians and the Greeks escaped through the flames, threw themselves into the sea; all those, who were saved, went to other countries. Thus, the Turks "cleaned" Turkey of the Christians. Turkey, along with Western Armenia and Cilicia, remained to the Turks..."* [Sv. 2011: T. 272, p. 456]

In actual fact, the international community, too, did not warn in time and did not condemn at its true worth the first genocide, The Armenian Genocide, perpetrated in the 20<sup>th</sup> century, and that fact gave birth, as a logical sequel, to Fascism and, most recently, to international terrorism, with its unpredictable manifestations and universally disastrous consequences, since unpunished crimes repeat themselves in prejudice of mankind.

Thus, the memoirs and songs of historical character communicated by the eyewitness survivors, saved, in this manner, from a total loss and entrusted to the coming generations, become, owing to their historico-cognitive value, testimonies elucidating, in a simple popular language, the Armenian Genocide and the historical events following it; they are authentic, objective and documental evidences, which are not only attestations of the past, but are also a warning for the future...

That is why it is particularly important to expose and to put, by means of the present study, into scientific circulation the popular factual-documentary testimonies of the eyewitness survivors concerning the whole course of the Armenian Genocide, the innocent martyrs and the lost Homeland, since GENOCIDE is a CRIME, which should be brought to light also with the help of the eyewitnesses. And **the greatest witness is the People**, who, painfully reliving, have narrated and continue to narrate and testify their tragic past. That past, which is the past of the Armenian people, their history, their collective historical memory, which should be presented to the world and to the righteous judgement of mankind.