

**THE SELF-DEFENSIVE BATTLES FOR SURVIVAL OF THE WESTERN
ARMENIANS DURING THE YEARS OF THE ARMENIAN GENOCIDE (1915-1923)
ACCORDING TO THE TESTIMONIES OF THE EYEWITNESS SURVIVORS**

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In 1914, when World War I broke out, the leaders of the Young Turk government of the Ottoman Empire thought that the opportune moment had come to implement the monstrous scheme, planned in great detail in advance, to do away with the Western Armenians - that is, to draft all the Armenian able-bodied males and youths to the Turkish army, to deprive them of arms and to recruit them in the “working battalions” and ultimately to exterminate them, to collect from the Armenians’ houses all the arms and even the kitchen knives, to gather all the Armenian intellectuals and cruelly massacre them, to organize mass deportations of the remaining helpless Armenian population to the Syrian deserts and to subject them to the unspeakable tortures and pogroms. All these acts of violence compelled the Western Armenians to resort to self-defense in the various regions of the country as in Yozghat (in the central region of Asia Minor) and nearby - in the mountain area of Akdagh, in Shatakh (about 40 km south of Van Lake) followed by the heroic battle of Van, then those of Mush, Sasun, Shapin-Garahissar, Moussa Ler (Dagh), Urha-Edessa (Urfa) and later, the heroic resistance fights in Marash, Ayntap and Hadjn. In all these self-defensive battles, the people themselves, women and men, young and old alike, revolted and waged, with self-made arms, a struggle of life or death against the armed soldiers of the Ottoman regular army to defend their elementary human right for survival and their national identity.



Khatun Garaminasian, the
hero of the self-defense
battle of the village Fntchak
near Marash

In those tragic days, in the soul of the Armenian people reawakened the courageous spirit of heroism inherited in the bloodlines from the depth of centuries to prefer “conscious death” to slavery and to withstand violence with joint forces¹.

From the very beginning of the World War I, the town of Yozghat, which had 48 villages around it and a total Armenian population of 75 thousand, stood out against the mobilization, the arm-collection and the deportation organized by the Ottoman government². This fact was testified also by our eyewitness survivors from Yozghat, **Mesrop Mesropian** (b. 1900), **Hakob Papazian** (b. 1901), **Srbouhi Galtakian** (b. 1902), **Arshakouhi Petrossian** (b. 1903), **Barounak Papazian** (b. 1906), **Veronika Berberian** (b. 1907), **Hovakim Karakekedjian** (b. 1907), **Anoush Topalian** (b. 1910) and **Herminé Ter Voghormiajian** (b. 1912)³.

In April, 1915, in the region of Yozghat, the Turk policemen, together with various Islamic tribes and the illiterate and fanatic rabble, encircled the villages of Yozghat,



Mesrop Mesropian
(1900, Yozghat)



Veronika Berberian
(1907, Yozghat)



Arshakouhi Petrossian
(b. 1903)



Hakob Papazian
(1891, Sivrihissar)

Bouroun Gheshla, Eylendjé and Goumgouyou (in the central region of Asia Minor), which had a population of about 8 thousand Armenians. The elements capable of taking up arms gathered in the village of Goumgouyou, where the peasants of the villages of Quiller and Beuhrenk, whose houses were razed to the ground and were miraculously saved from extermination had found shelter with their fighting forces under the leadership of Abissoghom Arakelian and Hadjibey Papazian. They formed fighting groups and organized a fortified self-defense.

Zekia bey, with his slaughterers, launched an attack on the Armenians' positions, but the peasants of Goumgouyou, men and women together, caught them unawares by

¹ Սվազլյան Վ., Արևմտահայոց ինքնապաշտպանական գոյամարտերը Հայոց ցեղասպանության ընթացքում (1915–1923 թթ.) ըստ ականատես վերապրողների վկայությունների, Պատմաբանասիրական հանդես, 2, 2015, էջ 30-60:

² Պատմագիրք Եղկատի եւ շրջակայից (Գամիրք) հայոց, խմբ. Ա. Դարեան, Ա. Երկանեան, Պէյրուք, 1988, էջ 775:

³ Սվազլյան Վ., Հայոց ցեղասպանություն. Ականատես վերապրողների վկայություններ, Երևան, 2011, Վկայություն 174-180, 200, էջ 351-386: - Henceforth: Սվազլյան - Սվ. 2011, Վկայություն - Վկ.:

shouting “hooray” and dropping their hand grenades. The very first volley sent 35 enemy corpses sprawling on the ground, including that of Zekia bey. Seeing this defeat, the rabble abandoned the front and ran away.

The executioner of the Armenians of Yozghat, Ghassem bey, infuriated by that defeat, sent a telegram to the commander of the Fourth Turkish Army demanding regular troops, saying: “With these forces, the Armenians are capable, one day, to march to the capital and occupy it”⁴.

The Turkish government sent a regular army equipped with cannons under the command of Ghassem bey, along with a revengeful mob and started to shell the Armenians’ fortified houses. Only 10 people escaped from this turmoil, who ascended the inaccessible forests of Akdagh under the leadership of Hadji Papazian and joined the young struggling countrymen of Chat⁵.

The alarming news of mobilization, arm-collection, deportation and massacres organized by the Turkish government had already reached the inhabitants of the Chat village of Yozghat, who had also decided to oppose and to deliver nothing to the enemy, not to send the Armenian youths to the Turkish army, but to ascend the Akdagh mountain and to take up arms to defend the honor and the life of their fellow countrymen.

With a view to struggling against the outnumbering forces of the enemy, the heroes of Akdagh had chosen the guerrilla warfare mode of fighting, which afforded the possibility to cause severe damage to the enemy, to exhaust its military potential and to increase, at the same time, the defensive and food supplies of the Armenian fighting groups⁶.

On the 30th of April, the slaughterer of Yozghat, Ghassem bey, entered the village of Chat with 100 horsemen and gave the order to mobilize the youth and to hand over the arms.

The peasants of Chat answered: “We have no arms and the young people have ascended the mountain”⁷. Ghassem bey sent two policemen up the mountain Akdagh to search for the fugitives, but the insurgent villagers of Chat held them captive and tying them on horses, set them free toward the Turkish side. Hearing about that incident, the government sent 200 policemen to search the village of Chat; they handcuffed 80 notables of the village and took them to Boghazlian, while the village itself was subjected to looting and ravage. Among the notables were the inhabitants of the village of Chat, Samvel Indjeyan, and his father.

A dweller of the “Ararat” retirement home in Los-Angeles, **Barounak Papazian** (b. 1906, Yozghat) took out, in 2001, a photograph of his beloved hero Samvel, which he

⁴ Աւետեան Մ., Հայ ազատագրական ազգային յիսնամեայ (1870-1920) յուշամատենն եւ Զօր. Անդրանիկ (Վերլուծական հայեցողութեամբ և վաւերական տուեալներով), Փարիզ, 1954, էջ 299:

⁵ Ibid., p. 300.

⁶ Պատմագիրք Եղգկատի եւ շրջակայից (Գամիրք) հայոց, էջ 779:

⁷ Ibid.

had kept with great care for so many years and showed it to me saying: "...*The village of Chat was an hour and a half distance from our town. They separated the men and took them to the valley with their hands tied. A father and his son had been tied together. The son, Samvel, said: "Father, I'm going to run away. I don't want to be killed by an axe; I'd rather die from a bullet"*⁸.

Samvel cut the rope tying him to his father with a knife he had hidden in his garments and fled to the Akdagh Mountain. Many others followed his example.



Andranik Ozanian

Adam, the leader of the Armenian braves positioned on the mountain instructed his freedom-fighters to gather all the refugees of Chat and help them to ascend the Akdagh Mountain, which would become the center of the combat. There were gathered more than 1.000 Armenians.

They all were in good solidarity with each other and helped one another, since their source of inspiration was the heroic character of General Andranik Ozanian, who was scoring victories far off. The large group of fighters under the leadership of Adam had taken the pledge to withstand and to take revenge on the enemy. The Armenians of Yozghat, Samsun and Bafra followed also their example. The mountaineers killed the 200 Turkish soldiers, who

were attacking them and put on their uniforms in order not to differ from the Turks. In the battle of Akdagh, Samvel was remarkable by his unusual bravery. He had served in the Turkish army and was an expert rifleman. Samvel taught the fighters the secrets of strategy. In his group was also his valiant and devoted wife, Gyulizar⁹.



Gyulizar Indjeian

Incidentally, many women fought on Akdagh side by side with their husbands, holding in high esteem the honor and dignity of the Armenian woman.

Besides the groups of Adam, Samvel, Gulbenk, Hadji, Zil Ohan, Artin, the group of Manouk from Tentil was also fighting on the Akdagh Mountain.

From the very beginning of World War I, the villagers of Tentil near Yozghat also withstood the Turkish murderers. When they compelled the village youths to be enlisted in the Turkish army, the countrymen of Tentil firmly decided to put up a resistance. More than 4,000 villagers of Tentil, young and old, ascended with their supply of provisions, the huge cavern of the mountain, which not only had a dangerous location, but it was also full of bats and reptiles; moreover, the

⁸ Սվ. 2011, Վկ. 350, էջ 527:

⁹ Աւետեան Մ., op. cit., p. 310.

spring was outside the cavern. Tentil had about 700 young men, but among them barely 200 were armed.



Artin Demirjian

Artin Demirjian's wife Mariam

The Turkish government sent a regular army of more than 2,000, which was accompanied by the fanatic rabble. They laid siege to the cavern and to the spring situated outside the cavern. The people were deprived of water. An unequal battle followed. The Armenian women and girls were also fighting. The Armenians suffered 135 losses, while the Turks suffered thrice as much. The Armenian leader Manouk tried to break through the siege and ascend with his

group the Akdagh Mountain. Some were taken captive, others were martyred. Only 20 people succeeded in ascending the summit of Akdagh and to join the freedom-fighters, who had taken refuge there, creating the regiment of Vindictive Braves...

One of the heroes of Akdagh was also the bold and indomitable leader Hadjibey Papazyan. He, too, had served in the Turkish army and was a good rifleman. He was always thinking about passing to the Caucasus and joining the Russian army, but various Turkish hordes of murderers constantly attacked his compatriots and being unable to leave his people unprotected, he successfully fought with the members of his group those unequal battles. When the Turks encircled him in the Greek village of Gharapir, he, with his friends killed 35 Turks and again ascended the Akdagh Mountain. However, Hadjibey Papazyan and his group had decided to cross the Russian border. He joined to his 40 freedom-fighters the combatants of Deli Papaz, Abraham, Zil Ohan and Gara Khachik. Many of them sailed from the coast of the Greek town of Termé to Trapizon, described the situation to the Russian command; the latter sent armed troops and liberated the town of Termé.



Hadjibey Papazyan

In the spring of 1917 the fighting groups of the Armenians of Chat approached, the borderline occupied by the Russian army, however, our native mountain passes were still swarming with Turkish murderers. The sense of duty to destroy them compelled the freedom-fighter Samvel Injeyan, who had won the title of "hero," to remain in front of the

enemy's fire and to continue the armed struggle. He said: "Here is buried half of our souls, the greater part of our beloved ones. Thousands of murderers are still roaming about. How can we escape from this heavy debt?"¹⁰.

The Armenian fighting groups of Yozghat have fought from the beginning of World War I till the armistice of 1918 in the native territories, in the mountains and valleys of Akdagh, Pontos and Taurus. They have fought during four years against the regular Turkish forces, destroying the enemy. The valiant Armenian fighters of Yozghat played a major role in the heroic struggle waged against the Turkish oppressors for the survival of the Armenian people.

After World War I part of the Armenian freedom-fighting groups of Akdagh, about 400 combatants under the leadership of commander Manouk, fighting against the Turks, reached Erez (Yerznka) and joined General Andranik's army in the province of Bardzr Hayk' (Բարձր Հայք) of Great Armenia. Many of the heroes of Akdagh entered Russia after sailing for 5-6 days¹¹, while commander Samvel and his braves reached in 1919 (after exterminating in the Taurus Mountains the Turkish murderers they met on their way) Cilician Armenia to help the Cilicians in the struggle waged for their independence.

If the four-year struggle for survival of Akdagh with its extensive sweep and the involvement of numerous fighting groups and popular masses against the armed regiments of the Turkish government was a life-and-death issue, then the self-defensive battle of Van, with its strategic organization made the feat of the valorous citizens of Van a particular model of heroism, which had originated by the armed self-defense of the peasants of Shatakh.



Andreas Gulanian

The eyewitness survivor **Andreas Gulanian** (b. 1907) from Shatakh has testified about this fact: "...*Beginning from the late autumn of 1914, post-guards (so-called cordons) had been located in all the villages of Shatakh, among them two post-guards in Sevtkin Village*"¹². The Shatakh people, foreseeing the impending danger, started to buy arms in order to defend themselves. The prefect of Shatakh, Meytibey, being suspicious, arrested the superintendent of the Armenian schools of Shatakh, Hovsep Choloian. During the search the list of the Shatakh countrymen, who had arms, was discovered

in his pocket.

Hearing the news, a general meeting of the elderly people and the young men of Shatakh was held in the center of Tagh, where they decided to create a self-defensive military body with a view to destroying the two Turkish post-guards in Sevtkin, since the

¹⁰ Պատմագիրք Եղգկատի եւ շրջակայից (Գամիրք) հայոց, էջ 780-781:

¹¹ Ճիզմեճեան Մ., Պատմութիւն ամերիկահայ քաղաքական կուսակցութեանց. 1890-1925, Ֆրէզնո, 1930, էջ 312:

¹² Ավ. 2011, վկ. 26, էջ 123:

road led from there through Vostan and the Hayots Dzor to Van. The Shatakh villagers demanded the commander of the Turkish guards, Corporal Bayri, to leave the building, but the Turks opened fire. A two-sided shooting started. The eyewitness survivor **Andreas Gulanian** continued: *"...We were watching the fight from the top of the mountain, together with my mother, hidden behind a stone. There were about forty shots. Then the shots stopped. The sky was cloudy, but it was not cold. Holding my mother by the hand, we descended the valley and came to the village as the other women did and we were told what had happened. Corporal Bayri was killed and his assistant, together with the askyars, threw down their guns from the inn window and, holding up their hands, surrendered"*¹³.

The details of the Sevtkin battle reached Van. The governor of Van, Djevdet pasha, arrested the famous political activist Mr. Ishkhan (Nikoghayos Mikaelian, originally from Artsakh) and ordered him to go and to calm down the rebellion of the Shatakh people. However, before getting to their destination, the Turk policemen escorting Ishkhan and his friends killed them in the village of Hirj (in Hayots Dzor) at night and buried them in the ground.

On the same day, Djevdet pasha arrested also a member of the Turkish Parliament, Arshak Vramian (Onik Derdzakian), who worked in Van. They took him to the shore of Lake Van, tied a sack full of stones to his neck and drowned him in the lake.

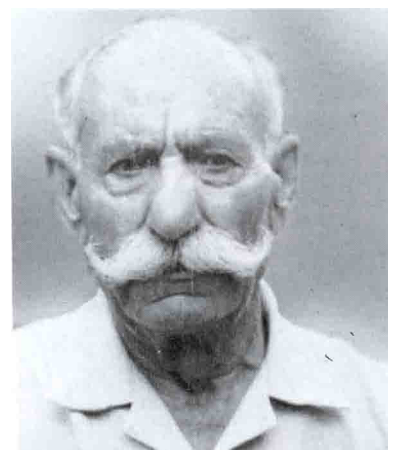
Eyewitness survivor **Sirak Manassian**, born in 1905 in the village of Kem of Hayots Dzor has referred to the historical events of the heroic battle of Van: *"...On the 4th of March 1915, we heard that they had killed the public-educational man, Mr. Ishkhan in the neighbouring village of Hirdj. ...When we heard that, we and all our compatriots got much alarmed and started to get ready for the attack of the Turks"*¹⁴.



Manvel Marutian
(b. 1901)



Smbat Davtian
(b. 1905)



Ghazar Gevorgian
(b. 1907)

¹³ Ibid.

¹⁴ ՍՊ. 2011, ՎՊ. 35, էջ 142:

The eyewitness survivors of the heroic battle of Van **Vahan Ktranian** (b. 1900), **Tovik Baghdassarian** (b. 1901), **Manvel Maroutian** (b. 1901), **Aghasi Kankanian** (b. 1904), **Sirak Manassian** (b. 1905), **Smbat Davtian** (b.1905), **Patrik Saroian** (b. 1906), **Siranoush Toutoundjian** (b. 1906), **Ghazar Gevorkian** (b.1907), **Yervand Shirakian** (b.1907), **Ardsrun Harutyunian** (b. 1909), **Nshan Abrahamian** (b. 1908), **Silva Byuzandian** (b. 1908), **Kadjberuhi Shahinian** (b. 1908), **Varazdat Harutyunian** (b. 1909), **Ardzvik Terzian** (b. 1910), **Shoghik Mkrtchian** (b. 1911) recalled and told us various remarkable episodes about the heroic battle of Van¹⁵.



Kadjberuhi Shahinian
(1908, Van)



Silva Byuzandian
(1908, Van)



Nshan Abrahamian
(1908, Van)



Ardsroun Harutyunian
(1907, Van)



Varazdat Harutyunian
(1909, Van)



Aghasi Kankanian
(1904, Van)



Patrick Saroyan
(1906, Van)



Siranoush Toutoundjian
(1906, Van)



Sirak Manassian
(1905, Van)



Ardsvik Terzian
(1910, Van)



Shoghik Mkrtchian
(1911, Van)

¹⁵ Սվ. 2011., Վկ. 30-56, էջ 132-170:



Grigor from Bulgaria

“Aygestan was besieged on all sides,” remembered **Shavarsh Hovivian**, “the cannons were placed on the south near the Hadji Bekir barracks, on the north near the Toprak Kale¹⁶ barracks over the height of Bardzants leaving the district of Aygestan between two fires, while the eastern and western sides were surrounded by a military chain at close range of rifles, where the regular army units kept watch all day long.”¹⁷

The town of Van was divided into two districts: Aygestan and Kaghakamedj. The barracks of Hamoud Agha in Aygestan, which was vacant, on that day was filled with 130 Turkish soldiers and had thus become a trouble for the Armenian fighters. However, the citizens of Van were unanimous and resolute; they had made a pledge: “To die the rifle in their hand rather than to be slaughtered like sheep.”¹⁸



Aram Manukian



Armenak Yekarian

The citizens of Van held a general meeting and elected a self-defensive military council under the leadership of Armenak Yekarian, Aram Manukian and Hrant Galikian. The freedom-fighters - Kaytsak Arakel, the gunsmith Grigor from Bulgaria, the painter Panos Terlemezian and others were also in Van¹⁹. A special body for the supply of provisions was also elected, for providing the people with food

products. The rich families of Aygestan contributed money, cereals, seeds, food products and sheep to the needs of the city population. It was decided to centralize all this stock and the people had to use it thriftily. Gevorg Sujian willingly placed his large house at the disposal of the Special Body for the supply of provisions²⁰.

The Amrashen sapper battalion was also established, where skilled craftsmen, carpenters, plumbers worked with spades, pickaxes, axes collected from the various houses of the town to construct defensive bulwarks and ramparts, while the blacksmiths urgently made spears to arm the population.

¹⁶ The King of Van-Ararat (Urartu) Kingdom Rusa I built the city fortress Rusakhinili [city of (King) Rusa]. Modern toponym “Toprak Kale” appeared as a result of the Turkish falsification policy of the Armenian toponyms.

¹⁷ Ճիզմեան Ա., op. cit., p. 315.

¹⁸ Ibid., p. 313.

¹⁹ Հայոց պատմություն, հ. III, գիրք երկրորդ, Երևան, 2015, էջ 493-498, 501-513:

²⁰ Ճիզմեան Ա., op. cit., p. 317.



The Amrashen sapper battalion's members



Kaytsak Arakel

guards came out of the neighbouring trench and saved the two women, but they fell victim themselves to the shower of bullets. This became the signal for the beginning of the battle. Rifle shots were followed by incessant cannon fires²¹.

It was planned also to create an "urgency group," which would instantly offer assistance to the fighters in danger or difficulty²².

The citizens of Van had also created a workshop for the manufacture of gunpowder under the leadership of the editor of the "Van-Tosp" periodical, Vardan

The artillery of the barracks of Hamoud Agha in Aygestan gave the Van citizens no rest with its constant bombings. The Amrashen sapper battalion, displaying resourcefulness, dug an underground tunnel reaching imperceptibly beneath the barracks ground and blew it up totally, freeing the citizens of Van of that nightmarish situation.

The people, men and women alike, were buckled down to work. Aygestan was divided into four regions. In every one of these regions, there was a Red Cross Hospital for the treatment of the wounded.

On Tuesday, the 7th of April, 1915, at 7 o'clock in the morning, the Turkish soldiers held two Armenian women coming from the village of Shushants situated at a distance of one hour from Aygestan and wanted to dishonor them. Two valiant Armenian



The Armenian brass band of Van

²¹ Ibid., p. 322.

²² Ibid., p. 323.

Papikian and Kakavian brothers, who perfected the quality of the fuming gunpowder, while the “Model” rifles had already become useless, therefore a workshop for the manufacture of bullets was also created, which produced 800 bullets daily. A workshop for the repair of the damaged arms was also created under the leadership of Nazaret Madoian and Sahak Kelekian. The number of the self-defenders of Van was 20 thousand, but they had only 250 rifles, which subsequently increased to 400-500²³.

During the self-defense of Van, a “Guardianship Body” was also created, whose task was to take care of the people coming from the neighbouring villages. Everything was organized on a very high level and everybody realized the importance of his job.

A remarkable role in the self-defense of Van had the brass band of the pupils of the pedagogical college “Varzhapetanots” under the leadership of Khachatur Bujikanian. The brass band was under the command of the Armenian military authorities and during the whole course of the battle, it moved to and fro from one position to the other, it raised, with its bold tone, the military ardor of the fighters of Van and, quite the reverse, it had a negative effect on the Turks, who were beside themselves with rage and fired unnecessary and aimless shots. Djevdet pasha complained, saying: “We can bear anything, but not the sound of this music”²⁴.

According to the testimony of one of the eyewitnesses of the self-defensive resistance of Vaspourakan, **Shavarsh Hovivian**: “...From the very first day, Aygestan acquired the appearance of a self-legislative government and, with its military, municipal and economic councils, it gave the most striking evidence of patrimonial talent and competence in the most democratic manner, namely, every individual voluntarily brought his share to the pressing task of self-defense”²⁵.

The eyewitness survivor **Manvel Marutian** (b. 1901, Van, Berdashen village) has also testified: “...I remember the events of 1915; I see them as though they are before my eyes. A lot of Armenian youth had been taken to the Turkish army. News spread that they had been brought out of the army and were shot by Turks. Then they attacked the Armenians and began to plunder. The Armenians’ self defense and rebellion occurred. The pasha called Aram Manukian and said: “Send an efficient person to calm them.” Arshak Vramian, who was a Parliament member in Constantinople, elected by the Armenians, went to Manukian and said: “I am going, but you shouldn’t come. My heart is predicting something bad.” The Turkish boatmen hung heavy iron loads on Vramian’s neck and threw him into the sea. After Vramian’s murder we felt that it was deceit and very soon it would burst out, so we began to arm ourselves. In Kaghakamedj two hundred people had guns. We fought for 25-30 days; it was a fighting of ‘life or death.’ The inhabitants of Van fought against the regular Turkish army, which had 15 thousand soldiers and Kurd rabble, but Armenians resisted. The teenagers fired cannons; they used tinder to fire them. Each contained ten kilograms of gunpowder. They removed the tinder, took it away and filled it again. There was a Frenchman, ‘Mon

²³ Ibid., p. 332.

²⁴ Ibid.

²⁵ Ibid., p. 334.

Cher' by name; he was a chemist. He said: "I'll make gun-powder." And he prepared gun-powder. Then he was killed. About 200 people were under arms, 400 people prepared the trenches by night. Whoever had food supplies, brought them to the Primacy. Every person had a function. They had sent a girl from Aygestan to collect news from the Armenians, but she was killed on her way back. Hearing the news that the resisting Armenians had been awaiting for the Russian army coming in a week, the Turks left gradually Kaghakamedj.

We were children, but we were not afraid; we collected cartridges. My father was an architect; he surveyed the construction of the positions. The priests and the vardapets were also fighting. The Turks drove the Kurds on us. I remember, when the fighting was over a man came and said: "Everywhere are slaughtered corpses. The priest is beheaded on the church threshold and his head is put before the Holy Virgin's portrait." After the Turkish army left all the villages we entered were full of corpses, and furious dogs, cats and vultures were devouring the corpses, which the Turks had slaughtered and filled in pits. They were committed to the earth without prayers. The Vaspourakanis gave 30-40 victims, but thousands were killed among the defenseless people. Whatever I'm telling you are my memoirs as an eyewitness. The Russian army approached. The volunteer army entered first, and we were saved"²⁶.

The eyewitness **Tovik Baghdassarian** (b. 1901) has narrated: "...The Turks fought against the Armenians for thirty days. The Armenians were digging trenches. We had no experience, we did not know what was taking place, but the children of Van knew a lot. When they brought us from the Varag Monastery to Van, I saw at the Armenian quarters - in Aygestan, the band was playing "Our Motherland"* to encourage the Armenian fighters. After thirty days, the Turks began to escape hearing the name of the Russians"²⁷.



The producers of smokeless powder during Van self-defence

²⁶ ՍՎ. 2011, ՎԼ. 32, էջ 135:

* The Armenian national anthem.

²⁷ ՍՎ. 2011, ՎԼ. էջ 133:

The eyewitness from Van, **Sirak Manassian** (b. 1905), related in great detail: *“...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 they exterminated the Turks, but also acquired a considerable amount of artillery units, bullets, etc. On the 6th 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**”²⁸.*



Alexander Shirvanzadé

The eyewitness survivors of the heroic battle of Van have later proudly narrated unforgettable episodes about these glorious historical events.

While in the villages surrounding Van, the Turks had time to exterminate on the spot thousands of Armenians. When the Russian army units approached Van, they were followed by the Armenian writers

Hovhannes Toumanian and **Alexander Shirvanzadé**, who



Hovhannes Tumanian

became witnesses of bewildering scenes of torture by the Turkish slaughterers: *“...Wherever they had the opportunity,” wrote Hovhannes Toumanian in his memoirs, “they had massacred the Armenians, mainly the males and had taken away the beautiful women. And if they had sufficient time and the fear from the Russian army and of the Armenian volunteers had not been close, they had invented barbaric scenes: they had crucified people, they had cut various body parts of live people and had arranged them in different patterns; games had been invented, people had been forcibly placed 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 children...”*²⁹.

Naturally, if the citizens of Van did not resort to self-defense, they would also be martyred, testified the eyewitness survivor from Van, the Honored Artist of Gyumri

²⁸ ՍՊ. 2011, Վկ. 35, էջ 142:

²⁹ Թումանյան Հովհ., Երկերի ժողովածու, հ. 6, Երևան, 1959, էջ 212-213:

Theatre, **Artsrun Harutyunian** (b. 1907) and added, “...*Self-defense is born when there is violence against the people*”³⁰.

Consequently, the self-defensive heroic battles waged against the acts of violence committed by the Ittihat government in Akdagh, Shatakh, Van and elsewhere were the noble outburst of the self-defending struggle of Western Armenians, their voice of protest addressed to the Great Powers of the world. The following popular song, communicated to us by the eyewitness survivor from Van, the Professor of Chemistry at the Yerevan State University, Doctor **Aghassi Kankanian** (b. 1904), is a testimony of those historical events:

*“Ah! Vaspourakan, sorrowful Armenia,
Countless heroes were sacrificed,
They resisted so long in the terrible battle
And were martyred for the love of the nation.*

*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...”*³¹

However, neither Europe nor America do not interfere; only the Armenian volunteers and the Russian soldiers lent a hand to the helpless people.

From the very beginning of World War I, the Turkish governors organized new, brutal persecutions, acts of plunder and murder toward the Western Armenians, directing the main blow to Mush (Moosh) and Sasun, which were well-known in the past as the important centers of the Armenian national liberation movement.

Carrying out the instructions of the Turkish government, the local authorities elaborated and implemented, along with the military command, the monstrous plan of the annihilation of the Armenians of the said provinces.



The entrance of Armenian volunteer units into Van on May 5, 1915

³⁰ Уд. 2011, 44. 40, էջ 150:

³¹ Уд. 2011, 44. 628, էջ 599:

In the spring of 1915, the Turkish regular regiments, together with the Kurdish tribes, attacked the Armenian population of Mush and Sasun provinces. The inhabitants of the villages of Tsronk and Goms were brutally exterminated.

The Armenians of Mush were saved from a total annihilation owing to the approach of the Armenian volunteers and the Russian army, who were chasing the retreating Turks and they reached Bulanekh in the beginning of May, drawing near to Mush.

Turks appeared to be in a grave situation. Under these conditions, the armed resistance of the Armenians of Mush was organized and led by one of the more resolutely disposed leaders of Mush, Hakob Kotoian. However, the opportunity was missed due to the existing discords³².

Soon, the situation on the front line changed, the Russian army retreated. The Armenians found themselves, once more, at high risk of being massacred by the Turks.

At the end of June, the Turkish forces took the offensive and the condition of the Mush population became distressing. Turks occupied the heights of the town and encircled the Armenian quarters. The massacre and the holocaust of the Armenian population started. This fact was testified also by our eyewitness survivors from Mush (Moosh) **Noyemzar Mouradian** (b. 1883), **Hrant Gasparian** (b. 1908), **Rehan Manoukian** (b. 1910).



Noyemzar Mouradian
(1883, Moosh)



Hrant Gasparian
(1908, Moosh)



Rehan Manoukian
(1910, Taron)

Reduced to despair, the inhabitants of Mush began to fight with their limited number of rifles. Men and women were fighting side by side, the children helping the adults.

On the 20th to 30th of June, 1915 heavy battles were fought against the outnumbering Turkish forces and brigands. The Armenian population of Mush helplessly fought for every house. However, the numerical and armament superiority of the Turks compelled the citizens of Mush to retreat.

³² Անտոնյան Մ., op. cit., pp. 354-362.



St. Karapet monastery (before its destruction in 1915 by Turks)

700 Armenian fighters succeeded in forcing their way through the encirclement and ascending the mountains. The Turks invaded Mush and massacred the whole population. Only 400 people were saved. The same hard lot fell also on the peasants of about 100 Armenian-inhabited villages of the Mush plain, who were ruthlessly slaughtered in the barns and cattle-sheds. Around 15-20

thousand people ascended the St. Karapet mountain and opposed the enemy. However, the leaderless and helpless struggle for survival ended unsuccessfully, suffering countless losses. The town of Mush was completely ravaged.



Yeghiazar Karapetian
(1886, Sassoun)



Hakob Grigorian
(1903, Sassoun)

During this, a group of Armenian fighters retreated from the Mush plain to Sasun (Sassoun) to join the Sasunis and with combined forces to oppose the Turkish and Kurdish massacrers. This fact was testified also by our eyewitness survivors from Sassoun **Hakob Grigorian** (b. 1903), **Yeghiazar Karapetian** (b. 1886)

The news about the mass massacres of the Armenians arriving from Mush and the various provinces of Western Armenia had compelled the Sasunis to get ready for self-defense having at their disposal only a thousand old and new military and hunting rifles.

The defensive groups of Sasun led by Petara Manouk, Rouben, Koms, Ishkhan Sharo and others had been able, in March 1915, to beat off the Turkish and Kurdish forces invading Sasun, who had attacked the village of Talvorik.

During the months of April-May, the Sasunis put up a heroic resistance against the Turkish forces, however, being unable to stand the heavy shelling of the enemy, the Armenian fighters, suffering great losses, retreated to the slopes of the Andok Mountain and continued the self-defense of the region.

Unyielding battles occurred in June in the region of Assank. The fighters of Gomuts Monastery and Talvorik raised a panic among the Kurd brigands and seized the Satan bridge. The villagers of Ksok came to their aid.

On the 30th of July, the Sasunis liberated the village of Shenik, but, launching a new attack, the enemy took possession of the cattle-sheds situated on the slopes of Andok and massacred the thousands of women and children, who had taken shelter

there. The Sasunis still surviving in the mountains of Andok, Tsovassar and Gerin heroically defended themselves against the attacking Turks and Kurds. About 30 thousand homeless Armenians saved from the massacres of Mush and the Mush plain and sheltered for months on end in the mountains of Kana and Havatorik stood up, with great difficulty, to the enemy. However, here again, the leaderless struggle for the survival of the Sasunis was cruelly suppressed.

The eyewitness survivors have also testified about these tragic events. *"...The Turks attacked and began to massacre,"* a survivor from Sasun, **Arakel Davtian** (b. 1904) has narrated, *"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. Sasun resisted for two months. The Turkish soldiers came and besieged us. We had no help whatsoever, and they slaughtered many of us"*³³.

The eyewitness survivor from the village of Shenik of Sasun, **Khachik Khachatryan** (b. 1900), has also testified: *"...The Turkish army came, about sixty thousand in number. They came and surrounded the village. Our fighters resisted bravely. Twice the Turkish army invaded the village and twice our freedom-fighters and those who had arms drove them out. Our combatants were gathered in the center of the village. Three days before our people had left the village and gone to Andok, the children (and I among them) with the women had gone with them. It was the beginning of July. There was no bread, no water, no salt, we had only unsalted meat. We stayed there for about forty-five days and the battle went on. After that our provisions came to an end. We were fed only on roasted flour. The Turkish soldiers came and invaded Andok. The valleys were filled with the corpses of children. Their mothers were not able to save them. The Turks and the Kurds were firing. People fell by the dozen. The young brides were taken away. At the end, they were dropping the people from the mountain top into the river to spare the bullets. The river carried away innumerable bodies..."*³⁴

The eyewitness survivor, **Yeghiazar Karapetian** (b. 1886) from Sasun, presenting day by day and in great detail those tragic events, has noted: *"...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."* At the end, the eyewitness has concluded: *"...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 28th of*

³³ ՍՊ. 2011, ՎԼ. 4, էջ 90:

³⁴ ՍՊ. 2011, ՎԼ. 2, էջ 88:

*June was the Sunday of Vardavar, the merry holiday of the Armenian nation, which, alas, was converted into the Sunday of burning of the Armenians of the Taron plain...*³⁵



Moushegh Hovhannisian
(b. 1908)

Along with these events, the below-cited popular song was woven, which was communicated to us by **Moushegh Hovhannisian** (b. 1908, Sasun) in Talin:

*“...The province of Sasun with its forests,
With its high mountains as ramparts
Always withstood the Turkish army,
Sasun smells now of hot blood.”*³⁶

The smell of “hot blood” was spread also in the heroic towns of Western Armenia: Shapin-Garahissar and Sebastia (Svaz), Malatia (Armenia Minor), Karin (Upper Armenia), Kharberd (Harput, in Tsopk), Amid (Diarbekir) and others, and in the Armenian-inhabited localities of Asia Minor: Pontos, Izmit, Bursa, Ankara, Konia and elsewhere. Turkish butchers exterminated with unspeakable cruelty all the Armenians, not sparing even the infants.



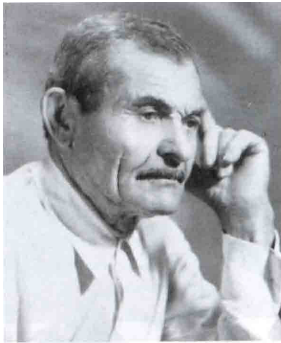
Shapin-Garahissar

Disobeying the detrimental order of the Turkish government, the Armenians of Shapin-Garahissar gathered together and decided to fight to the last drop of their blood.

The survivors from Shapin-Garahissar **Mkrtich Khachatryan** (b. 1907) and **Khoren Ayvazian** have related that the town of Shapin-Garahissar was surrounded by more than 16 Armenian villages.

³⁵ ՍՎ. 2011, ՎԼ. 1, էջ 79:

³⁶ ՍՎ. 2011, ՎԼ. 627, էջ 599:



Mkrtich Khachatrian
(1907, Shapin-Garahissar)

The population was occupied with agriculture and trade. They were also very studious. When World War I broke out, 300 Armenian youths were drafted into the Turkish army, but they were not given arms; they were sent to form the “amelé tabour” (“labor battalions”), and were condemned to penal servitude and were eventually killed³⁷.

Mass arrests and pogroms started in May 1915: surrounded by the Turkish and Circassian gangs. The condition of the Armenians became alarming day after day. On June 2, 1915, the rabble of brigands released from the jails, led by the Turkish policemen, attacked the market of Shapin-Garahissar and the pillage started, while the Armenian shopkeepers were taken to the prison with their hands bound.



A group of self-defenders
(Shapin-Garahissar)

The eyewitness survivor **Kadjouni Gharagyozyan** (b. 1905, Shapin-Garahissar, Tamzara village), who worked at the Gyumri railway station, has also testified: “...One day, as usual, father went to his town cloth shop, but he did not return in the evening. And no one returned from the town. We got news that they had searched the shops of 300 Armenian merchants; that they had made them stand in line and taken them to prison. Among them had been our dear father.

Our neighbours and relatives came to console us. The next morning mother took me to town to see father in prison. We had gone some distance when people coming towards us told us not to go to town, shouting: “They are slaughtering the Armenians”. We did not know what to do, we returned home, for my younger sisters and brothers were alone at home. The following day I had gone to town and from the corner of the market I was watching what was going on at police headquarters. I saw that they brought 8 men there. Then they made them stand under our cemetery wall and shot them. We heard that they had killed the 300 merchants by axes in the prison. We also heard that the Armenians of Shapin-Garahissar had ascended the fortress of the town at night and started their self-defense³⁸.



Kadjouni Gharagyozyan
(b. 1905)

³⁷ Յուշամատեն Մեծ եղեռնի, խմբ. Գ. Ահարոնեան, Պէյրուք, 1965, էջ 771-780:

³⁸ ՍՊ. 2011, Վկ. 98, էջ 234:

The citizens of Shapin-Garahissar held an urgent meeting and created a Military Resistance Council under the leadership of Ghoukas Deuvletian, Avag Tourikian, Garegin Karmirian, Shapouh Ozanian and Israyel Ozan, who would organize the defense of the population. It was necessary also to free from the prisons the illegally arrested innocent Armenian shopkeepers. During the meeting, the hero of the liberation struggle, Mourad of Sebastia, announced that he had at his disposal 10 thousand young refugees from various places, who were ready to join the Russian army; however, the Turkish battalion coming from Karin-Erzrum had encircled Shapin-Garahissar.

In June 1915, the citizens of Shapin-Garahissar started to take off the paving-stones of the streets and raised with them barricades, the men constructed bulwarks; the women sewed sacks, which the children filled with sand to protect themselves. They installed also artillery batteries in some Armenian houses. The Turkish gangs of brigands, who started the fight, received a severe blow from the Armenians.

Shapouh Ozanian attacked, with his "urgency group," the government building, where the Armenian shopkeepers were kept. Taken unawares, the Turkish sentries ran away out of extreme fear.

When the Armenians entered the building, they found all the Armenian detainees ruthlessly killed with axes and lying on the ground. On his way back Shapuh Ozanian was shot, filling his compatriots' heart with great sorrow.

On the following day, the Turkish artillery heavily shelled the Armenian district of Partez and the extensive fire destroyed about 3 thousand wooden houses. The Armenians' condition became inconsolable. The shelterless Armenians, 5,062 in number, were compelled to retreat to the ancient fortress built on a neighbouring hill. The Turks encircled the fortress and a bilateral shooting started. Soon, the Turks received reinforcement and, with the help of German officers, started to bombard the fortress.

On the 7th day of battle, the governor of Sebastia, Muamer, sent a messenger, bearing a white flag, to the Armenians advising them to surrender, but they had pledged to fight to the last drop of their blood. The Turkish cannons shelled the fortress for two days. On the third day, governor Muamer demanded the Armenians to surrender, but the Armenian freedom-fighters were adamant. A shortage of water and food supplies was being felt in the fortress, but the citizens of Shapin-Garahissar were inflexible, they had decided: "To die with dignity, arm in hand."

On June 23, Turks, after an uninterrupted volley of gunfire, succeeded in capturing the gate of the fortress. Two young Armenian freedom-fighters were waging a life or death struggle against 70 Turkish soldiers, who had managed, by climbing down the cliff, to gain access to the gate of the fortress. It was a critical moment and it was necessary to carry a bomb to the guards of the gate. All of a sudden, a 14-year-old boy, Hmayak Tevekelian, crossed himself and, taking off his cloak, wrapped the dangerous bomb in it and ran toward the gate, but the little hero fell down, near the cave adjoining the gate shot by a shower of bullets. From inside the cave, a woman's hand cautiously

picked up the bomb and flung it on the Turks, killing them on the spot. Inside the fortress, an epidemic had started due to the decay of accumulated corpses. In this desperate situation, the fighters decided to run the enemy blockade by a night attack and to move away to the neighbouring regions in order to save the life of those confined in the fortress, many of whom had drunk poison with a view to not falling into the hands of the enemy. Despite the silence of the following days, the Turks did not dare to approach the fortress. On June 29, however, on the 27th day of the Armenian self-defense, the Turks invaded the fortress and started to kill the still alive, defenseless people with axes. The Armenian women having self-esteem threw themselves into the abyss of the canyon in order to save their honor. The eyewitness survivor **Hakob Terzian** (b. 1910, Shapin-Garahissar), whom I met in New York in 1979, told me about the little defenseless Armenian boys who remained in the fortress: *"I am already 79 years old. I am from Shapin-Garahissar. When we resisted the Turks, they killed some of us and they took the children of my age to the Turkish orphanage. They stripped us. The officer drew out his sword, put it on our throat and the mullah said: "give up the Christian faith and adopt the Islamic religion".*"³⁹

Later on, a sad, but reassuring popular song was woven as a lullaby:

"That is the shirt of the brave man, my little one,

Who was called your father, sleep, sleep, my little one,

Come now, grow up fast, my little one,

Learn to suck the blood of the wicked, sleep, sleep, my little one!"⁴⁰

That is why, in order not to deceive its nation, faith and native land, Armenians have resisted against the enemy. But when the Russian soldiers retreated, the Armenians of Van, Sasun, Shatakh, Shapin-Garahissar (Nicompolis), Mush, Baghesh (Bitlis), Vagharshakert (Alashkert), Daruynk (Bayazet), Babert, Karin-Erzrum and other localities were compelled to follow them and to migrate to Eastern Armenia. Seeing no other way out, they abandoned, with tearful eyes, their native land, their millennial



Hayrik Mouradian
(1905, Shatakh)

historic cradle and, whimpering, took the road of migration. 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** (b. 1905), a survivor from Shatakh:

³⁹ Uđ. 2011, ԿԼ. 100, էջ 242:

⁴⁰ Ibid., p. 780.

"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]



Shogher Tonoyan
(1901, Moosh)

The talented survivor from Mush, **Shoger Tonoian** (b. 1901), in the below-cited elegy of her composition, has condensed that great indescribable national sorrow:

*"We abandoned the sweet plains and meadows of Mush,
Our sacred lodges, houses, roofs and Homeland,
Chapels and monasteries, books and canons, Bibles
Were abandoned and remained in the hound's muzzle."*⁴¹

The deportation was a real tragedy.

Suffering countless human losses on the trek, dispossessed of their native land and property, hardly evading the gun-fires of the Turkish and Kurdish massacrers, leaving unburied their dead kinsfolk on the road, the interminable human flood of Western Armenian deportees was dolefully moving forward through clouds of dust; while those moving in the forefront of this flood of deportees had, with the help of the Armenian volunteers and the soldiers of the Russian army, crossed the Arax river, had reached Edjmiadsin and had bunched up under the walls of the monastery, the other end of the procession was still in Western Armenia...

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



Zeytun

The Baghdad railway, which had a particular economic importance, passed through the Armenian-populated territory of Cilicia. This circumstance troubled the

⁴¹ Սվ. 2011, Վկ. 653, էջ 609:

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, Zeytun to Deurtyol; and their populations, although engaged in silk-production, carpet-making and other national handcrafts, 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.



Hadjn (1914)

Besides, the outrages and the massacres, which had started in many provinces of Turkey, coupled with the promised, but not implemented "Reforms" following the Russo-Turkish war of 1877-1878, had not completely exterminated the naturally freedom-loving Cilicians. Zeytun, the eagle-nest of Cilicia had, for a long time, become the flash point of Turkish tyranny and the latter decided to square accounts with the bold inhabitants of Zeytun as well.

The details of these events were divulged in the narratives of the eyewitness survivors from Zeytun, **Gyurdji Keshishian** (b. 1900), **Barunak Shishakian** (1902), **Hovsep Bshtikian** (b. 1903), **Karapet Tozlian** (b. 1903), **Eva Chouljian** (b. 1903), **Sedrak Gaybakian** (b. 1903), **Gayané Adourian** (b. 1903), **Samvel Ardjkian** (b. 1907), **Harutyun Alboyadjian** (b. 1904).⁴²

⁴² ՍՊ. 2011, ՎԼ. 252-258, էջ 432-444:



Gyurdji Keshishian
(1900, Zeytoun)



Hovsep Bshtikian
(1903, Zeytoun)



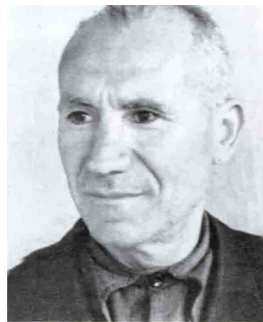
Karapet Tozlian
(1903, Zeytoun)



Eva Choulian
(1903, Zeytoun)



Sedrak Gaybakian
(1903, Zeytoun)



Harutyun Alboyadjian
(1904, Fendedjak)



Barounak Shishikian
(1902, Zeytoun)

The Cilicians, who were the worthy inheritors of the Armenian Principedom (1080-1197) and the Kingdom of Cilicia (1198-1375) and had glorious traditions of the national liberation struggle of the past, could once again fight in sacrifice.



Asatour Sajian
The courier from Sis to Hadjn

The eyewitness survivor from Zeytoun, **Karapet Tozlian** (b. 1903) has mentioned, referring to his past: *"...Zeytoun had an iron ore. I remember: we used to melt the ore in father's shop; we took it to town, and the blacksmiths made bullets and cartridges. ...We had two uncles. My father and uncle were gunsmiths, so that when the enemy came we would be ready, and would not bow our heads before the Turks."*⁴³...Since the Zeytuni mothers lulled their infants to sleep, still in their cradle, singing in our dialect, the following lullaby:

*"My son will soon become a brave,
He will knock the enemy's body down
And with his silver-ringed rifle on his shoulders
He will selflessly fight!"*⁴⁴

⁴³ Սվ. 2011, Վկ. 254, էջ 439:

⁴⁴ Սվազլյան Վ., Կիլիկիա. Արևմտահայոց բանավոր ավանդությունը, Երևան, 1994, Վկ. 147, էջ 117:



**The Armenian women self-defenders of Hadjn
Nvard Teleian, Ester Maleian, Akuline Khanjian**

However, 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 managed to escape from the army and hide themselves in Zeytun. Khurshid pasha came with an army of three thousand soldiers to claim the deserters, who had taken refuge in the ancient St. Astvatsatsin (Holy Virgin) Monastery, built on the top of the Berzenka Mountain. In the middle of March, 1915, the enemy started to shell the monastery. The self-defensive fighters of Zeytun, under the leadership of Panos Chakerian, responded to the enemy's attack, sparing their scanty bullets.

The braves of Zeytun, under the leadership of Aram Cholakian, jumping from the back windows of the monastery, arrived, through the forests, at the burg of Fendedjak to lend a helping hand to the fighters waging a self-defensive resistance there.

On the 9th of April, 300 notables of Zeytun were taken to the military barracks, followed also by their families, who were all deported to unknown places. These were the first deportees. The forcible deportation from Zeytun started. First the district of the monastery was deprived of its inhabitants and subsequently all the villages surrounding Zeytun were deserted. Then the eagle-nest of Zeytun 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, Alexandretta (Iskenderun), Kessab and the other Armenian-inhabited were deserted.

"The forcible deportation of the Armenians was only a fraudulently veiled death sentence," wrote the French publicist René Pinon in his published work entitled: *"La suppression des Arméniens. Méthode allemande - travail turc"* (The Extermination of the Armenians: German Method - Turkish Work)⁴⁵.

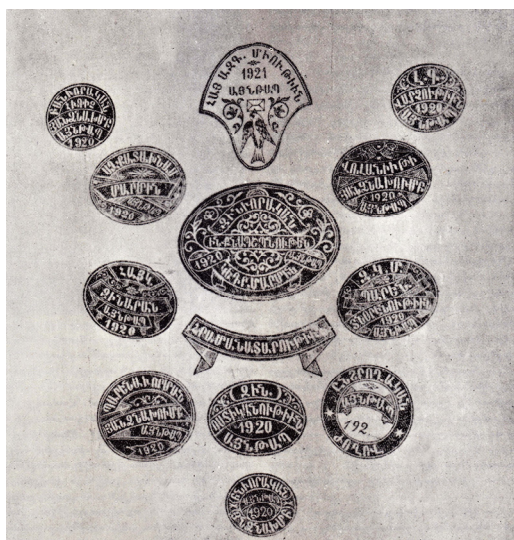
⁴⁵ Pinon, René. *La suppression des Arméniens. Méthode allemande – travail turc*. Paris, 1916, p. 27.

On the deportation trek, 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 flourishing homes under the strokes of whips and bayonets. The genocidal policy initiated by the Turkish government had embraced almost all the Armenian-inhabited localities.



**The leaders of the Ayntap self-defence:
Astour Levonian, Avetis Galamkerian, priest Nerses Tavukchian**



**The seals of organs of the Aintap heroic self-
defence bodies**



Ayntap

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, Rasul-Ayn, Meskene, Suruj, Deir-el-Zor and elsewhere.

According to the information provided by the survivors, the massacre began in April, on Easter Sunday, so that the Armenians, too, would be worthy of the Passion of the Christ and the Armenians would dye their Easter eggs with their own blood. And the affliction of the Armenians turned into a song, which resounded in a heart-breaking manner:

*“They dismantled the tents on Zatik-Kiraki,⁴⁶
They drove all the Armenians into the desert,
They slaughtered the Armenians like goats,
Armenians dying for the sake of faith!”⁴⁷*



Marash

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!”⁴⁸.*

⁴⁶ The Armenian words “Zatik-Kiraki” mean Easter Sunday.

⁴⁷ ՍՊ. 2011, ՎԼ. 480, էջ 571:

⁴⁸ ՍՊ. 2011, ՎԼ. 467, էջ 569:



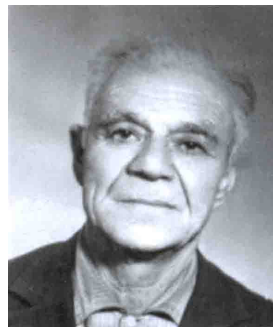
Yessayi Yaghoubian's group of self-defenders

On the 18th of July, an order for the deportation of the Armenians of Kessab arrived. In those very days, the Very Reverend Tigran Andreassian, a preacher, escaping from the group of people deported from Zeytun, had returned to his native **Moussa Ler** (Dagh) and had told about the inexpressible sufferings of the poor exiles.

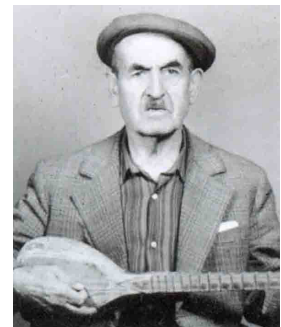
Seeing that their turn would come soon, nearly all the inhabitants of the seven villages of Moussa Ler united together on the 19th of July and decided to disregard the disastrous order of deportation. About the Moussa Ler self-defence struggle we wrote in details in our article "The heroic battle of Moussa Ler according to the testimonies of the eyewitness survivors"⁴⁹.



Mariam Baghdishian
(1909, Moussa Dagh)



Gevorg Chiftchian
(1909, Moussa Dagh)



Poghos Soupoukian
(1887, Moussa Dagh)



Soghomon Yetenekian
(1900, Mersin)



Movses Panossian
(1885, Moussa Dagh)

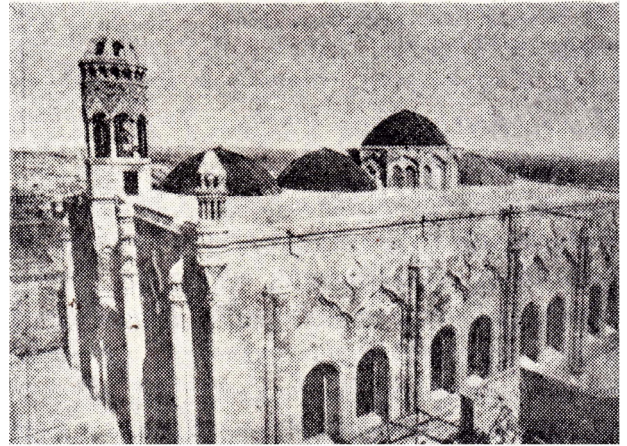


Aharon Mankrian
(1903, Hadjn)

⁴⁹ Fundamental Armenology, Issue 2, 2015, pp. 69-100. <http://www.fundamentalarmenology.am/datas/pdfs/11.pdf>

When relating their childhood memories, the survivors still remembered the way their mothers had taught them the Armenian alphabet by writing the Mesropian letters on the hot sands of the desert up to the time, when the Sisvan School, established by the Armenian General Benevolent Union, began to function in some tents, along with the adjoining hospital and orphanage in Port Said (Egypt).

Still in May, 1915, the new Turkish governor of Edessia-Urha (Urfa), Ali Haydar, an Ittihat member, organized the arrest of forty local Armenian notables and demanded from all the Armenians of the town to hand over their arms in forty-eight hours. At the end of July, the enlightened primate of the Armenian Diocese of Urfa, the Very Reverend Artavazd Galenterian, was put under arrest. In those days, new caravans of the Armenians deported from Zeytun and neighbourig provinces, all deprived of their valiant youths, arrived in Urfa. The thirty-five thousand Armenians of Urfa decided, after a special deliberation, to have recourse to arms similar to the inhabitants of Moussa Ler.



The church of the Armenian protestants, which became an important stronghold during the self-defence (Urha-Edessa)



The Armenian quarter in Urha-Edessia

In October 1915, the heroic self-defense of Urha (Urfa) was organized under the command of Mkrtich Yotnekhbayrian and Harutyun Rastkelenian. The whole Armenian population of Urfa 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 Armenian self-defenders of Urfa took oath: "We are ready to die, the arm in our hands"⁵⁰.

However, the Turk policemen and the rabble launched a new attack and occupied the Armenian Catholic Church. The Urfans let the enemy 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."*⁵¹

Meeting an obstinate resistance, a regular Turkish army composed of six thousand soldiers, under the command of Fakhry pasha, was sent to Urfa, to which were joined twelve thousand brigands. The defenders of Urfa 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?"⁵².



Khanoum Ketendjian

The Armenian women and girls were, along with the men, worthy of great praise with their exploits in the heroic battle of Urfa. Worthy of remembrance was Khanoum Ketendjian, a graduate of the American College in Kharberd (Harpoot). The commissar of the Turkish garrison, Youssef effendi, has recounted one of her courageous feats: "...After a while we were all encircled. Someone ordered with a shrill voice "Surrender!" We, the Turks, did not answer. The volley of gunfire was repeated. At the third volley, the inner and outer lamps shattered. The invaders had already rushed inside. Several guns were fired, too. The uproar

increased in volume. They were dragging someone to the door of the mosque. From the man's entreating voice I recognized that he was Ali, our policeman from Kalabeoyun. I dared to look to see what they were doing. I saw in the dim light that somebody wearing trousers but having woman's hair was passing the rope round Ali's neck. They hanged him from the lamppost. The commanding voice was hers, who started to call out the names of more than 30 women. The latter replied "Present" in a feminine voice. Indeed, they were all women wearing men's clothes. After checking that no one was killed or wounded, they all departed singing like fabulous heroes. When I remember all this, my bones begin to shudder"⁵³.

⁵⁰ Սահակեան Ա., Դիցազնական Ուրֆան և իր հայորդիները, Պէյրուս, 1955, էջ 818:

⁵¹ Սվ. 2011, Վկ. 638, էջ 602:

⁵² Արզումանյան Մ., Հայաստան. 1914-1917, Երևան, 1969, էջ 453:

⁵³ Աւետեան Մ., op. cit., pp. 329-330.



Mkrtych Yotneghbayrian

Seriously wounded in the knee and lying on a stretcher, Mkrtych Yotneghbayrian passed from one position to another and encouraged the fighters. Fakhy 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 Urfa answered him: "If you have the feelings of a civilized and Christian man, save the innocent Armenian people, who are being massacred in the deserts!"⁵⁴

The situation of the Armenians was becoming deteriorated day by day. On the next day, the enemy tightened the siege of Urfa and destroyed the Armenian quarter by a heavy cannonade. The condition of the Armenians became more critical. On the 23rd of October, the Turks invaded the Armenian quarter and cruelly slaughtered the devoted heroes of Urfa and deported the surviving 800 families of the neighbouring Armenian-inhabited village of Kamourj to Deir-el-Zor and ruthlessly massacred the majority of them on the road.

These historical events were narrated by three of the survivors of Urfa, **Khacher** (b. 1893), **Khoren** (b. 1893) and **Nvard** (b. 1903) **Ablapoutians** in their memoirs⁵⁵.

Khoren Ablapoutian
(1893, Yedessia)Nvard Ablapoutian
(1903, Yedessia)Khacher Ablapoutian
(1893, Yedessia)

Referring to these historical events it should be pointed out that still in the days of World War I, in 1916 two of the Allied countries, England and France, had signed a secret agreement. According to the Sykes–Picot Agreement, in case of the defeat of Turkey, Cilicia, having two million six hundred thousand hectares of arable and fertile

⁵⁴ Յուշամատենան Մեծ եղեռնի, էջ 804:

⁵⁵ Սվ. 2011, Վկ. 143-145, էջ 294-299:

lands, would pass under the supervision of France. The English and French authorities had earlier agreed with the Armenian National Delegation in Paris that, if the Armenian volunteers fought against the German-Turkish forces, 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.



Armenian legionaries before the Arara battle

Consequently, Armenian young men escaping from the Turkish army, from the roads of exile, from various places and even arriving from America (those who recently emigrated there: natives of Moussa Ler, Ayntap, Marash, Kessab, Hadjn, Hoosenik, Chengoosh, Sebastia, Kharberd, 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 innumerable innocent martyred kinsfolk and defying death, defeated the Turkish army and won the magnificent victory of Arara (on 19 September 1918), near Nablous (Palestine). This historical event, too, found its reflection in an Armenian popular song:

*"One by one I counted four years,
The Armenian soldiers took Nablous,
They were one thousand five hundred in number,
The English and the French were amazed"⁵⁶.*

The French and the English commanders-in-chief praised the brave Armenian legionaries. On the 12th of October, 1918, General Allenby sent a telegram to the President of the Armenian National Delegation in Paris, Poghos Nubar Pasha, saying: "I am proud to have the Armenian regiment under my command. They fought courageously and had a great share in the victory"⁵⁷.

After WWI the Armenian legion was removed to Cilicia by the French command. Numerous Armenian deportees from Cilicia, miraculously saved from Deir-el-Zor, Ras-

⁵⁶ Սվ. 2011, Վկ. 545, էջ 579:

⁵⁷ Քելեշեան Մ., Սիս-Մատեան, Պէյրուս, 1949, էջ 592:

ul-Ayn and other living cemeteries, emaciated and destitute, gradually returned and resettled in their Homeland. In February 1919 military power in Cilicia was concentrated in the hands of the English command. In November the English troops were replaced by the French contingents. Taking the advantage of the French authority's uncertainty the Turkish troops headed by Kemalists resumed genocidal actions against Armenians⁵⁸.

Starting from January of 1920, the Turkish forces launched an attack on the Armenian locations of Cilicia. During the violent battles, which lasted for more than twenty days, the Armenians of Marash were slaughtered and the town was burned to ashes.

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

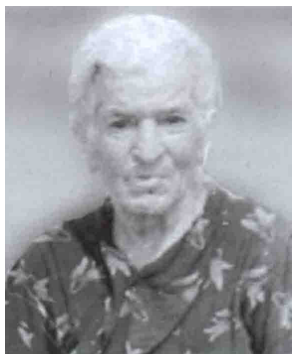
"Marash is called Marash, alas!

Marash, how do they call you Marash?

When they burn a church in Marash,

And they burn Armenians in the church!"⁵⁹

The eyewitness survivor from Marash, **Verginé Mayikian** (b. 1898) referred, in the memoir she has narrated, to the political events of the time, which were disappointing for the Armenians: *"...We led a comparatively peaceful life until 1920, when the French authorities were still in Cilicia. The French and Armenian newspapers always wrote that the French forces would always remain in Cilicia, because the prestige of France had grown after the First World War, while that of Turkey, on the contrary, had decreased.*



Verginé Mayikian
(1898, Marash)



Hambardzoum Bardakchian
(1921, Marash)

But that peace, alas, did not last long. We gradually felt that the Turks began to hate us. One day, we woke up and realized that the French had covered the hoofs of their horses and had abandoned Marash silently. We got up in the morning and were astonished, since nobody knew 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 by September 1920. It seemed that the Turks knew about it beforehand. At night, we heard gun-shots here and there. It frightened us..."⁶⁰

Thirteen thousand Armenians perished during the massacres of Marash. Subsequently, the surviving eight thousand residents of Marash, together with the six thousand Armenians from Urfa, were forcibly deported to Aleppo, Damascus, Beirut,

⁵⁸ Հայկական հարց, Երևան, 1996, էջ 185:

⁵⁹ ՍՊ. 2011, Վկ. 550, էջ 580:

⁶⁰ ՍՊ. 2011, Վկ. 259, էջ 446:

Jerusalem, Baghdad and to the regions of Anatolia (Asia Minor) found under Greek domination.

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

The eyewitness survivor **Sandoukht Hekimian** (b. 1908, Ayntap) has testified about those historical events: *“In 1920, Ali Keledj attacked Ayntap with a tremendous army. The leader of the self-defensive committee of Ayntap was Adour Levonian. He 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 Keledj to flee in dismay in one night shouting: “The Armenians are filled with vengeance”. The Armenians of Ayntap had composed a song about Adour Levonian”*⁶¹.

In the meantime, Turkish troops laid siege to the town of Hadjn; the town had, initially, an Armenian population of 35,000, of which only 6,000 had been rescued from the Genocide⁶².



Sargis Jebejian

The citizens of Hadjn 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 commander 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 a fighting mood.

The people of Hadjn, 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 unarmed freedom-fighters 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

⁶¹ Սվ. 2011, Վկ. 269, էջ 454: The son of the same eyewitness survivor, Gevorg Hekimian (b. 1937, Beirut) has sung that song, which he had heard from his mother (Սվ. 2011, Վկ. 641, էջ 604).

⁶² 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” (Թէրզեան Ս. Յ., Հաճընի ութամսեայ դիպագնամարտը, Պուենտս-Այրես, 1956, էջ 241).

only broke their word, but informed also the Turks about the 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 because of the lack of shells. Starvation caused a great distress to the inhabitants of Hadjn. "People were obliged to eat cats, mice, dogs, leather, the bark of trees, moccasins, etc"⁶³.

The enemy reinforced the army with new cannons and innumerable regular armed soldiers. 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 crosswise 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.

*"Three hundred Armenian braves,
All armed with rifles,
Gave a blow to Doghan bey's army,
Hadjn fell, shouting "Vengeance!"*"⁶⁴

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



Avetis Chavush and Sargis Mikayelian brothers, the hero leaders of the Armenian self-defenders at Amanos mountains' battles

The Treaty of Sevres (August 10, 1920), provided that the Entente countries should establish a supervision over Cilicia and that the Turkish troops should be evacuated from Cilicia. With hope and faith with regard to the future, they began to restore the ravage and to cultivate the abandoned orchards. Ignoring the Treaty of Sevres 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.

Not only did the French military administration evade to undertake serious measures to ensure the security of the Armenians, but they left also the local authority in the hands of the Turkish military officials, who, furthermore, were not disarmed. In 1921 Turks came to an agreement with the Allied States and urged the French to evacuate their

⁶³ Արամ Ասպետ, Դրուագներ Հաճնոյ հերոսամարտէն, Պէյրուք, 1961, էջ 242:

⁶⁴ ՍՊ. 2011, Վկ. 649, էջ 607:

peace-maintaining forces from Cilicia. In accordance with England's instructions, the French government, breaking its obligations as an ally towards the Armenians, handed Cilicia over to Turkey by an agreement signed on the 20th of October, 1921, in Ankara, condemning the Armenian population of Cilicia to the danger of massacre⁶⁵.

Whereas, of the 30,000 frisky and joyful inhabitants of the eagle-nest Zeytun, only 1,058 had miraculously survived the Armenian Genocide and had returned to restore their ruined and burned houses. Many of them united led by the national hero Aram Cholakian and his comrades in arms, Hovhannes Simonian, Karapet, Manouk and other braves, the group of courageous men led by Avetis from Adana fighting in the inaccessible mountains of Amanos.



Soghomon Tehlirian

This gradually increasing large group, about 500 people, composed of male and female armed heroes, fighting day and night in the impassable Taurus Mountains, like the guerrillas of Akdagh in the Pontos Mountains, frequently attacked the Turkish bands. Although they were pursued by the Turkish soldiers, however, overcoming unspeakable hardships, they continued to fight against the enemy forces hoping to save the cradle of their ancestors, the one-time flourishing Cilicia.

It was in that period that the national hero Soghomon Tehlirian took revenge for the millions of victims of the Armenian Genocide by killing, in Berlin, the great criminal Talaat pasha, who had escaped justice⁶⁶.

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

“Talaat pasha fled to Berlin,

⁶⁵ Հայկական հարց, էջ 185:

⁶⁶ “In 1921 the verdict of Young Turk leaders was issued, according to which 4 out of 31 criminals - Talaat, Jemal, Enver and Nazim - were condemned to death, while the remainder of the 27 were condemned to imprisonment for different terms. After World War I the trial of Young Turk leaders began in Turkey, with charges of war crimes. Among the accusations was the organization and implementation of massacres of Armenians in the Ottoman Empire. However, several were charged ‘in absentia’ as they had managed to flee the country. In 1922 one of the organizers of Armenian Genocide, Talaat, was assassinated in Berlin by an Armenian student, Soghomon Tehlirian. This was the beginning of the “Nemesis” (named after the goddess of revenge in Greek mythology) operation, worked out at the 9th session of the ARF party in autumn, 1919, the aim of which was to execute the death sentence of Young Turk leaders in Turkey. “Nemesis” was a clear, thoroughly worked out operation, which with time was efficiently implemented by the Armenian avengers, pursuing only the aim of justice. A special committee was formed to discover the hiding-places of the criminals living in different corners of the world. In June, Tehlirian’s trial for killing Talaat began in Germany, which in fact became a trial against the organizers of the genocide. Given European acknowledgment of Talaat’s responsibility as chief architect of the genocide, Tehlirian was acquitted. In Rome, on December 6, a bullet from a gun wielded by another Armenian avenger Arshavir Shirakyan killed the leader of the first Young Turk government – Said Halim. In Berlin on April 7, 1922 Armenian avengers Arshavir Shirakian and Aram Yerkanian executed the death sentence of the former governor of Trabzon Jemal Azmi and the founder of “Teshkilateshi Makhsuse” criminal organization – Behaeddin Shakir. In Tbilisi on July 25 Armenian avengers Stepan Tsaghikian, Artashes Gevorgian and Petros Ter-Poghosian murdered one of the butchers of the Armenian Genocide – Jemal Pasha” (<http://www.genocide-museum.am/eng/chronology.php>).

*Tehlirian 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!*

*They buried Talaat pasha in the ground
And sent the news to his bitch-mother.
Long live the German judge!
Fill your cup with wine, brother!
Fill your wine and drink to our health!”⁶⁷*

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

Moreover, in 1921, after the forcible deportation of the Armenian population of Cilicia, it was the turn of the Armenians of 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 Kemalist Turks burned down also the Armenian and Greek quarters of Smyrna (Izmir), driving the Christians to the seashore. That horrifying event has been recorded in the memory of the Western Armenians as “the calamity of Izmir”⁶⁸, since Kemal Ataturk cynically declared: “Turkey belongs to the Turks”⁶⁹.

In addition, the Allied States recognized by the Treaty of Lausanne, in 1923, the Ankara government of Mustafa Kemal and its right over Eastern Thrace, Izmir and Cilicia, as well as, over all those territories, which, by the Treaty of Sevres, would have passed to Armenia. Moreover, they also acknowledged the new “frontiers” of Turkey, which illegally included also the former regions of Eastern Armenia, namely, Kars, Ardahan and Surmalu (Igdir). While a smaller part of Historic Armenia continued to exist as the First Republic of Armenia (1918-1920), the Soviet Republic of Armenia (1920-1991), then, starting from 1991, as the Republic of Armenia and the Artsakh Republic, however, the greatest part of the Armenian people was left dispersed in the various countries of the world. Thus, the Armenian Diaspora was created as a historical reality.

Thus, although the Turkish government cruelly suppressed the two dozen heroic self-defensive battles of the Western Armenians in the various localities during the years of the Armenian Genocide (1915-1923), nevertheless, the devoted Armenian heroes, who fought for their elementary human rights for life and for the physical

⁶⁷ Уқ. 2011, ۷қ. 650, ۷қ 607:

⁶⁸ The great fire of Smyrna and the Armenians’ massacre witnessed a survivor from Afion-Garahissar, Arpine Bartikian (b. 1903) remembering with emotion the ghastly scenes she had seen (Уқ. 2011, ۷қ. 195, ۷қ 380 ۷қ. 564, ۷қ 586) (see in details in our article: “The Armenian Genocide according to the testimonies of the eyewitness survivors.” - Fundamental Armenology, Issue 1, 2015, pp.525-526)

⁶⁹ Уқ. 2011, ۷қ. 195, ۷қ 382:

survival of their nation, recorded brilliant pages in the history of the national liberation struggle of the Armenian people, about which the eyewitness survivors have also testified.

Summarizing the two dozen self-defensive resistance battles for survival of the Western Armenians fought during the Armenian Genocide, we come to a number of conclusions⁷⁰:

- From the very beginning of World War I (1914), the Young Turk government had collected the arms of the Armenians, even the kitchen knives. The Armenians were disarmed and during the battles for survival, they were fighting against the Turkish armed forces with self-made arms;

- The government had drafted into the Turkish army the Armenian youths and able-bodied males aged 17-45, who, by the secret order of Enver pasha, were taken to secluded places and brutally killed out of sight. Therefore the self-defenders were reduced in number;

- The government had collected the talented intellectuals and had crushed their skulls with stones in the deserts, so that the Armenians would be deprived not only of self-defenders, but of the leading minds as well;

- The Armenian people never have started the fighting; however, when injustice and violence were done to them, they requited the enemy according to what they had done;

- The Armenian self-defenders acted separated from one another;

- The Armenians have been unyielding towards the enemy, but humane with regard to the unarmed population, women, children and old people, in contrast to the Turks, who tortured to death the women, old people and even infants;

- The Armenian people have suffered great losses (human, material, cultural, territorial, etc.). Their aim has always been to live peacefully and with a creative life in their millennia-old cradle;

- The Armenian people have always been alone and without any help during their self-defensive resistance for survival, often also betrayed in return for their unreserved devotedness. The Great Powers have acted as mere observers and have displayed only a belated humanitarian and orphan-supporting aid.

- The Armenian people have always been alone and helpless during their self-defensive resistance battles for survival, often also betrayed in return for their unreserved devotedness. The Great Powers have acted as mere observers and have displayed only a belated humanitarian and orphan-supporting aid.

Whereas, when the Armenian people have jointly clenched in one fist, they have succeeded in restoring their statehood by the heroic battle of Sardarapat (1918). Later on, when they have pinned their hope on the people's nation-wide spirit, they have liberated the forcibly-seized (during the Soviet power) Artsakh as a result of the victory

⁷⁰ Սվազլյան Վ., Արևմտահայոց ինքնապաշտպանական գոյամարտերը Հայոց ցեղասպանության ընթացքում, էջ 58:

in the Artsakh Liberation war (1991-1994), which is the long awaited victorious stage of our national rightful demand...

It is therefore appropriate to mention the following popular prayer:

“Our Lord, keep unshakable

Our heroic Mother Armenia

Grant us long-lasting peace,

Life and sun, liberty,

With our Armenian State flag

May the Armenian nation live forever.

Amen.”⁷¹

**Translated from Armenian by
T. H. Tsoulikian**

⁷¹ Սվազլյան Վ., Կիլիկիա, Վկ. 1391, էջ 250: