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THE ARMENIAN COMMUNITY
IN EGYPT DURING
WORLD WAR I

ARMIN ALBERT KREDIAN

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The American University in Cairo

School of Humanities and Social Sciences

THE ARMENIAN COMMUNITY IN EGYPT
DURING WORLD WAR I

A Thesis Submitted to

Department of Arabic Studies

in partial fulfillment of the requirements for
the degree of Masters of Arts

by

Armin Albert Kredian

Bachelor of Arts

under the Supervision of Dr. Raouf Abbas

April 1997

Thesis
1997
37

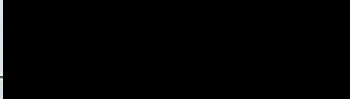
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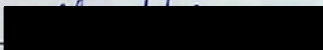
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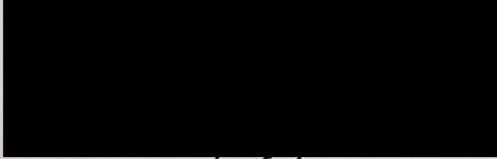
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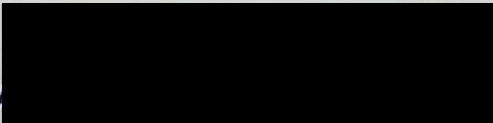
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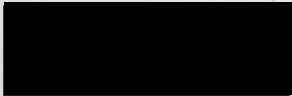
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To my childhood friend Aline Koutnouian goes my gratitude for her assistance in editing this thesis. Last but not least I thank all the members of my family for their understanding and encouragement.

I dedicate this study to my grandmother, Dr. Asdghig Papazian, without whose constant care, and help in my daily tasks this study would not have been accomplished.

ABSTRACT

The American University in Cairo

The Armenian Community in Egypt
During World War I

Armin Albert Kredian

Adviser: Dr. Raouf Abbas

Brief Statement: The socio-economic and communal structures of the Armenians in Egypt during 1914-1918 are examined to lay the ground upon which the responses of the Armenian community in Egypt to the impact of World War I and the Armenian genocide are analyzed.

Methodology and procedure: For an understanding of the socio-economical structure of the community, the study is primarily based on the 1911 census of the Apostolic Armenian community in Alexandria and the contemporary articles in Armenian periodicals dealing with the occupational patterns of the Armenians in Egypt.

The communal structure as it existed during the years under study has been examined through the published documents of the 1863 *Armenian National Constitution* in Istanbul, and the 1907 *Administrative Decree of the Diocese in Egypt*. The theoretical information provided by these documents has been complemented by the 1914-1918 *Minutes of the Civil Council* of the Armenian Prelacy in Cairo.

The manner in which certain Armenian individuals and the Prelacy institutions have been affected by the war are analyzed through a detailed examination of the 1914-1918 minutes of both the Community and Civil Councils in Cairo. Concerning the responses of the Armenian community to the political events affecting their homeland and compatriots in Ottoman Armenia, the used sources can be divided into two principle groups: for the Communal leadership's response, the minutes of the Prelacy Councils have been used; for the responses of the masses the contemporary Armenian press has been consulted.

Findings and Conclusions:

- The Armenian community in Egypt during World War I was not the "rich" and "prosperous" community it gave the impression to be.
- As part of the socio-economic structure of the country, Armenians in Egypt were affected, in various ways, by the economic changes brought about as a result of the war.
- As an ethnic minority living in proximity to their homeland the Armenians in Egypt were faced with numerous moral obligations towards the tragic events that befell their compatriots in Ottoman territories.
- Egypt's geo-political situation both facilitated and limited, at different stages of the war, the possibilities of the Armenians in Egypt to support their compatriots in Ottoman territories and Transcaucasia.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

	<i>Pages</i>
List of Tables	x
List of Maps	xi
✓ Introduction	
Objectives and Methodology of Study	1
Notes on Sources	5
Translation, Terminology and Transliteration	8
A Brief Survey on Armenian Presence in Egypt up to the 19th Century	10
The 19th Century	15
Power and Wealth	15
The Turning Point	21
✓ Chapter One	
THE COMMUNITY: SOCIO-ECONOMIC STRUCTURE	27
Citizenship and Ethnicity	27
Socio-economic Stratification	30
Armenian Employees	32
Armenians in Commerce and Commercial Industries	35
Armenian Artisans	46
Armenian Workers and Laborers	49
Armenian Professionals and Artists	57
Armenian Landowners	59
Conclusion	60

	<i>Pages</i>
✓ Chapter Two	
THE COMMUNITY: COMMUNAL ADMINISTRATION	62
The Armenians in Egypt and the Ottoman Millet System	62
The Administrative Structure of the Armenian Apostolic Community in Egypt	67
The Armenian Catholic Community in Egypt	80
Protestant Armenians in Egypt	84
Divergence and Convergence	87
Conclusion	90
✓ Chapter Three	
WORLD WAR I, EGYPT, AND THE COMMUNITY	92
Political Scene: Egypt, Britain and the Ottoman Empire	92
Political Changes and the Community	95
Economic Crisis and the Community	103
Conclusion	120
Chapter Four	
WORLD WAR I, GENOCIDE, AND THE COMMUNITY	122
Armenian Participation in Ottoman and Russian Armies	122
Armenians in Egypt and the Transcaucasian Scene	128
Armenians in Egypt and the Destruction of Ottoman Armenia	138
Boghos Pasha Nubar and the Armenian National Delegation	138
Armenians in Egypt and the Annihilation of Ottoman Armenians	141

	<i>Pages</i>
Arrival of Ottoman Armenian Refugees in Port Saïd	147
Settling the Refugees	153
An Overburdened Community?	157
The Community and the Port Saïd Camp	163
Nutrition and Health	165
Education	167
Issue of Dispersion of the Refugees	168
Workshops	171
French-British Tensions over the use of the Refugees	174
The Port Saïd Camp and the Légion d'Orient	178
Middle Eastern Fronts and the Port Saïd camp: 1918-9	187
Conclusion	197
Bibliography	202
Appendix A: Armenian National Union in Egypt	210

TABLES

	<i>Pages</i>
1. Armenian employees in Alexandria in 1911	33
2. Armenians in commerce in Alexandria in 1911	36
3. Armenian artisans in Alexandria in 1911	47
4. Armenian workers/laborers in Alexandria in 1911	52
5. Armenian professionals and artists in Alexandria in 1911	58
6. Armenian landowners and other occupations of Armenians in Alexandria in 1911	59
7. Total Armenian work force in Alexandria in 1911 in numbers and %	60
8. % of Armenians in Alexandria in 1911 in different occupations over their respective work force on the basis of their arrival before or after 1895	61
9. Arrival of Armenian refugees in Port Saïd camp April-December 1918	193
10. Return of Armenian refugees to homeland July-November 1919	195

MAPS

Introduction

Pages

1. Armenia in Ancient and Medieval Times 26
2. The Caucasus front, 1914-1917 124
3. Middle Eastern Front Lines:
4 August 1916-30 October 1918 187

Introduction

Objectives and Methodology of Study

One of the most important changes on the international political scene brought about by World War I was the fall of the Ottoman Empire. Although this was primarily a European War, as a result of the Ottoman decision to enter the war on the side of Germany, the Middle East was as affected by the War as Europe was. On the other hand, because of the strategic importance of the Suez Canal, Great Britain dragged Egypt into the war as early as August, 1914. The political, social and economic changes that took place in Egypt during the following four years affected the entire region. On the eve of World War I, there existed in Egypt a small, but organized, Armenian community which in turn, bore the consequences of the War. This research aims to bring under microscopic examination only a tiny spot on the vast canvas of the history of World War I: namely, the Armenian community in Egypt during the years 1914-1918.

One of the complexities of studying an ethnic minority in a given country lies in its dual identity. This becomes even more complicated when - as was the case with Egypt's Armenians- the country of residence and the native homeland of a given community are involved in a war on opposing sides. In the case of the Armenians in Egypt there was even a third dimension, as on the eve of World War I Armenia was divided between the Ottoman

and Russian empires which were antagonist to each other. While Egypt, their country of residence, though formally part of the Ottoman Empire, was under British occupation. Consequently, a study of Egypt's Armenians has to consider a number of complex relations on the international political scene which directly involved both Egypt and Armenia.

The First World War proved to be a double calamity for the Armenians throughout the world, and especially for Armenians in the Ottoman Empire. At the outbreak of World War I, the Russo-Turkish frontier in Transcaucasia - (established by the 1878 Berlin Congress in the aftermath of the Russo-Turkish War)-passed through Armenia dividing it into Ottoman Armenia to the west and Russian Armenia to the east. This made Armenia a theater of war throughout 1914-1918, as it was the setting for one of the major eastern battle fronts of World War I. However, for the Armenians in the Ottoman Empire the Young Turk government's decision to make use of the opportunity offered by war conditions to annihilate its Armenian population had far more devastating consequences, than the war itself. The massacres of their compatriots in Ottoman territories, the loss of their native homeland and the waves of survivors that came to Egypt greatly affected the Armenian community in this country.

This study aims at examining the impact of World War I on the Armenian community in Egypt, both in terms of World War I as it affected Egypt and Armenia politically and economically, and in terms of the consequences of the genocidal policy of the Young

Turk government towards the Armenians in the Ottoman Empire. The purpose and periodization of this study determines its approach. The events that developed during the four years under study created a national crisis for the Armenians worldwide. In this context, the Armenians in Egypt are dealt with as an ethnic minority whose interaction with their homeland during a period of crisis is examined.

The essence of the crisis was ethnic in the sense that the genocide of Ottoman Armenians was their indiscriminate massacre regardless of class and creed; an "ethnic cleansing" in today's terminology. Hence, the response of the Armenians in Egypt to this crisis was determined by their "ethnic allegiance". By "ethnic allegiance" it is meant here "ethnicity in action".¹ In other words, ethnicity was the "mobilizing factor" of the Armenian community in Egypt during the First World War.

This is not to exclude the notion pointed out by Kitroeff that "an ethnic group ... , is more than likely to be divided into different categories of social stratification. Hence, perceptions of ethnic identity may vary within the same ethnic entity".² This applies to the Armenian community in Egypt during 1914-1918 which was stratified in terms of economic classes, and was divided along creed lines, as apart from the mainstream Apostolic Armenians, there were also a small number of Armenian Catholics and an even smaller group of Armenian Protestants. However, the crisis at hand

¹Alexander Kitroeff, The Greeks in Egypt 1919-1937: Ethnicity and Class, (London: Ithaca Press, 1989), p.4.

²Ibid. p.5.

during the period under study made "ethnic identity and ethnic allegiance.... the dominant force"³ behind the Armenians' behavior. On the other hand, economic determinants, though less important in this context, played a significant role in the behavior of the Armenians as a group during this situation of crisis, and cannot be ignored.

Even more complicated than the issue of ethnicity and social stratification within the group under study is the interrelation between ethnicity and religion in a society where all non-Muslims were recognized as religious rather than national entities. It has to be stressed that despite its religious basis for official recognition, the Ottoman *millet* system played mainly an administrative role not only in religious but also in secular matters. On the other hand, the Armenian Church being a National Church, Armenian ethnic and religious identities overlapped.

Moreover, as a result of the Armenian national awakening in Ottoman territories in the second half of the 19th century an ethnic sense of identity gradually gained ground and became predominant among Ottoman Armenians, replacing the previously existing sense of religious belonging. Hence, the Armenians' being officially recognized as a religious entity does not mean that they have to be approached as a religious group. Nevertheless, their legal status necessitates the study of the Armenians in Egypt as an ethnic group against the background of this religious, yet, highly

³Ibid. p.6.

institutionalized administrative system, namely the Ottoman *millet* system.

Notes on Sources

Over the centuries Armenian presence in Egypt has been mentioned in a number of chronicles, travel accounts and memoirs written in various languages. However, monographs dealing with the Armenians in Egypt are not numerous, and are mostly in Armenian. The most comprehensive study dealing with the modern history of the Armenian community in Egypt is Hovhannes Topuzian's Yegiptosi haikakan gaghuti patmutiun: 1805 and 1952. In addition to the Armenian sources, English, French and Arabic sources have been used in this study, especially when dealing with issues concerning Egypt, the Ottoman Empire and the British policies during World War I. Armenian primary sources are used mainly for the examination of the internal dynamics of the community.

Fortunately, the gap created by the lack of studies on the subject can be filled with the abundance of documents in the archives of the Prelacy of the Armenian Apostolic community in Cairo. The records of the meetings of the two councils (*zhoghov-s*) responsible for communal affairs: the Community Council (*Temakan zhoghov*) and the Civil Council (*kaghakakan zhoghov*) were examined to find out how the decisions and activities of the official leadership of the mainstream Armenian Apostolic community were affected by World War I.

Two series of huge volumes contain the minutes of these *zhoghov*-s, recorded in Armenian. As the Community Council usually met only once a year, its 1914-1918 minutes are all found in one volume (volume 43) which covers the sessions held from February 1911 to July 1922. The Civil Council which administered the day to day affairs of the community and its institutions met regularly once a week. The minutes of its sessions held during the War years are found in three volumes: volume 24 consists of the weekly sessions held from 6/19 June 1914 to 16/29 March 1916; volume 25 consists of the sessions held from April 27/10 May 1916 to February 19/ 1 March 1918; volume 26, from March 1918 to May 1920.⁴

The minutes of both *zhoghov*-s are neatly kept, handwritten, detailed accounts of each session. They are an almost verbatim record of everything that was said during the meetings. As such, they are a very rich source of information on: the socio-economic problems faced by the Armenians in Egypt both individually and collectively; the decision making process within the community in face of the crisis of the Armenian nation during World War I; and the interaction between the communal leadership and the British authorities in the country, especially concerning the Armenian refugees and the prisoners of war that arrived in Egypt between 1915-1918.

⁴These dates appear on the covers of the registers. The double-dates indicate the date of the days and the months according to both the Julian and Gregorian calendars. This double-dating system is found also in the headings of the sessions. When only one date is mentioned it is the second one, marked as 'new', meaning Gregorian which was 13 days ahead of the Julian calendar.

Due to the executive character of the Civil Council, its records have been more useful to this study than those of the Community Council which had a legislative function. Hence, most of the primary information required for this study has been acquired from the minutes of the Civil Council. Though the vital issues preoccupying the community are either dealt with or hinted to in its records, as expected, they fall short of providing adequate information on a number of important aspects of community life falling outside the scope and jurisdiction of the Prelacy councils.

This shortcoming could be remedied by the abundant material provided by the Armenian press publications during 1914-1918. The large number of political, social and literary articles in the Armenian newspapers and periodicals published in Egypt during those years both complement the Prelacy records and present us the other side of the story. They mirror the political ideologies and national aspirations of the various Armenian political parties active in Egypt during the war, they give us information on the socio-economic situation of the Armenians through the activities of benevolent organizations and the different outlooks of the Armenian intelligentsia. These publications are indispensable in bringing the researcher closer to the common individual Armenian, in providing an insight into how the Armenian masses perceived their communal leadership, and in capturing the state of mind and response of a group of Armenians living outside and cut off from their homeland during a period of war and national crisis.

Translation, Terminology and Transliteration

All quotations from Arabic, Armenian and French sources have been translated by me. The extensive use of Armenian sources in the study posed a number of terminology problems. One of the major terminology problems is the use of the term 'community' for the Armenians living in Egypt. Following Kitroeff's example in his treatment of the Greeks in Egypt, in this study the Armenians in Egypt in general, or in a particular Egyptian city or town are referred to as the 'Armenian community', while to refer to the communal organization the term 'Community' with a capital 'C' is used.⁵

Another problem with the term 'Armenian community' arose from the community's being officially divided along creed lines into Apostolic, Catholic and Protestant. As the study deals with the Armenians as an ethnic minority, unless specified directly or in the sub-titles of sections, the term 'Armenian community' refers to all Armenians in Egypt, regardless of creed. On the other hand, as the Prelacy of the Armenian Apostolic community in Cairo unquestionably played the central role in the events pertaining the Armenians during the years under study, unless specified as Catholic, 'Prelacy' refers to the Apostolic Armenian Prelacy to avoid tedious repetitions.

Some clarification is also due about the terms 'national' and 'communal' used in this study. The problem emerges partly from

⁵Kitroeff, *The Greeks...*, p. 7.

the definition of the term 'national' in general, and partly from the multi-meaning of the Armenian term *azgayin* which is commonly translated as 'national'. The flexible usage of the term *azgayin* in Armenian sources creates difficulties in its translation. In Armenian, the term, in its adjective form, describes anything that pertains all the Armenian people in the world, or Armenians in one country, or one city. Due to the national character of the Armenian Apostolic Church,⁶ it is also used in the limited context of congregations or institutions linked to the latter.

For example, the 1863 Constitution drafted by the Armenian Patriarchate in Constantinople to regulate the affairs of the apostolic Armenians in the Ottoman Empire was called *Azgayin Sahmanadrutiun Hayots* which is commonly referred to in English as the Armenian National Constitution, though it concerned only the Apostolic Armenians within the political boundaries of the Ottoman Empire. On the other hand, the term *azgayin* is also used in describing the Apostolic Armenian prelacies and their institutions in Egypt: *azgayin arajnordaran* (Prelacy); *azgayin dprots* (school); *azgayin sntuk* (treasury); *azgayin dram* (money). Therefore, for the sake of clarity, in this study, the term is translated according to its sense within a particular context. For example, the term *azgayin*, when used within the context of the

⁶ Armenians were introduced to Christianity by the apostles Thaddeus and Bartholomew who are considered the founders of the Armenian church, hence the Apostolic nomination of the Armenian Church. Armenians are also referred to as Gregorians because of Gregory the Illuminator upon whose endeavors Christianity became the state religion of the Armenian Kingdom in the 4th century. By "National Church" it is meant that the supreme head of all Apostolic Armenians is the Armenian Catholicos who does not recognize any other higher ecclesiastic authority; and that all its members are ethnically Armenian. Catholic and Protestant Armenians in the Ottoman Empire were officially separated from their national church at the beginning of the 19th century.

Armenian Apostolic community in Egypt, is, in most cases, translated into 'Communal': i.e. 'Communal money', 'Communal Treasury', as opposed to 'National Treasury' which would mean the treasury of the Egyptian government.

For the transliteration from Arabic into English I have followed the system adopted by the *International Journal of Middle Eastern Studies* with a minimal use of diacritical marks. Except the ʿayn, diacritical marks have been used only for the first occurrence of an Arabic term in the text. Transliteration from Armenian into English proved to be more complicated because of a number of differences between the phonetic values of Western and Eastern Armenian. For the sake of consistency the phonetics of Classical Armenian which survives until today in the Eastern Armenian has been followed. In this, Richard Hovannisian's transliteration key in his *Armenia on the Road to Independence: 1918*, which does not use diacritical marks,⁷ has been used.

A Brief Survey on Armenian Presence in Egypt up to the 19th Century

Scattered information has come down to us about Armenian presence in Egypt prior to the tenth century. As valuable as they are, these sources are full of gaps and leave much unexplained. Though it has been mentioned that Armenians had settled in Egypt before the Fāṭimid rule, most sources talk of a substantial

⁷Richard Hovannisian, *Armenian on the Road to Independence: 1918* (California: University of California Press, 1967), p. 256.

Armenian community in Egypt starting from the Fatimid era, during which waves of Armenians arrived in Egypt from Syria and Mesopotamia. This has been accounted for on the one hand, by the generally religious tolerance of the Fatimids towards Christians, and on the other, by the devastating invasions of the Seljūq Turks in Armenia, Syria and Palestine.⁸

In 1074, the Fatimid khalif al-Mustanşir brought his Armenian general Badr al Jamāli from Syria to help him restore order in Egypt, which he did.⁹ Al-Jamali arrived in Egypt accompanied with his troops of Armenian soldiers and a large Armenian entourage. His appointment as commander-in-chief, chief justice and vizier shortly after his arrival gave impetus for Armenians to settle in Egypt in great numbers, where many of them were given key positions in the military apparatus and the state administration. Starting with Badr al-Jamali in 1074, for almost a century, Egypt got a number of viziers of Armenian descent. An estimated number of 30,000 Armenians are said to have lived in Egypt during the 11th and 12th centuries. According to Abū Sālih al-Armani, more than thirty Armenian churches and monasteries spread throughout the country.¹⁰

⁸H. Topuzian, Yegiptosi haikakan gaghouti patmutiun 1805-1952, [History of the Armenian Community in Egypt 1805-1952], (Yerevan: Publication of Armenian SSR Academy of Science, 1978) p. 15, citing Armenian chronicler Mateos Urhayetsi; also Avedis Sanjian, The Armenian Communities in Syria under Ottoman Dominion, (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1965), p. 154; see also Nazaret Aghazarm, Noter yegiptosi hai gaghouti vera [Notes on the Armenian Community in Egypt], (Cairo: Zareh Berberian, 1911), p. 4.

⁹Joan W. King, Historical Dictionary of Egypt, (Cairo: The American University in Cairo Press, 1984), p. 289.

¹⁰Sanjian, The Armenian Communities in Syria..., pp. 154-5 citing Abusahl Hai: Patmut'iun Ekeghets'eats' ew Vanoreits' Egiptosi, trans. Ghewond M. Alishan (rpt. 1895; Venice: 1933), notes p. 349

It was also during Fatimid rule that the Armenian community in Egypt was bestowed its first primate. On a visit to Egypt at the end of the 11th century, the Armenian Catholicos Grigor II Vkeyaser appointed his nephew Grigoris "Catholicos" of Armenians in Egypt. As Sanjian explains in his notes, "several medieval Armenian authors refer to Grigoris as "catholicos" of the Armenians of Egypt; nevertheless, they make it amply evident that he was subordinate and accountable to the supreme Armenian pontificate".¹¹ This, by no means assumes a continuity of an organized Armenian bishopric in Egypt from the 11th century onward. As we shall see, during the following centuries, Armenian presence in Egypt sometimes faded away to the point of disappearance, while at others surfaced in different forms, depending on the political developments in the region.

When the Ayūbīds came to power, Armenians were looked upon unfavorably, mainly because of their pro-Fatimid stances. As individuals, their prominence in the army and administration came to an end. On the community level, they were deprived of their churches and monasteries which were confiscated and were later given to the Copts. Their participation in anti-Ayubid revolts ended in their massacre and persecution by the new rulers of the country. Consequently, the number of Armenians decreased drastically as large numbers emigrated.¹²

¹¹Ibid. note 57, p. 349.

¹²Arshak Alpoyadjian, Arabakan miyatsyal hanrapetutian yegiptosi nahanke yev hayere, [The United Arab Republic's Province of Egypt and the Armenians], (Cairo: Nor Astgh, 1960), p. 241; Sanjian, The Armenian Communities in Syria, p.155.

With the coming to power of the Mamlūks in Egypt, a new wave of Armenians arrived. In sharp contrast with the Armenian immigrants during al-Jamali and his successors, these Armenians were brought to Egypt as slaves captured during the repeated Mamluk invasions of the Armenian Kingdom of Cilicia between 1266-1375. (Map 1.) Thousands of Armenian captives were employed in agriculture and as craftsmen in different provinces throughout Egypt. In accordance with the Mamluk system, Armenian slave children were gathered in military camps, given an Islamic education and employed in the army and palace. Al-Maqrizi mentioned that in 1290, 3,700 of the Sultan's 10,000 mamluks were of Armenian and Circassian origins.¹³

At the beginning of the fourteenth century, threatened by the Mamluks from the south and the Mongols from the east, the Armenian Kings of Cilicia attempted to preserve their kingdom with backing from the West. Consequently, a 1307 Convention of Church Councils in Sis- the See of the Catholicosate of the Armenians since 1292- adopted Latinophile policies, hoping in return to receive military assistance from Europe. This caused widespread discontent among the Armenian masses and the majority of the Armenian clergy both inside and outside Cilicia.

One of the most vehement backlashes to Sis came from Jerusalem where the Brotherhood of Surb Hagob (Saint James) defied the resolutions of the Armenian Catholicosate of Cilicia and

¹³Topuzian, *Yegiptosi haikakan...*, pp.19-20, citing al- Maqrizi's *Histoire des Sultans Mamelouks*, (Paris: 1832), and *Description Topographique et Historique de l'Egypte*, (Paris: 1895).

proclaimed its head Patriarch of Jerusalem.¹⁴ Patriarch Sargis of Jerusalem requested and obtained a *firmān* from the Mamluk Sultan Malik al-Naṣir, which brought the Armenians residing within the Mamluk realm under the jurisdiction of the Armenian Patriarchate of Jerusalem.¹⁵ This ameliorated the situation of the Armenians in Egypt as the Mamluk Sultan looked favorably upon this anti-European movement in the Armenian Church which had sought his backing. Thus, for more than six hundred years, from 1311 to the first half of the 19th century, the Armenian community in Egypt was administered from Jerusalem. The Patriarchate of Jerusalem sent to Cairo priests or bishops as primates for the Armenians, to meet the religious needs of the community which was centered in Kūm al-Arman where there was an Armenian church.¹⁶

With the defeat of the Mamluks at the beginning of the sixteenth century, Syria, Palestine and Egypt were incorporated within the realm of the Ottoman Sultan. Alboyadjian writes that following the Ottoman conquest of Egypt in 1517, the Armenians who were mostly merchants and artisans left the country due to the insecurity created by the weakness of the Ottoman *wali* in face of the local military conflicts.¹⁷ Grigor Daranaghtsi, an Armenian

¹⁴George Boumoutian, A History of the Armenian People Volume I: From Pre-History to 1500 A.D. (California: Mazda Publishers, 1995), pp. 128-9.

¹⁵Garegin Hovannesian, Yegiptosi patmutiune skizben minjev mer orere, [History of Egypt: From the Beginning to our Days], (Cairo: Hagop Papazian, 1937), pp. 219-220.

¹⁶Topuzian, Yegiptosi haikakan, pp. 20-1.

¹⁷Alpoyadjian, Arabakan miyatsyal, pp. 47-8.

priest, wrote that on his first visit to Egypt in 1605 he had found many Armenians from Julfa who had converted to Islam. He added that a Coptic priest had shamed him on their account.¹⁸

At the beginning of the 17th century, new waves of Armenians started to arrive in Egypt, fleeing from the devastation and plunder spread by the Jalāli movement (1598-1628) in Asia Minor, Ottoman Armenia and Syria¹⁹. According to the travel accounts of Simeon Lehatsi, an Armenian from Poland, there were 200 Armenian households in Cairo in 1615, who lived in what he calls the "Armenian District", had a church, St. Sargis, and a chapel Mar Mina, around which there was the Armenian cemetery. There were numerous Armenian goldsmiths, artisans and merchants from Istanbul, Tigranakert and Aleppo in Khān al Khālil.²⁰

In the 18th century, as a result of Egypt's rising importance in international trade, the number and wealth of the Armenians in Egypt increased. This lasted until 1798, when the French invasion of Egypt (1798-1801) and the ensuing years of chaos spread by conflicting Mamluk forces, interrupted the development of the Armenian community. Within six years (1798-1804) wide scale emigration brought Armenian presence in Egypt to the verge of disappearance.²¹

¹⁸Topuzian, *Yegiptosi haikakan...*, p. 22, quoting from Daranaghtsi's *Zhamanakagrutiun*, p. 462.

¹⁹"Jalaliner" [The Jalalis], in *Haikakan Sovetakan Hanragitaran* [Armenian Soviet Encyclopedia], vol.9, (Yerevan: Armenian SSR Academy of Science, 1983), p. 469.

²⁰Topuzian, *Yegiptosi haikakan...*, p. 22, citing "Simeon dpir Lehatsvo ughegrutiun, taregrutiun yev hishatakanok" [The Travel Accounts, Chronicle and Memoirs of Simeon Lehatsi], (Vienna: 1936), p. 216.

²¹Topuzian, *Yegiptosi haikakan...*, pp. 22-4.

The 19th Century

Power and Wealth

The sudden decrease of the Armenians in Egypt at the end of the 18th century was followed by as abrupt a rise in their number and fortunes during the reign of Muḥammad ʿAlī. To implement his ambitions in establishing an autonomous, centralized Egyptian state and for the success of his state monopoly system, the Pāshā had to rely on trustworthy and efficient functionaries. Muḥammad ʿAlī realized that "both the qualifications and the disabilities of the Armenians recommended them to the task", points out Adalian. Under the patronage of Egypt's Viceroy, a great number of Armenians were either invited or attracted to Egypt. Reduced to 50-60 Armenian families residing in Cairo in 1802, the Armenian community in Egypt increased to 2,000 individuals in the first half of the 19th century.

As Christians, the Armenians did not present any threat to Muḥammad ʿAlī either militarily or politically. Their loyalty to him as their sole patron could be insured as, unlike most Christian minorities of the Ottoman Empire, the Armenians did not enjoy the protection of any European state.²² Prospects for economic and political ascendancy were opened in front of the Armenians and in less than half a century the Armenians who settled in Egypt accumulated great wealth and power. By relying on Armenian

²²Rouben Adalian, "The Armenian Colony of Egypt During the Reign of Muḥammad Ali (1805-1848), in the *Armenian Review*, June 1, 1980, vol. 33, No 2-130, (Boston: 1980), pp.117-8.

şarrāf-s for loans to carry out his projects, Muhammad ʿAli attempted to avoid direct or indirect dependence on European capital which would unfailingly be accompanied by European domination in the economy of the country.

From among the Armenian bankers, merchants, landowners, interpreters, bureaucrats and craftsmen many rose to high ranks. A few held key posts in the state machinery and even reached international prominence, such as Boghos bey Yusufian and Artin bey Chrakian who successively held the position of *nazir* in Egypt's Commerce and European Affairs diwān until 1850.²³ A number of *beys* emerged from among the expert Armenian craftsmen employed at the palace, as well as the wealthier merchants who had become financiers and landowners, and those bureaucrats who were appointed as state functionaries. Thus, a small but influential Egyptian- Armenian aristocracy took shape.²⁴

Religious tolerance was yet another aspect of Muhammad ʿAli's rule, which accelerated the growth of the Armenian community in Egypt. In 1825, non-Muslims were granted a number of rights allowing them to build places of worship and to freely profess their creed.²⁵ This offered the Armenian notables an opportunity to establish religious and educational institutions in Egypt to serve the needs of the growing Armenian community. In their lifetime they donated large sums for building and

²³Topuzian, *Yegiptosi haikakan...* pp. 28-9.

²⁴Adalian, "The Armenian Colony...", p.133.

²⁵Topuzian, *Yegiptosi haikakan...* pp.29-30.

administering Armenian public institutions. Upon their deaths, large profit-making properties were left to the community as *waqf-s* to be administered by *mutawali-s*, and later by the Prelacy according to their testaments which specified the allocation of the revenues of each estate.

In 1828, a complex consisting of a school, a hospital and a refuge for travelers and the needy was built in Bein al Sūrein in accordance with the testament of Yeghiazar Amira,²⁶ Muhammad 'Ali's *ṣarrāf bāshī*. In 1837-9 the Armenian Apostolic Church of *Surb Asdvadsadsin* (St. Mother of God) was built adjacent to this complex. The money was procured from donations as well as the revenues of the estates belonging to the Jerusalem Patriarchate, without the consent of the latter.²⁷ In 1843, the *Mar Mina* Chapel was built on the grounds of the old Armenian cemetery by public donations from the Armenian Apostolic community.²⁸ The first Armenian Catholic chapel of *Tiramayr Surb Kuis* (St. Virgin) was built in the years 1832-3, and a large piece of land was bought which was used as a cemetery. Between 1837-41, due to the increase in the number of the Armenian Catholics in Cairo, a large church, *Surb Grigor Lusavorich*, (St. Gregory the Illuminator) was built in Darb al Gininah, by the Armenian Catholic community.²⁹

²⁶Alpoyadjian, *Arabakan miyatsyal...*, p. 257.

²⁷Artashes Gartashian, *Nuter Yegiptosi hayots patmutian hamar. Vol. 1, patmutiun yegiptahai yegeghetsineru yev gerezmanatuneru*, [Topics for the History of the Armenians in Egypt: The History of Armenian Churches and Cemeteries in Egypt], vol. 1, (Cairo: Nubar, 1943), pp. 67-8.

²⁸Ibid. p. 26.

²⁹Topuzian, *Yegiptosi haikakan...*, p. 32.

During the years 1825-1840 Armenians from Izmir, Constantinople and Kayseri started to settle in Alexandria as a result of the presence there and support of the influential Boghos bey Yusufian, himself from Izmir. Boghos bey consecrated one of the two buildings of the estate he had bought in Abū Dardar in 1820 to be used as a church and a school for Armenians starting from the 1830-s.³⁰ The present day St. Boghos-Betros Church built in 1884, the Boghosian school, the Melkonian Kindergarten and the Armenian Prelacy in Alexandria form a complex built on the above mentioned estate purchased by Boghos bey in 1820 and bestowed as *waqf* to the Armenian community during his lifetime³¹.

One of the most prominent Armenian notables of the 19th century, Boghos bey Yusufian held the position of *nazir* of Commerce and Foreign Affairs for years, until his death in 1844.³² Described as "one of the most powerful men in Egypt and certainly the most influential with the Pasha [Muhammad 'Ali]"³³, Boghos bey has also been, rightfully, considered the founder of the Armenian community in Alexandria.

It has repeatedly been mentioned that during the reign of 'Abbās I (1848-1854), many Armenians "fell out of favor",³⁴ were

³⁰Gartashian, *Nuter...*, vol. 1, pp. 115, 120, 123.

³¹*Ibid.* p. 120.

³²Artashes Gartashian, *Nuter Yegiptosi hayots patmutian hamar. Vol. 2, patmutiun yegiptahai parerameru yev krtakan hastatutiunneru*, [Topics for the History of the Armenians in Egypt: The History of Armenian Benefactors and Educational Establishments in Egypt], vol. 2, (Venice: St. Lazar, 1981), p. 175.

³³Adalian, "The Armenian Colony...", p. 137.

³⁴*Ibid.* p. 129.

dismissed from their influential positions in the political machinery of the state, and that "almost no Armenian remained at the Palace".³⁵ The veritability of these statements remain to be established. Even if proven to be true, the implication that the number of politically influential Armenians decreased by virtue of their being Armenian has to be reconsidered. Without attempting to resolve the controversies surrounding ʿAbbas's person and policies, it is important to mention that Stepan al-ārmanī (Stepan Demirdjian) was Egypt's *nazir* of Foreign Affairs in the years 1850-53.³⁶ Nubar *efendi* (later the prominent Nubar *Pasha*) was granted the title of *bey* by ʿAbbas I.³⁷ Garabet agha Galustian, a wealthy Armenian merchant and *sarraf* was made *nazir* of the Egyptian mint as soon as ʿAbbas came to power, and held the position until 1854.³⁸

At the same time, the organizational process of the Armenians in Egypt which had started in the 1820-s through the construction of institutional establishments did not come to a halt as a result of ʿAbbas's policies. Thus, in 1852, a prelacy was built on the grounds of the Surb Asdvadsadsin Church in Bein al Sūrein, which served the community needs for almost 80 years,³⁹ until 1930. Moreover, it was again during the reign of ʿAbbas that, to meet the educational needs of a growing Armenian community, construction on the Khorenian Armenian School started in Darb al-

³⁵Topuzian, *Yegiptosi haikakan...*, p.35.

³⁶Gartashian, *Nuter...*, vol. 2, p.236.

³⁷Ibid. p. 215.

³⁸Ibid. p. 343.

³⁹Gartashian, *Nuter...*, vol. 1, p. 84.

Gininah in 1853, with funding from one of the most eminent of the Armenian merchants, Garabet agha Galustian. The opening of the school took place in September 1854, and in 1897, after Garabet agha's death (1864), it was renamed Galustian.⁴⁰ To insure its financial administration, Garabet agha Galust endowed the school with two large, lucrative, agricultural estates (Deljah and Sheikh ʿthmān),⁴¹ the revenues of which covered the major part of the expenses of the school.

Based on the above, it would be wrong to assume that ʿAbbas's coming to power marked a turning point in the role of the Armenian notables as state functionaries. Influential Armenians, such as Nubar *pasha*, Arakel *bey* d'Abro and Tigran *pasha* d'Abro, to mention only the most prominent ones, continued to reach high positions as ministers and statesmen till the end of the 19th century. This is not to deny that, the highly distinctive status of the Armenian notables in the Egyptian Court was not maintained after Muhammad ʿAli's death.⁴²

The Turning Point

Muhammad ʿAli's favoritism of the Armenians he surrounded himself with would not be repeated during the reign of any of his successors. Nevertheless, as Anne Kazazian points out, the turning point for Armenian services in the Egyptian state

⁴⁰Hovannesian, *Yegiptosi patmutiune...* p. 200.

⁴¹Gartashian, *Nuter...* vol. 2, p.343.

⁴²Adalian, "The Armenian Colony--", p. 141.

machinery did not come until the last quarter of the 19th century when, as a result of the educational policies established by Muhammad ʿAli, an Egyptian class of politicians and technocrats started to emerge.⁴³ Consequently, the role played by the Armenians during the formative years of the modern Egyptian state at the beginning of the 19th century was no more indispensable at the turn of the 20th century.

The Armenian community itself underwent a number of changes at the end of the 19th century as a result of which the entire social structure of the Armenians in Egypt was transformed. These changes were mostly related to the deterioration of the situation of Armenians in Ottoman Armenia (the Armenian vilayets or the "Eastern vilayets"). In the aftermath of the 1878 Russo-Turkish war Armenian demands for reforms in the Armenian provinces were intensified and internationalized by the treaties of San-Stefano and Berlin. Sultān ʿAbd al Hamīd II responded to these rising demands by intensifying his anti-Armenian policies in Ottoman Armenia.

This led to the migration of large numbers of Armenians from their native lands. Because of its rapidly growing economy and political stability Egypt became a haven for fleeing Ottoman Armenians and their number increased from a mere 2000 prior to

⁴³ Anne Kazazian, "Les Logiques Associatives Dans La Communauté Arménienne D'Egypte", in *Egypte/Mondearabe* no. 3, 3e trimestre, (Cairo: 1990), p.33.

1895⁴⁴ to almost 8000 in 1907⁴⁵. This was facilitated to a great extent by Egypt's special status as an Ottoman province which, starting with Muhammad 'Ali, was only nominally part of the Ottoman Empire. As Ottoman subjects they could enter and settle in Egypt relatively easily, at the same time being securely out of the Sultan's reach.

Sultan 'Abd al Hamid's anti-Armenian policies culminated in the 1894-6 massacres in Ottoman Armenia and Istanbul. 1897 witnessed the largest influx of Armenians into Egypt during the 19th century and marked a turning point in the history of the Armenian community in Egypt. Within a few years, the community - which had during the 19th century, consisted of a small number of wealthy and powerful notables at the top, a middle-class majority of merchants and professionals, and a small number that belonged to the lower class- was transformed into a community formed overwhelmingly of deprived refugees. In contrast to the 19th century Armenian immigrants who had come to settle in Egypt in search of fortunes, those of the turn of the century had arrived as refugees hoping to return, once the turmoil in their homeland was over.

Until 1914, the Armenians present in Egypt maintained strong ties with their native towns in Ottoman Armenia, Istanbul,

⁴⁴Aghazarm, Noter..., p. 75.

⁴⁵Anne Kazazian, "Annexe 3: Les Arméniens et la nationalité (d'après les recensements égyptiens)" in état des archives du Patriarcat arménien orthodoxe du Caire, Mémoire de DEA "Monde arabe", juin 1990, p. 110. According to the figures in the table formed by Kazazian on the basis of the 1907 Egyptian census, 7747 Ottoman Armenians resided in Egypt in 1907. Non-Ottoman Armenians do not appear in this table.

Izmir, Cilicia and other parts of Asia Minor, where they still had families, relatives and business associates. Administratively, the Armenian Apostolic community in Cairo was, since the middle of the 19th century, a diocese under the jurisdiction of the Armenian Patriarchate in Constantinople. These ties were severed as a result of the 1914 rupture of the relations between Great Britain and the Ottoman Empire due to the War. For all practical purposes, communication between Armenians in Egypt and their compatriots in Ottoman Armenia could not be maintained during the war.

This created a number of juridical difficulties both on the individual and Communal levels. When news of the massacres of Ottoman Armenians started to creep into Egypt, the Armenian community here was mobilized to raise funds for the survivors. However, efforts shed to aid the surviving deportees in Syria and Mesopotamia were conditioned with the movements of Allied troops on the Middle Eastern war fronts.

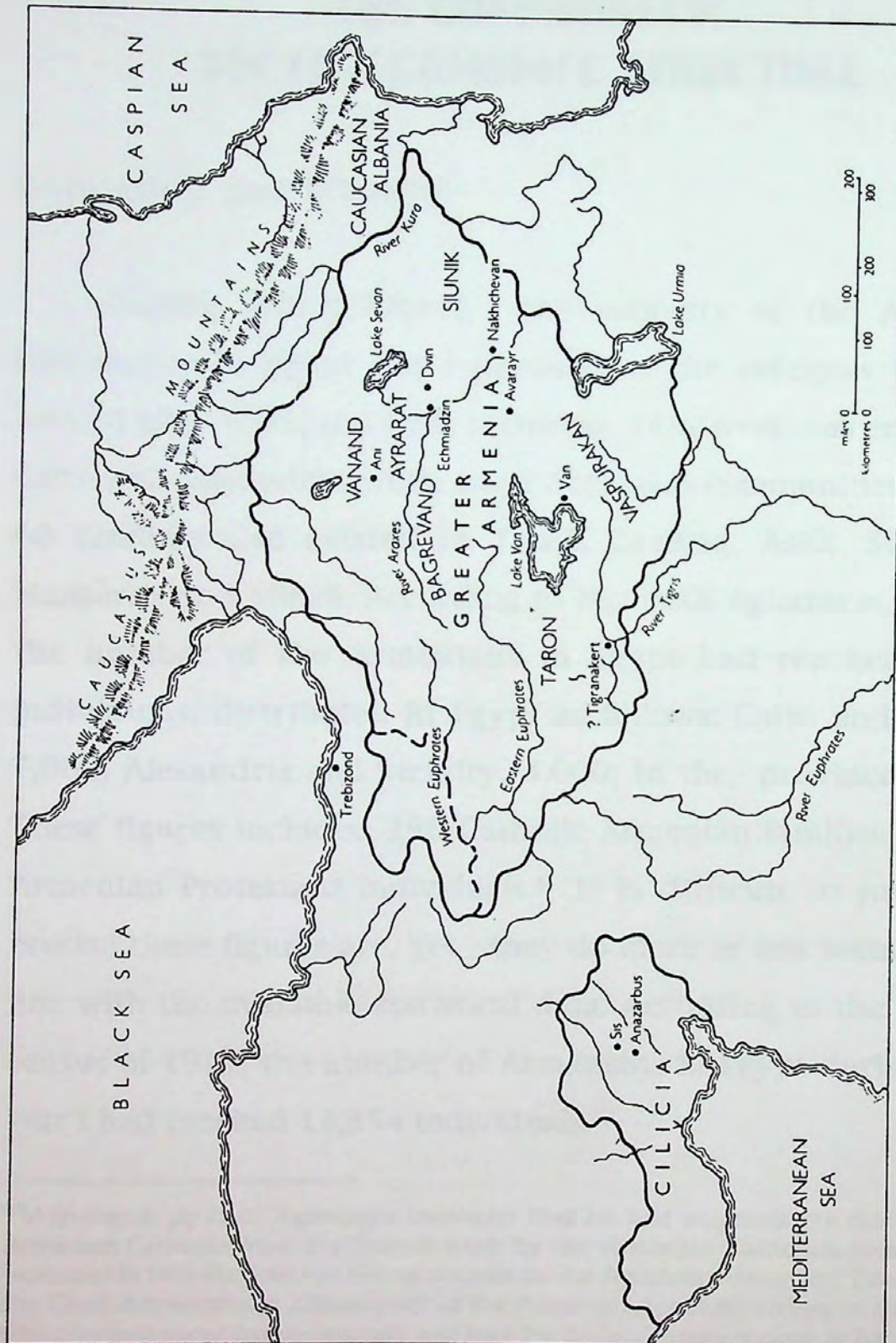
The first chapter examines the occupational patterns of the Armenians in Egypt on the eve of World War I within the context of the socio-economic structure of the country. Focusing on the 1911 census of the Apostolic Armenians in Alexandria, it discusses the changes introduced in the socio-economic structure of the community as a result of the arrival of the Ottoman Armenian refugees in the turn of the century.

Chapter Two sets out the social structure of the Armenian community in Egypt as it existed on the eve and during the First

World War, describes its administrative and social institutions and discusses their roles and functions. It deals in detail with the administrative structure of the Apostolic Armenians, as it presented the backbone of the Armenian Communal organization and is instrumental for an understanding of the following chapters. Chapter Two also discusses the Armenian Catholics and Protestants, and examines the inter-sectarian relations among the Armenians.

Chapter Three deals with the political and socio-economic repercussions of World War I on the Armenians in Egypt. It examines the paradoxical status of the mainstream Armenian Apostolic community as an Ottoman *millet* in an un-Ottoman Egypt within the context of the political changes in the Middle East during the War. It discusses the problems faced by the community both collectively and individually as a result of the impact of the economic instability of the country on Communal revenues.

Chapter Four deals with the responses of the Armenians in Egypt to the massacres and deportations of Ottoman Armenians, focusing on four major issues: the accounts of the massacres of Ottoman Armenians; the Armenian refugees that arrived in Port Sa'id starting from 1915; the Armenian volunteers sent to the Caucasian and Palestinian battle-fronts as part of the Russian and French forces respectively; the simultaneous movements of the advance of the Allied forces on the Middle Eastern battle-fields and of the arrival in Egypt of the surviving Armenian deportees in Syria and Mesopotamia.



Map 1. Armenia in Ancient and Medieval Times

Reproduced from Walker, Armenia: The Survival of a Nation, p. 22.

Chapter One

THE COMMUNITY: SOCIO-ECONOMIC STRUCTURE

Citizenship and Ethnicity

During World War I, the majority of the Armenian community in Egypt was composed of the refugees that had arrived after 1895, and their offspring. They were concentrated in Cairo and Alexandria, while small Armenian communities of 20 to 60 families also existed in Ṭanṭā, Zaḡāziq, Asiūt, Sharqiyah, Maṣūrah and Minyā. According to Nazareth Aghazarm, in 1911, the number of the Armenians in Egypt had reached 12,000 individuals, distributed in Egypt as follows: Cairo and vicinity, 7,000; Alexandria and vicinity, 4,000; in the provinces, 1,000. These figures included 390 Catholic Armenian families and 250 Armenian Protestant individuals.⁴⁶ It is difficult to judge how precise these figures are. Yet, they do more or less seem to be in line with the available statistical data. According to the Egyptian census of 1917, the number of Armenians in Egypt during World War I had reached 13,854 individuals.⁴⁷

⁴⁶Aghazarm, pp.75-6. Aghazarm mentions that he had acquired the number of the Armenian Catholics from the French work by the Armenian Catholic's Vicar, Davitian, published in 1910. He does not cite his sources for the Apostolic Armenians. However, being the Chief Administrator (*Tivanapet*) of the Armenian Apostolic Prelacy in Cairo, he was well informed about the community and had the prelacy registers close at hand, which he must have used as his source for the number of the Apostolic Armenians.

⁴⁷Anne Kazazian, "Annexe 3: Les Arméniens et la nationalité (d'après les recensements égyptiens)" in *état des archives* ..., p. 110.

On the eve of World War I, among the 2,359 Armenians listed in the 1911 census of the Apostolic Armenians in Alexandria we find: 61 marked as "local" subjects, 66 Persian, 43 Russian, 38 Bulgarian, 13 American, 9 Greek, 7 British, 5 French and 3 Italian. All the rest were marked as Ottoman subjects. The 61 Armenians marked as 'local' (13 families and 3 bachelors) had either settled in Egypt before 1890 or were born there.⁴⁸ Though during the next decade the number of Armenians classified as Ottoman (later Turkish) greatly decreased in favor of those who became local subjects, until the end of the First World War, more than half of the Armenians in Egypt were still Ottoman subjects.⁴⁹

As the above figures show, apart from a small proportion of Armenians of foreign nationalities, the Armenians in Egypt, (like the Syrians in Egypt), were one of the national minorities that formed up the multi-ethnic Ottoman Empire of which Egypt was still officially a part. Consequently, they did not enjoy the privileges offered by the Capitulation that provided the foreigners with a number of advantages resented by the Egyptians. Thus, as far as their legal status was concerned by and large Armenians were not foreigners. This, however, did not spare the Armenians from being perceived as privileged foreigners not only by the local

⁴⁸These figures are based on the register of the 1911 Census of the Armenian Apostolic Community in Alexandria, which was made between May and October 1911. "Arajnordaran Hayots Agheksandrio: mardahamar", [Armenian Prelacy in Alexandria: Census], archives of the Armenian Orthodox Prelacy in Alexandria; thenceforth referred to as: *The 1911 Census of the Armenian Apostolic community in Alexandria*.

⁴⁹Anne Kazazian, "Annexe 3: Les Arméniens et la nationalité (d'après les recensements égyptiens)" in *État des archives* ...; for 1917, 5094 Armenians are classified as 'local' and 7760 Armenians as Ottoman subjects. For 1927, the figure for Egyptian-Armenians is 13,833, while 3355 Armenians are marked as Turkish subjects, making the total number of Armenians in Egypt 17,188 individuals; p. 110.

population but also in different studies dealing with Egypt. This was due to the fact that like the foreigners, the Armenians were culturally different from the indigenous Egyptian population in terms of language, religion and customs. This perception of Armenians was further enhanced by some socio-economic factors to be discussed below.

The Armenian community that came into being during the two decades preceding World War I started the long process of integration for the Armenians in Egypt. Without being assimilated in the Egyptian population, the Armenians gradually acquired some cultural traits of the Egyptian society. For example, instead of exchanging their language with the Arabic, they started to learn the local language and added it to their own native language. They adopted some local customs and habits without completely neglecting their own Armenian traditions.

This integration was both necessitated and made possible by the dual social structure the Armenians belonged to. In terms of their occupations, Armenians were part of the Egyptian socio-economic structure and in direct daily interaction with the Egyptian society. On the other hand, the community had an ethnic social structure of its own, which, within the context of the Ottoman *millet* system, administered the affairs of the Armenians in terms of their civil status and maintained institutions that reinforced their ethnic identities. Eventually, Armenians found no difficulty in belonging to these two structures at the same time.

The process of integration was, however, a long one, and it was, to a certain extent delayed by the strong European presence in the country. This is reflected in the articles of some contemporary Armenian writers. In 1914, Gabamadjian feels the need to forewarn the Armenian public of the fact that thenceforth "for those who have only a foreign education the doors of careers as state-employees will be shut. If Armenian parents wish to prepare their young for that purpose they have to seriously consider educating them in Egyptian state schools".⁵⁰

Socio-economic Stratification

Though presenting a small number compared with other minorities existing in Egypt during the same period, such as the Greeks (63,000), Italians (35,000), British (21,000), French (15,000), Syrians (34,000), and Sudanese(18,000),⁵¹ the Armenian community in Egypt was highly diversified in terms of occupation. The influx of Armenians into Egypt at the end of the 19th century had both increased the number of Armenians in certain occupations and introduced the Armenian element in a number of other occupations in which Armenians had not been involved until then.

⁵⁰A. Gabamadjian, "Hai tarre yegiptosi petakan, tntesakan yev arevtrakan aspareznerun mej: vidjakagrakan ambob teghekutiunner", [The Armenian Element in State, Economic and Commercial Careers in Egypt: Brief Statistical Information], *Yegiptahai taretsuits*, [Annuaire des Arméniens d'Egypte], Suren Partevian ed. First Year (Cairo: Z. Berberian, 1914), p. 230

⁵¹According to "The Census of Egypt" taken in 1907, in Joel Beinin and Zachary Lockman, *Workers on the Nile: Nationalism, Communism, Islam and the Egyptian Working Class, 1882-1954*, (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1987), p.35.

During the period under study we find Armenians in Egypt almost in every stratum along the socio-economic ladder of the Egyptian society, as private and public sector employees, large and small scale merchants, owners of industrial firms, artisans, workers, domestic servants, professionals and some landowners⁵². These categories often overlap and should be considered with flexibility. It must be kept in mind that industrialists and some artisans are also merchants though of varying scopes of trade; a number of professionals are employees; while landowners may belong to a number of various occupational groups.

As the above categories are socio-professional rather than socio-economic, we find that the range encompassed in some of these groups, especially the employees and merchants, vary greatly in terms of income and standard of living. In the absence of any economic study on the Armenians in Egypt, it is not possible to determine the social structure of the community in terms of their proportions in socio-economic classes. This remains to be examined by further research. On the other hand, the socio-professional groups, when looked at closely in terms of the specific jobs of the individuals, provide us with a certain picture of the stratification of the community. The 1911 census of the Armenian Apostolic community in Alexandria used below serves this purpose.

Unfortunately, no similar census exists for the Armenians in Cairo or the Egyptian provinces for the same year. The only census

⁵² 1911 Census of the Armenian Apostolic Community in Alexandria; and A. Gabamadjian, p. 220-237.

made by the Armenian Apostolic Prelacy in Cairo was in 1906-7, after which new waves of refugees arrived as a result of the 1909 massacres of Armenians in Cilicia. For the professional patterns of Armenians in Cairo, the brief statistical information provided by Gabamadjian's contemporary article has been relied upon⁵³.

Armenian Employees

On the eve of World War I, Armenians who worked as employees formed one of the largest occupational groups in the Armenian community in Egypt. Under this socio-professional category we find a large range of individuals from employees with prestigious and lucrative positions, to those who made a bare living. Table 1 presents the number and the different kinds of jobs of the Armenian employees in Alexandria in 1911. It also points out the difference in the occupational patterns between the old and relatively new Armenian residents in the country.

⁵³Gabamadjian, "Hai tarre...".

Table 1[†]: Armenian employees in Alexandria in 1911

N°	SPECIALISATION/ INSTITUTION	NUMBER OF PERSONS	ARRIVED BEFORE 1895	ARRIVED AFTER 1895
1	employee (unspecified)	98	12	86
2	commissioner*	12	2	10
3	municipality	4	3	1
4	post office	3	1	2
5	government	4	4	0
6	judiciary	3	3	0
7	state	1	1	0
8	expert	1	1	0
9	railway inspector	1	1	0
10	tramway**	32	0	32
	bank	4	0	4
11	bank	4	0	4
12	hotel manager	3	0	3
13	superintendent	2	0	2
14	chargé d'affaires	2	0	2
15	accountant	1	0	1
16	customs broker	1	0	1
17	beadle***	1	0	1
	Total	173	28	145

[†] This and the following 7 tables are formed on the basis of the occupations of Armenians marked in the 1911 Census of the Armenian Apostolic Community in Alexandria.

* Commissioners could also be private business owners as the 4 import-export agencies in Cairo mentioned by Gabamadjian under the 'Commissioners' category; in Gabamadjian, "Hai tarre...", p. 228. This kind of specification is not present in the 1911 Census.

** The 1911 Census does not specify the job of these tramway men who are marked as 'tramway employees'. Probably most of these fell under Beinun and Lockman's category of tramway workers most of whom were drivers and conductors.

*** In 1917, the beadle (Iusarar) of the Armenian Church in Cairo was paid 250 piasters a month; in "Atenagrutun kakhakakan zhoghovo", [Minutes of the Civil Council], vol. 25, April 27/10 May 1916 to February 19/ 1 March 1918, Session 60, 2/15 June 1917, p. 249; archives of the Armenian Orthodox Patriarchate in Cairo. (Henceforth, *Minutes of Civil Council*, vol. 25).

With the resignations of Nubar *pasha* (1894), Tigran *pasha* D'Abro (1895), and Ya'qūb Artin *pasha* (1906) from their ministerial functions, the Armenian element in key positions in Egypt's state machinery had come to an end. Thenceforth, Armenian government employees held secondary functions and more often bureaucratic jobs in different departments of the state administration⁵⁴. In 1913, at least 70 Armenians had different jobs in various ministries and governmental departments as directors, inspectors, engineers, designers, interpreters, secretaries, clerks, doctors, architects and zincographes.⁵⁵

At least 47 Armenians worked, in 1913, as employees in foreign banks and in large foreign enterprises as accountants, cashiers, correspondents, engineers, architects and designers. A few held high positions. For example, the director of the *Société Commerciale Et Financière D'Egypte* (Alexandria) was an Armenian named Bekian, while Djanik Chaker was the Sous-Directeur of the *Companie Intérieure Des Wagons-Lits*.⁵⁶

A minimum of 23 high level Armenian employees were engaged in 1913, by the four large Armenian tobacco and cigarette firms in Egypt which had branches all over the country.⁵⁷ (Armenians in the cigarette sector will be discussed below). Also a considerable number of Armenians were employees of the

⁵⁴Topuzian, *Yegiptosi haikakan...*, pp. 116-117.

⁵⁵Gabamadjian, "Hai tarre...", pp. 230-232.

⁵⁶Ibid. pp. 232-3.

⁵⁷"Yegiptahai gerazantsutiune dskhakhoti ardunagordsutian mej", [Egyptian Armenian Prominence in Cigarette Production] *Yegiptahai taretsuits*, 1914, p. 187.

prelacies in Cairo and in Alexandria. Until further research provides us with a more precise picture of the stratification of the Armenian employees in Egypt, it is important to note that they ranged from deprived church beadles to respectable judges as Boghos bey Hagopian,⁵⁸ and prestigious and rich employees as Djanik Chaker.

Armenians in Commerce and Commercial-Industries

Similar to the case of the Armenian employees in Egypt, on the eve and during World War I Armenians who were engaged in commerce presented a wide spectrum in terms of socio-economic stratification. The little that has been published about Armenian involvement in trade in this country discusses only the prominent Armenian merchants and commercial enterprises, while the retailers and petty merchants remain in oblivion.

Armenian Importers: In 1913, most of the Armenians in Egypt who were involved in foreign trade were importers rather than exporters. The large variety of goods imported by some of the Armenian merchants mentioned in Table 2 included: shoes; tobacco; precious stones; coal; woolen, cotton and silk fabrics; antiques; iron and cement; and stationary items.⁵⁹ We can add on this list the Armenian merchants mentioned by Gabamadjian, such as the importers of petroleum; ironware and machines; leather;

⁵⁸Gabamadjian, "Hai tarre..." p. 230. Boghos bey Hagopian was a 'Juge au 1er Instance' in Alexandria Mixed Tribunal in 1913.

⁵⁹Ibid. pp. 225-8.

photographic appliances; furniture and kitchenware; chemical fertilizers; flour; cereals and dry fruit; ropes.⁶⁰

Table 2: Armenians in commerce[†] in Alexandria in 1911

Nº	OCCUPATION/FIELD	NUMBER OF PERSONS	ARRIVED BEFORE 1895	ARRIVED AFTER 1895
1	Merchant (unspecified)	58	22	36
2	dairy products/milkman*	45	1	44
3	shop-keeper	37	3	34
4	shoe-merchant+	19	7	12
5	tobacco+/cigarette	18	5	13
6	haberdasher+	10	1	9
7	grocer	10	3	7
8	scarf (yazmadji)	7	1	6
9	dried-beef (bastermadji)	5	2	3
10	jeweler+	1	1	0
11	coffee	2	0	2
12	sugar	2	0	2
13	coal+	2	0	2
14	fabric+	2	0	2
15	book-shop	2	0	2
16	antiques (tohafdj)+	2	0	2
17	peddler	2	0	2
18	medicine-seller	1	0	1
19	cement+	1	0	1
20	dye merchant	1	0	1
21	butcher	1	0	1
22	stationary+	1	0	1
	Total	229	46	183

⁶⁰Ibid. pp. 227-8.

[†] Under this term I have classified all those who were involved in trade, in its simple meaning of buying and selling. The 58 'merchants' in the above table were not specified in the census. Those in bold letters are the occupations in which manufacturing or processing the raw material preceded selling. These are not grouped in a separate table because the numbers in the census do not show how many persons in a given trade were only traders and how many were manufacturers as well.

* The Armenian term 'gatnavadjar' which may mean both a firm or a shop which produced or sold dairy products, and simply 'milkman', does not allow to be more precise on this entry.

+ Some of these merchants were importers, but their precise number cannot be determined.

Though Table 2 presents the various branches of commerce in which Armenians were involved in Alexandria, Gabamadjian's article shows that Cairene Armenians were also involved in almost all of the occupations listed in the table.⁶¹ The two major branches of import in which Armenians in Egypt played a dominant role were petroleum and tobacco. Whereas petroleum was imported by a foreign-Armenian firm, the tobacco import and cigarette manufacturing were domestic Armenian enterprises.

The only company in Egypt that imported petroleum from Russia was the *SOCIETE ANONYME DE L'INDUSTRIE DE NAPhte ET DU COMMERCE, A.J. MANTACHOFF ET CIE*, while its competitors imported petroleum from Romania.⁶² In 1913, Mantashoff's petroleum company was based in St. Petersburg and had branches in different cities all over the world including Egypt.⁶³ The company's main office in Egypt was in Alexandria. Its general representative was Hovhannes Mutaftian, an Armenian of Russian citizenship from Transcaucasia, who had settled in Egypt in 1893 and was the Chairman of the Alexandria Armenians' Community Council.⁶⁴ The director of the company's Cairo office was Avedik Lalayants, likewise an Armenian from Transcaucasia, who was the Chairman of the Civil Council of the Armenian community in Cairo.

⁶¹Gabamadjian, "Hai tarre...", pp. 222-8.

⁶²Ibid. p. 225.

⁶³"Mantashianner", *Armenian-Soviet Encyclopedia*, vol. 7 (Yerevan: Armenian SSR Academy of Science, 1981), pp. 221-222. In 1913 the company's central office was in St. Petersburg not Tibilisi as stated by Gabamadjian. It had been in Tibilisi until 1911 when it was transferred to Baku whence, in 1913 it was transferred to St. Petersburg.

⁶⁴Gabamadjian, "Hai tarre...", p. 225; and 1911 Census of the Armenian Apostolic Community in Alexandria where Mutaftian's occupation is marked as 'merchant'.

The company had branches all over the country, such as Mit-Ghamr, Zaqaziq, Benhā, Fagūs, Fayūm and Mellāwi, where a number of local and Ottoman Armenians acted as agents. These representatives were rich petroleum merchants to whom belonged the monopoly of the sale of the company's petroleum in the above mentioned cities.⁶⁵ According to Gabamajian, Mantashoff's branches played a significant role in Egypt's petroleum sector.⁶⁶

Armenians and Export: Among the few Armenian merchants who were involved in export one had an ostrich farm in *maṭareyah* and exported ostrich feather. The Armenian owned *Société Anonyme des Echarpes Egyptiennes* exported to Europe and the United States silver thread scarves made in Asiūt. The only other item mentioned in the goods exported by Armenians in 1913 was onion which was sent to Europe. In addition to these there were some Armenian export-import commissioners who played the role of middle-men. Gabamadjian mentions only four such agents.⁶⁷

Industrialist-merchants: During the three decades between 1896-1926, Armenian large-scale tobacco merchants and cigarette manufacturers dominated the domestic Egyptian cigarette market, while the export of cigarette was in the hands of prominent Greek cigarette manufacturers and merchants. The cigarette exports of Armenian owned firms were minimal and stopped altogether in

⁶⁵Gabamadjian, "Hai tarre...", pp. 225-6; and "Yegiptahai Dimastverner" [Egyptian-Armenian Personalities], in *Yegiptahai taretsuits* [Annuaire des Arméniens d'Egypte], Suren Partevian ed. Second Year, (title page missing, no publication data, 1915), p. 121.

⁶⁶Gabamadjian, "Hai tarre...", p. 223.

⁶⁷Ibid. pp. 228-9.

1910 when some European countries put certain customs obstacles in face of the Egyptian cigarette.⁶⁸

The development of the cigarette manufacturing industry in Egypt was a consequence of the economic policies of the Ottoman government in Constantinople. Starting from 1882, when cigarette manufacturing became the monopoly of the French Regie, Greek and Armenian cigarette manufacturers from different cities in Anatolia moved to Egypt.⁶⁹ Four major Armenian firms, the Société Anonyme Matosian, Melkonian, Kamsarakan and Ipekian were prominent in the Egyptian cigarette market.⁷⁰

Matosian, the foremost amongst these, was founded in Alexandria in 1882 by Hovhannes bey Matosian, an Armenian Catholic. Developing into a large family business, in 1899 Matosian became a Société Anonyme with a capital of 100,000 pounds (increased to 150,000 by 1902). The shareholders were exclusively family members. In 1913, the Matosian company had branches and factories in Cairo (Giza), Alexandria, Ṭanṭā and Asiut, and consumed half of the tobacco imports in Egypt. Its daily tobacco consumption reached up to 15,000 kilos⁷¹, meeting the daily needs of around a million smokers.⁷² Though Matosian's capital and quantity of production attest to the establishment's large size, the studies that discuss the Matosian company do not inform us of the

⁶⁸Topuzian, *Yegiptosi haikakan...*, p. 110.

⁶⁹Ibid. p. 99.

⁷⁰"Yegiptahai gerazantsutiune dskhakhoti ardunagordsutian mej", pp. 179-185.

⁷¹Ibid. pp. 179-181.

⁷²Ibid. p. 184. Calculated on the basis of the article's claim that 3,000 kg. of tobacco could provide for the daily consumption of 200,000 smokers.

size of its work force.⁷³ Discussing labor activism in Egypt, Beinín and Lockman state:

"A union did emerge at the Matosian factory [in 1903] but remained weak for several years. In October 1908, however, after a brief and unsuccessful strike in Cairo, this union became the core of a new and broader grouping, the Ligue Internationale des Ouvriers Cigaretteiers et Papetiers du Caire..... In 1910, the Matosian union had some 200 members, the Cairo union over 1,500".⁷⁴

This, however, does not tell us much about the actual work force employed by the Matosian company.

Another prominent Armenian owned cigarette establishment was that of the Melkonian Brothers, natives of Kayseri, who settling in Alexandria in 1875⁷⁵, founded a small cigarette factory in Zaqaq in 1882, which was followed by factories in Alexandria, Fayūm and Aswān. In 1900 all these branches were transferred to Cairo (the Alexandria office was kept) where the Melkonians had built a large factory which in 1913 used modern machinery and produced 10 million cigarettes a month.⁷⁶ If we compare this figure with the figures given for the Gianacis cigarette factory, we can get an idea of the work force employed by the Melkonian firm.

⁷³Citing Topuzian as his source Mohammed Rifaat Al-Emam mentions 1000 workers working for the Matossian company at the end of the 19th century; in *Al-Arman fi Misr*, (Cairo: Nubar Printing House, 1995), p. 91. This number is not mentioned by Topuzian who remains silent about the size of Matossian's workforce.

⁷⁴Beinín and Lockman, *Workers on the Nile*, p. 52.

⁷⁵Gartashian, *Nuter*, vol. 2, p. 157.

⁷⁶"Yegiptahai gerazantsutiune dskhakhoti ardunagordsutian mej", op.cit., p. 181.

An article quoted by Kitroeff⁷⁷ states that the daily output of the Gianaclis factory was 400,000 cigarettes a day made by 140 cigarette makers each of whom produced three to four thousand cigarettes daily. On the basis of these figures calculations show that the 10,000,000 monthly cigarette output of the Melkonian firm could be produced by 100 cigarette makers who produced 300,000 cigarettes daily.

According to the same source, 40-60 cigarette workers were employed in the Gianaclis factory to mix the leaves supervised by foremen whose number is not specified. Neither is the number of the workers who operated the 'motor-driven cutting machines' specified. In addition to these there were also 34 men who made the boxes in which the cigarettes were packed. Packaging was carried out by the same workers who mixed the tobacco leaves at the first stage of the manufacturing process.⁷⁸ From the above, it can be deduced that the work force of the Melkonian factory was around 200 people.

The Kamsarakan establishment occupied the third place in terms of its size of production. The Kamsarakans, came to Egypt from Constantinople in 1895 and established a cigarette factory in Zaqaziq. It was specialized in the preparation of high quality tobacco blends and the manufacturing of cigarettes. Though the Kamsarakan House was a large-scale cigarette producing firm

⁷⁷Kitroeff, *The Greeks...*, p. 106. Excerpt quoted by Kitroeff from an article published in A. Wright ed. *Twentieth Century Impressions of Egypt*, (London: 1909), p. 485.

⁷⁸Kitroeff, *The Greeks...*, p. 105.

which in 1913 provided 3,000Kgs. of tobacco daily, "which is the consumption of around 200,000 smokers in one day",⁷⁹ it was a relatively smaller business compared with the Matosian establishment which, as mentioned above had a daily consumption of 15,000 Kgs. of tobacco. In addition to these three major Armenian names in the Egyptian market, there were, as Table 2 shows, a number of other Armenian cigarette enterprises, some of which were quite well known.

Due to the expansion and the mechanization after 1907⁸⁰ of the large scale tobacco and cigarette enterprises which were in direct contact with the consumer through their own shops, small-scale cigarette merchants who made and sold cigarettes in their shops were unable to survive the competition and became mere retailers. This resulted in the appearance of *entrepotaires* who owned cigarette warehouses and played the role of commissioners between the industrialist-merchants and retailers in the domestic market. In 1916 one of the major *entrepotaires* in Alexandria was Hovhannes Pembedjian.⁸¹

It is noteworthy that although the domestic cigarette market was dominated by Armenian industrialist-merchants who were responsible for the import and sale on the local market of 70% of

⁷⁹"Yegiptahai gerazantsutiune dskhakhofi ardunagordsutian mej", op.cit., p. 184.

⁸⁰Kitroeff, *The Greeks...*, p. 106.

⁸¹"Yegiptakan dskhagordsi hraparaken: Hovhanness Pembedjian" [From the Egyptian Cigarette Market: Hovhanness Pembedjian], in *Yegiptahai taretsuits* [Almanach Arméno-Egyptien (formerly Annuaire des Arméniens d'Egypte)], ed. Suren Partevian, 4th year, (Alexandria: Kassabian, 1917), pp. 75-6.

Egypt's total tobacco imports,⁸² there did not exist an ethnic network of Armenian tobacco merchants or cigarette manufacturers. In 1914, Gabamadjian, foresightedly warned Armenian merchants in general against the consequences of not having a center of commerce:

"... here, it is necessary to point out two major shortcomings: first, the lack of a strong Armenian financial establishment; second; the inexistence of an Armenian center of commerce. Considering Egypt's political and economic importance, it can be assumed that it will not be possible to compete with western currents for long using traditional methods..... in this context the [two] above mentioned establishments are vital".⁸³

At least in the cigarette sector, Gabamadjian proved to be right. In fact, in the early 1920-s the Egyptian tobacco market was penetrated by large foreign industrial capital as "..... the Eastern Tobacco Company, a subsidiary of British-American Tobacco came to Egypt with the object of taking over the largest companies with popular brand names which had installed cigarette making machines".⁸⁴ Along with a number of Greek owned factories, the large Armenian owned firms were taken over by the Eastern Tobacco Company.⁸⁵ Thus, in mid 1920-s, the almost thirty years long Armenian domination of the domestic cigarette market in Egypt came to an end.

⁸²"Yegiptahai gerazantsoutiune dskhakhoti ardunagordsoutian mej", p. 179.

⁸³Gabamadjian, "Hai tarre...", p. 224.

⁸⁴Kitroeff, *The Greeks...*, p. 107.

⁸⁵Ibid. p. 109.

A very different kind of production in which Armenian industrialist-merchants in Egypt were involved was that of the flowery linen scarves (*yazma*) which "until the 'Great Migration' of the Armenians to Egypt [1895] was imported entirely ready-made from Constantinople, while now [1914] more than ten [Armenian] factories both in Cairo and Alexandria produced this modest item locally".⁸⁶ No hint has been given about the scope of these factories in terms of their capital, the quantity and quality of their production, or the number of their workers and employees.

Little is known about Armenian shop-keepers and retailers. According to Gabamadjian, Armenians were responsible for the introduction and spread in Egypt of yogurt, dry-okra and dried-beef (*basturma*).⁸⁷ The Armenian grocers mentioned in Table 2 confirms Kitroeff's argument that not all grocers were Greeks. Discussing the Association of Greek grocers in Alexandria, Kitroeff writes:

"..., the way in which Egyptian and Armenian competitors are mentioned [in the proceedings of the grocers' conference] would belie the misguided impression that all grocers were Greeks. It seems very much as if the others were always present but were only in a position to compete seriously with the Greeks in the 1930s".⁸⁸

⁸⁶Gabamadjian, "Hai tarre...", p. 222.

⁸⁷Ibid. p. 222.

⁸⁸Kitroeff, *The Greeks*, p. 136.

Table 2, in addition to presenting the diversity of the fields of commerce in which Armenians were involved, shows that alongside very rich cigarette merchants like the Matosians, there were Armenian grocer, peddlers and milkmen. This does not help us much in structuring the Armenians in Egypt in terms of their socio-economic status. Yet, it cautions us against repeating existing misconceptions, such as presenting Armenians in Egypt at the beginning of the twentieth century as 'privileged foreigners'. On the basis of the above, it can be argued that this image is a misperception stemming from generalizations which though understandable on a popular level should be avoided in academic studies.

It is true that an undefined number of rich Armenian merchants existed in Egypt during and on the eve of the First World War. However, as was seen above, apart from a few exceptions like the Mantashoff petroleum company, the businesses they ran were not 'foreign' businesses in as much as they neither involved foreign capital nor benefited from the capitulations.

Moreover, commerce in Egypt is one of the fields where the involvement of Armenians, though often mentioned in general terms, remains to be studied closely. The above discussion, rather than providing answers, raises unasked questions that need further research: for example, what was the number and proportion of the large import firms, whole-sale merchants, moderate retailers and petty merchants vis à vis the Armenian community on the one hand and the Egyptian society on the other?

What was the range of capital and scope of production and sale of 'large', 'moderate' and 'small' scale merchants? What was the ratio of Egyptians, Armenians, and foreigners employed by Armenian owned firms? The answers to these questions await further research, away from preconceived notions.

Armenian Artisans

Armenians were famous for being skillful artisans. Table 3, lists the different kinds of crafts practiced by Armenian artisans on the eve of World War I. It is interesting to note that of the 18 crafts mentioned in Table 3, two were practiced exclusively by Armenians who were in Egypt before 1895, while 12 crafts were the exclusive domains of Armenians who had arrived after 1895.

Table 3: Armenian artisans in Alexandria in 1911

N°	CRAFT	NUMBER OF PERSONS	ARRIVED BEFORE 1895	ARRIVED AFTER 1895
1	shoemaker	89	5	84
2	goldsmith	39	8	31
3	tailor	33	2	31
4	watch-maker	14	3	11
5	sedefji*	1	1	0
6	marpuji**	3	3	0
7	carpenter	22	0	22
8	barber	19	0	19
9	blacksmith	17	0	17
10	smelter	12	0	12
11	seamstress	10	0	10
12	shirt-maker	3	0	3
13	furniture-maker	3	0	3
14	engraver	3	0	3
15	cobbler	2	0	2
16	weaver	1	0	1
17	embroider	1	0	1
18	tin-maker	1	0	1
	Total	273	22	251

* fine craft which uses sea-shells especially for inlays in wooden objects.

** maker of the ferrules of *nerguilehs*.

The Armenian goldsmiths in Khan al-Khalil were of long-standing fame and in 1914 dominated this craft in Cairo.⁸⁹ They were also the only occupational group among the Armenians known to us to have formed an ethnic craft union which was known as the "Union of Armenian Goldsmiths". Not much is known about the activities of this union except that it participated in the fund-raising for the Armenian refugees during World War I, as its name appears in various donation lists published in the Armenian press during the war years.

The Union of Armenian Goldsmiths also presented gifts on various occasions. For example, in May 1914, during a gathering on the occasion of the return of Boghos *pasha* Nubar from his first mission in Europe as the head of the Armenian Delegation, the Armenian goldsmiths presented him with a gold plaque as a gift.⁹⁰ It is noteworthy that though shoemakers formed by far the largest group among the Armenian artisans in Alexandria, there is no indication that they had formed an association or a union.

A considerable number of Armenian artisans owned smelting workshops both in Cairo and in Alexandria.⁹¹ As Table 3 shows, in Alexandria alone there were 10 Armenian smelters in 1911. Some of these should have been large workshops as in addition to small items used in construction such as taps, keys, door handles, they

⁸⁹Gabamadjian, "Hai tarre...", p. 121-2.

⁹⁰"Yegiptahai tarin" [Egyptian-Armenian Year] in Yegiptahai taretsuits, 2nd year, 1915, p. 54.

⁹¹Topuzian, Yegiptosi haikakan, p. 104.

also produced doors, fences, water-pipes, as well as metal products used in agriculture.⁹²

As Table 7 (below) demonstrates, among the 870 strong Armenian work force in Alexandria in 1911, the Armenian artisans formed the largest occupational group (31.4%). It is significant that in 1911 those who were born in Egypt or had arrived prior to 1895 formed only 8% of the Armenian artisans in Alexandria.

Armenian Workers and Laborers

Beinin and Lockman argue that at the beginning of the 20th century (until the 1930s), there did not exist in Egypt a working class in the sense of "a sizable body of workers who were completely dependent on industrial labor for their subsistence".⁹³ The existing core of industrial workers were not "highly differentiated from ... the urban 'working people - owners of and workers in small workshops, independent and semi-independent artisans, those self-employed in marginal occupations, and casual laborers".⁹⁴

The few writings that mention Armenian workers provide us with contradictory and unreliable information, in particular about the number and status of Armenian workers in the cigarette sector. Writing in 1913, Gabamadjian mentions that a significant

⁹²Ibid. p. 104.

⁹³Beinin and Lockman, *Workers on the Nile...*, p.38.

⁹⁴Ibid. p. 38.

number of Armenian workers were employed by the large Armenian-owned cigarette firms in Egypt in the period of writing.⁹⁵ Gabamadjian also presents a list of Armenians employed as directors, assistant directors, cashiers and accountants in the administration of the four largest Armenian tobacco firms: Matosian, Melkonian, Kamsarakan and Ipekian. By no means does Gabamadjian imply that his list is exhaustive or that Armenians worked exclusively as office workers. In short, Gabamadjian mentions that there was a large number of Armenian workers in Armenian-owned cigarette firms and that these firms owed their prosperity partly to the zeal of their Armenian administrators.⁹⁶

Curiously, Topuzian, citing Gabamadjian as his source, states that in 1913-1914 out of the total of 14-15000 workers in the Egyptian cigarette industry, 10,000 worked in Armenian-owned firms.⁹⁷ This is an unfounded exaggeration. Moreover, Topuzian asserts that in these factories the overwhelming majority of workers were peasants while almost all the employees (directors, experts, blending specialists, supervisors, accountants, office workers) were Armenians.⁹⁸

⁹⁵Gabamadjian, "Hai tarre...", p. 186. Gabamadjian's article is not a study but rather similar to a chronicle. As informative as it is, it should be approached with caution.

⁹⁶Gabamadjian, "Hai tarre...", p. 186-7.

⁹⁷Topuzian, Yegiptosi haikakan, p.100, citing Gabamadjian's above article, the same page (p. 186).

⁹⁸Ibid. p. 100. Though most of Topuzian's section on the cigarette factories is based on Gabamadjian's article, here, Topuzian does not cite any source to substantiate this unfounded assertion. Citing Topuzian, Mohammed Rifaat Al-Emam repeats this assertion: Mohammed Rifaat Al-Emam, p. 91.

Some clarification is due here on the definition of the term "worker" used for workers in cigarette factories, which Topuzian seems to ignore. Sources agree that "tobacco workers were usually all Egyptians".⁹⁹ However, the term 'tobacco workers' does not refer to all the workers in a cigarette factory. As Kitroeff explains, by 'tobacco workers' it is meant those who "mixed the leaves under the guidance of a foreman and sprayed them with filtered water. They were also employed in packing the finished cigarettes into boxes".¹⁰⁰

In terms of skills and wages the tobacco workers formed the lowest stratum of workers in the cigarette factories,¹⁰¹ and earned 8 to 15 piasters a day.¹⁰² Above these there were the tobacco cutters "who operated the steam-driven leaf shredders.....",¹⁰³ and their mixture of Greeks, other foreigners and Egyptians",¹⁰³ and their daily wages ranged between 15-30 piasters.¹⁰⁴ At the top of these strata of workers were the highly-skilled cigarette rollers (or makers) who earned, on the eve of World War I 20 to 40 piasters a day.¹⁰⁵ The majority of cigarette rollers were Greeks and during the war their daily wages rose and ranged from 60 to 100 piasters.¹⁰⁶

⁹⁹Kitroeff, *The Greeks...*, p. 106; Bein and Lockman, p. 39.

¹⁰⁰Kitroeff, *The Greeks...*, p. 105. Obviously Topuzian is unaware of this definition of 'tobacco workers'.

¹⁰¹Ibid. p. 106.

¹⁰²Bein and Lockman, *Workers on the Nile...*, p. 39.

¹⁰³Kitroeff, *The Greeks...*, pp. 105-6.

¹⁰⁴Bein and Lockman, *Workers on the Nile...*, p. 39.

¹⁰⁵Ibid. p. 39.

¹⁰⁶Kitroeff, *The Greeks...*, pp. 105, 107.

The information provided by Bein and Lockman concerning the status of Armenian workers in the hierarchy of cigarette workers is vague. Discussing foreign workers in Egypt, they write: "There were foreign workers in all the large enterprises, though certain branches of industry were associated with workers from particular countries..... Syrians and Armenians often worked in cigarette factories".¹⁰⁷ The only other specific reference they make about the Armenian workers in cigarette factories is when they mention that the mainly Greek cigarette rollers' "elite" included some Armenians and Syrians.¹⁰⁸

Table 4: Armenian workers/laborers in Alexandria in 1911

N°	OCCUPATION	NUMBER OF PERSONS	ARRIVED BEFORE 1895	ARRIVED AFTER 1895
1	worker (unspecified)	40	3	37
2	lottery-ticket seller	14	1	13
3	coffee-house servant	22	0	22
4	cook	18	0	18
5	painter/shoe-polisher*	14	0	14
6	domestic servant	4	0	4
7	domestic maid	3	0	3
8	cigarette roller	2	0	2
9	cigarette cutter	1	0	1
10	mason	1	0	1
11	door-keeper	1	0	1
12	newspaper-man	1	0	1
	Total	121	4	117

*When unspecified, the Armenian term 'nergarar' may mean either a painter in construction work or a shoe-polisher. Though only one entry in the census specifies 'shoe-polisher', some of the others marked as painters may well be shoe-polishers.

¹⁰⁷ Bein and Lockman, op. cit, *Workers on the Nile*, p. 36.

¹⁰⁸ Ibid. p. 50.

Unfortunately, Table 4 does not help us much on the issue of Armenian workers in the cigarette sector, as among the 43 Armenian workers listed in the Alexandria census the jobs of only three are specified: 2 as cigarette makers (rollers), and one as cigarette cutter. This does not, however, mean that no other Armenians worked in the cigarette industry. Moreover, it has to be pointed out that the 2 largest Armenian-owned cigarette factories were in Cairo, and the data in Table 4 does not include Cairene Armenians. On the other hand, the small Armenian community in Tanta - which counted 100-150 Armenians in 1916- was formed overwhelmingly of the Armenian workers of the Matosian cigarette factory.¹⁰⁹ Similarly, almost all of the 150 Armenian families in Zaqaziq earned their living from the Kamsarakan cigarette factory. After it was shut down in 1930, the Armenian community in Zaqaziq was reduced to 50-60 individuals.¹¹⁰

Thus, as far as the number and status of Armenian workers in the cigarette industry in Egypt on the eve and during World War I is concerned we remain in the dark until further research (for example, if accessible, in the files of the large cigarette firms) sheds light on it. The main aim of the above discussion was to stress the need for questioning the established notions on the subject. As probable as it is, no evidence upholds Gabamadjian's statement that a large number of the workers in Armenian-owned cigarette factories were Armenian; neither is there evidence to

¹⁰⁹"Tantayi hai gaghute" [The Armenian community in Tanta] in *Yegiptahai Taretsuits*, 3rd year, no publication data, 1916, p. 188.

¹¹⁰"Armenak Bey Kamsarakan" in Vahan Zardarian ed. *Hishatakaran* [Annual for 1941], (Cairo: n.p. 1940), p. 70.

support Topuzian's assertion to the contrary. In light of the contradictory, vague and scattered information about Armenian workers in the cigarette industry it is obvious that the issue is very much under-studied. Pre-mature conclusions can only be misleading.

Another sector where Armenian workers were involved at the beginning of the 20th century is that of the Tramway Company both in Cairo and in Alexandria. Table 4 does not mention tramway workers because the 1911 census uses the term 'tramway employees' for those working in the Alexandria Tramway Company (32 in number) and accordingly they are placed in Table 1. The census does not, however, specify the jobs of these employees. On the other hand, Beinín and Lockman's category of 'tramway workers' included tramway drivers and conductors. The possibility that Armenians working as tramway drivers or conductors described themselves as tramway employees during the census should not be excluded.

Whatever their number or jobs, Armenian tramwaymen participated in the 1911 strikes of tram workers both in Cairo and in Alexandria. In the summer of 1911 agitation started in Cairo during which the Cairo Tramway Company (CTC) "confronted a united and determined work force" which put forth its demands for, among others, "nine-hour workday, higher wages full pay while sick, an end to harassment by foremen, the abolition of fines...."¹¹¹. The delegation of the Cairo tramwaymen who negotiated

¹¹¹ Beinín and Lockman, *Workers on the Nile...*, p. 62.

with CTC officials included Egyptian, Italian, Greek, Austrian and Armenian workers. As their demands were refused by the company's management the tramwaymen went on strike (July 31, 1911) "with the participation of nearly all the company's employees".¹¹² After a week, the Alexandria tramwaymen followed suit. "The strike was quite brief (only the militant Armenian workers remained on strike for more than a day and even they returned to work soon thereafter)".¹¹³

Beinin and Lockman who deal extensively with labor activism in Egypt refer to specifically Armenian workers only scatteredly. Their loose usage of the term 'foreigner' surrounds the participation of Armenian workers in the labor movements with ambiguity. Though they point out to the fact that Ottoman subjects did not share "the special rights and privileges enjoyed by most foreigners",¹¹⁴ they do not deal with this category of Ottoman, non-indigenous workers (like Syrians and Armenians) separately, but within the concoction of workers of foreign citizenship.

The socio- economic changes that developed in the Armenian community in Egypt starting with the arrival of the 1895 refugees is strikingly reflected in Table 4. It shows that Armenians involved in the different types of domestic service, which lay "at the bottom of the working class [and] were paid no more than eight piasters

¹¹²Ibid. p.63.

¹¹³Ibid. p. 64.

¹¹⁴Ibid. p.36.

a day",¹¹⁵ were exclusively those who had arrived after 1895¹¹⁶. Also, Table 7 shows that 96.7% of the Armenian workers and laborers in 1911 Alexandria was formed of those who had arrived after 1895.

Another important change that occurred in the Armenian community at the beginning of the 20th century as a result of the arrival of new refugees was in female working patterns. During the 19th century, the only reference to Armenian working women in Egypt is in the craft of embroidery. In Constantinople, where their skill was very much appreciated in high circles, Armenians had opened numerous workshops where Armenian girls learned this fine craft. The owners of some of these workshops were 'women-masters' who taught their Armenian female apprentices. Among them were those who had come to Egypt to sell their fine embroideries to the Ottoman elite in this country, during the 19th century. The most skillful amongst the Constantinople female masters were invited to Egypt, especially on the occasion of the weddings of members of the ruling family, for the preparation of their dowries.¹¹⁷

At the beginning of the 20th century there were in Egypt a number of Armenian female teachers (in Cairo, Alexandria and the Egyptian provinces), seamstresses and maids. Of the 17 working

¹¹⁵Ibid. pp. 39-40.

¹¹⁶In 1917, the Armenian Prelacy in Cairo paid 125 P.T. a month (4 piasters a day) to its cemetery guard; in *Minutes of the Civil Council* vol. 25, Session 60, Friday 2/15 June, 1917, p. 249.

¹¹⁷Alpoyadjian, *Arabakan miyatsyal*, p. 200.

female Armenians mentioned in the 1911 Alexandria census, only one had been born in Alexandria (in 1894) and worked as a teacher. The rest, including three other female teachers (Table 5), 10 seamstresses (Table 3), and 3 maids (Table 4), had arrived after 1895. It is significant that the three maids had arrived from Cilicia in 1909-1910, and were young girls of 14, 16 and 17 years old.¹¹⁸ Most probably they were among the survivors of the 1909 massacres of the Armenians in Cilicia, many of whom had fled to Egypt.

Armenian Professionals and Artists

Most of the professions practiced by Armenians in Alexandria, photographers, teachers, doctors, dentists, and others listed in Table 5 were also practiced by Armenians in Cairo. To these must be added lawyers and agronomic-engineers. In 1914, there were at least nine Armenian lawyers in Cairo and four in Alexandria, and three agronomic-engineers in Cairo. In the provinces, there was an Armenian pharmacist in each of Helwan, Tanta and Mellawi, an Armenian doctor in each of Zaqaziq and Ibrahimeyah-Sharqiyah, and two dentist brothers in Asiut. In Cairo there were at least 7 Armenian pharmacists, 10 doctors and 4 dentists. Two Armenian doctors served in the Egyptian army in Sudan.¹¹⁹

¹¹⁸1911 census of Armenian Apostolic Prelacy in Alexandria.

¹¹⁹Gabamadjian, "Hai tarre...", pp. 233-7.

Table 5: Armenian professionals and artists in Alexandria in 1911

N°	OCCUPATION	NUMBER OF PERSONS	ARRIVED BEFORE 1895	ARRIVED AFTER 1895
1	photographer	12	2	10
2	teacher (male)*	5	1	4
3	teacher (female)*	4	1	3
4	civil engineer	4	2	2
5	architect	3	1	2
6	pharmacist	4	0	4
7	doctor	2	0	2
8	mechanic	2	0	2
9	surgeon	1	0	1
10	dentist	1	0	1
11	priest**	1	0	1
12	painter	1	0	1
13	music master	1	0	1
14	musician	1	0	1
15	pianist	1	0	1
	Total	43	7	36

*Between 1914-1918 the best paid teacher in the Armenian school earned a monthly wage of 12 pounds a month, while the lowest monthly wage for a teacher was 5 pounds a month. The principal of the school was paid 20 pounds a month. Source: A. Gartashian, vol. 2, op. cit., p. 446.

**In 1917 a priest employed by the Armenian Prelacy in Cairo was paid 6 pounds a month.

Source: Minutes of Civil Council, vol. 25, op. cit., Session 60, 2/15 June, 1917, p.249.

Armenian Landowners

The Armenian notables in 19th century Egypt were large landowners and possessed large *ab'adiyahs* in different Egyptian provinces. Most (if not all) of the land owned by Armenians on the eve and during World War I belonged to the families of Armenian *pashas* and *beys* of the 19th century, such as Boghos *pasha* Nubar from the Nubarians, the Abroyans, etc. (Gabamadjian mentions 11 names and states that there were still others).¹²⁰ His list includes Catholic Armenian landowners from Alexandria not mentioned in Table 6.

The Egyptian economy depended mainly on the export of cotton. Armenian landowners were involved in the cultivation of cotton, but they did not participate either in the industry of cotton ginning or in its export. Contrary to the Greeks in Egypt who were involved "in every stage of the production and export of cotton",¹²¹ Armenian merchants were almost totally absent from this field of commerce.¹²²

Table 6: Armenian Landowners and others in Alexandria in 1911

Nº	OCCUPATION	NUMBER OF PERSONS	ARRIVED BEFORE 1895	ARRIVED AFTER 1895
1	landowner	2	2	0
2	hotel-owner	1	1	0
3	sarraf	1	1	0
4	agriculturalist	2	0	2
5	publishing-house owner	1	0	1
	Total	7	4	3

¹²⁰Ibid. pp. 220-1.

¹²¹ Kitroeff, *The Greeks...*, p. 76.

¹²²Topuzian, *Yegiptosi haikakan...*, p. 110.

Conclusion

On the eve and during the First World War Armenians in Egypt were employed in diverse and stratified fields of occupations. The arrival of Armenian refugees at the end of the 19th century changed the occupational patterns of the Armenian community in Alexandria. It is highly probable that similar changes, in different proportions, occurred among the Armenians in Cairo as well. As Table 7 shows, in 1911, most of those who had arrived prior to 1895 were either involved in commerce or worked as employees. It is significant that of the 24 jobless Armenians marked as 'unemployed' in Table 7, only one had arrived prior to 1895.

Table 7: Total Armenian work force in Alexandria in 1911 in numbers and %

N°	OCCUPATION	TOTAL WORKFORCE		ARRIVED BEFORE 1895		ARRIVED AFTER 1895	
		N°	%	N°	%	N°	%
1	Artisans	273	31.4%	22	8.1%	251	91.9%
2	Commerce	229	26.3%	46	20.1%	183	79.9%
3	Employees	173	19.9%	28	16.2%	145	83.8%
4	Workers/labourers	121	13.9%	4	3.3%	117	96.7%
5	Professionals/Artists	43	4.9%	7	16.3%	36	83.7%
6	Others	7	0.8%	4	57.1%	3	42.9%
7	Unemployed	24	2.8%	1	4.2%	23	95.8%
Total workforce		870	100%	112	12.9%	758	87.1%

Table 8 reveals that in 1911 Alexandria, among the Armenians who had arrived to Egypt prior to 1895 (or were born there), the largest occupational group was that of the merchants and traders, followed by the employees, the artisans, the

professionals, and the workers. Whereas, among the Armenians who had arrived to Egypt after 1895 the largest occupational group was formed of the artisans, followed by those involved in commerce, the employees, the workers and then the professionals.

Table 8: % of Armenians in Alexandria in 1911 in different occupations over their respective work force on the basis of arrival before and after 1895

Nº	OCCUPATION	BEFORE 1895 %	AFTER 1895 %
1	Artisans	19.6%	33.1%
2	Commerce	41.1%	24.1%
3	Employees	25.0%	19.1%
4	Workers/laborors	3.6%	15.4%
5	Professionals/Artists	6.3%	4.7%
6	Others	3.6%	0.4%
7	Unemployed	0.9%	3.0%
	Total workforce	100.0%	100.0%

On the basis of the above discussion and 8 tables, there remains no doubt that at least in Alexandria, the refugees who had arrived after 1895 greatly increased the proportional number of the Armenians in the lower strata of the socio-economic ladder, mainly as artisans, workers and laborers. Yet, a number of questions remain unanswered concerning the stratification of Armenians in the socio-economic structure of the Egyptian society. The answers to these questions await further research. At this point, we pass to an examination of the Armenians in Egypt within the context of a different type of social structure, namely the Communal structure.

Chapter Two

THE COMMUNITY: COMMUNAL ADMINISTRATION

The Armenians in Egypt and the Ottoman Millet System

The Prelacy of the Armenian Apostolic community in Cairo, officially but erroneously known as the Armenian Orthodox Patriarchate in Cairo,¹²³ played a pivotal role in the turbulent years faced by the Armenian community in Egypt during the First World War. As we shall see, this role was not a religious one but emerged from the national character of the Armenian Church and the secular administrative role of the Communal leadership centered at the Prelacy. Before discussing this role, however, an examination of the administrative structure of the Armenian community in Egypt within the context of the Ottoman *millet* system is indispensable.

From the outset of the Ottoman Empire until the nineteenth century, the Christians in the Ottoman Empire were officially recognized as part of two large Christian *millets*: the Greek and the Armenian *millets*. Despite the implication of ethnicity in their nomination, these *millets* were divided on the basis of confessional

¹²³Officially the Armenian Church is known as the Armenian Apostolic Orthodox Church, hence the often used reference to Armenians as 'Orthodox'. This however creates confusion with the Greek Orthodox. Moreover, there is no Armenian Patriarchal See in Egypt. It is an Armenian bishopric headed by a Primate. The nomination "patrichkhané" to the Armenian Prelacy by the Egyptian government was a misconception and was based on the model of the Greek Patriarchs of Alexandria.

differences within Christianity. The Greek Patriarch in Constantinople was the official supreme head of all the Orthodox dyophysites of the empire, while all the monophysites comprising the Armenian, Syrian Jacobite, Coptic and Abyssinian communities were placed under the jurisdiction of the Armenian Patriarch in Constantinople.¹²⁴

However, the jurisdiction of the Armenian Patriarchate over non-Armenians was only nominal as "the Maronites, the Nestorians, Jacobites and Copts, had been vaguely and only theoretically subordinated to the authority of the Armenian *millet* after the Ottoman conquest of the Arab lands".¹²⁵ In contrast, the Armenian Patriarch in Constantinople had almost unlimited authority over the Armenians in the Empire. The Sultan had bestowed him with the power to control and administer the Armenians and held him responsible for their conduct. The Armenian Patriarch played the role of the intermediary between the Sultan and his Armenian subjects.¹²⁶

As was mentioned in the introduction, ever since the 14th century, the bishopric of the Armenians in Egypt had been dependent upon the Armenian Patriarchate of Jerusalem. Once Syria, Palestine and Egypt were conquered by the Ottomans at the beginning of the 16th century, the authority of the Armenian Patriarchate of Constantinople was established over the different

¹²⁴Sanjian, p. 33.

¹²⁵Thomas Philipp, The Syrians in Egypt: 1725-1975, (Wiesbaden, Stuttgart: Franz Steiner Verlag, 1985), p.72.

¹²⁶Sanjian, The Armenian Communities in Syria, p.33.

Armenian communities in these territories. Administratively, the Armenian bishopric in Egypt continued to be financed by and remained under the jurisdiction of the Armenian Patriarchate in Jerusalem, which possessed estates in Egypt. The revenues of the estates were sent to Jerusalem by the bishops who came to Egypt as representatives of the Jerusalem Patriarch, to meet the spiritual needs of the Armenians.

With the rapid growth of the number of Armenians in Egypt, the need for religious and social institutions increased. On the other hand, having gained a strong power base in Egypt in the first half of the 19th century, the Armenian notables showed signs of resentment for being administered by the Armenian Patriarchate in Jerusalem. During the years 1825-34, "the secular leaders, who began to play a more active role in the community's affairs, prevented the bishop from sending to Jerusalem the proceeds of properties belonging to the see; instead, they used these funds to purchase new real estate".¹²⁷

Bishop Gabriel Marashtsi, who in 1834 was appointed locum tenus in Egypt to act on behalf of the Jerusalem Patriarchate, declared the Armenian bishopric in Egypt independent of the Jerusalem Patriarchal see and appropriated its estates to the advantage of the local community.¹²⁸ This practically terminated the jurisdiction of the Armenian Patriarchate in Jerusalem over the diocese in Egypt. Enjoying the support of the local secular

¹²⁷Ibid. p.157.

¹²⁸Archbishop Maghakia Ormanian, Azgapatum, vol. 3, book 2, (Beirut: Sevan, 1961), section 2796, pp. 4218-9.

leaders, Gabriel Marashtsi sought to legalize his position. To consolidate his status as head of the now autonomous Armenian bishopric of Egypt, Gabriel Marashtsi, appealed to the Armenian Patriarch in Constantinople and through his mediation he obtained, in 1852, an imperial *berat* recognizing him primate of the Armenians in Egypt, independent of Jerusalem.¹²⁹

Marashtsi's actions inevitably started a long conflict with Jerusalem over the revenues of the Patriarchate's properties which were being used on local needs instead of being sent to the Patriarchal see. This conflict lingered until 1882 when, through the mediation of Nubar *Pasha* a final settlement was reached and Jerusalem's major property holdings were sold in favor of the St. James Monastery in Jerusalem.¹³⁰

In the meantime, the "Armenian National Constitution"¹³¹ was promulgated by the Armenian Patriarchate in Constantinople in 1863 and starting from 1864 it began to be applied as the organizational basis of the Armenian community in Egypt. After the death of Gabriel Marashtsi in 1867, the primate sent to Egypt was first officially recognized by the Armenian Patriarch in Constantinople in accordance with the principles of the Armenian National Constitution.¹³² By this, both officially and practically the

¹²⁹"Translation of the text of the *berat* granted to Bishop Gabriel Marashtsi", in Gartashian, *Nuter...*, vol. 1, pp. 183-186.

¹³⁰ Gartashian, *Nuter...*, vol. 1, p. 173.

¹³¹"The Armenian National Constitution" will be dealt with in the following section.

¹³²Gartashian, *Nuter...*, vol. 1, p. 175.

Armenian Apostolic community in Egypt became one of the provincial dioci of the Armenian Patriarchate in Constantinople.

The Armenian Catholics and Protestants separated themselves from the Armenian National Church mostly during the 17th and 19th centuries respectively. In the Ottoman Empire, Armenian Catholics were formally separated from the jurisdiction of the Armenian Patriarchate of Constantinople in 1831, through an imperial edict.¹³³ Protestant Armenians followed suit, when in 1847, upon the recognition of the Ottoman government of a "Protestant millet", they were incorporated into the latter.¹³⁴

Thus, until 1914, Armenians (of all creeds) in Egypt remained an integral part of the Ottoman *millet* system. At the outbreak of World War I, with the rupture of relations between Britain and the Ottoman Empire and the proclamation of British Protectorate over Egypt the status of Armenians in Egypt as an Ottoman *millet* was de facto terminated. Nevertheless, the communal administrative institutions that were created within the framework of the Ottoman *millet* system remained unchanged throughout the War years and having later undergone certain modifications, they survive to this day.

¹³³Ibid. p.251.

¹³⁴Buzant Yeghyaian, Hai haranvanutians bazhanume [The Separation of Armenian Sects], (Antilias: 1971), p. 263.

The Administrative Structure of the Armenian Apostolic Community in Egypt

Two important documents formed the theoretical basis of the administrative structure of the Armenian Apostolic community in Egypt during World War I. The first was the "Armenian National Constitution" issued by the Armenian Patriarchate in Constantinople in 1860, and ratified, after minor changes, by Sultan 'Abd al 'Aziz in 1863 through an imperial decree.¹³⁵ The second was the 1907 "Administrative Decree for the Diocese in Egypt" granted to the Armenians in Egypt by Ormanian, the Armenian Patriarch in Constantinople.

In its ratified Turkish original, the Armenian National Constitution was called the *nizamnameh* of the Armenian *millet*.¹³⁶ In essence, it was a by-law which aimed at introducing reforms in the administrative machinery of the Ottoman Armenian *millet*. Having been formulated under pressure from the Armenian liberal intelligentsia backed with the support of the artisan class, which had developed into a populist movement, the "Armenian National Constitution" officially curtailed the arbitrary dealings of the influential Armenian *amiras* in the affairs of the Armenians, mainly in Constantinople.¹³⁷ By introducing an electoral and representative system of administration in the Armenian Patriarchate in Constantinople,¹³⁸ the Armenian National

¹³⁵Sanjian, *The Armenian Communities in Syria*, p. 40.

¹³⁶Ormanian, *Azgapatum*, p. 4069, section 2730.

¹³⁷Sanjian, *The Armenian Communities in Syria*, pp. 38-40.

¹³⁸"Azgayin sahmanadroutiun haiots" [National Constitution of the Armenians] (text of the Armenian National Constitution) in *Orenk yev kanonk azgayin arajnortarani haiots*

Constitution gave the Armenian masses a say in their own affairs. In other words it was the manifest result of the social conflict within the Armenian community in Constantinople.

Within the context of regulating class interaction in the highly stratified Ottoman Armenians, the Armenian National Constitution can be, and has been described, as a liberal document. It was in no position, however, to protect the rights of Ottoman Armenians, whether in Constantinople or the Armenian provinces of Eastern Anatolia against arbitrary and oppressive governments. As pointed out by Walker, the major shortcoming of the Armenian National Constitution was that it was based "on the assumption that the era of Ottoman 'reform' (*tanzimat*) would continue. When it ended in 1871 the bottom fell out of the Constitution".¹³⁹

The 99 articles of the Armenian National Constitution set an elaborate administrative structure in Constantinople called the *Azgayin Kedronakan Varchutiun* (National Central Administration) and shaped on its model the *Azgayin Gavarakan Varchutiun* (literally, National Provincial Administration) for Armenians living in the provinces of the Ottoman Empire. The provincial administrations were under the higher supervision of the central administration in the Constantinople Patriarchate.¹⁴⁰ That the Armenian National Constitution was formulated primarily to settle the inter-communal conflicts among Armenians in Constantinople

Hegiptos, [Rules and Regulations of the National Prelacy of the Armenians in Egypt], Official Publication of the Armenian Prelacy in Cairo, (Cairo: Vosketar, 1930), pp. 17-18.

¹³⁹Christopher Walker, *Armenia: the Survival of a Nation*, (1980: rpt. New York: St. Martin's Press, 1990), pp.99-100.

¹⁴⁰*Orenk yev kanonk...*, pp. 19, 70, 72.

becomes clear when we consider that only five of its 99 articles were dedicated to the *Azgayin Gavarakan Varchutiun*¹⁴¹ and only 40 out of the 140 seats of the National General Assembly were allotted to Representatives from the provinces.¹⁴² Egypt being a Province of the Ottoman Empire, in 1864, under the guidance of a Patriarchal representative from Constantinople, the Armenians in Egypt embarked upon a long process of establishing their own Provincial Administration.

Among the Armenian refugees that arrived Egypt at the end of the 19th century were revolutionaries of various political affiliations. The Egyptian-Armenian community which until then did not possess any revolutionary organizations or political parties was invaded by these imported currents. The conflict that started to emerge between the new comers and the native Egyptian-Armenians reached its peak in the struggle over the implementation of the Armenian National Constitution in Egypt, and in general lines pitted the revolutionary new comers as pro-constitutionalists against the anti-constitutionalist, conservative natives, who had centralized the communal affairs in their hands¹⁴³.

¹⁴¹These were articles 94 - 98 listed under Section 4 of the Constitution bearing the subtitle "Azgayin Gavarakan Varchutiun", in *Orenk yev kanonk....*, pp.70-73. This shortcoming was later, in 1872, remedied by issuing a constitutional decree for the provinces, consisting of 8 sections which detailed the rules for the formation of the provincial councils, their functions and the election of the Primate, his functions and obligations; see *Orenk yev kanonk....*, pp. 149-191.

¹⁴²"Azgayin sahmanadrutium hayots", article 57, in *Orenk yev kanonk....*, p. 53.

¹⁴³Grigor Pasmadjian, *Ormanian Serbazan yev yégyptahai gaghute: 1896-1918*, [Ormanian and the Egyptian-Armenian Community: 1896-1918, (Cairo: Vosketar,1973), p.4.

This struggle was sharpest in Alexandria. It culminated in the announcement of the 1907 "Administrative Decree for the Diocese in Egypt", which was a relatively short document consisting of 24 articles and aimed as one of its main objectives, to settle the conflicts which had come to be known as the constitutional struggle. Drawn on the principles of the Armenian National Constitution it was adapted to "suit the special conditions of the Diocese in Egypt and to meet its needs"¹⁴⁴. The major change introduced by this decree was that, upon the protests of the Armenians in Alexandria,¹⁴⁵ the latter were granted the right to administration through Councils similar and equivocal to those in Cairo. Until 1907, the Armenian community in Alexandria had been considered a parish dependent on the Cairo Prelacy, and had possessed only a *Taghakan Khorhurt* (Parish Council).

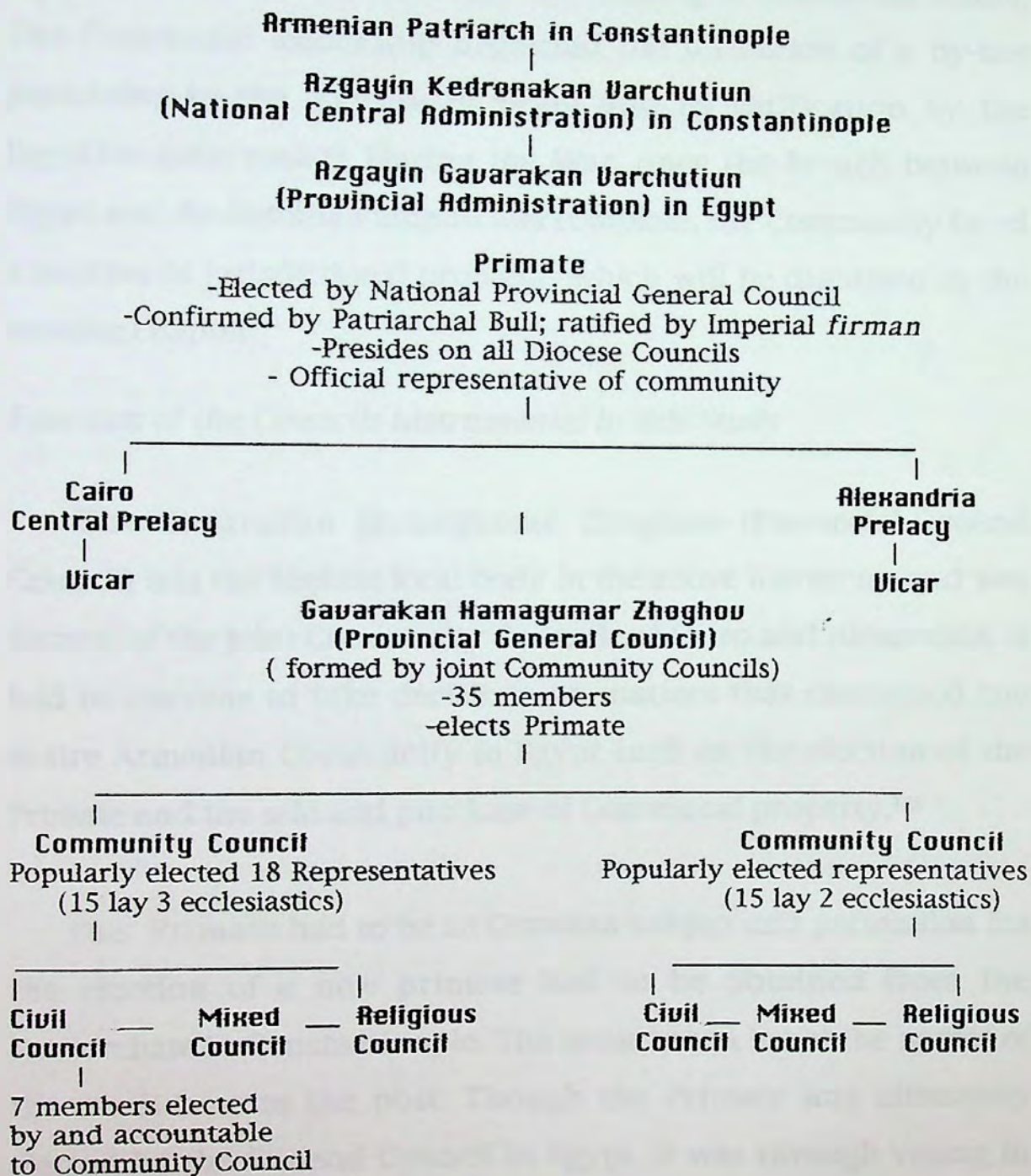
This did not mean that Cairo and Alexandria became two separate dioceses headed by two different primates. The opening article of the Administrative Decree hurried to make that clear: "Egypt forms a single diocese under the jurisdiction of the Armenian Patriarchate in Constantinople and is governed by one Primate".¹⁴⁶ The administrative structure of the Armenian Apostolic community in Egypt as it existed during the period under study emerged out of the combination of the two above discussed documents.

¹⁴⁴ *Orenk yev kanonk...*, p. 197.

¹⁴⁵ "Pashtonakan haitararoutiun" [Official Announcement] by the Armenian Prelacy in Alexandria dated July 15, 1907, in *Orenk yev kanonk...*, pp. 195-196.

¹⁴⁶ "Varchakan herahang vidjakin Yegiptosi", [Administrative Decree for the Diocese in Egypt] in *Orenk yev kanonk...*, p. 210.

The following chart presents the *Azgayin Gavarakan Varchutiun* (Provincial Administration) of the Armenian diocese in Egypt on the eve of the First World War:¹⁴⁷



¹⁴⁷The chart is based upon "Azgayin sahmanadrutium hayots" [National Constitution of the Armenians], (text of the Armenian National Constitution) pp. 16-74; and "Varchakan herahang vidjakin yegiptosi", [Administrative Decree for the Diocese in Egypt] pp. 210-217; both in Orenk yev kanonk.

As long as Egypt was part of the Ottoman Empire, the rules and regulations set by the 1863 *National Constitution of the Armenians* and the 1907 *Administrative Decree for the Diocese in Egypt* provided a firm basis for the running of Communal affairs. The Communal leadership neglected the formation of a by-law pertaining to the Diocese in Egypt and its ratification by the Egyptian government. During the War, once the breach between Egypt and the Ottoman Empire was complete, the Community faced a number of jurisdictional problems which will be discussed in the ensuing chapter.

Function of the Councils Instrumental in this Study

The Gavarakan Hamagumar Zhoghov (Provincial General Council) was the highest local body in the above hierarchy and was formed of the joint Community Councils of Cairo and Alexandria. It had to convene to take decisions on matters that concerned the entire Armenian Community in Egypt such as, the election of the Primate and the sale and purchase of Communal property.¹⁴⁸

The Primate had to be an Ottoman subject and permission for the election of a new primate had to be obtained from the Patriarchate in Constantinople. The latter sent a list of the names of the candidates to the post. Though the Primate was ultimately elected by the General Council in Egypt, it was through voting in the Mixed Council that the list of candidates sent from

¹⁴⁸ "Varchakan herahang vidjakin Yegiptosi", Article 12, in *Orenk yev kanonk...*, p. 213.

Constantinople was reduced to three. These three names were suggested to the Community Council which presented it to the General Assembly. The latter elected the Primate and asked the Patriarch of Constantinople to ratify the election of the Primate. The Patriarch, in turn, requested the Sultan to grant a *berat* to this effect. Thus, the election of the Primate was confirmed by the National Central Administration in Constantinople and his position was officialized by a Patriarchal Bull, and was ratified by an Imperial *berat*.¹⁴⁹

The Primate was the president of all the Councils both in Cairo and Alexandria¹⁵⁰ each of which possessed a prelacy where identical administrative structures existed. However, it was the Prelacy in Cairo which was considered the center of the diocese of the Apostolic Armenians in Egypt.¹⁵¹ For each of the two cities, the Primate appointed a vicar who carried out his functions in his absence.¹⁵² During the War, the Primate of the Armenians in Egypt was Bishop Torgom Gushakian. After the resignation, on popular demand, of the previous primate, Bishop Aghavnuni, on 22 September 1912,¹⁵³ Bishop Torgom arrived in Cairo as locum-tenus in May, 1914. He was elected primate of the Armenian Diocese in Egypt in June 1914, and held the position until 1931.¹⁵⁴

¹⁴⁹ Ibid, articles 19, 20, p. 216.

¹⁵⁰ "Azgayin sahmanadroutiun haiots", article 94, in *Orenk yev kanonk...*, p. 70.

¹⁵¹ "Varchakan herahang vidjakin Yegiptosi", Article 2, in *Orenk yev kanonk...*, p. 210.

¹⁵² Ibid. Article 22, p. 217.

¹⁵³ Grigor Pasmadjian, *Ormanian Serbazan...*, p.105.

¹⁵⁴ Alpoyadjian, *Arabakan miyatsyal...*, p. 278.

The Temakan Zhoghov (Community Council),¹⁵⁵ often referred to as the legislative body of the administration, elected the members and confirmed the resignation of the Civil Council, examined the reports presented by the latter, confirmed the yearly balance sheet of the Communal Treasury at the Prelacy and took decisions on any issue raised to it by the Civil Council.¹⁵⁶

Though the lay members of the Community Council were theoretically elected by the masses through direct voting, practically, pre-conditions for the right to vote greatly reduced the number of voters. The preconditions were as follows: a voter should be a member of the Armenian Apostolic Church, who was at least 25 years old; he should pay a yearly Communal tax of 50 Egyptian piasters; he should either have been born in Egypt and a local subject, or have resided in Egypt for at least three years if he was with his family, and at least five years if he was a state functionary or had established a trading house.¹⁵⁷ It went without saying that all voters should be males!

To be a candidate for the elections of the Community Council a person had to fulfill the same pre-conditions as the voter with the difference that he had to be at least 30 years old and should pay a yearly Communal tax of one Egyptian pound.¹⁵⁸ Their election had

¹⁵⁵The Community Council (*majlis millah/temakan zhoghov*) has been known under various names which have been used interchangeably in Armenian sources, often creating confusion, such as: Provincial Council (*gavarakan endhanur zhoghov*), and Representative Council (*Yerespoghanakan zhoghov*). All three names refer to the same body and for the sake of consistency, in this study they have all been translated into 'Community Council'.

¹⁵⁶"Varchakan herahang vidjakin yegiptosi", Article 14, in *Orenk yev kanonk*, pp. 214-5.

¹⁵⁷Ibid. Article 9, pp. 211-2.

¹⁵⁸Ibid. Article 15, p. 215.

to be confirmed and officialized by a Bull from the Armenian Patriarch in Constantinople.¹⁵⁹ It is noteworthy that citizenship was irrelevant for the election of a representative. As mentioned above, the Chairman of the Alexandria Community Council during the war was an Armenian of Russian citizenship. The members of the Community Council enjoyed great prestige and authority in the community. Throughout the War, Boghos Pasha Nubar was the Chairman of the Cairo Community Council.

The Kaghakakan Zhoghov (Civil Council),¹⁶⁰ in both cities, was the executive body of this structure and as such it had a pivotal role in the administration of Communal affairs. The official name of the Civil Council as it appeared at the heading of each session in the minutes was *Kaghakakan Zhoghov Azgayin Gavarakan Varchutian* which literally translated would be 'Civil Council of the National Provincial Administration'. A terminology set by the Armenian National Constitution, this official name of the Council continued to be used in the minutes at least until 1920, six years after Egypt had ceased to be an Ottoman Province, and almost two years after the Ottoman Empire had ceased to exist. Its use also outlived the Armenian Constitution which was abolished in Constantinople in 1916.¹⁶¹

¹⁵⁹Ibid. Article 21, p. 217.

¹⁶⁰Known in Arabic as *majlis idara* and in Armenian as *kaghakakan zhoghov*

¹⁶¹Archbishop Zaven, *Patriarkakan husheres- vaveragirner yev vkayutiunner* [Memoirs of a Patriarch: Documents and Testimonies], (Cairo: Nor Asdgh, 1947), p. 194. He also mentions (p. 277) that following the Armistice of Mudros (30 October 1918), the Armenian Constitution was restored and the exiled Armenian Patriarch returned to Constantinople in February 1919.

During the War, the Cairo Civil Council met at the Armenian Prelacy in *Bein al Surein*. The main functions of the Civil Council were the administration of the Prelacy institutions and the estates belonging to the Community and the implementation of the decisions taken by the Community Council. It was answerable to the latter¹⁶² and passed up issues about which it was not empowered to take decisions. It did, however, influence the decisions of the Community Council as part of its function was to present the necessary reports and suggestions to facilitate the resolution of the matters at hand.

Institutions Belonging to Prelacy

To help it carry out its numerous tasks, the Civil Council formed committees. In 1914, six committees (*hogabardzutun*) worked under the supervision of the Cairo Civil Council, namely: the Church; the Mar Mina (cemetery); the School; the Poor; the Prelacy and the Estates.¹⁶³ In 1915, the Church and Mar Mina committees were merged to form the new "Church and Mar Mina Committee",¹⁶⁴ while the Prelacy and Estates committees were merged to have one treasury and one register.¹⁶⁵

¹⁶²"Varchakan herahank vidjakin yegiptosi", Articles 16 and 18, in *Orenkyev kanonk...* pp. 215, 216.

¹⁶³Archives of the Armenians Orthodox Patriarchate in Cairo, "Atenagrutun kaghakakan zhoghovo", [Minutes of the Civil Council], vol. 24: 6/19 June, 1914 - 16/29 March, 1916, Session 38, 11/24 June 1914, p. 3. Henceforth referred to as *Minutes of Civil Council* vol. 24.

¹⁶⁴Ibid. Session 82, 25 May, 1915, p. 114.

¹⁶⁵Ibid. Session 89, 7 July, 1915, p.160.

The role of each committee was the supervision and the maintenance of the institution implied by its name. These institutions were financed by the Prelacy mainly from the revenues of the Communal estates. In 1914 the Prelacy Councils administered a number of estates in the form of buildings, apartments and land. These estates were acquired through donations by wealthy Armenians and in a few cases by the Khedive, mostly during the 19th century.¹⁶⁶

Usually, these donations were accompanied with testaments which specified the purpose or institution for which the revenues of a given estate would be allotted. For example, the school budget for 1915 estimated 298,000 P.T. as the school's annual expenses. The Prelacy paid 233,000 P.T. from the revenues of different estates donated to the school, as follows: 80,000 P.T. from the Delja farm; 160,000 from the Sheikh 'Athman farm; 3000 P.T. from the house No. 34 in Bein al Surein; 8000 P.T. from the Garabetian Testament. The remaining 65,000 was paid by School Committee as follows: 20,000 P.T. from tuition fees, 40,000 from extra payments by parents for transportation of the school children, and 5000 P.T. from expenses paid by parents for the stationary.¹⁶⁷ In addition to revealing how the Prelacy financed its branches, the above budget gives us a general idea of the value of money in Egypt at the beginning of the 20th century.

¹⁶⁶For a detailed list of the Cairo Prelacy's agricultural lands and urban estates and their revenues see Gartashian, *Nuter...*, vol. 2, pp. 540-547.

¹⁶⁷ *Minutes of Civil Council*, vol. 24, Session 79, 14/27 April 1915, pp. 130-1.

The Prelacy estates were usually rented and as shown in the above example, their revenues comprised the bulk of the money that allowed the Prelacy to finance its branches and institutions. The function of the Estates Committee was to find tenants through announcements in the newspapers, to make the contracts, to supervise on the nazirs, and to solve problems related to the agricultural lands in the countryside and unmovable properties in the city. It was the Civil Council's eye on these localities. The Committee had not, however, the power to take any decisions. For any changes in conditions, or problems, it had to report to the Civil Council. The latter often sought for the opinion of the Estates Director after examining his reports, but the final word remained with the Civil Council .¹⁶⁸

Similarly, any problem, whether financial or social concerning an institution was presented by its respective committee to the Civil Council which decided the measures to be taken. The Civil Council controlled and followed-up the activities of the committees which only implemented its decisions. It revised their annual accounts and budget proposals before submitting them to the Community Council for confirmation.¹⁶⁹ Thus, in accordance with the "Administrative Decree for the Diocese in Egypt", the

¹⁶⁸ *Minutes of Civil Council* vol. 24, Session 57, 3 November 1914, pp. 65-6. Item 5 in this session is the "Report of the Director of Estates, Mr. Levon Papazian" on the latest dealings of the Estates Committee. This report provides us with the list of all the agricultural lands pertaining the Prelacy, the revenues anticipated from each in the current year and the problems to be resolved.

¹⁶⁹ *Minutes of Civil Council* vol. 24, Session 38: 11/24 June 1914, p.3.

committees were answerable to the Civil Council while the Civil Council was answerable to the Community Council.¹⁷⁰

Neither the members of the councils nor those of the committees were employees of the Prelacy. Working in coordination with the councils, the Prelacy had a section called *divanatun* (diwan-khané) which was shaped on the model of the Constantinople Patriarchate, and where a number of offices carried out the bureaucratic paper-work of the Prelacy, such as, the official correspondence; keeping the registers for and issuing certificates of baptism, marriage, death; issuing documents needed by individuals for various purposes such as identification, travel and inheritance; and the general financial accounting of the Prelacy and its institutions.

Those working in these offices were paid employees of the Prelacy and received their salaries from the Communal Treasury. Their work was supervised by the *divanapet*, the Chief Administrator who was answerable to the Prelacy Councils. Similarly, anyone working in any of the Prelacy institutions, from the guardians of the cemeteries to the principals of the schools were considered employees of the Prelacy and received their salaries from the Prelacy. The following is a chart of the institutions belonging to the Armenian Apostolic Prelacies in Cairo and Alexandria during the First World War:

¹⁷⁰"Varchakan Herahank Vidjakin Yegiptosi", Article 18, in *Orenk yev Kanonk...*, p. 216.

	Cairo Prelacy	Alexandria Prelacy
Church	Surb Asdvadsadsin (in Bein al Surein)	Surb Boghos-Bedros (in Abu Dardar)
Cemetery/ Chapel	Mar Mina Surb Minas (in Old Cairo)	Bab-Sharqi cemetery -
School	Galustian (in Bulaq)	Boghosian (in Abu Dardar)

The Armenian Catholic Community in Egypt

The organizational formation of the Armenian Catholic community in Egypt started in 1832, a year after the Ottoman government recognized the independence of the Armenian Catholics of the Empire from the Armenian Patriarchate in Constantinople.¹⁷¹ As was mentioned above, in the following decade the Armenian Catholics in Cairo built a chapel, a church and possessed a cemetery of their own through individual donations and communal fund-raising. In 1849, Barsegh vardapet Aktarian was ordained bishop Boghos and became the first Armenian Catholic Primate in Egypt. To teach Armenian children their

¹⁷¹Puzant Massraf, "Hai Katoghigeh Hassarakutiune Yegiptosi mej (Patmakan yev Vijakagragan Aknark)" [The Armenian Catholic Community in Egypt: A Historical and Demographic Glimpse], in *Yegiptahai taretsuits*, [Annuaire des Arméniens d'Egypte], ed. Suren Partevian, First Year, (Cairo: Z. Berberian, 1914), p. 129.

language and history he opened an elementary school which functioned from 1849 to 1855.¹⁷²

Some of the Armenian notables of the 19th century discussed in the introduction were Catholics. The most prominent among them were Artin bey Chrakian (1800-1859), his son Ya'qub Artin pasha (1842-1919) and Yusef bey Hekekian (1807-1875). Through their influence and wealth these notables greatly enhanced the organizational process of the Armenian Catholics in Egypt. Until 1890, the Armenian Catholics in Alexandria did not have a place of worship and attended mass in Latin churches. In 1889, the Armenian Catholic Primate Agshehirlian bought a land in Alexandria with the assistance and cooperation of Ya'qub Artin pasha. The revenue from the sale of a house donated to the Armenian Catholic church in Cairo through the testament of Tito pasha Hekekian (the son of Yusuf bey Hekekian) was used to build a chapel on this land in 1890. Being too small, this chapel was replaced in 1895 with the larger church of *Surb Asdvadsadsin* (St. Mother of God). The money for the expenses of the new building was provided by Khalil pasha Khayat and his brother Nasri bey.¹⁷³

An Armenian Catholic girls' school was established in Cairo in 1897, followed by a similar one opened in Alexandria in 1914. Founded and run by the Armenian Catholic nuns of the Immaculate Conception (*Anarad Heghutiun*), these schools were

¹⁷²Gartashian, *Nuter...*, vol. 3, p.303.

¹⁷³Massraf, "Hai Katoghigeh...", p. 131.

essentially established to educate Armenian orphan girls.¹⁷⁴ There did not exist an Armenian Catholic school for boys in Egypt until 1919 when, with the personal efforts of Bishop Hovhannes Guzian, the Armenian Catholic School of St. Gregory the Illuminator was opened in Cairo's Fagāla suburb. This school was shut in 1923, due to the insufficiency of funds.¹⁷⁵ Some Armenian Catholics sent their children to the schools of the Armenian Apostolic community.¹⁷⁶

In 1905, the Armenian Catholic community, with the objective of consolidating their internal organization on a firm legal basis, presented a petition to the Egyptian government to ratify their bylaw. This was a document which defined the internal and external administrative jurisdictions of the Armenian Catholic community in Egypt. Signed by 150 individuals, the petition was accepted by the Egyptian government. On 16 November 1905, a Khedival Decree officialized the Armenian Catholic community's bylaw, thus regulating relations with the state and authorizing the prelacy to resolve inheritance issues as well as other individual and family matters outside the complications of courtrooms.¹⁷⁷

After the 1905 decree, the Armenian Catholic Benevolent Society, founded in 1890 was reorganized and was placed under the jurisdiction of the community's Administrative Council. Under the auspices of Ya'qub Artin *pasha*, this Society became efficient enough not only to care for the needy in the local community but

¹⁷⁴Topuzian, *Yegiptosi haikakan...*, pp. 184, 190.

¹⁷⁵Gartashian, *Nuter...*, vol. 3, p.303.

¹⁷⁶Aghazarm, *Nuter...*, p. 85.

¹⁷⁷Massraf, "Hai Katoghigeh...", pp.131-132.

also to lend a helping hand to the refugees that arrived in Egypt in a state of deprivation as a result of the massacres in Ottoman Armenia and Constantinople in 1895. These new arrivals doubled the number of the Armenian Catholics in Egypt. Estimated at 228 families in Egypt in 1884, the Armenian Catholics in Egypt in 1914 counted 300 families in Cairo, 120 families in Alexandria and 80 families in the Egyptian provinces and the Sudan.¹⁷⁸

The Administration of the Armenian Catholic community was centered in the Cairo Armenian Catholic Prelacy and the Alexandria Vicarage. Each possessed, (on the basis of the 1905 bylaw) : an *Administrative Council* formed of 1 ecclesiastic and 9 lay members; a *Commission du Statut Personnel* formed of 5 lay members; and a *Commission en degré d'Appel* formed of four lay members. In 1914, the Primate of the Armenian Catholics was Bishop Hovhannes Guzian and the leadership of the community was in the hands of prominent Armenian Catholics who were members of the administrative Councils and Commissions. In Cairo, there were, among others, Ya'qub Artin pasha, Hagop bey Farahian, 'Aziz bey Hanki, while in Alexandria there were well known figures like Khalil pasha Khayat and his brother Nasri bey Khayat, Yusuf bey Chrakian (Ya'qub Artin's Brother) and Hovhannes bey Matosian (the prominent tobacconist and cigarette manufacturer).¹⁷⁹ The Cairo Council and Commissions were presided upon either by the Primate or his representative. Similarly, the

¹⁷⁸Ibid. p.132.

¹⁷⁹Ibid. pp.134-5.

Alexandria Council and Commissions were presided upon by the Vicar or his representative.¹⁸⁰

Protestant Armenians in Egypt¹⁸¹

The origins and spread of Protestantism among Armenians is relatively recent. It dates back to the beginning of the 19th century and was the result of the zealous activities and institutions of foreign missionaries, mainly British and American in Ottoman Armenia.¹⁸² Following the arrangements made for the legal status of the Catholics of the Ottoman Empire, an imperial decree was proclaimed in 1847 recognizing a Protestant *millet* which encompassed all the Protestants of the Empire, regardless of ethnicity. In 1853, another imperial decree, attained through the mediation of the British Ambassador in Istanbul, declared the Armenian Protestants officially independent from the Armenian Patriarchate of Constantinople and recognized Stepan efendi Serovbian head of the Armenian Protestants.¹⁸³

During the years 1865-1870, a few Armenian Protestant families from different Ottoman provinces settled in Cairo. At the beginning they used their houses as churches. Later on, when they learned the language of the country, they attended Coptic

¹⁸⁰"Kazmakan kanonagir Yegiptosi hai katoghike hamaynkin" [Organic Bylaw of the Armenian Catholic Community in Egypt], in Alpoyadjian, op., cit., pp. 316-7.

¹⁸¹Protestant Armenians were originally called Evangelical Armenians. However, having been incorporated in the officially recognized "Protestant millet", the two terms have been used interchangeably.

¹⁸²Gartashian, *Nuter...*, vol. 1, p.279.

¹⁸³Ibid. pp. 280-1.

Protestant masses. These immigrants were "so much Copticized" that some of them even served in Coptic churches as deacons. This process of assimilation came to an end with the arrival of Armenian refugees at the end of the 19th century. As was the case of the Apostolic and Catholic Armenians, the number of Protestant Armenians in Egypt also increased after 1895. Two Armenian Protestant Reverends who had arrived with the wave of Armenian refugees succeeded in bringing together a congregation of 8-10 Armenian Protestant families.¹⁸⁴

In 1898, in an attempt at organization, an administrative council was formed to manage the affairs of this small community which in 1899 was officially known as the "Armenian Protestant Church".¹⁸⁵ In 1899, the Reverend of the Armenian Protestants, Reverend Gmadjian, founded a mixed school which functioned only for four years and was shut down in 1903 due to financial difficulties.¹⁸⁶ According to Aghazarm, a number of Armenian Protestants sent their children to the Armenian schools of the Apostolic community. On the other hand, not possessing a cemetery of their own, Armenian Protestants buried their dead in cemeteries of other Protestant communities.¹⁸⁷ Neither did they possess a church of their own (until 1955), so, the Armenian Protestants in

¹⁸⁴H. S. Khantamour, "Yegiptahai avetaranakan hassarakutiune", [The Armenian Evangelical Community in Egypt], in Yegiptahai taretsuits, [Annuaire des Arméniens d'Egypte], ed. Suren Partevian, Third Year, 1916, pp. 113-4.

¹⁸⁵Gartashian, Nuter..., vol.3, p. 383.

¹⁸⁶Khantamour, "Yegiptahai avetaranakan...", p. 115.

¹⁸⁷Aghazarm, Noter..., p. 85.

Cairo used one of the halls of the American Mission Church for their place of worship.¹⁸⁸

In contrast with the Apostolic and Catholic Armenians in Egypt, the Armenian Protestant community did not possess any large, lucrative estates in the first quarter of the 20th century.¹⁸⁹ In 1916 the Armenian Protestant community in Egypt counted 250-300 members. With the exception of one or two families, the rest had not succeeded in climbing up the socio-economic ladder and sustained a modest living. Nevertheless, almost all of them, both males and females, were literate. A considerable number among the young of both sexes (40% of the community) had received college education in American and European institutions.¹⁹⁰ Reverend Khantamur asserts that collectively, the average level of education among Protestant Armenians was higher than that of Apostolic or Catholic Armenians.¹⁹¹

The administrative structure of the Armenian Protestant community was very simple: a Religious Council formed of five lay members elected every year; the deacon who was a regular member; and the pastor who presided upon the Council.¹⁹² In contrast with the Armenian Catholics, Armenian Protestants were not recognized as a separate entity on the basis of ethnicity and were administered according to the rules determined by the

¹⁸⁸Gartashian, *Nuter...*, vol. 3, p. 383.

¹⁸⁹Khantamur, "Yegiptahai avetaranakan...", p.113.

¹⁹⁰Ibid. pp. 113, 116-7.

¹⁹¹Ibid. p. 113.

¹⁹²Ibid. p. 116.

Egyptian government for all the Protestants in the country.¹⁹³ Writing in 1916, Reverend Khantamur stressed: "One of the main obligations of the Administrative Council will be the composition of a bylaw, which has been neglected to date. It should not be forgotten that the Armenian Protestant Community, not being officially recognized by the Egyptian government, has to administer its inheritance, marriage and other dealings through Coptic Protestant institutions".¹⁹⁴

Divergence and Convergence

At the beginning of the twentieth century, apart from the mainstream Armenian Apostolic community there existed in Egypt a small Armenian Catholic and an even smaller Armenian Protestant community. Contrary to commonly held views, no rigid barriers separated individuals belonging to these groups from the mainstream Apostolic Armenians. It is true that these communities were administratively and spiritually divided along creed lines which were quite rigid as far as religious matters were concerned. Nevertheless, on the secular national scope they interacted and their members intermingled in various institutions such as schools, and organizations like the Armenian General Benevolent Union founded in Egypt in 1906 and the Armenian Red Cross formed in Alexandria in 1915.

¹⁹³Aghazarm, *Noter...*, p.77.

¹⁹⁴Khantamur, "Yegiptahai avetaranakan...", p. 116.

"It is consoling that Armenians belonging to the three creeds [Apostolic, Catholic and Protestant] have amiable relationships and in national, public matters cooperate and help each other"¹⁹⁵ wrote Aghazarm in 1911. This was true also for the period under study. Though sectarian boundaries divided Armenians where administrative and religious institutions were concerned (prelacy, church, cemetery), creed lines were often crossed in ethnic secular institutions and organizations.

The best example for an organization which united Armenians of all creeds is the Armenian General Benevolent Union [AGBU] which survives until today. Ya'qub Artin *pasha* (an Armenian Catholic) was one of the founding members of the AGBU established in Cairo in 1906 on the initiative of Boghos Nubar *pasha*. The aim of the AGBU as defined by its founders was, among others "to aid the intellectual and moral progress of the Armenians in the East [and] to assist in the improvement of their financial situation".¹⁹⁶ In fact, Armenians of all creeds and walks of life became members of this organization which "began growing rapidly from its very date of inauguration".¹⁹⁷

Reverend Khantamur, the pastor of the Armenian Protestants in Egypt during the years 1913-1924, was an active member of the AGBU and worked in the Armenian communities of Egypt and the

¹⁹⁵ Aghazarm, *Noter...*, p. 79.

¹⁹⁶ Antranig Antreassian, *The AGBU: A Mission in Service to the Armenian People*, (USA: 1981), p. 9.

¹⁹⁷ *Ibid.* p. 9.

Middle East for seventeen years, until 1942.¹⁹⁸ He was a zealous proponent of the notion that creed differences should not undermine the common ethnicity of Armenians.¹⁹⁹ Moreover, Protestant Armenians, used their contacts with the British acquired on the basis of a common creed to help Armenians in general. In 1915, it was through the efforts of Reverend Mekertichian that the British authorities officially permitted the formation of the Armenian Red Cross in Egypt.²⁰⁰ In 1917-8, Reverend Khantamur succeeded to secure the release of nearly a hundred Armenian prisoners of war captured from the Ottoman army and held at the British military camps in Egypt during World War I.²⁰¹

The schools of the Armenian Apostolic Prelacy was yet another institution where creed lines often disappeared. As we saw above, some Catholic and Protestant Armenians sent their children to the schools belonging to the Apostolic Prelacy. Moreover, some of the principals and a considerable number of the teachers of these schools were Armenian Protestants.²⁰² Professor Hovannes Gayayan, an Armenian Protestant from the Armenian vilayet of Sepastia (Sivaz), was the Principal of the Boghosian National School in Alexandria from 1910 to 1913, and the Principal of the Galustian Armenian National School from 1914-1918.²⁰³

¹⁹⁸Gartashian, *Nuter...*, vol. 1, p. 286.

¹⁹⁹Khantamur, "Yegiptahai avetaranakan...", p. 116.

²⁰⁰Ibid. pp.118-9.

²⁰¹Gartashian, *Nuter...*, vol. 1, p. 287.

²⁰²Khantamur, "Yegiptahai avetaranakan...", p. 120.

²⁰³Gartashian, *Nuter...*, vol. 2, p. 657.

As we shall see in the following chapters, the inter-communal ties described above were further enhanced as ethnic allegiance became the predominant mobilizing factor in the response of the Armenians in Egypt to the crisis they faced due to the war and the massacre of their compatriots in Ottoman Armenia. Hence, unless specified, the term 'Armenian community' refers to all Armenians in Egypt, regardless of creed.

Conclusion

With the increase of the number of Armenians in Egypt after 1895, the Armenian community was reshaped, and modeled for itself a new form of integration into the Egyptian society. On the one hand, the increase in the number of Armenians and the consequent reorganization of the Communal administration and the increase in the number of Armenian schools, press publications and associations moved the Armenians away from assimilation which threatened their Armenian identity at the end of the 19th century.

On the other hand, neither enjoying the protection of a powerful patron like Muhammad 'Ali, as was the case of their compatriots in the 19th century, nor enjoying the privileges allowed by the Capitulations, Armenians, especially those who had arrived after 1895, worked in various occupations all along the socio-economical strata of the Egyptian society. This opened up the space for interaction with the indigenous Egyptian population and started the process of a communal consciousness of a dual identity,

shaping an Egyptian-Armenian identity which today means more than an Egyptian citizen of Armenian origins or an Armenian of Egyptian citizenship.

Chapter Three

WORLD WAR I, EGYPT, AND THE COMMUNITY

The dichotomy of the Armenian community in Egypt that was the result of the dual belonging of its members meant that the Armenians in Egypt would be affected by the First World War both as Egyptians and as Armenians (though officially most of them were neither Egyptians nor Armenians but Ottomans). This chapter discusses how the Armenian Community was affected by the political and economic changes in Egypt during the War by focusing on the repercussions of the war on the administrative and financial situation of the Communal institutions in Cairo.

Political scene: Egypt, Britain and the Ottoman Empire

Within a few days of Austria-Hungary's declaration of war against Serbia on 28 July 1914, Germany, Russia, France, Belgium and Great Britain were involved in a war that would last for four years. By August 28, 1914, World War I had already pitted Germany and Austria-Hungary against Russia, France, Great Britain, Belgium, Serbia, Montenegro and Japan.²⁰⁴ On 3 August 1914- the day Germany declared war against France- Egypt declared its neutrality. Only two days later, this neutrality was reversed, as in the meantime, on 4 August Britain had declared

²⁰⁴"The World Wars", (pp. 962-1024) in *The New Encyclopædia Britannica*, vol. 29, Macropædia, 15th ed. (Chicago: 1991), p. 962.

war on Germany and pressurized the Egyptian Prime Minister Husein Rushdi to enter the war on the side of the Entente.²⁰⁵

The 5 August Resolution signed by Rushdi dragged Egypt into a war that was of no interest to the Egyptians. Whether Rushdi could have done otherwise remains controversial. However, the 3 August declaration of Egypt's neutrality and Rushdi's fear of Egypt's official incorporation into the British Empire in case he did not succumb to British pressures indicate the Egyptian government's reluctance in becoming a war-time British ally.²⁰⁶

The 5 August 1914 Resolution created a critical situation between Egypt and its suzerain, the Ottoman Empire. As the latter was still officially neutral, juridically, this Resolution was invalid. Practically, it meant that Egypt no more recognized the sovereignty of the Sublime Porte.²⁰⁷ Thus, overnight Egypt became un-Ottoman without, however, becoming independent. This resulted in the Egyptian state's ambiguous international status. The situation thus created worried the British who wanted to 'legalize' their presence in Egypt.

²⁰⁵Laṭī fā M. Sālem, *Miṣr fī al harb al ʿālamīyāh al ūlā: 1914-1918*, [Egypt During the First World War: 1914-1918], (Cairo: 1984), pp. 17-8. The Khedive (ʿAbbas Helmi II) was in Istanbul and Husein Rushdi was serving as his acting Regent, (*qaimaqam*). Thenceforth, Entente, Allied and Allies are used interchangeably.

²⁰⁶Ibid. p. 18.

²⁰⁷Ibid. p. 19.

Between August and November 1914, relations between Egypt and the Ottoman Empire were tense but not totally cut off.²⁰⁸ Meanwhile, the British authorities took severe steps to prevent the rise of any kind of opposition to the semi-colonial rule they had imposed on the Egyptian people. Fearing internal disturbances that might distract their war efforts, laws against public gatherings were promulgated in October, 1914. Press censorship followed in November, even before martial law was proclaimed.²⁰⁹ The Armenians in the country did not remain unaffected by these war measures. For example, the press censorship which Laṭifā Sālem refers to as "press massacres"²¹⁰ appear in the pages of the Armenian war-time press in the form of blank spaces which indicated the cancellation by the censors of entire articles.²¹¹

When eventually the Ottoman Empire entered the War at the end of October 1914, it was to be against the Entente. One of the most important articles of the 5 August Resolution was that Egypt would cut off her relations with Britain's enemies.²¹² Therefore, the final rupture of relations between Egypt and the Sublime Porte came with Great Britain's declaration of war against the Ottoman Empire in November, 1914. This provided the British with the pretext they needed to officialize their intentions in Egypt. In December 1914, the Khedive ʿAbbas Helmi - who had been in

²⁰⁸Great Britain, Foreign Office. Miscellaneous. No. 13 (1914), Correspondence Respecting Events Leading to the Rupture of Relations with Turkey, (London: Harrisons and Sons, 1914).

²⁰⁹Salem, Miṣr fi al harb ..., pp. 23-4.

²¹⁰Ibid. p. 350.

²¹¹Arev bound collection of Year One, issues No 1- 156, from 11 May 1915 to May 10 1916, published in Alexandria; Arev Press House, Cairo.

²¹²Salem, Miṣr fi al harb ..., p. 20.

Istanbul since the month of July of the same year- was deposed and never returned to Egypt.²¹³ Finally, on the 18th of December 1914, Egypt was declared a British Protectorate and Husein Kamil was made the Sultan of Egypt.²¹⁴

Once the Protectorate was proclaimed, British rule in Egypt became absolute. On 9 January 1915, Sir Henry McMahon arrived in Egypt as High Commissioner. Thenceforth and throughout the War years, as Latifa Salem points out, the Sultan of Egypt was considered an employee of the High Commissioner, while real authority was vested in the hands of the British "Counselors" in the different departments of the Egyptian state machinery. Therefore, the policies attributed to the Egyptian government during the years 1914-1918 rather mean the policies of the British authorities in the country.²¹⁵

Political changes and the Community

As a result of the rupture of relations between Egypt and the Ottoman Empire, the Armenian community faced a number of juridical problems. As discussed above, the administrative structure of the Armenians in Egypt was based on the Ottoman *millet* system. Therefore, when the 5 August resolution brought a de facto end to the Ottoman Empire's suzerainty over Egypt, it also brought a de facto end to the jurisdiction of the Armenian

²¹³Ibid. pp. 36, 39.

²¹⁴Ibid. p. 35, 43. For a detailed account of British considerations prior to the declaration of the Protectorate see Latifa Salem, pp. 29-35.

²¹⁵Ibid. p. 51, 49, 103.

Patriarchate in Constantinople over the Armenian "provincial diocese" in Egypt. . Nevertheless, relations between the Armenian Prelacy in Cairo and the Constantinople Patriarchate continued unchanged until November 1914 when communication between Egypt and the Ottoman Empire was cut off.²¹⁶

This rupture created inter-communal problems as the authority of the Community leaders was jeopardized. According to the Armenian National Constitution, the election of the members of the Community Council should be ratified by the Central Administration in the Patriarchate in Constantinople. The term of the Community Council was ten years during which 1/5th of its members should be renewed every two years.²¹⁷ During the war, these partial elections were neglected. Likewise, the appointment of a new Civil Council was neglected by the Community Council. The term of the members of the existing Civil Council expired in October 1915, yet they functioned until May 1916.²¹⁸ According to the Community leaders, the major reasons for these irregularities were the problems created by the war and the consequent absence of communication with the Patriarchate in Constantinople.²¹⁹

²¹⁶That communication with the Constantinople Patriarchate continued until November 1914 is revealed from the dates of the documents that had arrived in Cairo mentioned in the minutes of the Civil Council. For example, an official letter dated October 9, 1914 the central Administration of the Patriarchate in Constantinople gave its consent for the sale of a house in Cairo; *Minutes of Civil Council* vol. 24, Session 65, January 5, 1915, p. 92. Also financial transactions between the Cairo Prelacy and the Constantinople Patriarchate through the Ottoman bank were carried out at least as late as November 5, 1914; *Minutes of Civil Council* vol. 24, Session 59, 11/24 November, 1914, p. 75.

²¹⁷"Azgayin Sahmanadroutiun Hayots" [National Constitution of the Armenians], in *Orenk yev kanonk* ..., p. 60.

²¹⁸*Minutes of the Civil Council* vol. 25, Session 1, May 10, 1916, p. 1.

²¹⁹Archives of the Armenian Patriarchate in Cairo, Report, (in French) dated 10 December, 1927, written by Bishop Torgom Gushakian, Armenian Primate in Egypt from 1914 to 1931.

These irregularities resulted in public protests articulated through the Armenian press and collectively signed letters sent to the Prelacy.²²⁰ The letters questioned the legitimacy of the Community Council and its members were accused of "holding firmly to their chairs".²²¹ Finally, in 1918, the Community Council decided that as newly elected members could not be ratified by the Patriarchate, the Community Council itself would ratify the elections.²²²

In May 1918, only six out of the 15 lay members of the Alexandria Community Council were considered legitimate, on the basis of the terms of the Armenian National Constitution. On 27 October 1918, elections were held in Alexandria and a new Council was formed.²²³ The belated elections of the Cairo Community Council were held on 18 August, 1918. A member of the Civil Council announced that the elections had taken place within the limits of legality, after which the newly elected Community Council unanimously ratified the election of its members.²²⁴

Part of the problem lay in that in 1914 the validity of the use of the Armenian National Constitution in Egypt had become

The report is addressed to "Abdel Khalek Saroit Pacha, Président du Conseil des Ministres et Ministre de l'Intérieur"; unclassified.

²²⁰ Archives of the Armenians Orthodox Patriarchate in Cairo, "Atenagrutun gahireyi enthanour zhoghovo" [Minutes of the Cairo Community Council], Sessions 7/22 February 1911 to 14 July 1922, vol. 43, Session 55, 5/18 April 1916, p. 208; (Henceforth, *Minutes of the Community Council*). also *Arev*, Armenian newspaper, First Year, No. 136, Wednesday, 22 March 1916, Alexandria.

²²¹ *Minutes of the Community Council*, vol. 43, Session 56, April 28/11 May 1916, p.214.

²²² *Minutes of the Community Council*, vol. 43, Session 61, 9/22 October 1918, p. 252.

²²³ Report by Bishop Gushakian to "Abdel Khalek Saroit Pacha....", archives of the Armenian Patriarchate in Cairo, unclassified.

²²⁴ *Minutes of the Community Council*, vol. 43, Session 61, 9/22 October 1918, p.252.

dubious. When the First World War broke out, the Armenian Community in Egypt neither possessed an officially recognized by-law of its own, independent from the Constantinople Patriarchate, nor had the Egyptian government ratified the Armenian National Constitution. Therefore, when Egypt's status vis à vis the Ottoman Empire became ambiguous, the need to redefine the Armenian Community's legal status in Egypt surfaced.

Meanwhile, as part of the Ottoman government's anti-Armenian policies, in 1916, the Armenian Patriarch in Constantinople was exiled, the Patriarchate was shut down and the Armenian National Constitution was abolished.²²⁵ Hence, while Egypt waited patiently for the war to be over to re-determine its international status, the Armenian Community in Egypt waited to re-determine its legal status vis à vis the Egyptian government. Until then, the Communal leadership had no choice but to find circumstantial solutions for the problems faced by the community.

The breach of relations between Egypt and the Ottoman Empire also affected the lives of individual members of the Armenian community in this country. Since the beginning of the 19th century²²⁶ and until 1926,²²⁷ it was officially recognized in Egypt that the Armenian prelaties dealt, among other matters,

²²⁵Archbishop Zaven, *Patriarkakan...*, pp. 194, 203.

²²⁶Aghazarm, *Noter...*, p. 29

²²⁷Alpoyadjian, *Arabakan miyatsyal...*, p. 300: "Until 1926, the Armenian Prelacy resolved the inheritance matters of Armenians by making lists of the deceased persons' belongings, by protecting the rights of absent heirs and by making the needed arrangements regarding *téréké*. In 1926 the government issued a law by which these matters were transferred to the jurisdiction of the *majlis hassbi*."

with the inheritance issues pertaining to their community members. As a great number of Armenians in Egypt were Ottoman subjects, the Armenian Prelacy in Cairo issued *i'lam shar'f-s* in coordination with the Armenian prelacies in the deceased person's place of birth in Ottoman territories. For example, in order to issue a certificate attesting to the fact that the heirs in Egypt were the only legitimate heirs of a person who died in this country, the prelacies in Egypt asked from the claimants of the inheritance a certificate to that effect procured from the Armenian Prelacy in the deceased person's town of origin.

During the war years, it was impossible to communicate with prelacies in Ottoman territories. Once again, the leadership of the Armenian community had to find circumstantial solutions for the cases presented to the Prelacy. The following is a sample²²⁸ of numerous such cases mentioned in the minutes of the Cairo Civil Council.

On the death of Movses Shamlan- a native of Arabkir- in April 1916, his brother and mother requested the Prelacy in Cairo to issue a certificate to the effect that they were the only heirs to the deceased. They needed the certificate to present it to the Railway Administration as obviously the deceased had been an employee there and the Administration owed him a certain amount of money. Initially, the Civil Council issued an ordinary death certificate and refused to give the requested certificate

²²⁸ *Minutes of Civil Council*/vol. 25, Session 2, 6/19 May, 1916, p. 10; Session 3, 13/26 May, 1916, pp. 15-6.

unless a document from the Armenian Prelacy in Arabkir, confirming that no other legitimate heirs existed was presented to the Council. However, when the Railway Administration refused to deliver the money it owed the deceased on the basis of the death certificate issued by the Prelacy, the Civil Council reconsidered its position:

"Taking into consideration that as a consequence of the war it is absolutely impossible to obtain any official paper from the Prelacy in Arapkir, which may even be presently shut down; also considering that if the money owed to the Shamlan family is not cashed from the treasury of the Railway Administration within six months it legally becomes the property of the Administration; considering that the heirs here are in desperate need of that sum, it was decided: if two respectable and informed natives of Arapkir [residing in Egypt] testify, in a written declaration that Movses Shamlan has no other legitimate heirs but the ones present in Cairo, the Prelacy will issue an *i'lam shar'i* to the effect that these are the sole heirs of the deceased".²²⁹

The British military authorities in Egypt issued law after law prohibiting any kind of interaction with individuals residing in enemy territories. On January 10, 1916 the Armenian newspaper *Arev* announced: "As numerous petitions have been made to the authorities to send money to relatives and others living in Syria, it has been announced that according to the order of the General

²²⁹ *Minutes of Civil Council*/vol. 25, Session 3, 13/26 May, 1916, p. 16.

Commander of the British forces in Egypt, it is not allowed to send money to individuals in Turkish territories".²³⁰ This was not all. On July 31, 1916 the British authorities in Egypt announced that anyone who was entrusted with money or property belonging to citizens residing in enemy territories had to inform the Administration of the Public Custodian. The party who had the custody of such property was not entitled to deliver the money or property to their owners without the permission of the Public Custodian.²³¹

This law further complicated matters for the Armenian Prelacy in settling inheritance problems, as a number of Armenians who died in Egypt had heirs in Ottoman territories. Usually, in such cases the share of these heirs from the *téréké* of the deceased was kept in the custody of the Prelacy. Now, the dealings of the Armenian Prelacy in Cairo were closely supervised by the British military authorities. The following is a relevant example from the minutes of the Civil Council: in a letter dated 6 November 1917, sent to the Armenian Prelacy in Cairo, the military authorities stated that they were informed about the 565 pounds in the Prelacy treasury, pertaining Hovsep Sahakian and Nazik Gavukdjian, residents of Aintab. The letter reminded the Prelacy that if this were true, the Prelacy had to notify the Public Custodian's office in accordance with the July 31, 1916 announcement.

²³⁰ *Arez*, Year 1, No. 106, Monday, 10 January, 1916, p. 2.

²³¹ *Minutes of Civil Council*/vol. 25, Session 82, 3/16 November, 1917, p. 351.

Hovsep Sahakian and Nazik Gavoukjian were the legitimate heirs of Tigran Sahakian who had died in Cairo before World War I had started. The money they had inherited was kept in the Prelacy treasury until the necessary verifications were made as to whom and how the amount should be transferred. As the heirs had authorized representatives in Manşūrah (Egypt), the Prelacy decided to send them a check with the amount. When the Prelacy reported the details of the case to the Public Custodian's office, the latter declared that it was not allowed to deliver money pertaining to residents in enemy territories to their representatives in Egypt and the Prelacy was forced to convey the money to the Administration of the Public Custodian.²³²

Prior to 1914, it was officially recognized in Egypt that in case of the absence of legitimate heirs, the properties of deceased Christians were left to the prelacy to which they belonged.²³³ During the war the British military authorities created a number of obstacles as a result of which the Armenian Prelacy in Cairo met with great difficulties in appropriating the *téréké-s* of deceased persons who had no heirs.²³⁴

Thus, through the Public Custodian Administration, the British military authorities were able to confiscate the money and property of many deceased Armenian residents in Egypt. It must

²³² *Minutes of Civil Council*/vol. 25, Session 82, 3/16 November, 1917, p. 351; Session 83, 10/23 November, 1917, p. 354; Session 90, 11 January, 1918, p. 385.

²³³ *Minutes of Civil Council*/vol. 25, Session 85, 7 December, 1917, p. 364.

²³⁴ *Minutes of Civil Council*/vol. 25, Session 63, 6 July, 1917, p. 261; Session 67, 17/30 July, 1917, p. 281; Session 70, 4/17 August, 1917, p. 292.

be stressed that this process was part of the general policy of the British military authorities who, throughout the war, did not cease to find various 'lawful' means for material extortion from Egypt's population²³⁵.

Economic Crisis and the Community

World War I introduced a number of financial and economic changes in Egypt. At the outbreak of the war, the fluctuating prices of cotton and the government's changing cotton policies greatly damaged the Egyptian economy. On the other hand, the country's involvement in international trade was minimized. Egypt's external trade was greatly affected by the government's prohibiting transactions with Britain's enemies. Moreover, the government temporarily stopped exportations, in particular those of food stuff. A number of obstacles hindered importation. As a result of this, and because of the presence of the British troops in Egypt, prices of goods on the local market rose enormously. The majority of the population, particularly the professionals, the workers and the villagers found themselves in extremely harsh material conditions.²³⁶

Armenians were no exception. As discussed above, in 1914, occupationally Armenians in Egypt were an integral part of the country's socio-economic structure and as such the community was highly stratified. Accordingly, they could not remain untouched by

²³⁵Salem, *Misr fi al harb*, pp. 267-271, 272-4.

²³⁶Ibid. p. 350.

the economic crisis in Egypt during the war, which affected negatively almost all the strata of the population. As Muṣṭafā Jabr points out "the crisis affected not only the landowners and the cultivators and the poor villagers in the countryside, or the workers, the artisans and the destitutes in the cities, but it also extended to the petty merchants. In November 1914, the number of bankruptcies reached 3000, in contrast with only 100 cases in November 1913".²³⁷

It would practically be impossible to find out how the income of the anonymous individual members of the Armenian community was affected by the war. In the absence of Armenian trade unions, craft organizations or other informal occupational networks, it is not even possible to reveal the particulars of the changes that took place among Armenians in the various strata of Egypt's socio-economic ladder. On the other hand, the sources in the archives of the Armenian Prelacy in Cairo provide us with the particulars of the impact of the economic crisis on the Armenian Prelacy in Cairo and its branches, and consequently on the individuals linked with them financially. This gives us a picture of the crisis in the community within the framework of the Communal institutions.

The panic and the fear of uncertainty that accompanies the eruption of wars led the people in Egypt to withdraw their money from the banks. As a result, within a few days a number of banks

²³⁷Mustafa al Nahass Jabr, Siyasat al ihtilal tijah al harakah al wataniyah min 1914-1936, (Cairo: 1985), p. 27.

in Egypt went bankrupt. Bank loans for cotton and the plantation of various crops were stopped. On 4 August 1914 the government declared a moratorium that would end after three months, at the beginning of November.²³⁸

The Armenian Prelacy was affected by the ensuing financial and economic crisis in the country. In fact, on 3 August 1914, the Civil Council of the Armenian Prelacy in Cairo convened in an extraordinary session to discuss the Communal money in the banks. Under the heading "Resolution on Communal Money" the financial crisis in the country is discussed in the minutes as follows:

"The present European war which threatens to develop daily, has created a crisis on the world banking market. Hence, it is feared that like other banks, Crédit Lyonnais also, in a few days, will not be in a position to return to their owners the money deposited there. If this worry materializes it will be impossible to cover the expenditure of the Prelacy and its branches".

As a precautionary measure, the Communal leaders decided to withdraw from the Crédit Lyonnais both the Prelacy money and the money of individuals in their custody. It was arranged that the withdrawn money would be kept in a deposit box in the National Bank.²³⁹

²³⁸Ibid. p. 92.

²³⁹*Minutes of Civil Council* vol. 24, Session 44, 3 August 1914, p. 25.

This state of financial affairs did not continue throughout the four years of the war. On the 26 October 1914, the moratorium was lifted. Though this caused a new wave of problems on the Egyptian market,²⁴⁰ the initial panic of the Armenian Prelacy in Cairo at the outbreak of the war seems to have subsided by the end of the year. On 15 December 1914, the Civil Council decided that the paper money kept in the deposit box of the National Bank be withdrawn and various sums be redeposited in interest accounts in the Crédit Lyonnais, the Anglo-Egyptian Bank and the National Bank.²⁴¹ A week later, a similar decision was taken for the money in gold. This decision was to be implemented only after confirming that on withdrawal, the money received would also be in gold.²⁴²

One of the major factors that affected Egypt's economy throughout the war years was the government's changing cotton policies. Smaller areas were allotted for cotton cultivation to allow maximum space for the cultivation of cereals needed for the provision of British troops.²⁴³ There is no doubt that the instability of the government's cotton policies and the ensuing fluctuation of the price of cotton on the market played a crucial role in Egypt's economic crisis during World War I.²⁴⁴

On 22 September 1914, the government issued a law limiting the area of cotton cultivation to 1/4 of the land. This law created a

²⁴⁰Salem, *Misr fi al harb* ..., p. 93.

²⁴¹ *Minutes of Civil Council*/vol. 24, Session 62, 15 December 1914, p.82.

²⁴² *Minutes of Civil Council*/vol. 24, Session 63, 23 December 1914, p.85.

²⁴³Salem, *Misr fi al harb* ..., p. 350.

²⁴⁴*Ibid.* p. 111.

lot of conflicts between the landowners and the cultivators. The nature of these conflicts is reflected in the minutes of the Civil Council of the Cairo Armenian Prelacy where the following case was registered in detail:²⁴⁵ All the tenants of the *Ekfhas ab'adiyah* expressed discontent as the government had issued decisions on the basis of which they were under the obligation to plant cotton on an area less than their lease with the Prelacy allowed them. A tenant of 240 *feddans*, had planted more cotton than allowed by his lease. On visiting the land for examination, the Prelacy's Estates Director had met with armed resistance. The case was taken to court where the verdict had been in favor of the Prelacy.

As Latifa Salem points out, this cotton law proved to be disadvantageous for both landowners and the cultivators. The ensuing wide spread discontent created a lot of problems for the government. As a result, on 6 November 1915 the government changed the area allowed for the plantation of cotton from one quarter to one third.²⁴⁶ On the other hand, the fluctuating prices of cotton led to inflation while the government's monopoly of the cotton crop fixed the price of cotton at half its usual price.²⁴⁷

It should not be forgotten that the revenues from the communal estates provided the main source of income for the Armenian Communal institutions. At the outbreak of the war these revenues dropped considerably. In its 15 September 1914 session

²⁴⁵ *Minutes of Civil Council* vol. 24, Session 57, 3 November 1914: "Information and decisions on Estates and their revenues", pp. 65-6.

²⁴⁶ Salem, *Misr fi al harb* ..., p. 110.

²⁴⁷ *Ibid.* p. 350.

the Civil Council of the Armenian Prelacy in Cairo mentioned that as a result of the European War and its grave consequences the cotton crop of that year had been damaged and it was not certain that what had been saved would be sold.²⁴⁸

Also, the 1914 reports of the Estates Director of the Prelacy reveal that revenues from the rents of most of the estates-whether agricultural lands or flats and houses in Cairo- have been reduced. For example, the rent of 111 *feddans* in the *Sheikh 'thman ab-'ādiyah* was reduced from 925 pounds for the year 1913-1914 to 770 pounds for the year 1914-1915. In November 1914, the Civil Council agreed to reduce the rent of the *Kūm al 'arus ab-'ādiyah* to 6 pounds per *feddan* (one pound less than the previous year), as no one was willing to pay more.²⁴⁹

Another report presented by the Estates Director of the Prelacy in May 1916, attests to the damages caused by the instability of the government's cotton policies. Discussing the revenues of the *Hisas ab-'ādiyah*, the report stated: "This year, cotton was to be planted on 225 *feddans*, but the government did not allow it. Though later this obstacle was removed, the planting season was almost over and only 70 *feddans* were cultivated".²⁵⁰

²⁴⁸ *Minutes of Civil Council*/vol. 24, Session 49, 2/15 September, 1914, pp. 36-7.

²⁴⁹ *Minutes of Civil Council*/vol. 24, Session 56, 14/27 October, 1914, p. 63, and Session 57, 3 November 1914, p. 66. For details on other estates see text of Estates Director report: "Information and decisions on Estates and their revenues", Session 57, pp. 65-6.

²⁵⁰ *Minutes of Civil Council*/vol. 25, Session 3, Friday 13/26 May, 1916, p. 14.

As for the flats in Cairo, the same report states that because of the war, the rents of the houses had dropped by 10-20%. Five flats owned by the Prelacy had remained vacant for a long time. Finally, the Civil Council had to agree to rent them with reduced prices as follows: those which were previously rented for 360 P.T., 375 P.T. and 430 P.T. a month were reduced to a monthly rent of 225 P.T.; while a previous rent of 450 P.T. a month was reduced to 250 P.T.²⁵¹

One of the consequences of the economic crisis was the rising unemployment, which soon after the outbreak of the war reached ten thousand. To cut down expenses, a number of factories and commercial enterprises reduced the wages of some of their workers and employees, and fired others.²⁵² The Armenian Prelacy, in its role of employer, acted similarly.

As early as the first days of the declaration of the war, the Armenian Communal leadership, started to consider measures to cut down the Prelacy expenditure. The first step in that direction was taken by negotiating with the Prelacy employees on their wages. On September 8, 1914, the School Committee informed the Civil Council that it had come to an agreement with the teachers to pay them 50% of their monthly wages for the time being, the rest to be paid once the Prelacy Treasury could afford it. The School Committee also added that as the school would remain shut during

²⁵¹ *Minutes of Civil Council*/vol. 25, Session 3, Friday 13/26 May, 1916, p. 15.

²⁵² Mustafa al Nahass Jabr, *siyasat al ihtilal...*, p. 27-8.

the month of September, the teachers had signed written statements remitting their wages for that month..."²⁵³

It is not difficult to understand the compliance of the teachers to these harsh terms. Considering the economic situation of the country, when even large commercial enterprises were cutting down their budgets by firing their employees,²⁵⁴ it was easy to persuade someone to work with half his regular wage. Nevertheless, the Communal leaders were more generous than anticipated. They did not reduce the wages of the Prelacy employees to 50%. Instead, the Civil Council proceeded to a cutting down of the budgets of the Prelacy and its branches in a more systematic manner. The "Resolution on the wages of the employees" registered in the 2/15 September 1914 of the Civil Council is very informative both in form and content. Excerpts from this resolution are translated below:

"The Council, taking into consideration:

- the European War and its grave consequences which, among others, affect the financial and economic scene in Egypt,

- that as a result the revenues of the communal estates, which provide the main source of income for the communal institutions has been considerably reduced,

- that it is feared that the other sources of communal income, i.e. the fees paid to the church, the Prelacy and the school, will also decrease; and it is not anticipated that the normal state of affairs will be reestablished before the end of the War,

²⁵³ *Minutes of Civil Council*/vol. 24, Session 48, 8 September, 1914, pp. 34-5.

²⁵⁴ Salem, *Misr fi al harb*, p.93.

- that if the present state of affairs continues for a long period of time, paying the employees their full wages will cause the Prelacy enormous financial problems leading to great difficulties and even impossibility in maintaining its institutions,

The Council, as precautionary measures, after having taken the consent of its president [the Primate] and the Chairman of the Community Council [Boghos Pasha Nubar], and following the examples of other prelacies, decided:

To cut down the monthly wages of the employees of the Prelacy and of all its branches, namely the estates' department, the church, the school, the cemetery and the Committee for the Poor, starting from next October [1914], on the basis of the details mentioned below:

Monthly wage of employee (in piasters)	Cut down (%)
300 or less	0
300-600	20%
600-1000	25%
1000 and more	30%

The amounts cut down from the monthly wages will remain the right of the employees, to be given to them after the War... All the employees will sign a document to this effect".²⁵⁵

The above document provides us with a partial picture of how the economic consequences of the War on Egypt affected the Armenian community both collectively and individually. Needless

²⁵⁵ *Minutes of Civil Council*/vol. 24, Session 49, 2/15 September, 1914, pp. 36-7.

to say, the above wage cuts affected the material conditions of the families of those who were on the Prelacy payroll, such as: priests, teachers, administrators, accountants, clerks, beadles, gardeners, door-keepers, guards. Most of these were Armenians. During the years 1914-1918, 31 out of the 33 members of the educational staff of the Community school were Armenians.²⁵⁶ The sum-total of the money cut down was 57,506 piasters. More than half this sum, 29,386 piasters, was cut down from the school employees.²⁵⁷

Fortunately, the resolution taken on the Prelacy employees' wages, was implemented only during the 1914-1915 school year. In June 1915, based on an official request made by the School Committee for the payment of the money cut down from the wages, the Civil Council reconsidered its September 1914 resolution and decided that:

- "1) starting from June of the current year the wages of all employees be fully paid;
- 2) the sums cut down from wages be also paid in one or more installments, according to the financial situation of the Prelacy".²⁵⁸

It is difficult to explain the reasons for this new decision, as there is no indication in the minutes of the Civil Council that the economic conditions of the Prelacy had improved during the first year of the war. Nevertheless, it should not be totally ruled out

²⁵⁶Kardashian, *Nuter...*, vol. 2, p.446.

²⁵⁷ *Minutes of Civil Council* vol. 24, Session 89, July 7, 1915, p. 160. The sum of almost 300 pounds cut down from the school employees amounted to 10% of the school's budget for that year.

²⁵⁸ *Minutes of Civil Council* vol. 24, Session 88, June 29, 1915, p. 158.

that the decision to restore the wages was related to the cotton market, as during 1915, the price of cotton rose temporarily.²⁵⁹ On the other hand, as we saw above, the decision to cut down the wages had been made as a precautionary measure, on the anticipation that the Communal revenues would be reduced. In September 1914, the Communal leadership had not been in a position to estimate the extent of the financial loss it would face as a consequence of the war. Probably, within a year, it became clear to the Civil Council that though the income from its estates had been reduced, they could still afford to pay the Prelacy employees their full wages.

In the meantime, during the first year of the war a few employees were fired, as a result of the Prelacy's "tightening belts" policy. The physical education teacher was fired as the Civil Council decided to cancel his classes in the school for a year and to satisfy this need through "internal efforts". Other similar arrangements were also made. The Civil Council asked the School Committee to request the part-time music teacher and the school doctor to offer their services for the school-year 1914-1915 "with dedication", meaning without being paid.²⁶⁰ Naturally, both the music teacher and the doctor resigned.²⁶¹ It was also arranged that the Prelacy lawyer's services as a monthly paid employee would be terminated at the end of the current year, [December, 1914], and thenceforth he would be paid per law-suit case.²⁶²

²⁵⁹ Salem, *Misr fi al harb* ..., p.111.

²⁶⁰ *Minutes of Civil Council*/vol. 24, Session 49, 2/15 September, 1914, pp. 36-7.

²⁶¹ *Minutes of Civil Council*/vol. 24, Session 53, October 6, 1914, p.55.

²⁶² *Minutes of Civil Council*/vol. 24, Session 52, October 2, 1914, p. 49.

Some other steps were also taken to reduce the expenses of the Prelacy. The Prelacy subsidized the Armenian newspaper *Houssaper*²⁶³ with a yearly sum of 30 pounds. In October 1914, it was decided that "under the present circumstances" the payment of this sum to the newspaper should be stopped indefinitely.²⁶⁴ In fact, it was not until August 1917 that the Prelacy restarted to subsidize *Houssaper*. The newspaper, however, protested that the 30 pounds which was the sum paid until the outbreak of the war was now insufficient. Therefore, it was arranged that in addition to the 30 pounds, the Prelacy would pay separately for the announcements it made in *Houssaper*.²⁶⁵

On the other hand, the Civil Council's anticipation that the Prelacy's income from its institutions would be reduced as a result of the war proved to be correct. In fact, on October 1, 1914, the first day of the school-year, a crowd of parents gathered at the Galustian school asking for their children to be registered without paying tuition fees. The Principal, Kayayan efendi, fearing unpleasant consequences if they were refused, registered them provisionally, until the parents' claims of inability to pay the fees would be verified. 490 students were registered on that day. Only half had paid the tuition fees. 245 were registered without payment. Of the latter, 82 had "certificates of poverty" from the

²⁶³ During the years 1913-1926 *Houssaper* was published every two days. Ever since it is a daily.

²⁶⁴ *Minutes of Civil Council* vol. 24, Session 52, October 2, 1914, p. 49.

²⁶⁵ *Minutes of Civil Council* vol. 25, Session 72, 18/31 August, 1917, pp. 299-300; and Session 92, February 1, 1918, p. 397.

Charity Association. The parents of the rest had protested that getting a "certificate of poverty" was an insult to their dignity. Therefore, the Principal asked the Civil Council to verify the financial state of these parents in a manner "reconciliatory with the feelings of public dignity".

Consequently, a mixed sub-committee of five people including members from the Civil Council, School Committee and Charity Association was formed and assigned to examine the financial status of the parents in question and to present a report to the School Committee.²⁶⁶ Whether this investigation was carried out or not, and what the result was is not mentioned in the minutes of the Civil Council. However, the possibility that some of the parents' claims could have been mere attempts to take advantage of the general crisis, must not be excluded.

In addition to attesting to the problems in the community as a result of the war, the above document is particularly significant in revealing some of the negative aspects of the relationship between the Armenian masses and their leadership. This document, which implies that the manner in which the Prelacy cared for the needy in the community was insulting to their dignity, is a unique sample in the 1914-1918 minutes of the Cairo Civil Council. A number of contemporary newspaper articles and literary works criticize the patronizing attitude of the Community leaders vis à vis the masses and their degrading treatment of the needy. The above document,

²⁶⁶ *Minutes of Civil Council*, vol. 24, Session 52, 2 October 1914, p. 50.

written by the Communal leaders themselves, indirectly confirms the viability of this public sentiment.

Reports presented to the Civil Council by the Charity Association point to the fact that due to the inflation and the sharp rise in prices, the number of the needy in the community increased rapidly during the first months of the War. For example, in a letter dated 20 November 1914, the Charity Association stressed that "misery and deprivation were constantly rising", and asked the Civil Council to allot a considerable sum from the Prelacy treasury to meet the needs of the poor. The response of the Council was in line with its initial "tightening belts" policy and the proposal was refused because of "insufficiency of means".²⁶⁷

In the following months, the number of Armenians in need for material support continued to increase due to the prevailing crisis and arriving refugees*. On 2 December 1914, members of the Charity Association appealed to the Civil Council to help them with the rising need for funds. They declared that the number of the needy in the care of the Committee for the Poor had increased and that the Charity Association had been forced to cut down on the allowances it used to make to its beneficiaries. Finally, the Civil Council decided to allot 90 pounds to cover the monthly payments due to the needy for the previous month, and to grant the newly arrived refugees 25 piasters a week, instead of the weekly 20

²⁶⁷ *Minutes of Civil Council*, vol. 24, Session 59, 11/24 November 1914, p. 74.

* I could not find any information in outside sources on these "new refugees" referred to in the minutes. For example: how many were they? from where and how did they arrive in Egypt?

piasters given previously.²⁶⁸ This sum was less than the monthly wage of the lowest paid Prelacy employee.²⁶⁹

Some of the economic consequences of the war proved to be advantageous for the Armenian Prelacy in Cairo. In 1917, the Prelacy's financial situation was ameliorated when- again as a consequence of the war- rents started to rise. It is not clear whether they rose above pre-war prices or increased just relatively to the years 1915-1916. Starting from the second half of that year, phrases like "refused due to insufficiency of funds" almost disappeared from the minutes of the Civil Council and petitions for increases in wages and for the monthly allowances of the needy were granted more readily by the Community Council.

Nevertheless, the economic conditions of the country continued to worsen and pressed hard on the majority of the population. In July 1917 the Church employees presented the Prelacy a petition for a temporary increase in their wages, as "food had become extremely expensive and living conditions had become very harsh".²⁷⁰ A week later, the School Committee made a similar request on behalf of the school employees.²⁷¹ These petitions were taken up to the Community Council, together with a request by the Civil Council to make a raise in the wages of all the Prelacy employees. On 15 December 1917, the Community Council decided

²⁶⁸ *Minutes of Civil Council*, vol. 24, Session 60, 2 December 1914, pp. 76-7.

²⁶⁹ In 1917 the monthly wages of the employees at the Apostolic church and at the cemetery ranged from 125 P.T. to 650 P.T. *Minutes of Civil Council*, vol. 25, Session 60: 2/15 June 1917, p. 249.

²⁷⁰ *Minutes of Civil Council*, vol. 25, Session 63, 6 July 1917, p. 263.

²⁷¹ *Minutes of Civil Council*, vol. 25, Session 64, 13 July 1917, p. 269.

to give raises for the year 1918, to all Prelacy employees, on the following basis:²⁷²

Monthly Wage of employee in piasters	raise %
up to 600	20%
601-1200	15%
1200 and up	10%

In October 1917, the Charity Association asked the Civil Council to take into account the "exorbitant rise in prices of goods essential for subsistence" and urged the Council to make a 20% increase in the funds allotted to the Association. The Civil Council decided that an extra sum of 210 pounds would be given from the Prelacy treasury to the Charity Association for the year 1917 to be equally divided on 12 months, including the nine months that had elapsed since the beginning of the year.²⁷³

At the beginning of the 1917-1918 school year, 25-30 Armenian school-children dropped out of school as their parents -mostly residents of Bein al Surein- could not afford to pay for their transportation. The Charity Association asked the Civil Council for a remedy to their situation. The Council replied that the various Prelacy Funds were all over-burdened and it was decided for the Charity Association to arrange the matter with the School Committee.²⁷⁴

²⁷² *Minutes of Civil Council*, vol. 25, Session 88, 15/28 December 1917.

²⁷³ *Minutes of Civil Council*, vol. 25, Session 78, 6/19 October 1917, p. 326.

²⁷⁴ *Minutes of Civil Council*, vol. 25, Session 78, 6/19 October, 1917, p. 326.

During 1918, the income of the Prelacy from the rents of its estates increased a sum total of 3,800 pounds. Accordingly, on 7 November 1918, the Community Council not only agreed to extend the temporary raises made to the Prelacy employees for the year 1919, but also doubled these raises. Though the rise in the rents had been due to the war, the Council remarked that even if the war came to an end soon as anticipated, at least for the coming year, the rents would be collected on the basis of the increased prices.²⁷⁵

Moreover, the dropping prices of land during the war, presented the Armenian Community leaders the opportune moment to implement the Yeghiayan Testament²⁷⁶ concerning the building of a new church. Writing from Europe in 1916, Boghos Pasha Nubar- the Chairman of the Community General Council and the official executor of the will- pointed out to the Prelacy in Cairo that circumstances were very favorable to buy the land for the building of the new church.²⁷⁷ In fact, with the money allotted by Yeghiayan, the land on which the present day Armenian Apostolic Church in Cairo stands was bought in June, 1917 from the Ministry of waqf-s for 2 Egyptian pounds a meter.²⁷⁸

²⁷⁵ *Minutes of Community Council*, vol. 43, Session 62, 7 November 1918, p. 259.

²⁷⁶ The original of the testament was written in French. For the full text of the Armenian translation of the Testament see Gartashian, vol. 2, pp.720-726. Grigor Yeghiayan, known as Gregoire d'Eli, was one of the benefactors of the Armenian Community, born in Egypt in 1833 of a mixed Armenian-Coptic parentage. On his death in 1911, he bequeathed vast estates to the Community. In his testament he had determined the purposes for which the revenues of each estate should be used.

²⁷⁷ *Minutes of Civil Council*, vol. 25, Session 22, 6 October 1916, pp.91-2.

²⁷⁸ *Minutes of Civil Council*, vol. 25, Session 62, 9/22 June 1917.

This situation may seem paradoxical. On the one hand, during the war, the Prelacy faced financial hardships due to which the Community leaders had to take measures towards cutting down the expenses of the Prelacy and its institutions. On the other hand, a land lot for 10,000 pounds²⁷⁹ was bought during the same years. This paradox is explained by the fact that the benefactors of the Armenian community determined the purpose for which the money or property they bequeathed the Prelacy should be used for. The Communal leadership did not have the legal right to deal with these donations according to the current needs of the community.

Conclusion

During the war years the Armenian Community in Egypt faced a number of administrative and financial difficulties which in one way or another affected the lives of its individual members. The number of the unemployed and the needy in the community increased. As an integral part of the Egyptian socio-economic structure, Armenians in different occupations suffered, in various degrees, from the economic consequences of the war on the country in general.

It has to be stressed here that these problems did not reduce the Armenian community as a whole to a state of destitution. There were still a small number of very rich Armenian *pashas*, a number of rich merchants and merchant industrialists, and an

²⁷⁹ *Minutes of Civil Council*, vol. 25, Session 41, 3/16 January 1917, p.163.

undefined number of 'well off' people within the wide range of the middle class. As we shall see in the following chapter, this community was still in a position to render moral and material support for almost four years, to 4,200 Armenian refugees from the Ottoman Empire who arrived in Egypt in 1915.

Chapter Four

WORLD WAR I, GENOCIDE, AND THE COMMUNITY

In the years 1914-1918 rapidly developing events on the war zones in Transcaucasia and the Middle East took such a turn that the entire Armenian community in Egypt was mobilized to face the calamity that befell the entire Armenian nation. The responses of the Armenians in Egypt to World War I as it affected Ottoman Armenia, and to the massacres of the Armenians in Ottoman territories is the subject of this chapter. The reaction of the Armenian Community in this country to these external events is examined within the context of various inter-related issues, namely: the massacres of Ottoman Armenians; the Armenian volunteer movement on the Transcaucasian front; the Armenian National Delegation in Europe headed by Boghos *pasha* Nubar; the Port Sa'ïd Armenian refugee camp; the surviving deportees in Syria and Mesopotamia; the formation of the Légion d'Orient; the movements of Allied troops on the Middle East fronts and the arrival of Armenian refugees.

Armenian participation in Ottoman and Russian Armies

The Ottoman decision to enter World War I meant engulfing the entire Middle East in a primarily European war. The native subject populations of the Middle East became involved in an

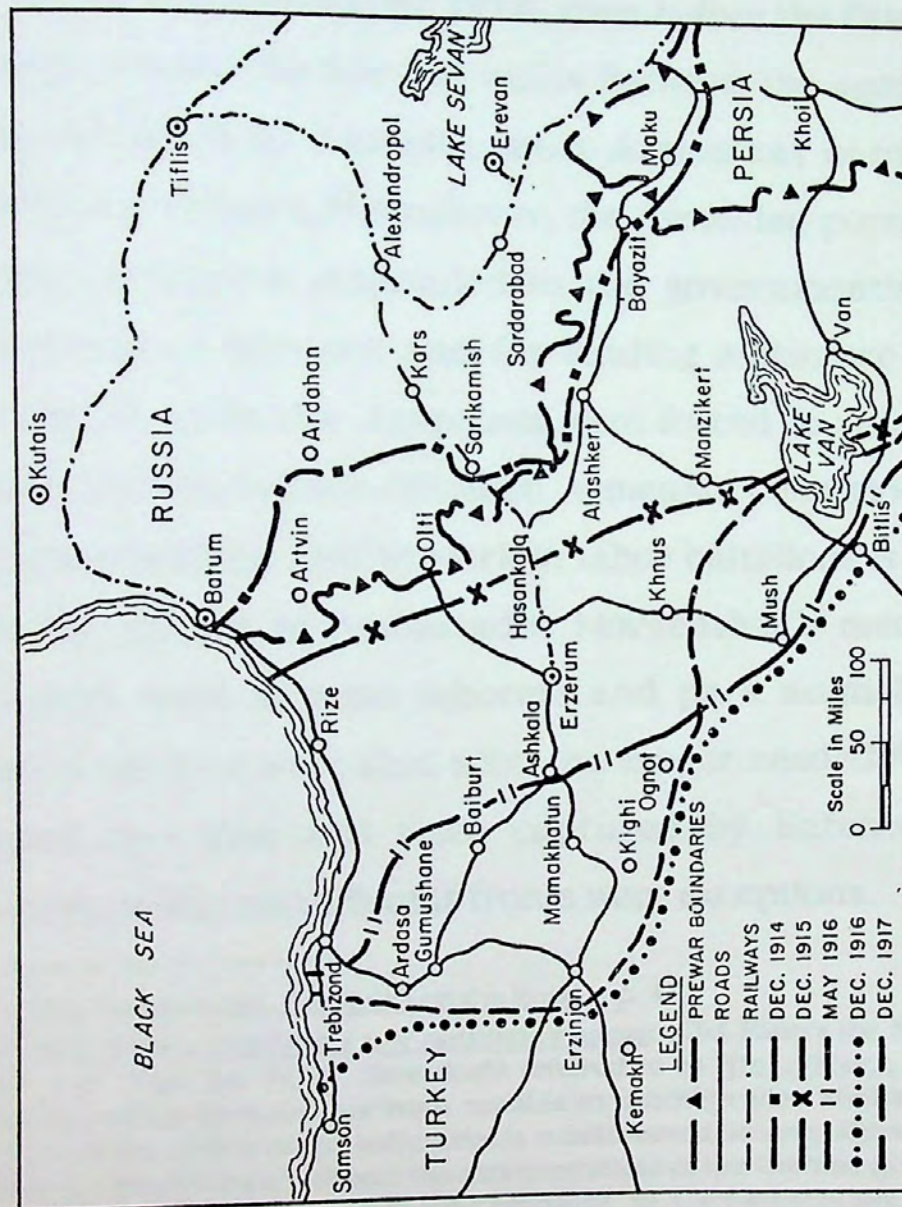
international war which was initially no concern of theirs, and in the decision making process of which they had had no say. In the Arab East, the developing anti-Ottoman movement which, prior to 1914, sought autonomy within the boundaries of the Ottoman Empire, joined forces with the nationalist movement which emerged during the war years and aspired to Arab independence.²⁸⁰ In Armenia, which was divided by the Ottoman-Russian frontier into western (Ottoman) Armenia and eastern (Russian) Armenia, (Map 2.) anti-Ottoman emotions reigned. Not only were the 1894-1896 massacres still fresh in the minds of Armenians, but also the various reform schemes²⁸¹ set for Ottoman Armenia had been repeatedly aborted.

For the Egyptian masses, the British Protectorate was tantamount to a British occupation. Anti-British emotions in Egypt rose throughout the war years and culminated in the 1919 revolution. Yet, in Egypt, directed by the British, the entire government machinery was activated to impose on the Egyptian masses full collaboration with the British war effort. The country's resources of money, food, animals and even manpower were put at the disposition of the British military.²⁸² As the Egyptian masses were exhorted by their government to collaborate with the war effort of the British whose rule they resented, the Ottoman Armenians too were exhorted to cooperate with the war effort of

²⁸⁰Muhammad Y. Muslih, The Origins of Palestinian Nationalism, (New York: Columbia University Press, 1988), pp. 2-3.

²⁸¹The last one being the 8 February 1914 reform plan; see Hovannisian, Armenia on the Road..., pp. 38-9.

²⁸²Abd al Rahman al Raf'i, Thawrat 1919: tarikh misr al qawmi min 1914 ila 1921, vol. 1, (Cairo: Dar al Sha'b, 1968), pp. 32-3, 38-9.



Map 2. The Caucasus front, 1914-1917

Reproduced from Hovannisian, Armenia on the Road to Independence 1918, p. 65.

the Ottoman government²⁸³ which they resented. Similar to the case of the Egyptians, the Armenian masses too complied to the orders of their respective governments out of helplessness and intimidation.

Thus, when in August 1914- even before the Ottoman Empire officially entered the war- all males between the ages 21-45 were being recruited in Anatolia, most Armenians enrolled without protest or resistance.²⁸⁴ Moreover, the Armenian population in the Ottoman provinces responded to the government's appeal for requisitions of livestock and for lending assistance to the "Red Crescent",²⁸⁵ while the Egyptians were forced to support the Red Cross²⁸⁶. The fate of the Ottoman Armenian conscripts, who were soon disarmed and sent to work in labor battalions is described in gruesome details in Ambassador Morgenthau's memoirs. These men were used as road laborers and pack animals until they dropped dead or were shot when no longer needed²⁸⁷. Those who escaped this fate and were captured by Entente armies as prisoners of war on different fronts were exceptions.

²⁸³Richard Hovannisian, Armenian on the Road... p. 42.

²⁸⁴Simon Vratsian, Hin tgher nor patmutian hamar [Old Papers for Modern History] (Beirut: n.p., 1962), pp. 74, 82; Henceforth referred to as Hin tgher... That Ottoman Armenians neither intended nor were capable to sabotage the Ottoman war effort but submitted to the orders of the authorities is substantiated, among others, by the German war time correspondence between the representatives of the German government in the Ottoman-Armenian provinces and their Embassy in Constantinople in Archives Du Génocide Des Arméniens: Recueil de documents diplomatiques allemands-extraits de Deutschland und Armenien (1914-1918) compiled by Dr Johannes Lepsius, trans. by Marie-France Letenoux, edited by Dr Tessa Hofmann (France: Fayard, 1986).

²⁸⁵Johannes Ehman, (head of the German Mission in Mamouret ul Aziz), letter dated 5 May 1915, addressed to the Baron von Wangenheim, German Ambassador in Constantinople in Archives Du Génocide Des Arméniens, p. 87.

²⁸⁶Jabr, Siyasat al ihtilal ... p. 30.

²⁸⁷Henry Morgenthau, Ambassador Morgenthau's Story, (1919: rpt. New York: New Age publishers, n.d.) p. 302.

As Hovannisian explains: "Although most Armenians maintained a correct attitude vis-à-vis the Ottoman government, it can be asserted with some substantiation that the manifestations of loyalty were insincere, for the sympathy of most Armenians throughout the world was with the Entente, not with the Central Powers".²⁸⁸ Therefore, while Ottoman Armenians were reluctantly but dutifully enrolling in the Ottoman army, Armenians residing outside Ottoman territories were motivated to participate in the war effort of the Allies. To begin with, Armenians in eastern Armenia fulfilled their obligation as subjects of the Russian Empire by enrolling in the Russian army, where their number reached 150.000. Most of these conscripts were sent to fight on the European front.²⁸⁹ Moreover, the Armenian leaders in Tibilisi welcomed the proposal of Count Vorontsov-Dashkov, the Viceroy of Transcaucasia, to form four Armenian volunteer units²⁹⁰.

The Armenian National Bureau, founded in Tibilisi in 1912 with the objective of achieving reforms in Ottoman Armenia, formed a committee which enrolled volunteers and supervised their units.²⁹¹ This committee worked in coordination with the Russian military: "Though all units were subject officially to the general directives and strategy of the Russian Caucasus Army Command, immediate contact and orders emanated from the special Armenian committee in charge of volunteer activities".

²⁸⁸Richard Hovannisian, *Armenian on the Road...*, p. 42.

²⁸⁹Richard Hovannisian, *Armenian on the Road...*, p. 44.

²⁹⁰*Ibid.* p. 44.

²⁹¹*Ibid.* pp. 42, 44.

Equipped by the Russian military authorities, these units were commanded by Armenian revolutionary heroes.²⁹²

In December 1915, these volunteer units were deprived of their separate status and later, despite the protests of the Armenians, they were incorporated into the Russian Caucasus Army, in the form of six Armenian rifle battalions.²⁹³ When in 1917 the Russian army abandoned their lines in Armenia, "these Armenian forces took over the Caucasus front and for five months delayed the Turk's advance, thus rendering important services to the British Army in Mesopotamia....".²⁹⁴

Armenians in Egypt could not remain indifferent towards this movement which aspired to the liberation of their compatriots in Ottoman Armenian and to secure their future under Russian protection²⁹⁵.

²⁹²Ibid. pp. 47, 43-4.

²⁹³Ibid. p. 63.

²⁹⁴Ibid. "Appendix: The Allies and Armenia" (pp. 247-254) quotation from a letter written in 1918 by Lord Robert Cecil, British Assistant Secretary for Foreign Affairs to Viscount James Bryce, pp. 248-9.

²⁹⁵Hovannisian, *Armenia on the Road*..., p. 45.

Armenians in Egypt and the Transcaucasian Scene

In addition to the Armenians in the Russian Empire, Armenian young men from all over the world, mainly from the United States and the Balkans, hurried to Transcaucasia to participate in the volunteer movement. In a letter dated 20 February, 1915, Vratsian, a member of the Special Committee for the Armenian Volunteer Units, wrote that the number of Armenians gathered to enlist in the volunteer corps already exceeded 7,000, which was the number authorized by the Russian government then.²⁹⁶ By July 1915, there were 20,000 Armenian volunteers on the Ottoman-Russian front.²⁹⁷

In Egypt, a committee for the Armenian volunteers was formed by the Dashnak Party which organized fund-raising in support of the volunteers in Transcaucasia. Due to disputes among the Armenian political parties, the fund-raising process remained in Dashnak circles. As a remedy to this situation, a member of the Cairo Civil Council suggested the imposition of a communal tax on the Armenian public, as a means of fund-raising, to meet the needs of the Armenian volunteers. The implementation of this proposal

²⁹⁶Vratsian, "Namak hai heghapoghakan dashnaksutian amerikayi kentronakan komiteyi", [Letter Addressed to the Central Committee of the Armenian Revolutionary Federation in America] pp. 131-142. Letter dated 20 February 1915, in *Hin tgher.....*, pp.133-4.

²⁹⁷"Letter From Mr. E. Vartanian, An Armenian-American Volunteer in the Russian Service, to his Brother-in-Law in Egypt", dated 9/22 July, 1915, and Published in the Armenian Journal "Houssaper" of Cairo" in *The Treatment of Armenians in the Ottoman Empire 1915-16* by Viscount Bryce, 3rd ed. (1916: rpt. Beirut: Doniguian and Sons, 1988), p. 657.

was postponed until efforts were shed to come to an understanding with the Dashnak's committee for the volunteers.²⁹⁸

Attempts made in this direction failed.²⁹⁹ In March 1915, a letter from the Armenian Ramgavar Party, and another one signed collectively by Armenian individuals requested the Cairo Civil Council to give the fund-raising in support of the volunteers a general, communal nature.³⁰⁰ According to a contemporary article, the Communal leadership failed to satisfy the demands to create a general body to unify the efforts shed for the support of the volunteer movement, partly because of the inefficiency and partly because of the apathy of some of its conservative members to the volunteer movement.³⁰¹

On the other hand, it is worth pointing out that despite the time-consuming, disruptive disagreements among the Armenian political parties, their differences were theoretical. Practically, they shared the same concerns for Ottoman Armenia. Through the fund-raising of its committees for Military Contribution for the Cause of Armenian Volunteer Units (*Hai Kamavorakan Gunteru Zinvorakan Npast*) during 1915, the Dashnak Party succeeded to send, to the war front in Transcaucasia an amount of 3,000 Egyptian pounds.³⁰² Similarly, money was sent for the same purpose jointly by the two other Armenian political parties in Egypt, namely the Social

²⁹⁸ *Minutes of Civil Council*/vol. 24, Session 72, 2 March 1915.

²⁹⁹ *Minutes of Civil Council*/vol. 24, Session 76, 17/30 March 1915, pp. 122-3.

³⁰⁰ *Minutes of Civil Council*/vol. 24, Session 74, 3/16 March 1915, p. 117.

³⁰¹ "Yegiptahai tarin" [The Egyptian-Armenian Year:1914-1915] in *Yegiptahai taretsuitse*, third year, 1916, no publication data, p. 14.

³⁰² *Ibid.* p. 17.

Democrat Hnchak and Sahmanadrakan (Constitutional) Ramkavar. Between March and May 1915, a "Fund for the Defense of National Interests" (Himnadram Azgayin Shaheru Pashtpanutian-henceforth, *himnadram*) was created through the initiative of Boghos *pasha* Nubar, under the auspices of the Catholicos.³⁰³ On 13 May, 1915, Arev announced that representatives of the S. D. Hnchak and the Ramgavar parties had agreed to collaborate together and to send all the money from the fund-raising for Armenian national interests to Boghos *pasha* Nubar³⁰⁴. In July, 1915, Boghos Nubar sent the Catholicos 10,000 Rubles from the *himnadram* to be allotted to the volunteers.³⁰⁵

In the summer of 1915, an independent volunteer movement had already started to take shape among the Armenian youth both in Alexandria and in Cairo. A number of young men had already left for the Caucasus at their own expense while many others expressed readiness to hasten to the battlefield in Armenia where "the need for fresh and larger forces had become more and more pressing". They requested the Prelacy to pay for their travel expenses.³⁰⁶ In August, the Civil Council finally consented on allotting money for the volunteer movement from the treasuries of the Prelacies in Cairo and Alexandria and promised to put forth the issue to the Community Council.³⁰⁷

³⁰³ Arev, 15 May 1915.

³⁰⁴ "S. D. Hnchakian and Sahmanadrakan kusaktsutants hamadzaynutiune" [The Agreement of the S. D. Hnchak and Constitutional Ramkavar Parties] in Arev 13 May 1915.

³⁰⁵ Arev, 11 June 1915.

³⁰⁶ Minutes of Civil Council vol. 24, Session 90, 7/20 July 1915, p. 166.

³⁰⁷ Minutes of Civil Council vol. 24, Session 92, 6/19 August 1915, pp. 173-4.

From a military point of view, the aim of the Armenian volunteer movement was the liberation of Ottoman Armenia from Turkish rule. From a political point of view, the Armenian leaders believed that- in case of an Entente victory- through this movement, they would earn the right to make demands for the future of their country during post-war settlements. This is mentioned explicitly by Boghos pasha Nubar in a letter addressed to Mikayel Varandian in 1915: "... these [Armenian] volunteers fighting on the side of the Entente... can give us the right to make our voices heard when the time comes to materialize our rightful and modest demands"³⁰⁸. The Allies' secret war-time agreements and the post-war settlements proved him wrong. Here too, the similarity with the post-war expectations and disappointments of the Egyptians and the Syrians is striking.

During Enver's December 1914-January 1915 Anatolian campaign, while Ottoman Armenian conscripts fought in the Turkish lines³⁰⁹, Armenian volunteer units fought alongside the Russian armies in Transcaucasia and in Persian Azerbaijan.³¹⁰ Though Enver's campaign failed disastrously, by February 1915, 100,000 Ottoman Armenian refugees³¹¹ had arrived in Transcaucasia, fleeing the massacres in the battle zones. The fund-raising for the relief of these refugees initiated by native Armenians did not stay within the boundaries of Transcaucasia. In

³⁰⁸"Kamavorakan gordse yev vsemapail Boghos pasha Nubar" [The Volunteer Affair and Boghos Pasha Nubar], in *Arev*, 5 July 1915, p.3.

³⁰⁹Christopher J. Walker, *Armenia: The Survival of a Nation*, p. 199.

³¹⁰Hovannisian, *Armenian on the Road...*, pp.46-7.

³¹¹Vratsian, *Hin Tghter...*, p 134.

response to the January 1915 appeal made by the "Armenian Central Committee for the Aid of the War-Stricken" (*Paterazmits vnasvadsneri ognogh haikakan kentronakan komite*)- an organization which functioned under the auspices of the Catholicos of All Armenians, Kevork V, in Ejmiadsin³¹². Armenian communities all over the world from the USA to India started organizing material aid for these refugees.

As elsewhere, the Armenians in Egypt responded to this appeal. Various relief societies were either created or activated. Numerous fund-raising enterprises were organized. As elsewhere, in Egypt too, the Armenians were faced with the increasing need for funds in Transcaucasia where material support for both the volunteers and the refugees was essential. For Armenians outside Armenia, aiding the first meant contributing to the salvation of their homeland, while helping the second meant the salvation of the population of that homeland.

To begin with, the Armenians in Egypt urgently sent to Transcaucasia 20,000 Rubles.³¹³ As early as February 1915, a "Committee for the Refugees in the Caucasus" was already functioning in Cairo.³¹⁴ By May, 1915, the AGBU had sent 60,000 Rubles to the Catholicos, collected through fund-raising.³¹⁵

³¹²Topuzian, *Yegiptosi Haikakan...*, p. 173.

³¹³Ibid. p. 173. From an exchange between Cairo and Transcaucasia made through the Egyptian Bank and registered in the minutes of the Cairo Civil Council, the rate of British pound/ Ruble exchange can be calculated. Based on the registered figures, calculations reveal that the value of 1 British pound was 9.75 Ruples at its lowest and 15 Ruples at its highest rate. (Minutes of the Civil Council, vol. 25, Session 7: 17/30 June 1916, p. 39).

³¹⁴*Minutes of Civil Council*/vol. 24, Session 69, January 20 / 2 February 1915, p. 100.

³¹⁵*Arev*, 15 May, 1915.

Eventually, the AGBU merged its fund-raising with the *himnadram*.³¹⁶ The *Voskerchats Npastamatuits Masnakhumb* (Goldsmith's Contribution Committee) was one of the most active fund-raising societies functioning in the community. It became defunct after the Prelacy's announcement on 8 October, 1915, that all fund-raising activities would be centralized in one official committee formed for the purpose.³¹⁷

In the Spring of 1915 an Armenian Red Cross started to take shape in Alexandria following the initiative of some Armenian ladies to come together and prepare underwear for the wounded Armenian volunteers fighting on the Caucasus front.³¹⁸ In July 1915, an officially authorized Armenian Red Cross was founded in Cairo, "after a general meeting of all sectarian, benevolent and educational institutions and political parties".³¹⁹ On 6 August 1915 the by-law of the Armenian Red Cross was ratified by the Cairo Civil Council³²⁰ and the newly formed organization acted under the auspices of the Armenian Prelacy.³²¹ The Central Committee of the Armenian Red Cross was based in Cairo and had branches in Egypt (Alexandria, Sharqiyah) and Sudan.³²² Within the following year, the Primate was made the president of the Armenian Red Cross to

³¹⁶ *Arev*, 15 May, 1915.

³¹⁷ *Arev*, 20 October 1915. The newly formed committee was called *Yegiptahai Npastamatoyts Marmir* (Egyptian-Armenian Relief Committee) and will be discussed below.

³¹⁸ "Azgayin kronik" in *Arev*, 17 May 1915.

³¹⁹ M. Salpi, "Hai karmir-khache" [The Armenian Red Cross] (pp. 149-160), in *Alyakner yev khlyakner: hai veranakaghaki taregirk* [Waves and wrecks: year-book of the Armenian tent-city], (Alexandria: A. Kassabian, 1920), p. 149.

³²⁰ *Minutes of Civil Council* vol. 24, Session 91, 6 August 1915, p. 171.

³²¹ *Minutes of Civil Council* vol. 24, Session 94, 7 September 1915, p. 188.

³²² *Minutes of Civil Council* vol. 25, Session 57, Friday 12/25 May 1917, pp. 233-4; *Arev*, 1 October 1915.

facilitate mediation between the organization and the government.³²³

Though Cairo and Alexandria were the major centers for fund-raising in Egypt, Armenians in various towns in the Egyptian provinces- where the Primate made a tour for the purpose of fund-raising for the refugees- also participated.³²⁴ Generally speaking the Armenians in Egypt were far from being indifferent to the suffering and needs of their compatriots in Armenia. Many instances are described where families and individuals of modest means contributed to the fund-raising by allotting "the price of their daily bread" to the refugees and the volunteers.³²⁵ Yet, the Armenian community in Egypt has often been criticized for disappointing the expectations placed upon it as a "rich" community.³²⁶

These accusations were not totally unfounded. First, the Armenian Prelacy in Cairo was known to be a "rich landowner" which possessed extensive estates. In 1915, the legality of the sale of at least part of these estates to allot the money to the refugees and survivors of the massacres became the subject of disputes in the Communal Councils.³²⁷ Finally, based on the terms in the testaments by which these estates were bestowed to the Armenian

³²³ *Minutes of Civil Council* vol. 24, Session 116, 14 March 1916, p. 273.

³²⁴ *Minutes of Community Council* vol. 43, Session April 18/1 May, 1915, p. 196; *Arev*, 17 May 1915; "Gavari yegiptahai kyanken" in *Arev*, 21 May 1915.

³²⁵ Suren Partevian, "Yegiptahai tarin: 1914-1915" [The Egyptian-Armenian Year:1914-1915] in *Yegiptahai taretsuitse*, third year, 1916, no publication data, p. 16.

³²⁶ *Ibid.* p. 17.

³²⁷ *Minutes of Civil Council* vol. 24, Joint Session of the Cairo and Alexandria Civil Councils in Bulaq, 16/29 August 1915, p. 179.

Community and some other legal considerations related with the *waqf-nameh*,³²⁸ the idea was abandoned as illegal.

Second, though the Armenians in Egypt were socio-economically highly stratified and the economic crisis in Egypt during the war pressed hard on many, there were a handful of very rich Armenians in Egypt who had earned the community as a whole the "rich" label. It was the indifference of this class which came under fierce criticism both in Egypt and abroad. Of course there were exceptions like Boghos pasha Nubar, the Kamsarakan Brothers,³²⁹ and few others. In October 1915, Arev wrote: "... we all know who amongst them [the rich] fulfilled their duties. The rest are deserters... The masses have already started to despise them".³³⁰ Thus, those rich Armenians- referred to as "Croesus"³³¹- who either did not participate in the fund-raising or contributed minimal "symbolic" sums were labeled by the people as "deserters" and "traitors".³³²

³²⁸ *Minutes of Civil Council*, vol. 24, Session 104, 9/22 November 1915, p. 220.

³²⁹ "Armenak Bey Kamsarakan" in *Hishatakaran* p. 71. The Kamsarakan Brothers, Armenak and Tigran, the well known cigarette manufacturers, contributed 2400 pounds for the foundation of the *himnadram*, and later paid a monthly contribution of 300 pounds on a regular basis to the Relief Society (Npastamatoyts), formed in Egypt at the beginning of 1916. They are often mentioned in the Armenian press of the war years as an example to be followed by much richer Armenians; see Suren Partevian, "Yegiptahai dimasdvner: Armenak Kamsarakan" in *Anapatin hushardzane* vol. 2, 8th pamphlet, (Cairo: Sokrat Sarrafian, 1917), p. 121; *Arev*, 28 February 1916.

³³⁰ Mikayel Gurdjian, "Harustneru masin" [On the Rich] in *Arev*, 4 October 1915.

³³¹ Suren Partevian, "Yegiptahai tarin: 1914-1915" [The Egyptian-Armenian Year: 1914-1915] p. 23. The allusion is to Croesus, the King of Lydia (560-546 BC), renowned for his legendary great wealth and love for gold.

³³² *Ibid.* p. 23; see also Garo Balian, "Khramatneren heru" [Far from the trenches] in *Anapatin hushardzane*, vol. 2, 6th pamphlet, (Cairo: Zareh Berberian, 1917), p. 95.

Meanwhile, news of the massacres and deportation of Ottoman Armenians in different regions of Cilicia and Anatolia started to creep into Transcaucasia with the arriving refugees. When the news of the siege of Van by the Turkish forces in April 1915 reached Transcaucasia, the Russian forces and the Armenian volunteer units accompanying them advanced towards the city and entered it on 18 May. The resistance of the Armenians in Van to the Ottoman armies besieging the city, has been distorted by the Turkish authorities into an alleged "Armenian uprising". However, numerous foreign eye-witness accounts bear evidence to the fact that Armenians in Van rose only in self-defense to avoid being slaughtered *en mass* like their compatriots in the neighboring villages and in Cilicia.³³³

The news of the occupation of Van by the Russian armies in May 1915 created great enthusiasm among all the strata of the Egyptian- Armenian community. The event was considered "a pledge for the liberation of Armenia".³³⁴ Inter-communal disputes were forgotten and in both Alexandria and Cairo Armenians of different political adherence gathered together to celebrate the event in unity.³³⁵ Enthusiastic as they were, Armenians in Egypt realized that the occupation of territories in Ottoman Armenia by

³³³Hovannisian, *Armenian on the Road...*, p. 53. For eye-witness accounts which testify that Armenians were not the aggressors see: the report of the American mission in Van in *Archives du Génocide des Arméniens* compiled by Lepsius, pp. 289-300. "This report has been confirmed by the information provided by Mr. Sporri, the director of the German orphanage in Van, who was the last to leave the city after its destruction" in Lepsius, p. 289; Clarence D. Ussher, *An American Physician in Turkey* (Boston, 1917) p. 244; Rafael de Nogales, *Four Years Beneath the Crescent*, trans. by Muna Lee (New York: 1926), p. 60.

³³⁴*Minutes of Civil Council* vol. 24, Session 83, 31 May 1915, p. 143.

³³⁵Partevian, "Yegiptahai tarin: 1914-1915" [The Egyptian-Armenian Year:1914-1915] p.18.

the Russian armies meant new responsibilities. Accordingly, in June 1915, Boghos pasha Nubar sent 15,000 Rubles to the Catholicos from the money in the *himnadram*, to be allotted for the urgent needs in Van,³³⁶ where an Armenian governorship had been established.³³⁷ Appeals to the public for the reconstruction of the homeland were voiced in the pages of Armenian newspapers and journals in Cairo and Alexandria.³³⁸

Thus, throughout the first half of 1915, the hope that the Allies would soon win the war and the Armenian refugees would return to rebuild their war-devastated homeland in western Armenia was predominant among Armenians in Transcaucasia and abroad. Little did they know that what befell Ottoman Armenia since November 1914 were not 'merely' damages caused by the war but the beginning of the process of the total destruction of Ottoman Armenians by their own government.

³³⁶Arev, 11 June 1915.

³³⁷Hovannisian, *Armenian on the Road...*, p. 56. This lasted for only two months as following an Ottoman counter-offensive in July 1915, the Russians retreated and the native population followed them. (Hovannisian, p.56).

³³⁸"Tarvan Sarturner: 1915 garunen minchev dzmemamut" [The Creeps of a Year: from Spring to Fall 1915] in *Yegiptahai taretsuitse*, third year, 1916, no publication data, p. 36.

Egyptian Armenians and the Destruction of Ottoman Armenia

Boghos Pasha Nubar and the Armenian National Delegation

All through the first half of 1915, only scattered news about massacres of Ottoman Armenians crept out of the Ottoman Empire mostly through travelers that arrived in Europe and refugees that crossed the frontier to Transcaucasia.³³⁹ Armenians outside Ottoman territories were greatly disturbed by the news of blood-baths which reached them in the form of isolated incidents. But they did not yet detect the genocidal policy of the Young Turk government to systematically exterminate the Armenian element in Ottoman land.³⁴⁰

In April 1915, the Catholicos of All Armenians cabled Boghos pasha Nubar in Egypt and informed him that persecutions, massacres and bloodshed were taking place in various provinces in Armenia and Cilicia.³⁴¹ The Catholicos appointed Boghos pasha president of the Armenian National Delegation, and his sole representative near the Entente powers.³⁴² The purpose of the

³³⁹ *The Armenian Genocide: News Accounts from the American Press (1915-1922)*, compiled by Richard D. Kioian, 4th ed. (1980: rpt. California: Anto Printing, 1985), pp. 2-16

³⁴⁰ Walker, *Armenia: The Survival*, p. 200. Citing the articles written by Aziz Samih-chief of the historical department of the Ottoman ministry during the war- in the Turkish newspaper Kurun, in 1935, Walker points out that "orders to attack Armenian villages were received in the east between 29 October and 5 November 1914". Walker also mentions that "the actual decision to take measures against Armenians seems to have been taken by the Central Committee of the Union and Progress in mid-February 1915".

³⁴¹ "Haikakan guizhe" [The Armenian calamity] in *Arev*, May 13, 1915.

³⁴² "Haikakan khndire yev N. V. Boghos pasha Nubari pashtone" [The Armenian Question and the mission of His Excellency Boghos pasha Nubar] in *Arev*, 11 May 1915.

Delegation was to present to the Allies the grievances and aspirations of the Armenian people.³⁴³ In a second telegram, the Catholicos stated that the policy of the National Delegation should be based on finding a solution for the Armenian Question through attaining an autonomous Armenia. He also informed Boghos pasha that the members of the Delegation to Europe were the same persons as in the 1913-1914 Delegation, namely: Bishop Kevork Unjian (the Primate of Europe), Boghos pasha Nubar, Ya'qub Artin pasha and Mr. Harutiun Mostijian.³⁴⁴

According to the Egyptian newspaper *al Muqattam*- which had run an interview with Boghos pasha, on the eve of his departure to Europe- if given the choice, Boghos pasha Nubar would wish for his nation administrative independence, guaranteed by an Allied protection, waiting until the time was ripe for a political independence.³⁴⁵ During the same days, Mr. Defrance, French Minister in Cairo, sent a telegram to the French Minister of Foreign Affairs, Mr. Delcassé, stating that Boghos pasha Nubar was urgently leaving for Paris and London to defend the interests of the Armenians. Writing about the expectations of the Delegation, the telegram states that Boghos Nubar "thinks that part of the

³⁴³"Kévork V, Catholicos de tous les Arméniens, à M. Viviani, Président du conseil, Ministre des Affaires étrangères", letter (Vagharchabad, le 5/18 octobre 1915), in Arthur Beylerian ed. *Les Grandes Puissances, l'Empire Ottoman et les Arméniens dans les archives Françaises, (1914-1918): recueil de documents*, (Paris: Sorbonne, 1983), pp. 126-7.

³⁴⁴"Haikakan khndire yev N. V. Boghos pasha Nubari pashtone" [The Armenian Question and the mission of His Excellency Boghos pasha Nubar], op. cit. The purpose of the 1913 Delegation was to secure reforms in Ottoman Armenia through the mediation of the Triple Entente powers. For details on results of negotiations, consult Hovanissian, pp. 32-39; also, "Haikakan barenorogutiunner 1913-4" in *Haikakan Sovetakan Hanragitaran* [Armenian Soviet Encyclopedia], vol. 6, (Yerevan: Armenian SSR Academy of Science, 1980), pp. 170-1

³⁴⁵"Haikakan khndrin batsume" [The emergence of the Armenian Question], translated excerpts from *al-Muqattam*, 4 May 1915 in *Arev*, 15 May, 1915.

Armenian provinces in Turkey will become Russian..."³⁴⁶ In retrospect, the choice of the word "think" (il pense) is bitterly sardonic.

On 3 May 1915 Boghos *pasha* Nubar left Port Saïd for Europe, where he would be based in Paris. He was to meet Dr. Hakob Zavriev³⁴⁷ who had been given assurances for an autonomous Armenia by Sazonov, the Russian Foreign Minister.³⁴⁸ That the Armenians outside Ottoman territories did not suspect the real intentions of the Young Turks becomes clear from the memorandum presented by Dr. Zavriev to Izvolskii, Russian ambassador to France, which, among others, stated that "Russia intends to propose to the governments that within the Turkish boundaries there be created an autonomous Armenia, under Turkish suzerainty and the protection of the three governments, Russia, England, and France".³⁴⁹ Ironically, in May 1915, when the Turkish policy of extermination of Ottoman Armenians was already in process, maintaining a Turkish suzerainty over Ottoman Armenian was still considered a possibility in the minds of Armenians, who, as yet, ignored the genocidal intentions of the Young Turk government.

³⁴⁶"M. De France, Ministre de France au Caire, à M. Declassé, Ministre des Affaires étrangères", telegram (Le Caire, le 30 avril 1915), in Beylerian ed. *Les Grandes Puissances...* pp. 15-6.

³⁴⁷"Haikakan Khndire yev N. V. Boghos pasha Nubar" [The Armenian Question and the Function of His Excellency Boghos pasha Nubar] in *Arev*, 11 May 1915.

³⁴⁸Walker, *Armenia: The Survival...*, p. 457.

³⁴⁹Hovannisian, *Armenian on the Road...*, p. 58.

By the end of June 1915 when the future of Armenia was envisioned as "autonomous and neutral", including part of Cilicia, under the collective protection of the Entente powers³⁵⁰. Boghos pasha Nubar was very optimistic with the results of the preliminary talks held with the European representatives and worked in the direction of reconciling the Armenian aspirations for an autonomous Armenia with the interests of the Powers under whose protection Armenia would fall.³⁵¹ Boghos pasha Nubar's extensive correspondence from Europe with the Armenian Prelacy in Cairo coordinated the measures to be taken by the Armenian official leadership and the political parties in Egypt with the policies of the Armenian National Delegation, on the basis of the results of his talks with the representatives of the Entente.

Armenians in Egypt and the Annihilation of Ottoman Armenians

Like the pieces of a jigsaw puzzle, the bits and pieces of the tragic news that kept reaching Egypt in the first half of 1915 gradually unveiled the situation of Ottoman Armenians. News arriving from Bulgaria informed that massacres and barbaric acts in the Armenian vilayets had restarted.³⁵² A correspondent of the *Times* reported from the Balkans that the number of prominent Armenians exiled from Constantinople to the depth of Anatolia reached 1500 individuals.³⁵³ On 24 May 1915, a cable from the

³⁵⁰"Haikakan patvirakutiun" [Armenian Delegation] in *Arev*, 28 June 1915.

³⁵¹Ibid.

³⁵²Krikor Sarkissian, "Haikakan hartse: Boghos pasha Nubari patvirakutiune" [The Armenian Question: the delegation of Boghos pasha Nubar] in *Arev*, 13 May, 1915.

³⁵³"Polsahayots vidjake" [The condition of Armenians in Constantinople] in *Arev*, 21 May 1915, based on "Armenian Exiles" in *Bourse*, 20 May 1915.

special correspondent of the *Egyptian Gazette* from London stated that the Entente Powers had informed the Porte that they would hold all the members of the Ottoman government responsible for the Armenian massacres.³⁵⁴ From Transcaucasia came the news of the slaughter in Alashkert of all Armenians between the ages of 11 and 60.³⁵⁵ On 9 June 1915, translating from a Russian newspaper, *Arev* gave the sequence and details on the tragic events in Ottoman Armenia, Cilicia and Constantinople until the end of April 1915.³⁵⁶

On 25 June, Mihran Damadian wrote: "Facing these sad facts, one would be tempted to think that the Armenian population in Armenia was doomed to certain annihilation". However, he hastened to eliminate this possibility on the basis of an anticipated "near Entente victory".³⁵⁷ A few days later, *Arev* wrote that following the orders of the central government in Constantinople, the Armenian population of Cilicia have been deported *en mass*, males separately from females and children. "This time", commented *Arev*, "it is different from the general massacres [1894-6]; it is more barbaric and more diabolic; it is mass deportation".³⁵⁸

354 "Dashnakits petutiunk hayots jarterun hantep" [Position of Allied Powers vis-à-vis the Armenian massacres] in *Arev*, 26 May 1915, based on the same day's *Egyptian Gazette*.

355 "Azgayin kronik" [National Chronicle] in *Arev*, 2 June 1915.

356 "Haiastani vidjake nerka paterazmi mijotsin" [The Situation in Armenia during the Present War] in *Arev*, 9 June 1915.

357 Mihran Damadian, "Katsutiune Haiastani mej" [The situation in Armenia] in *Arev*, 25 June 1915.

358 "Azgayin kronik" [National chronicle] in *Arev*, 30 June 1915.

It seems that only when news of the mass deportation of Ottoman Armenians reached Egypt at the end of June 1915, the Armenians in this country woke up to the horror of the CUP's (Young Turks' Committee of Union and Progress) policy of extermination of the entire Armenian population of the Ottoman Empire. By July 1915, there was no doubt in the minds of the Armenians in Egypt that the tragic events in Cilicia and western Armenia surpassed the massacres of the 1894-6 red years. "It is a policy for the annihilation of the Armenian element that is being implemented now", wrote Mihran Damadian on 9 July 1915. But, he added optimistically: "All is not lost, yet... there are yet means to rescue our brethren who are still in Cilicia".³⁵⁹ He did not, however, specify to the appalled Armenian masses in Egypt what those means could be.

In August 1915, the copy of an extensive secret report (dated 30/13 July 1915) from Constantinople- confirming the newspaper accounts of the situation of Ottoman Armenians- reached the Armenian Prelacy in Cairo, enclosed in a letter (dated 9/22 July 1915) sent by the Armenian Primate in Bulgaria.³⁶⁰ The report- which was read during the 6/19 August 1915 session of the Cairo Civil Council- mentioned, among others, that the Armenians living in the 6 Armenian vilayets (Erzerum, Van, Kharpert, Sivas, Bitlis, Diyarbekir) were forcibly uprooted and driven southwards towards Aleppo and Mosul. As a consequence, no Armenians had been left in those vilayets and the majority of

³⁵⁹Mihran Damadian, "Kilikian nor aghete" [The new calamity in Cilicia] in *Arev*, 9 July 1915.

³⁶⁰Bulgaria was still neutral. It joined the Central Powers on 14 October 1915.

the deportees had perished on the road, unable to continue the journey on foot.³⁶¹

The full text of this report was translated and was sent by the Armenian Prelacy to the diplomatic representatives of the United States, Italy and France in Cairo, who dispatched the report they received to their respective governments.³⁶² In a letter attached to the report sent to Mr. DeFrance, the French Minister in Cairo, Primate Torgom Gushakian wrote:

"I submit to Your Excellency this letter [report] in response to the wishes not only of the community which I represent here, but also of the entire [Armenian] nation. These wishes are to bring to the benevolent attention of the European powers the fate of our miserable Armenia where unheard of exactions have taken such a grave turn that they jeopardize its already precarious existence".

³⁶¹ *Minutes of Civil Council*/vol. 24, Session 92, 6/19 August, 1915, p.173. The source of this report is not revealed by Bulgaria's Primate, Ghevond Dourian. However, the date of the report (30/13 July, 1915) and part of its content mentioned in the minutes, indicate that it was the copy of the second of 4 reports sent by Zaven Archbishop Ter-Yeghiayan, the Armenian Patriarch in Constantinople, to Ghevond Dourian. In 1947, these reports were published in Zaven Archbishop, *Patriarkakan hushers...*, pp. 132-149. These published reports reveal that the Patriarch had requested the Armenian Primate in Bulgaria to send copies of the reports, unsigned- with a note stressing that he had received them from "reliable sources in Constantinople"- to various addresses, primarily to the Catholicos of All Armenians and to Boghos pasha Nubar. As a French translation of the unsigned report which arrived the Armenian Prelacy in Cairo was sent by Primate Gushakian to Mr. DeFrance in Cairo, and hence to the Ministry of foreign Affairs in Paris, the French text is published in Beylerian ed. *Les Grandes Puissances...*, pp. 61-3. A comparison between the French translation and Archbishop Zaven's letter in *Patriarkakan hushers...*, pp. 134-6, confirms that the author of the report sent to Cairo was the Armenian Patriarch in Constantinople.

³⁶² *Minutes of Civil Council*/vol. 24, Session 93, 31 August 1915; Session 94, 7 September 1915.

The Primate's letter appealed to the French government to bring to an end the tragic situation in Armenia.³⁶³

On receiving the report, the Civil Council decided to launch on a general mobilization of the community by holding a joint session of the Civil Councils of Cairo and Alexandria, and by inviting the following people to attend the session: the members of the Community Councils and other official councils; representatives of the Armenian political parties, the AGBU, and relief societies; Armenian lawyers, doctors, prominent bankers, merchants and notables without distinction of creed; and the leaders of the Armenian Catholics and Protestants.³⁶⁴

The joint session of the two Civil Councils convened on 16/29 August 1915.³⁶⁵ The main purpose of the session was to examine the budgets of the prelacies in Cairo and in Alexandria in order to find a means to provide money from the treasuries of both prelacies for the vital needs of the Armenians reduced to a state of destitution as a result of the deportations and the massacres in Ottoman territories. After long deliberations, the session prepared a project to be presented to the General Council for a final decision. The Civil Councils proposed that a sum of 15,000 pounds be procured in the form of loans by mortgaging national estates; 2/3 of the sum be provided by the Cairo Prelacy, whereas 1/3 be

³⁶³"Mgr Thorgom, Prélat des Arméniens d'Égypte, à M. A. De France, Ministre de France au Caire" (Le Caire, le 28 août 1915), in Beylerian ed. *Les Grandes Puissances*, p. 61.

³⁶⁴ *Minutes of Civil Council* vol. 24, Session 92, 6/19 August, 1915, p. 173.

³⁶⁵ Details of its deliberations are registered in *Minutes of Civil Council* vol. 24, *Joint Session of the Cairo and Alexandria Civil Councils in Bulaq* 16/29 August 1915, pp. 175-180.

provided by the Alexandria Prelacy. Alluding to the problem of "legalities" linked with the terms in the testaments of the donators of the Communal estates, which might hamper the implementation of this decision, a member of the Council stressed the spirit in which these endowments were made: "all Communal estates belonged to the people and are for the various needs of the people; and the above determined sum is to be used for the most vital needs of the [Armenian] people".³⁶⁶

The joint session of the Civil Councils also came to the conclusion that the various fund-raising projects in the community should be stopped and the General Council should form a Committee under the presidency of the Primate and the auspices of Boghos pasha Nubar. This Committee would have the exclusive right to fund-raising so as to centralize the allocation of funds for the volunteer movement and for the Armenian refugees who have been reduced to destitution as a result of the War or mass deportation. Any money that remained unused from previous fund-raising should be delivered to the Committee-to-be.³⁶⁷ These projects were put forth to the General Council. But before the latter gave its consent, and before practical steps were taken to implement the decisions of the session, the Communal authorities were faced with the reality of the arrival of 4200 Ottoman Armenian refugees at their door.

³⁶⁶Ibid. p. 179.

³⁶⁷Ibid. p. 178.

Arrival of Ottoman Armenian Refugees in Port Sa'id

On September 14, 1915, a telegram sent by Dr. Arsharuni from Port Sa'id informed the Armenian Prelacy in Cairo that 4000 Armenian refugees had just arrived in Port Sa'id³⁶⁸. General Maxwell informed the Prelacy that these refugees had been brought from Jebel Musa³⁶⁹ on board French ships, that habitation [tents] and nutrition would be cared for by British military authorities, and that the Prelacy should participate in providing for their various needs, including clothing.³⁷⁰ The following day, Mr. Karapet Kechian, a member of the Cairo Civil Council, Mr. Martik Prutian, a prominent Armenian merchant and Mr. Nishan Togatlian left for Port Sa'id with the assignment to make the necessary arrangements and to report to the Civil Council on the situation there. Mr. Togatlian was appointed the Prelacy's employee-interpreter in the camp and had to act according to the instructions of the Prelacy.³⁷¹

These refugees were the inhabitants of the six Armenian villages of *Suediyeh*, in the southernmost periphery of Cilicia, in

³⁶⁸N. M. Togatlian "Svetatsineru Port Sa'id zhamanume, otar ashkhatoghner" in *Alyakner yev khlyakner*, p. 19.

³⁶⁹Mountain located north to the city and bay of Antioch, in proximity to Ras al Mina, in the vilayet of Aleppo.

³⁷⁰*Minutes of Civil Council*/vol. 24, Session 95, 1/14 September, 1915, p. 190.

³⁷¹*Minutes of Civil Council*/vol. 24, Session 95, 1/14 September, 1915, p. 190; Session 96, 5/18 September 1915, p. 192; N. M. Togatlian "Svetatsineru Port Sa'id zhamanume, otar ashkhatoghner" in *Alyakner yev khlyakner*, p. 20. Mr. Togatlian stayed in the camp for nine months after which he moved to the city of Port Sa'id where he stayed till the end of the war. As interpreter, he was also the mediator between the refugees and local state authorities. Through a regular correspondence with *Arev*, he kept the Armenian public informed of the developments in the camp and the needs of the refugees.

the *sanjak* of Antioch;³⁷² (hence, in Armenian writings they are interchangeably referred to as *Suediyans* and *Cilicians*). Having heard of the tragic fate of the Armenians in Zeitun and Diyarbekir, and convinced that "deportation" meant slow, agonizing death, they had resisted the deportation orders of the *qaim maqam* of Antioch in July 1915, and had taken refuge on Jebel Musa, the slopes of which ran down to the Mediterranean coast.³⁷³ They had succeeded in holding back regular and irregular Turkish forces which besieged the mountain from the inland for almost a month and a half.³⁷⁴

French warships cruising the Syrian coast for blockade purposes had noticed their SOS flags, evacuated them and brought them to Port Saïd.³⁷⁵ There, with the cooperation of the British

³⁷²These 6 villages were: Bethias, Hadji Habibli, Yoghoun Olouk, Kebousiyeh, Khederbek and Vakif. Administratively, Suediyeh, also referred to as Selefka, was a nahiye in the Kaza of Lefkia, in the Sanjak of Antioch, part of the Vilayet of Aleppo. For information on the inhabitants of these villages who were almost exclusively Armenian, see Rev. Tigran Andreasian, "Svetahaiere" [The Armenians of Suediyeh] in *Alyakner yev khlyakner*, pp. 13-8.

³⁷³Dikran Andreasian, *A Red Cross Flag That Saved Four Thousand*, translated by Stephen Trowbridge, published for the American Relief Committee in Cairo, (Cairo: Nile Mission Press undated), p. 5; "Le Capitaine de vaisseau Chamonard, Chef d'état-major de la 3e Escadre de la Méditerranée, au Lieutenant-Colonel Elgood, Commandant Militaire britannique à Port-Saïd", dated Port-Saïd, le 12 septembre 1915, in Beylerian ed. *Les Grandes Puissances...*, p. 65. The total number of the Armenians in these villages was 6311 individuals. When the Armenian heads of these villages held a meeting and decided to defy the Ottoman authorities orders, two thirds of the villagers, 4231 people, chose to attempt resistance in the heights of their mountain. The rest chose obedience to the authorities, were deported and were never heard of again. (Rev. Dikran Andreasian, "Svetahaiere" p. 18).

³⁷⁴For the details on the resistance on Jebel Musa see; Arthur Beylerian ed. *Les Grandes Puissances...*, pp. 65, 85; Christopher Walker, *Armenia: the Survival of a Nation*, (St. Martin Press, New York, 1990), pp. 223-5; Tigran Andreasian, *A Red Cross Flag That Saved Four Thousand*, pp. 5-15; and Andreasian, "Svedahaier" in *Alyakner yev khlyakner*, pp. 13-16.

³⁷⁵The French warships which accomplished the embarkation of the Armenians of Jebel Musa were the cruisers of the Third Mediterranean Squadron, namely: le Desaix, le Guichen, l'Amiral Charner, la Foudre and le D'Esstrées. This and all the details on the circumstances of the evacuation of the Armenians from Jebel Musa and their transportation

military authorities, and thanks to the *corvée* furnished by the French Marine, almost overnight, the tents for a concentration camp were installed on the east bank of the Suez Canal, near the *lazaretto* (quarantine).³⁷⁶ During the first two weeks, the camp was administered by the local British military authorities in Port Saïd, after which the responsibility for the task was assumed by civilian Administration.³⁷⁷

On 16 September 1915, a delegation of prominent Armenians, headed by the Primate arrived in Port Saïd where in a brief address to the Rear-Admiral Darrieus, the Primate expressed words of profound gratitude on behalf of all Armenians to the French government, the French Marine and the President of the French Republic.³⁷⁸ After the return of the Primate from Port Saïd the Prelacy sent letters to the French President and the King of England, thanking them for the protection they had offered and the

to Port Saïd are found in "Le Contre-Amiral Darrieus, Commandant la 2e Division et p.i. la 3e Escadre de la Méditerranée, à M. Victor Augagneur, Ministre de la Marine", D. no 293. Secret. A bord du *Jauréguiberry*, en mer, le 22 septembre 1915, in Beylerian ed. *Les Grandes Puissances*, pp. 84-9.

³⁷⁶"Le Contre-Amiral Darrieus, Commandant la 2e Division et p.i. la 3e Escadre de la Méditerranée, à M. Victor Augagneur, Ministre de la Marine", D. no 286. Secret. A bord du *Jauréguiberry*, Rade de Port-Saïd, le 17 septembre 1915, in Beylerian ed. *Les Grandes Puissances*, pp. 73-7. The lazaretto had a hospital which, before the war, served as a quarantine for travellers. There were also buildings for the doctors and the employees of the hospital; see, N. M. Togatlian "Svetatsineru Port Saïd zhamanume, otar ashkhatoghner" [The arrival of Armenians from Suediyeh in Port Saïd] (pp. 19-25) in *Alyakner yev khlyakner*, p. 20.

³⁷⁷P. G. Elgood, *Egypt and the Army*, (Humphry Milford: Oxford University Press, 1924), pp. 186-7.

³⁷⁸"Le Contre-Amiral Darrieus, Commandant la 2e Division et p.i. la 3e Escadre de la Méditerranée, à M. Victor Augagneur, Ministre de la Marine", D. no 286. Secret. A bord du *Jauréguiberry*, Rade de Port-Saïd, le 17 septembre 1915, in Beylerian ed. *Les Grandes Puissances*, p. 76.

care they had bestowed upon the Armenians of Jebel Musa.³⁷⁹ If the Armenians had known the reality in French and British officialdom, the irony of the situation created by their letters would not have escaped them.

It is beyond doubt that the French Marine deserved utmost gratitude from all Armenians for having saved, at great personal risks, the inhabitants of *Suediyeh* from certain death. However, on examining the communication that circulated among various French officials and government Departments from 10 to 22 September 1915, it becomes clear that if left to the French government's decision, all the Armenians on Jebel Musa would have perished: either killed or starved.

The SOS sign on Jebel Musa was first detected on 5 September 1915 by the French cruiser *Guichen*, just a few days before the food and ammunition of the Armenians on the mountain expired. On the same day, one of the leaders of the resistance, Pierre Dmlakian, met the commandant of the *Guichen* and revealed to him the desperately grave situation of the Armenians on the mountain. Between 5 and 11 September, the commandants of the *Guichen* which had stayed on the scene, and the *Desaix* which had joined the *Guichen* on September 6, as well as the Commandant of the Squadron, Admiral Dartige du Fournet on board the *Jeanne d'Arc*, waited for instructions from Paris.³⁸⁰ These instructions

³⁷⁹ *Minutes of Civil Council* vol. 24, Session 96, 5/18 September, 1915, p. 192; "Vranakaghaki taretsuitse" [Yearly events of the tent-city] in *Alyakner yev khlyakner*, pp. 248-9.

³⁸⁰ That Paris was informed of the situation at least on 10 September 1915 is revealed in the telegrams sent by "M. Defrance, Ministre de France au Caire, à M. Declassé, Ministre

never arrived.³⁸¹ In a sarcastic tone, characteristic to his writings, Elgood mentions:

"... the French Government, however interested in principle in the fate of Armenia, were occupied at that moment with matters of greater importance than the problem of rescuing refugees, and postponed consideration of their reply to a more favourable hour... There was a grim humour in the belated reply. Paris, with studied simplicity, inquired 'Where is Jebel Musa'".³⁸²

This reply may well be part of Elgood's rhetoric. Yet, the fact remains that orders for the evacuation of the Armenians in Jebel Musa and their transportation to Port Saïd were given on the night of 11 September by Admiral Dartige du Fournet who had not yet received any instructions from Paris, for the evacuation of the refugees, nor for their settlement in Egypt from the British. The Admiral's decision was based on the communication made to him on 11 September by the Commandant of the *Desaix* stating that it seemed to him the evacuation should take place immediately and unless he got orders to the contrary effect, he would begin the operation early the next morning.³⁸³

des Affaires étrangères" dated Le Caire, le 10 septembre 1915, 16 h 30. (Recu: 16 h 45), and "M. De France, Ministre de France au Caire, à M. Déclasse, Ministre des Affaires étrangères" dated Le Caire, le 11 septembre 1915, 1 h 30. (Recu: 3 h 20), both in Beylerian ed. *Les Grandes Puissances*, p. 64.

³⁸¹"Le Contre-Amiral Darrieus, Commandant la 2^e Division et p.i. la 3^e Escadre de la Méditerranée, à M. Victor Augagneur, Ministre de la Marine", D. no 293. Secret. A bord du *Jauréguiberry*, en mer, le 22 septembre 1915, in Beylerian ed. *Les Grandes Puissances*, pp. 86-7.

³⁸²Elgood, *Egypt and the Army*, pp. 182-3.

³⁸³"Le Contre-Amiral Darrieus, Commandant la 2^e Division et p.i. la 3^e Escadre de la Méditerranée, à M. Victor Augagneur, Ministre de la Marine", D. no 293. Secret. A bord du *Jauréguiberry*, en mer, le 22 septembre 1915, in Beylerian ed. *Les Grandes Puissances*, p. 86.

Thus, it was only through the humanism and audacity of a few French naval officers who acted on their own initiative and responsibility that the Armenians of Jebel Musa were transported to safety in Port Saïd. Obviously, the French government- let alone the President to whom words of thanks were directed- could not be less interested in the fate of the 4000 Armenians in Jebel Musa. Later, the French government took full credit for the rescue operation and used it in the formation of the *Armenian Legion*; though it was not necessary to press the point. Having been saved from certain death by French warships, these Armenians were forever grateful to France, the French government, the French Republic, the French President, and to everything that was French. Little did they know what had happened behind the scenes.

The story of the responsibility for the disembarkation of the Armenian refugees in Port Saïd is similar to that of their embarkation in Jebel Musa. Refused by the High Commissioner in Cyprus to settle the Armenian refugees on the island, the French Marine commandant now turned to the British authorities in Egypt.³⁸⁴ Elgood seems to have forgotten to mention that General Maxwell's reply to the French Marine's requests to settle the Armenian refugees in Egypt was not very different from the French reply "Where is Jebel Musa?". Two days after contacts with Egypt were made, on 12 September while the embarkation had begun in Jebel Musa, the Captain of the French vessel *Chamonard*

³⁸⁴M. Defrance, Ministre de France au Caire, à M. Delcassé, Ministre des Affaires étrangères", Le Caire, le septembre 1915 in Beylerian ed. Les Grandes Puissances, p. 64.

was still answering the questions posed by General Maxwell on where these Armenians were from³⁸⁵.

The British government opposed the settlement of the Armenian refugees either in Cyprus or in Port Saïd.³⁸⁶ Colonel Elgood, Head of the Intelligence Office in Port Saïd, faced with the *fait accompli* imposed by the French, offered to settle the refugees in a concentration camp on the Asian bank of the Suez Canal.³⁸⁷ While the settlement of the refugees by the French Marine and British military officials in Port Saïd was already in process, His Majesty's government was still insisting on not giving them asylum in Egypt and urged the French Government "to transport the refugees elsewhere as soon as possible".³⁸⁸ The Armenians' letter of gratitude to the King of England should have caused His Majesty quite a surprise.

Settling the Refugees

While in Port Saïd, the Primate had made some arrangements with the local Armenian residents of the city and a committee was formed to gather donations and clothing for the

³⁸⁵"Le Capitaine de vaisseau Chamonard, Chef d'État-Major de la 3e Escadre de la Méditerranée, au Lieutenant-Colonel Elgood, Commandant Militaire britannique à Port-Saïd", Port-Saïd, le 12 septembre 1915 in Beylerian ed. *Les Grandes Puissances*, pp. 65-6.

³⁸⁶"Communication de l'Ambassade de Grande-Bretagne au Département", Paris, 14th September 1915 in Beylerian ed. *Les Grandes Puissances*, p. 67.

³⁸⁷Elgood, *Egypt and the Army*, p. 184; "Le Contre-Amiral Darrieus, Commandant la 2e Division et p.i. la 3e Escadre de la Méditerranée, à M. Victor Augagneur, Ministre de la Marine", D. no 286. Secret. A bord du *Jauréguiberry*, Rade de Port-Saïd, le 17 septembre 1915, in Beylerian ed. *Les Grandes Puissances*, p. 74.

³⁸⁸"Communication de l'Ambassade de Grande-Bretagne au Département", Paris, 15th September 1915 in Beylerian ed. *Les Grandes Puissances*, p. 68

refugees from the inhabitants of Port Sa' id and its surroundings.³⁸⁹ On his return to Cairo, on 18 September 1915, the Civil Council held an emergency session, whereby a preliminary plan for the aid of the refugees was formed by the Communal authorities.

Through the Armenian newspapers the Prelacy made appeals to the public for clothes and material. The donations were to be received at the Armenian School in Bulaq and at the Prelacy in Bein al Surein. The Armenian Red Cross- which proved to be the most dedicated and efficient Armenian organization active in the camp throughout the following four years- was to administer the sorting and distribution of the donated goods. Meanwhile, a committee responsible for making clothes for the refugees had already started work in an apartment put under the committee's disposition by Arakel bey Nubar.³⁹⁰

On 19 September, 1915, the General Council met in Alexandria and agreed on the formation of a new, centralized Committee for fund-raising, as proposed in the 29 August session of the joint Civil Councils.³⁹¹ Thus, all the members of the *himnadram* merged with its successor organization which was called *Yegiptahai Npastamatuits Marmin*³⁹² (Egyptian-Armenian

³⁸⁹N. M. Togatlian "Svetatsineru Port Sa' id zhamanume, otar ashkhatoghner", p. 20; *Minutes of Civil Council*/vol. 24, Session 96, 5/18 September, 1915, p. 193.

³⁹⁰*Minutes of Civil Council*/vol. 24, Session 96, 5/18 September, 1915, p. 192.

³⁹¹The register of the General Council could not be found in the archives of the Armenian prelacies in Cairo and in Alexandria. However, for bureaucratic purposes, a summary of the resolutions of the 19 September session of the General Council were mentioned in a letter sent from the Alexandria Civil Council to the Cairo Civil Council and were registered in the *Minutes of Civil Council*/vol. 24, Session 111, 8/21 January 1916, p. 249.

³⁹²*Minutes of Civil Council*/vol. 24, Session 101, 18/31 October 1915, p. 213; *Arev*, December 8, 1915.

Relief Committee- henceforth, *npastamatuits*). But now the resolutions of the Communal leaders had to take into consideration the 4200 Armenian refugees in Port Sa'id. Consequently, the General Council decided that 1/4 of the sum to be procured by the Communal treasuries and by fund-raising would be allotted to the Armenian Red Cross for the care of the Armenian refugees in Port Sa'id, while 3/4 of the sum would be allotted to both the volunteers fighting in Armenia, and the Ottoman Armenian deportees. The final decision on the allocation of the funds rested with Boghos pasha Nubar.³⁹³

Throughout September appeals were made, especially for clothes and medication. The appeals also stressed the need for alimentation (rice, lentil, bean, oil, sugar, dairy products, egg, dry fruit, etc.), as the nutrition provided by government was nothing more than the bare necessity to stay alive.³⁹⁴ People responded by donating in money and kind. Various Armenian merchants made gifts of their goods, such as: 48 pairs of shoes; 36 dozens combs; 80 dozens handkerchiefs; etc.³⁹⁵ Within a month from the arrival of the refugees in Port Sa'id, the Armenian Prelacies in Cairo and Alexandria, working in coordination with the AGBU, and with wide popular support, had provided enough material to meet the basic needs for the subsistence of the Armenians in the tent-city, such

³⁹³ *Minutes of Civil Council*/vol. 24, Session 111, 8/21 January 1916, p. 249.

³⁹⁴ *Arev*, 29 September 1915; *Arev*, 15 October 1915.

³⁹⁵ These items are found in one of numerous donation lists, chosen randomly, in *Arev*, 6 October, 1915.

as: beds, quilts, covers, kitchen utensils, hats, shoes, and sewing machines.³⁹⁶

From mid-September to mid-October, thanks to the efforts of efficient British personalities, such as Mrs. Elgood, (who was later called the camp's "guardian angel"), Major Haron, Major Pearson, Mr. Hornblower, and others, the refugees were provided with a well organized camp equipped with sanitary necessities, clean water and elementary alimentation. Three Armenian doctors, Dr. Arsharuni, Dr. Churukian and Dr. Teovletian, and a few nurses of the Armenian Red Cross also worked hard in the camp ever since the arrival of the refugees.³⁹⁷

Nevertheless, until substantial communal aid reached the camp-city, a whole month had elapsed during which the refugees in Port Sa'id had lived in unbearable desert conditions.³⁹⁸ This brought the Armenian community in general and the leadership in particular under severe criticism by the Armenian press. The masses were blamed for their indifference towards the suffering of their compatriots, while the leaders were accused of apathy and inefficiency.³⁹⁹

³⁹⁶ *Minutes of Civil Council* vol. 24, Session 98, 8 October 1915, pp. 197-201; *Arev*, 20 October 1915.

³⁹⁷ N. M. Togatlian "Svetatsineru Port Sa'id zhamanume, otar ashkhatoghner" pp. 21-3; Dr. Arsharouni, "Lapurintosi mej enk" [We are in a Labyrinth] in *Arev*, 4 October 1915.

³⁹⁸ "Kilikiatsinere Port Saidi mej" [Cilicians in Port Sa'id] report by N. Togatlian in *Arev*, 29 September 1915.

³⁹⁹ Vahan Tekeyan, "Inch sirt e merine" [Do we Have a Heart?] in *Arev*, 29 September 1915; Dr. Arsharouni, "Lapurintosi mej enk" [We Are in a Labyrinth] in *Arev*, 4 October 1915.

Under the circumstances, inefficient they were; but indifferent they were not. It is not to be forgotten that the leaders of the Armenian community were not professional administrators. Neither was the bureaucratic machinery of the prelacies equipped to deal with emergency situations. As for the masses - except for many of the rich who remained indifferent- it was revealed after the first month that they were far from being apathetic, and showed large support to the Prelacy's appeal for contributions. In November 1915, Arev, which only a month ago had accused the masses of apathy, announced: "The Armenian Red Cross, greatly encouraged by the sympathy and enthusiastic support of the masses, decided to establish in the Armenian camp in Port Sa'id a supplementary kitchen, in addition to the hospital founded and administered by it [the Armenian Red Cross]".⁴⁰⁰

An Overburdened Community?

The fact of the matter was that Armenians in Egypt, leadership and masses, were, by Fall 1915, overwhelmed and confused in face of the ever-increasing expectations directed to them from all over the region. Egypt's geo-political situation placed upon them heavy responsibilities as a rich and organized Community in proximity to the Middle Eastern war-fronts. In Port Sa'id were 4200 destitute Armenians that needed to be cared for. From Transcaucasia came appeals for the support and the assistance of the volunteers and the refugees there. From Constantinople, appeals for the urgency of funds, to save from

⁴⁰⁰ Arev, 12 November, 1915.

certain death the surviving deportees in Ottoman territories, continued to arrive.

In fact, in October 1915, another letter from the Armenian Primate in Bulgaria, dated 19 September 1915, reached the Armenian Primate in Egypt, appealing for immediate aid for the deportees. Quoted in the minutes of the Civil Council, the letter urged:

"Our misfortunate compatriots, deported from the provinces are dying in 100-thousands in the deserts, as a consequence to the hardship and hunger they are being subjected to. In an attempt to alleviate the pain caused by this catastrophe at least partially, we have officially been asked to appeal to the Armenians abroad for immediate aid in the form of contributions.

According to information from reliable sources, if material assistance is not hastily rendered to regions from Eskishehir to Konya to [.....], to Daron, Adana, Aleppo, Zor, Urfa and as far as Mosul and Baghdad where Armenians have been uprooted and deported in 100-thousands, within the span of 1-2 months, even before the winter starts, all of them will perish.

Consequently, on the basis of the demand made to us, we come to request Your Reverence, that on receiving this letter you hastily launch on a fund-raising campaign and instead of sending the collected sums to the Caucasus or elsewhere, you send the money to our address, and hence it will

be sent to Constantinople, as all the resources of the Patriarchate there have been drained".⁴⁰¹

Between the writing of this letter and its arrival in Cairo, Bulgaria had joined the war (October 14, 1915), cutting off the closest route of communication between the Armenians in Egypt and Constantinople. (It also cut off the routing of Armenian volunteers from Egypt and Ethiopia to Transcaucasia).⁴⁰² Therefore, the Civil Council faced the problem of how to send money to Constantinople. Moreover, the members of the Civil Council wondered whether the Patriarch would be able to use the money for the mentioned purpose, as "according to newspaper accounts Mr. Morgenthau, the American Ambassador in Constantinople, had attempted to distribute aid to deported Armenian, but the Ottoman government had not allowed it".⁴⁰³

This brought to an end the prospects of the Armenians in this country to send money or material aid to the Armenians in the Ottoman provinces. As early as May 1915, when news of the miserable condition of Armenians in Ottoman territories had just started to reach Egypt, Arev had written:

"Every day hundreds of petitions for contributions are made to the Patriarchate in

⁴⁰¹ *Minutes of Civil Council*/vol. 24, Session 101, 18/31 October 1915, p. 211. As the memoirs *Patriarkakan hushers...* of Archbishop Zaven, the Patriarch of Constantinople, published in 1947 show, this letter had been written on the request of the Patriarch and the information it contained was based on the Patriarch's extensive letter, dated August 25/ 7 September 1915 sent to the Primate in Bulgaria; in Zaven Archbishop, pp. 142-149.

⁴⁰² Vostanik Ter Gabrielian, "Shit me artsunk im tagharis" [A drop of Tear] (pp. 74-5) in *Arara, haikakan iegeone*, [Arara: the Armenian Legion], (Alexandria: Aram Stepanian, 1919), p. 75.

⁴⁰³ *Minutes of Civil Council*/vol. 24, Session 101, 18/31 October 1915, p. 211.

Constantinople, which in turn, appeals to the AGBU. However, because of the present war conditions, transferring aid to Turkey has become extremely difficult.

It is still possible to send money to Constantinople through the banks and dispatches of neutral countries... The main issue, however, is... how can money reach the provinces?

Though the Patriarchate has a thousand of administrative links, it has remained bewildered... It is not possible to send money through checks from the provinces to Constantinople and vice versa. Free movement is also not allowed...

The sole means that remains is through the courtesy of the American Embassy in Constantinople, for those provinces where American Consulates or representatives exist".⁴⁰⁴

On 27 October 1915, citing the *Times* correspondent in Washington, Arev wrote:

"Neither means nor facilities have been granted by the Turkish government to put in use the sum of 20,000 pounds sent for the Armenians from America to Mr. Morgenthau. Thus, the Ambassador had been reduced to complete inability to render assistance to the victims".⁴⁰⁵

⁴⁰⁴"Inchpes kmank npast hastsnel" [How Can Contribution Reach Place?] in *Arev*, 24 May 1915. In fact, in April-May 1915 the Central Committee of AGBU in Cairo had sent 1000 British pounds to its branch in Constantinople, through the courtesy of the American Consul in Cairo, intended for the most badly destroyed regions in Armenia. The exact destination of the aid was to be decided after consulting the Patriarch in Constantinople; (*Arev*, 11 May, 1915).

⁴⁰⁵*Arev*, 27 October 1915.

If the American Ambassador on Ottoman territories was not able to save the Armenians from certain death, what chance did the Armenians in Egypt have to rescue their compatriots on enemy territories? As far as aiding the deportees in the Syrian and Mesopotamian deserts was concerned, at the end of 1915, the Armenians in Egypt resigned in despair, awaiting the advance of the Allies on these two fronts. Nevertheless, fund-raising for the deportees, the volunteers and the refugees in Transcaucasia continued in the community. Also, by November 1915, the prelates of Cairo and Alexandria had been able to procure a loan of 5,000 pounds through borrowing from the Henaiekian heritage which had been left to the custody of the Alexandria Prelacy.⁴⁰⁶ The Armenian Red Cross in Egypt conscious of the forthcoming need for nurses for the survivors in Ottoman territories once the war would be over, offered a training program to Armenian young ladies, ran by three of its volunteer doctors.⁴⁰⁷

Meanwhile, the eye-witness accounts that arrived Egypt exposed the horrible conditions of the deportees in the Syrian deserts. Translating from *Ahram* (14 March 1916), Arev wrote on 15 March 1916, that a traveler who had recently returned from Mesopotamia and who had been in the Deir al-Zor region for 12 days, recounted that he had found all parts of the region full of Armenians. "They are in an extremely destitute state. Most of them

⁴⁰⁶A sum of money left by the late Mr. Henaiekian for his son who was a minor. It was arranged that over a span of six years, 2/3 of the loan and its interests would be paid by the Cairo Prelacy, while 1/3 by the Alexandria Prelacy; *Minutes of Civil Council* vol. 24, Session 104: 9/22 November 1915, p. 220, and Session 111, 8/21 January 1916, p. 249; *Minutes of Civil Council* vol. 26, March 1918 - May 1920, Session 4, 16/ 29 November 1918, p. 138; *Minutes of Community Council*, vol. 43, pp. 225-7.

⁴⁰⁷*Arev*, 2 February 1916.

have nowhere to live and survive on grass. A few have a donkey or a goat. You never meet an adult male in those numerous people. They are only women and children among whom there are some very old men".⁴⁰⁸ Unfortunately for these Armenian survivors of the massacres, throughout 1916 no significant advances were made by the Allies on the Middle Eastern fronts.

On the other hand, the occupation of the Russian armies of territories in Ottoman Armenia in 1916 did not result in the enthusiasm which the occupation of Van in May 1915 had created among the Armenians in Egypt. "Our mourning hearts", wrote Partevian in 1917, "could not rejoice with the successive occupations of Erzerum, Mush, Baghesh (Bitlis), Trebizond, Baberd, and Erzinjan".⁴⁰⁹ The Armenians in Egypt were not alone in their mourning. As Hovannisian points out: "Russian occupation of Erzerum and Trebizond would have elicited delirious celebrations throughout Transcaucasia in 1914, but in 1916 it was greeted with silent interest, for the tsarist armies had occupied 'Armenia without Armenians'".⁴¹⁰

Even the proclamation of a sovereign Armenian state in Transcaucasia in May 1918 was greeted with heavy hearts by

⁴⁰⁸"Mijagetki hai aksorialnere" [The Armenian Exiles in Mesopotamia] in *Arev*, 15 March 1916.

⁴⁰⁹Partevian, "Yegiptahai tarin (1915-1916)" [The Egyptian-Armenian Year (1915-1916)] (pp.5-9) in Partevian ed. *Yegiptahai taretsuitse* [Armeno-Egyptian Almanach] 4th year, 1917, (Alexandria: A. Kassabian, 1917), p.5.

⁴¹⁰Hovannisian, *Armenian on the Road...*, p. 67.

Armenians both in the newly formed Republic and abroad⁴¹¹. Thus, until the gradual occupation of Ottoman territories in Palestine and Syria by the Egyptian expeditionary Force between October 1917 and October 1918, concerned Armenian individuals and organizations in Cairo, Alexandria and the Egyptian provinces focused their efforts on the refugees in the Port Sa'id Armenian camp. The story of this camp can be divided into two phases: September 1915- March 1918, during which only the refugees who had arrived from *Suediyeh* resided in the camp; April 1918- November 1919, during which the camp gave refuge also to waves of Ottoman Armenian survivors of the massacres arriving from Ottoman territories occupied by the Entente.

The Community and the Port Sa'id Camp: 1915-1917

Within a few days of the disembarkation of the refugees from Jebel Musa, under the supervision of Major Pearson the camp was divided into six "villages", which were sub-divided into sections numbered alphabetically from A to S. Refugees from each village in *Suediyeh* were settled together in the same camp "village". Each section was composed of 25 tents,⁴¹² which means that each tent had 8-9 residents. A census was prepared as one of the first measures to organize the distribution of food and clothes, and the vaccination of the refugees.⁴¹³ In a report sent by

⁴¹¹Curiously, the proclamation of the Republic of Armenia in May 1918 is not mentioned in the 1918 minutes of the Cairo Civil Council. The relation between the Armenian community in Egypt and the 1918-1920 Republic of Armenia lies outside the scope of this paper.

⁴¹²N. M. Togatlian "Svetatsineru Port Sa'id zhamanume, otar ashkhatoghner" p. 22.

⁴¹³N. M. Togatlian "Svetatsineru Port Sa'id zhamanume, otar ashkhatoghner" pp. 22-3.

Togatlian from the camp to the Cairo Prelacy, the number of the refugees is given as follows: 915 men; 1408 women; 702 boys; 539 girls; 636 children.⁴¹⁴ That made a total of 4200 individuals all of whom were vaccinated within a short period of time. The process of vaccination was led by the directress of the hospital, Mrs. Elgood who was assisted by three Armenian Doctors, Dr. Arsharuni, Dr. Churukian and Dr. Teovletian, and three Armenian Red Cross nurses Misses Sirakian, Patmanian and Perperian.⁴¹⁵

During the first week, under the directives of the Communal authorities, a local committee was formed in the camp, from the leaders of the resistance on Jebel Musa. Composed of 17 members, the function of this committee was to care for the internal problems in the camp, to give the refugees moral support and to register the newly born.⁴¹⁶ It is worth pointing out that the refugees' moral behaviour in the camp had presented no difficulties for the authorities, where there were no policemen to oversee public discipline and check crimes.⁴¹⁷

The major issues which needed organization in the camp were: health, nutrition, clothing, providing education for the young

⁴¹⁴ *Minutes of Civil Council* vol. 24, Session 98, 8 October, 1915, p. 199; Confusingly, in his above article Togatlian presents the results of the census as follows: 427 children below 4 years of age; 508 girls between the ages of 4 and 11; 628 boys between the ages of 4 and 14; 1441 females and 1054 males above the age of 14; a total of 4058; in N. M. Togatlian "Svetatsineru Port Sa'id zhamanume, otar ashkhatoghner" p. 23.

⁴¹⁵ N. M. Togatlian "Svetatsineru Port Sa'id zhamanume, otar ashkhatoghner" p. 23.

⁴¹⁶ *Minutes of Civil Council* vol. 24, Session 98, 8 October 1915, p. 198.

⁴¹⁷ *Arev*, 13 December 1915. In fact, the few cases of arrests in the camp, reported to the Cairo Prelacy were during 1918, when thousands of new refugees and orphans overcrowded the camp facilities. One case mentions the exile of 4 refugees to Bilbess, while another case states that 2 minors from the camp were kept at a Correction Home in Gizah; see *Minutes of Civil Council* vol. 26, sessions 100, (10 May 1918, p. 43) and 112 (27 September 1918, p. 98).

and jobs for the adults. It must be kept in mind that the Armenian community provided only auxiliary help to the needs of the refugees to improve their conditions. The camp was administered by the State Refugees Administration which cared for the major expense of providing daily food for the refugees. American and British relief societies also worked on the camp.

The next section focuses on the participation of the Armenian community in Egypt in the care of this refugees. By October 1915, on the initiative of the Armenian community, there already existed in the camp the nucleus for a special kitchen, a school, a *vestiaire* and a workshop. On the arrangement and in coordination with the Civil Councils in Cairo and Alexandria, responsibilities were divided among the Armenian Red Cross, the AGBU and the Prelacies.⁴¹⁸

Nutrition and Health

Initially, providing alimentation for the refugees was undertaken by the British authorities.⁴¹⁹ With the purpose of improving health conditions and the quality of alimentation, the Armenian Red Cross collaborated with the British authorities by providing doctors and nurses,⁴²⁰ and establishing a special kitchen

⁴¹⁸ *Minutes of the Civil Council* vol. 24, Session 100, 13/26 October 1915, p. 209.

⁴¹⁹ "Le Contre-Amiral Darrieus, Commandant la 2e Division et p.i. Escadre de la Méditerranée, à M. DeFrance, Ministre de France au Caire", A bord du *Jauréguiberry*, Rade de Port-Said, le 17 septembre 1915, in Beylerian ed. *Les Grandes Puissances*, p. 98.

⁴²⁰ Dr. M. Salpi (Aram Sahakian) "Hai karmrir khache Por-Saidi vranakaghakin mej" [The Armenian Red Cross in the Port Sa'id Tent-city] (pp. 149-166) in *Alyakner yev khlyakner*, p. 162.

for the weak and the sick. Dr. Arsharuni was the responsible head of this kitchen which was initiated and ran by Mrs. Arsharuni, under the supervision of the Armenian Red Cross doctors, and was subject to the higher supervision of the Prelacy.⁴²¹

The alimentation of the refugees was a major problem. Though food was distributed to them from the day of their arrival, first by the French Marine (for the first two days), then by the British authorities, the bad quality⁴²² and poor nutritive value of the food resulted in grave consequences. Due to malnutrition, during the first month, the number of the sick in the hospital rose from 50 to 150.⁴²³ Also, pellagra,⁴²⁴ appeared in the camp and claimed 40 lives, half of them from among the old and the weak.⁴²⁵ In May 1917, the reply-letter of the Ministry of Interior to the inquires of the Prelacy stated that probably pellagra had started to appear in the camp in May 1916 due to the diet of the refugees and that changes in the nutrition have been made to fight against the epidemic. Only four people had been infected during April-May 1917.⁴²⁶

⁴²¹Zakar Masikian, "Amerikian karmir khache haikakan gaghtavayrin mej" [The American Red Cross in the Armenian Refugee camp] (pp. 167-171) in *Alyakner yev khlaykner*, p. 168; *Minutes of the Civil Council* vol. 24, Session 100, 13/26 October, 1915, p.209.

⁴²²"spoiled cheese, and cereals full of worm" are examples of the quality of food sometimes offered to the refugees by the State Refugees Administration; see *Minutes of Civil Council* vol. 24, Session 113, 10/23 February 1916.

⁴²³*Minutes of Civil Council* vol. 24, Session 104, 22 November 1915.

⁴²⁴A disease characterized by skin eruptions and nervous disorders.

⁴²⁵*Minutes of Civil Council* vol. 25, Session 59, 8 June 1917, p. 244. Dr. M. Salpi gives the figure of 191 deaths due to pellagra during 1916 in "Hai karmrir khache Por-Saidi vranakaghakin mej", p. 166.

⁴²⁶*Minutes of Civil Council* vol. 25, Session 59, 8 June 1917, p. 244.

The special kitchen in the camp, initially financed solely by the Armenian Red Cross, played a crucial role in the amelioration of the nutrition of the refugees, by offering especial, balanced diets to weaklings and convalescents. It widened its scope when Mr. Hornblower, the General Supervisor of the camp, agreed to allot money for especial food for those between 2 and 6 years old. Following the arrival of the American Red Cross on the camp in October 1916, the number of those who benefited from the especial kitchen rose to 300 children and 200 adults.⁴²⁷

Education

The school for the education of the young was established by the AGBU and functioned under the higher supervision of the Prelacy.⁴²⁸ Opened on 15 October 1915, and named Sisvan by Primate Gushakian, the school was composed of 36 tents. It offered classes to 1254 children from both sexes who were mostly uneducated and spoke a Turco-Arabic Armenian dialect. The AGBU, which financed the school also provided the school children with the necessary stationary, including maps, pictures, sports necessities and toys for the kindergarten.⁴²⁹ Sometimes rightly criticized⁴³⁰ for its mismanagement, and often praised for the

⁴²⁷Victoria Arsharuni, "Tkarakazmeru khohanotse" [The Kitchen for the Weak] (pp. 171-176) trans. Nishan Togatlian, in *Alyakner yev Khlyakner*, pp. 174-176.

⁴²⁸*Minutes of the Civil Council*/vol. 24, Session 100, 13/26 October, 1915, p. 209.

⁴²⁹Artashes Gartashian, *Nuter Yegiptosi Hayots Patmutian Hamar: Patmutiun Yegiptahai Bareranerou yev krtakan hastatutiunnerou*, [Topics for the History of the Armenians in Egypt: The History of Armenian Benefactors and Educational Establishments in Egypt], vol. 3, (Venice: St. Lazar, 1981), pp. 278-282.

⁴³⁰*Minutes of the Civil Council*/vol. 25, Session 14, 2/15 August 1916, p. 61. Levon Arigian, "Sisvan varzharane" [The Sisvan School] (pp. 181-189) in *Alyakner yev khlyakner*.

noble cause it pursued, Sisvan, succeeded to "justify the hopes placed upon it- even if not completely at least partly- by teaching our exiled children the Armenian language".⁴³¹

In addition to the above mentioned, the camp also had a chapel⁴³² and an auditorium.⁴³³ What the refugees could not acquire in the vast deserts of Sinai was a cemetery. At first, they had buried their dead in the desert, near the camp. It turned out that their dead had trespassed the property of the Suez Canal Company. Upon the protests of the latter in February 1916, Mr. Hornblower, in behalf of the State Refugee Administration, sent a letter to the Cairo Prelacy, prohibiting the burial of the refugees in proximity to the camp and arranged that thenceforth the dead be buried in a public cemetery which was quite far off the camp. The Prelacy was asked to pay for the coffins and the transportation expense of the dead.⁴³⁴ Following this arrangement the *npastamatuits* cared for the burial expenses.⁴³⁵

Issue of Dispersion of the refugees

As we saw above, since the day of the disembarkation of the refugees in Port Sa'id, the British were against their settlement in Egypt. Many a times they tried to negotiate with the French to

⁴³¹ Levon Arigian, "Sisvan varzharane", p. 188.

⁴³² *Minutes of the Civil Council* vol. 25, Session 1, 10 May 1916, p. 4.

⁴³³ "Vranakaghaki taretsuitse 1915-1919", p. 254.

⁴³⁴ *Minutes of the Civil Council* vol. 24, Session 114, 29 February, 1916; Session 116, 14 March, 1916, p. 271.

⁴³⁵ *Minutes of the Civil Council* vol. 25, Session 5, 9 June, 1916, p.31.

arrange their accommodation at Rhodes or Algeria.⁴³⁶ When, eventually, the refugees remained in Egypt, the British started pressurizing the Armenian Prelacy in Cairo to make arrangements for their dispersion. At first, the Prelacy strictly opposed that any refugee leaves the camp.⁴³⁷ But, in mid October 1915, the British military authorities claimed that it was not possible to continue for long the state grant and protection allotted to the refugees in Port Saïd, and that consequently they should be gradually dispersed.⁴³⁸ The Cairo Civil Council reluctantly complied, and formulated a set of pre-conditions for anyone who would leave the camp. These conditions were:⁴³⁹

- 1- Those who have material means⁴⁴⁰ and wish to leave the camp, may do so.
- 2- Those who have relatives ready to care for them may leave the camp.
- 3- Healthy young men who can find jobs outside, must leave the camp.
- 4- Orphans from both parents be placed in the care of trustworthy families as protégés.

Refugees leaving the camp were asked to sign a declaration to the effect that at no time and under no circumstances would they be a burden on the government or the Prelacy.⁴⁴¹

⁴³⁶"Communication de l'Ambassade de Grande-Bretagne au Département", Paris, 14th September 1915 in Beylerian ed. *Les Grandes Puissances*, p. 67.

⁴³⁷ *Minutes of the Civil Council*/vol. 24, Session 98, 8 October 1915, p. 197.

⁴³⁸ *Minutes of the Civil Council*/vol. 24, Session 99, 2/15 October 1915, p. 204.

⁴³⁹ *Minutes of the Civil Council*/vol. 24, Session 99, 2/15 October 1915, p. 204.

⁴⁴⁰"material means" were later determined: each person leaving the camp should carry on him 10 pounds for each family member. *Minutes of the Civil Council*/vol. 24, Session 107, 3/16 December 1915, p. 235.

⁴⁴¹ *Minutes of the Civil Council*/vol. 24, Session 107, 3/16 December 1915, p. 235.

In mid-December 1915, Mr. Hornblower, the Chief Supervisor of the State Refugees Administration continued to urge the Prelacy that the Armenian refugees in Port Sa'id should work and earn a living.⁴⁴² Consequently, on 28 December 1915, the Prelacy announced that all those who wished to take servants or adopt orphans from the camp may apply to the Armenian prelacies in Cairo and in Alexandria. The applicants had to fill in official forms which would guarantee their integrity, and had to sign their agreement to the conditions of the Prelacy.⁴⁴³ Though these precautionary steps were taken, a few cases of maid-abuse were reported during 1917,⁴⁴⁴ following which the Civil Council brought an end to this practice by refusing the employment of girls from the camp as servants.⁴⁴⁵

Fear of the material burden that would be caused by the dispersion of the inhabitants of the camp was not the primary concern of the Armenian leaders in Egypt. Some of those who left were cared for by relatives abroad- especially the United States- who paid for their travel expenses.⁴⁴⁶ The main reason behind Armenian opposition to the dispersion of the refugees was that

⁴⁴² *Minutes of the Civil Council* vol. 24, Session 106, 6 December 1915, pp. 229-230.

⁴⁴³ *Minutes of the Civil Council* vol. 24, Session 107, 3/16 December 1915. p. 235; *Arev*, 29 December 1915.

⁴⁴⁴ *Minutes of the Civil Council* vol. 25, Session 78, 6/19 October 1917, p. 328; Session 85, 7 December 1917, p. 364.

⁴⁴⁵ *Minutes of the Civil Council* vol. 24, Session 78, 6/19 October 1917, p. 328; Session 85, 7 December 1917, p. 365.

⁴⁴⁶ Vahan Tekeyan, "Port Saiden Amerika" [From Port Sa'id to America] in *Arev* 23 January 1916; As early as 8 October 1915, a Mr. Vorperian had sent a telegram from Djibouti informing the Prelacy in Cairo that he had provided 15 tickets for the travel by sea of his sister and relatives from the camp to Djibouti, where he resided. The Prelacy had refused to let anyone leave the camp; see, *Minutes of the Civil Council* vol. 24, Session 98, 8 October 1915, p. 197.

the political significance of the repatriation of the refugees in their homeland during the post-war period did not escape the Armenians in Egypt.⁴⁴⁷ As a means to counter-balance dispersion, various workshops were installed in the camp on the basis of the skills of the refugees.

Workshops

At the end of October 1915, there already existed in the camp a workshop where 180 refugee women worked on sewing machines and prepared clothes for the refugees. This workshop, financed by the Communal treasury, was about to finish its project at the end of November 1915, and could work to produce orders received from outside the camp. With the purpose of providing jobs to a greater number of refugees, the Civil Council widened the scope of this existing workshop where the number of workers could reach 350.⁴⁴⁸ The men among the refugees were skillful comb-makers (wooden and ivory) and weavers, while the women were skilled in lace and needlework.⁴⁴⁹ Therefore, a sum of 600 pounds was allotted from the Communal treasury for installing four new branches: comb-making and weaving for male-workers, lace and needlework for females.⁴⁵⁰ On a space of 2500 meters

⁴⁴⁷ Vahan Tekeyan, "Port Saiden Amerika".

⁴⁴⁸ *Minutes of the Civil Council*/vol. 24, Session 100, 13/26 October 1915, p. 209; Session 105, 17/29 November 1915, p. 223; Session 107, 3/16 December 1915, p. 234.

⁴⁴⁹ Andreassian, "Svetahaiere", pp. 17-8; *Minutes of the Civil Council*/vol. 24, Session 102, 3/16 November 1915, p. 216.

⁴⁵⁰ *Minutes of the Civil Council*/vol. 24, Session 105, 17/29 November 1915, p. 223.

allocated by Mr. Hornblower, wooden buildings were constructed for the purpose.⁴⁵¹

Financed by the Prelacy and administered by the Civil Council's Workshop Committee⁴⁵² which procured the needed machinery and raw material, these workshops functioned successfully for some months.⁴⁵³ At the end of December 1915, Miss Cunningham arrived the camp on behalf of the London based "Friends of Armenia" and supervised the women's needlework and lace workshop which, under her organization, prepared handkerchiefs and carpets.⁴⁵⁴ By the end of January 1916, some of the sections had already started making profits.⁴⁵⁵

Soon, however, problems occurred between the refugees and the camp Administration. The State Refugee Administration took 40% of the working refugees wages as "nutrition expenses". The refugee-workers were already paid minimum wages (males 3 P.T. and females 1,50 P.T per day). Protesting against the sum taken by the Administration, the workers went on strike in February 1916.⁴⁵⁶ Overall, the workshop enterprise was a success, as at the end of February 1916 only 120 people had left the camp.⁴⁵⁷

⁴⁵¹ *Minutes of the Civil Council* vol. 24, Session 107, 3/16 December 1915, p. 234.

⁴⁵² The members of this Committee were: Kevork Tchakejian, Haik Khayetian, Karapet Kechian, and Harutjun Kemhadjian; the last two were members of the Cairo Civil Council.

⁴⁵³ *Minutes of the Civil Council* vol. 24, Session 112, 27 January 1916, pp. 255-6.

⁴⁵⁴ *Minutes of the Civil Council* vol. 24, Session 111, 21 January 1916, pp. 250-1; N. M. Togatlian "Svetatsineru Port Sa'id zhamanume, otar ashkhatoghner" p. 24.

⁴⁵⁵ *Minutes of the Civil Council* vol. 24, Session 112, 27 January 1916, pp. 255-6.

⁴⁵⁶ *Minutes of the Civil Council* vol. 24, Session 111, 21 January 1916, pp. 250-1; Session 113, 10/23 February 1916, pp. 258-9.

⁴⁵⁷ *Minutes of the Civil Council* vol. 24, Session 113, 10/23 February 1916, p. 259.

Another obstacle created by the State Administration left a number of refugees unemployed. As the administration of the workshops needed close follow up, and the members of the *Workshop Committee* could not reside in Port Saïd permanently, a contract was signed between the Cairo Prelacy and Mr. Kevork Tchakedjian on 29 February 1916, whereby the latter became the entrepreneur of the workshops.⁴⁵⁸ Three months later, as a result of the difficulties created by the government, Mr. Tchakedjian resigned his post.⁴⁵⁹ Mr. Hornblower who had objected to the deal argued that "the Armenian refugees should not be exploited to the advantage of an individual or a company".⁴⁶⁰ Thus, the refugees remained unemployed. Not for long, though.

After only a week, the real intentions behind the British concern against "the exploitation of the Armenian refugees" became clear. In a meeting in Port Saïd on 3 June 1916, with Mr. Kechian -a member of both the Cairo Civil Council and the *Workshop Committee*- Mr. Hornblower expressed the British Military authorities' intentions to employ 550-600 healthy Armenian refugees in British military camps as porters, workers and servants.⁴⁶¹ In fact, on 10 June a labor corps was formed and for one month a few hundred men from the camp worked for the

⁴⁵⁸ *Minutes of the Civil Council* vol. 24, Session 112, 27 January 1916, pp. 255-6; Session 114, 16/29 February 1916, pp. 263-4. The terms of the agreement are mentioned in detail in this session.

⁴⁵⁹ *Minutes of the Civil Council* vol. 25, Session 2, 6/19 May 1915, p. 8.

⁴⁶⁰ *Minutes of the Civil Council* vol. 25, Session 3, 13/26 May, 1916, p. 17.

⁴⁶¹ *Minutes of the Civil Council* vol. 25, Session 4, 2 June 1916, pp. 22-3; Session 5, 9 June 1916, p. 31.

British military authorities in Port Saïd.⁴⁶² The French were displeased with this arrangement as it had been agreed that it was the prerogative of the French authorities to make use of these refugees who had been rescued by the French Marine.⁴⁶³ The labor corps was soon disbanded.

French-British Tensions over the use of the Refugees

Immediately after the arrival of the refugees from Jebel Musa in Egypt, the French Minister of Foreign Affairs had asked his representative in Cairo, M. Defrance, for information on their exact number, aptitude for work, and whether it would be possible to recruit among them men for the foreign battalion that operated in the East.⁴⁶⁴ Meanwhile, on General Maxwell's demand, the leader of the Armenian resistance on Jebel Musa went to Cairo and presented the British military a report on the Armenian refugees apt to be used in combat. These inquiries revealed that there were 500 able bodied men in the Port Saïd camp who could be employed as soldiers.⁴⁶⁵ Their presence was of great interest for the Entente powers, at a time when they were hard pressed for labor force on different war fronts.⁴⁶⁶

⁴⁶² *Minutes of the Civil Council* vol. 25, Session 9, 1/14 July 1916, p. 46; "Vranakaghaki taret suite", p. 255.

⁴⁶³ "Communication de l'Ambassade de Grande-Bretagne au Département", Paris, October 11th 1915 in Beylerian ed. *Les Grandes Puissances*, p. 120.

⁴⁶⁴ "Le Ministre des Affaires étrangères à M. Defrance, Ministre de France au Caire", Paris, le 17 septembre 1915 in Beylerian ed. *Les Grandes Puissances*, p. 73.

⁴⁶⁵ "M. Defrance, Ministre de France au Caire à M. Delcassé, Ministre des Affaires étrangères" Le Caire, le 19 septembre 1915 in Beylerian ed. *Les Grandes Puissances*, p. 78.

⁴⁶⁶ "Le Ministre de la Guerre au Contre-Amiral Lacaze, Ministre de la Marine", Paris, le 30 octobre 1915; and "Le Contre-Amiral Darrieus, Commandant p.i. la 3e Escadre de la Méditerranée, à M. Victor Augagneur, Ministre de la Marine", Rade de Port-Saïd, le 28 octobre 1915 in Beylerian ed. *Les Grandes Puissances*, pp. 136, 137-8.

British motivation behind the employment of these Armenians differed from the French. The British wanted to get rid of- by any means- as large a number of Armenians as possible,⁴⁶⁷ who had been "dumped" upon them by the French.⁴⁶⁸ The French intended to utilize these Armenians for their political ambitions in Syria, but did not yet envision the exact manner in which they could be best used for the purpose.⁴⁶⁹

The British military authorities in Egypt urged the French either to use these men or let the British employ them. As French indecision on how to employ them continued, the British sought, and received, the French government's approval to use the able-bodied Armenian refugees in Port Saïd as workers on the docks at the military base in Moudros.⁴⁷⁰ The Armenian refugees in the camp were reluctant to accept to be employed as workers,⁴⁷¹ especially in Europe, as their sole desire was to be armed and sent to fight against the Turks.⁴⁷²

⁴⁶⁷"Note du Lieutenant Brémond sur les Arméniens réfugiés à Port-Saïd", Le Caire, le 7 septembre 1916; "M. DeFrance, Ministre de France au Caire, à M. Aristide Briand, Président du Conseil, Ministre des Affaires étrangères" Le Caire, le 15 octobre 1916 in Beylerian ed. *Les Grandes Puissances*, pp. 232, 261.

⁴⁶⁸Elgood, *Egypt and the Army*, p.184.

⁴⁶⁹"Le Contre-Amiral Darrieus, Commandant p.i. la 3e Escadre de la Méditerranée, à M. Victor Augagneur, Ministre de la Marine", Rade de Port-Saïd, le 28 octobre 1915 in Beylerian ed. *Les Grandes Puissances*, pp.137-8.

⁴⁷⁰"M. Viviani, Président du Conseil, Ministre des Affaires étrangères p.i. à M. DeFrance, Ministre de France au Caire", Paris, le 12 octobre 1915; "M. Alexandre Millerand, Ministre de la Guerre à M. Victor Augagneur, Ministre de la Marine" in Beylerian ed. *Les Grandes Puissances*, pp. 122-3, 124-5.

⁴⁷¹"M. DeFrance, Ministre de France au Caire, à M. Viviani, Président du Conseil, Ministre des Affaires étrangères p.i.", Le Caire, le 13 Octobre 1915 in Beylerian ed. *Les Grandes Puissances*, p. 123.

⁴⁷²"M. DeFrance, Ministre de France au Caire à M. Delcassé, Ministre des Affaires étrangères" Le Caire, le 23 septembre 1915 in Beylerian ed. *Les Grandes Puissances*, p. 96.

Lacking insight into the character of these Armenian mountaineers, the British authorities in Egypt chose to ignore their aspirations. Impatient to get rid of them, the British prepared one project after another for the employment of these refugees as laborers. The British military failed to realize that these proud mountaineers who- refusing to be slaughtered without an effort at resistance- had defied the Ottoman armies, would easily defy the British military authorities by refusing to be used as "volunteer" porters in Moudros or mule drivers in Salonika.⁴⁷³ Of course, the few hundred Armenian men in the Port Saïd camp were not the only game for British-imposed *volunteerism*. The entire Egyptian country-side had become a large hunting ground where "volunteers" for *corvée* were chased.⁴⁷⁴

Accusing the robust Armenian men in the Port Saïd camp of idleness and laziness, Colonel Elgood sarcastically points out: "Although Englishmen were accepting conscription, Armenians might not be asked to submit to a lesser and safer ordeal. Their persons were apparently sacred".⁴⁷⁵ Elgood refused to admit that it was exactly the "lesser" nature of the ordeal that met with the refusal of the Armenians.

On more than one occasion the leaders of the Jebel Musa resistance forces had made it known to the French and the British

⁴⁷³"Note du Lieutenant Brémont sur les Arméniens réfugiés à Port-Saïd", Le Caire, le 7 septembre 1916; and "Note pour la Marine française à Port-Saïd", Port-Saïd, le 12 septembre 1916 in Beylerian ed. *Les Grandes Puissances*, pp. 232, 236.

⁴⁷⁴al Raf'i, *Thawrat 1919*, p. 32.

⁴⁷⁵Elgood, *Egypt and the Army*, p. 191.

that they were ready to participate in the war efforts of the Entente as combatants against the Turks in Asia. To the French they had expressed their preference to fight under French leadership against the common enemy and their sole purpose was to return to their homeland.⁴⁷⁶ However, when French projects to enroll them delayed, they responded positively to the British military's suggestion to land them near Alexandretta with the purpose of cutting Turkish communication lines.⁴⁷⁷

That this operation did not take place was not- as Elgood distortedly presents- because "the cautious Armenian, on reflection, preferred to obtain his revenge [from the Turk] vicariously",⁴⁷⁸ but because, considering the hazardous and futile nature of the British operation, the French did not agree to it.⁴⁷⁹ The enthusiastic response in November 1916, of the 600 able-bodied men from the camp to the French project of the "Légion d'Orient", belies Elgood's description of these men as cowards, unwilling to participate in the Allies war efforts against the Ottomans.

⁴⁷⁶"Le Contre-Amiral Darrieus, Commandant la 2^e Division et p.i. la 3^e Escadre de la Méditerranée, à M. Victor Augagneur, Ministre de la Marine", Rade de Port-Said, le 2 octobre 1915; and "M. DeFrance, Ministre de France au Caire, à M. Delcassé, Ministre des Affaires étrangères" Le Caire, le 22 septembre 1915, in Beylerian ed. Les Grandes Puissances, pp. 118, 81.

⁴⁷⁷"Le Lieutenant-Colonel Elgood, Commandant Militaire britannique à Port-Said, au Général Maxwell, Commandant en Chef les Armées britanniques en Égypte", Le Caire, le 23 septembre 1915 (Traduction) in Beylerian ed. Les Grandes Puissances, pp. 99-100.

⁴⁷⁸Elgood, op., cit., p. 190.

⁴⁷⁹"Le Ministre de la Guerre au Lieutenant Doynel de Saint-Quentin, Détaché auprès du Commandement des Forces britanniques en Égypte", Paris, le 24 septembre 1915 in Beylerian ed. Les Grandes Puissances, p. 101.

The Port Said Camp and the Légion d'Orient

For a number of reasons, the French were more successful in their designs vis à vis the Armenian men in the camp. First, the rescue operation of the French Marine had gained the entire French nation the gratitude, the sympathy and the trust of all Armenians, and most of all of the rescued refugees. Second, the French officers in contact with the Armenian refugees had deep insight into their character and stressed the importance of channeling their anti-Turkish vigor for best results in any French military project which intended to utilize them.

As early as October 1915, the Rear-Admiral Darrieus reported that the Armenians that had been rescued were not the passive people who Europe was used to see submitted to their fate without protest. He pointed out that it would be worthwhile to attempt recruiting them for the Légion Étrangère because, in their hearts there was a very ardent and sincere desire to serve France. But, he added, it would not be possible, even with the use of military authority, to make them accept the idea of serving as diggers and porters.⁴⁸⁰ The French Foreign Ministry's agreement to the British project to use these men as laborers in Moudros was frozen by the French War Ministry on receiving a project proposal from the French Marine which suggested utilizing the Armenian

⁴⁸⁰"Le Contre-Admiral Darrieus, commandant p.i. la 3e Escadre de la Méditerranée, à M. Victor Augagneur, Ministre de la Marine", Rade de Port-Said, le 15 octobre 1915 in Beylerian ed. *Les Grandes Puissances*, pp. 125-6

refugees in question as irregular corps in France's Syrian squadron.⁴⁸¹

Thus, the French Marine started the recruitment and training of Armenians in the camp in December 1915,⁴⁸² long before any definite operation was envisioned for their utilization by the French Ministry of War. *Capitaine* Benoist d'Azy was in charge of the military instruction of the Armenians and was assisted by *Commissaire* Tiran Tekeyan,⁴⁸³ a French-Armenian naval officer. One of the principle protagonists of the Jebel Musa evacuation operation, Tekeyan had earned the love and trust of his Armenian compatriots, and was a key link between the relations of the refugees with the French Marine Command.⁴⁸⁴ Between October and August 1916, a number of projects for the use of the Armenian man-power in Port Saïd were presented to the French government by French Naval officers.⁴⁸⁵ For various considerations, none of them was implemented.

In September 1916, a report presented by Lieutenant-colonel Brémond, Chief of the French mission, to the French Foreign

⁴⁸¹"M. Alexandre Millerand, Ministre de la Guerre, à M. Victor Augagneur, Ministre de la Marine", Paris, le 15 October 1915 in Beylerian ed. *Les Grandes Puissances*, pp. 124-5.

⁴⁸²"Le Vice-Admiral Moreau, Commandant la 3e Escadre de la Méditerranée, au Capitaine de frégate Benoist d'Azy", A bord la *Jeanned'Arc* le 4 decembre 1915 in Beylerian ed. *Les Grandes Puissances*, p. 147; and *Minutes of the Civil Council* vol. 24, Session 107, 3/16 December, 1915, pp. 233-4.

⁴⁸³Tiran Tekeyan, "Inchpes dsnav haikakan legeone" [On how the Armenian Legion was Created] trans. from original by Ds. H. (pp. 69-72) in *Arara*, p. 69.

⁴⁸⁴Ibid; and "Le Lieutenant Doynel de Saint-Quentin, Détaché auprès du Commandement des Forces britanniques en Égypte, à M. Alexandre Millerand, Ministre de la Guerre", Le Caire, le 12 octobre 1915 in Beylerian ed. *Les Grandes Puissances*, p. 12; "Vranakaghaki Taretsuitse", p. 255.

⁴⁸⁵Beylerian ed. *Les Grandes Puissances*, pp. 137-230.

Affairs Ministry found response in the French War Ministry. The report stated that excellent results had been obtained from the instruction of 200 Armenians in the camp: "they are intelligent, remarkable marksmen ... I trust that this number can be doubled".⁴⁸⁶ Brémont suggested that a center for their instruction be established in Cyprus where the few hundred Armenian volunteers from the Port Saïd camp would be used as a nucleus to attract Armenians from all over the world. He envisioned that a substantial force would be thus formed that would bring a significant participation in the Expeditionary forces which would, in the near future, occupy Syria.⁴⁸⁷

Negotiations between the French government and the Armenian National Delegation on the issue of the formation of Armenian volunteer corps to join the Allies against the Ottomans were activated. The President of the Armenian National Delegation, Boghos *pasha* Nubar, who had formerly opposed the French intentions to use the refugees in Port Saïd as volunteers,⁴⁸⁸ cabled his son, Arakel *bey* Nubar in Egypt: "... having received formal assurances that in case of an Allied victory, our national aspirations will be satisfied, I entrust you to take measures to

⁴⁸⁶"M. De France, Ministre de France au Caire, à M. Aristide Briand, Président du Conseil, Ministre des Affaires étrangères", Le Caire, le 10 septembre 1916, and Annexe "Note du Lieutenant Brémont sur les Arméniens réfugiés à Port-Saïd", Le Caire, le 7 septembre 1916, in Beylerian ed. Les Grandes Puissances, pp. 232-3.

⁴⁸⁷"Note du Sous-Directeur d'Asie-Océanie résumant une lettre du Lieutenant-Colonel Brémont" 14 septembre 1916 in Beylerian ed. Les Grandes Puissances, pp. 237-8.

⁴⁸⁸"Le Vice-Amiral Moreau, Commandant le 3^e Escadre de la Méditerranée, à M. de France, Ministre de France au Caire", Port-Saïd, le 5 février [1916] in Beylerian ed. Les Grandes Puissances, p. 163.

encourage and facilitate the engagement of the largest number of volunteers possible....." ⁴⁸⁹

Following these developments Commandant Romieu was sent as head of a mission by the French War Ministry to Cyprus and to Egypt to make the necessary arrangements for the implementation of this prospect.⁴⁹⁰ In addition to the fruitful negotiations held with the British military in Egypt and Cyprus, Commandant Romieu's mission met great success with the leadership of the Armenian community. Following a number of meetings with Commandant Romieu at the Armenian Prelacy on the issue of recruiting volunteers from the Armenian camp in Port Sa'id, the Cairo Civil Council informed the Commandant of their willingness to support the volunteer movement among the Jebel Musa refugees and stressed the following points:

- 1- the refugees would be engaged as soldiers not laborers;
- 2- the troops formed by the refugees would not be mixed with those of the Foreign Legion but would be considered an integral part of the French Army, enrolled under the French flag;
- 3- On the basis of the desires expressed by the refugees themselves, they should be employed in their homeland, namely the battle-fronts in Cilicia.⁴⁹¹

⁴⁸⁹"Le Président du Conseil, Ministre des Affaires étrangères, à M. DeFrance, Ministre de France au Caire", Paris, le 10 novembre 1916 in Beylerian ed. Les Grandes Puissances... p.267.

⁴⁹⁰"Le Ministre de la Guerre au Contre-Amiral Lacaze, Ministre de la Marine", Paris, le 23 septembre 1916 in Beylerian ed. Les Grandes Puissances... p. 242

⁴⁹¹ *Minutes of the Civil Council*, vol. 25, Session 29, 6 November 1916, p. 120

The French government having agreed to these points, Romieu attained the full support of the Communal authorities to encourage the Armenian refugees to enroll as volunteers.⁴⁹²

Romieu was even more successful with the leadership of the Armenian political parties in Egypt. Not only did the ever-disputing Armenian leaders express their solidarity to Romieu's mission each separately, but also they formed a united front to act in concordance.⁴⁹³ Moreover, this "United Body of Armenian Political Parties" initiated the formation of a National Central Administrative body,⁴⁹⁴ which was eventually called the Armenian National Union. The latter consisted of ten representatives from the four Armenian political parties, and nine representatives from the official leadership of Apostolic, Catholic and Protestant Armenians, the AGBU, the *npastamatuits* and the Military Fund.⁴⁹⁵ Furthermore, the Armenian National Union accepted the terms for collaboration laid by Boghos pasha and adopted the policy to work in coordination with the Armenian National Delegation.⁴⁹⁶ (Appendix A) Only those informed of the petty inter-communal disputes can fully appreciate the significance of such a development. Never before, and never again did the Armenian community in Egypt live such an experience.

⁴⁹² *Minutes of the Civil Council*, vol. 25, Session 31, 17 November 1916, p. 127. For the terms on which the "Légion d'Orient" was created see "Décision prise par le Ministre à la date du 15 novembre 1916" in Beylerian ed. *Les Grandes Puissances...* pp. 276-7.

⁴⁹³ *Minutes of the Civil Council*, vol. 25, Session 32, 11/24 November 1916, p. 130.

⁴⁹⁴ *Ibid.* and *Minutes of the Civil Council*, vol. 25, Session 34, 5 December 1916, p. 135.

⁴⁹⁵ *Minutes of the Community Council*, vol. 43, Session 63, 3/16 December 1918.

⁴⁹⁶ *Minutes of the Community Council*, vol. 43, Session 58, 3/16 March 1917, p. 233.

Based on the reports sent by Romieu to the French War Ministry, the latter decided to establish in Cyprus a "Légion d'Orient" formed of the 500 Armenian volunteers from the Port Saïd camp, who were ready to leave, believing that this corps would soon provoke the enrollment of new Armenian volunteers from Egypt, the USA and India. It was also decided to include in this corps those Ottoman Syrians who had been asking to fight against Turkey.⁴⁹⁷ Accordingly, a document dated 26 November 1916 and entitled "Instruction sur l'organisation de la Légion d'Orient" detailed the terms of the formation of this new military organization.⁴⁹⁸

The expectations of the Armenian volunteers and their political leaders from the participation in the French war effort are reflected in the *"Conditions d'engagement des volontaires arméniens de la Légion d'Orient"*:⁴⁹⁹

"Following the agreement concluded between the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the President of the Armenian National Delegation, a French mission under the direction of Commandant Romieu was sent to Egypt. It arrived Cairo in November 1916 and entered into communication with the leaders of the various Armenian organizations for the formation of a legion named "Légion d'Orient".

In consistence with the concluded agreement, it was agreed:

⁴⁹⁷"Le Ministre de la Guerre au Contr-Admiral Lacaze, Ministre de la Marine", Paris, le 20 novembre 1915, in Beylerian ed. *Les Grandes Puissances*, p. 272.

⁴⁹⁸Full text published in Beylerian ed. *Les Grandes Puissances*, pp. 278-283.

⁴⁹⁹"Conditions d'engagement des volontaires arméniens de la Légion d'Orient" in Beylerian ed. *Les Grandes Puissances*, pp. 291-2.

1- That the formation of the Légion d'Orient aimed at making the Armenians contribute to the liberation of Cilicia, thus giving them new guarantees for the realization of their national aspirations;

2- That the Armenian legionnaires would fight only against the Turks and only in Cilicia;

3- That the Armenian legion would form, in the future, the core of the Armenian Army.

In Egypt, the enlistment of volunteers- which according to the "Dispositions générales" concerning the formation of Légion d'Orient was the responsibility of the Armenians and the Syrians⁵⁰⁰- was in full swing. Military Committees were formed in Cairo and in Alexandria.⁵⁰¹ In addition to the refugees in the Port Saïd camp, there were in Egypt in 1916 Ottoman Armenian prisoners of war who had been captured and brought to Egypt along with the Turkish prisoners of war from various fronts, at different stages of the war. Month after month throughout 1915-1916, the British had brought to Egypt POWs from the Dardanelles⁵⁰², the Sinai⁵⁰³ and the Mesopotamia⁵⁰⁴ fronts. In Alexandria, there were Armenian POW in the Sidi Bishr camp⁵⁰⁵, while in Cairo they were in the Citadel and at the camps in Meadi⁵⁰⁶ and Heliopolis⁵⁰⁷. Most of these Armenian POW- those

⁵⁰⁰"Dispositions générales" in Beylerian ed. *Les Grandes Puissances...* p. 284.

⁵⁰¹Tiran Tekeyan, "Inchpes dsnav haikakan legeone", p. 71.

⁵⁰²*Arev*, 14 June 1915, 9 July 1915, 8 March 1916.

⁵⁰³*Minutes of Civil Council*/vol. 25, Session 32, 11/24 November 1916, p. 129.

⁵⁰⁴*Minutes of Civil Council*/vol. 25, Session 7, 17/30 June 1916, p. 38. The POW from the Mesopotamia front were first taken to India and hence were brought to Egypt; see *Arev* 26 November, 1915 for case of four Armenian doctors and 100 soldiers in a village in India.

⁵⁰⁵*Minutes of Civil Council*/vol. 25, Session 47, 26 February 1917, p. 191.

⁵⁰⁶*Minutes of Civil Council*/vol. 25, Session 1, 10 May 1916, p. 5.

⁵⁰⁷*Minutes of Civil Council*/vol. 25, Session 43, 16/24 January 1917, p. 170.

who were found fit by medical examination⁵⁰⁸ - were incorporated in the Légion d'Orient.

The Jebel Musa men in the Port Sa'id camp, formed the nucleus of the Légion d'Orient and left for Monagra, on the island of Cyprus, at the end of November 1916. The first battalion which was soon organized comprised of: 5-600 refugees from Jebel Musa; 300 Armenian volunteers from Egypt; and 236 Armenian prisoners of war from the Ottoman Army.⁵⁰⁹ The latter were probably recruited among the 200 Armenian POWs in the British military camps in Egypt⁵¹⁰ and the 75 Armenian POWs in India.⁵¹¹ The number of Armenian volunteers from Egypt is remarkable if we take into consideration that the total number of Armenians of military age in the country was 4-500.⁵¹²

On the initiative and efforts of the representatives of the Armenian National Union⁵¹³ numerous Armenian volunteers from America and France were grouped in Cyprus, where, within the span of 6-7 months the number of the Armenians in the Légion d'Orient reached 3000 fighters.⁵¹⁴ After staying in Cyprus until May

⁵⁰⁸ *Minutes of Civil Council* vol. 25, Session 61, 9/22 June 1917, pp. 254-5.

⁵⁰⁹ Tigran Poyadjian, *Haikakan legeone* [The Armenian Legion] (Watertown: Baykar, 1965), p. 23.

⁵¹⁰ "Le Commandant Romieu, Chargé de mission en égypte et à Chypre, au Général Roques, Ministre de la Guerre" in Beylerian ed. *Les Grandes Puissances...* p. 270.

⁵¹¹ "M. Paul Cambon, Ambassadeur de France à Londres, à M. Aristide Briand, Président du Conseil, Ministre des Affaires étrangères" in Beylerian ed. *Les Grandes Puissances...* p. 237.

⁵¹² Ibid.

⁵¹³ "Le Commandant Romieu, Chargé de mission en égypte et à Chypre, au Général Roques, Ministre de la Guerre", Port-Saïd, le 4 decembre 1916 in Beylerian ed. *Les Grandes Puissances...* p. 302.

⁵¹⁴ Tigran Poyadjian, *Haikakan legeone* p. 26.

1918,⁵¹⁵ the Légion d'Orient participated, as part of the French troops in the Egyptian Expeditionary Force, in General Allenby's September 1918 advance on the Palestinian front.⁵¹⁶ The results of this offensive which marked the beginning of the end of the war in the Middle East are well known and lie outside the scope of this study.

The Allied successive victories on the Palestinian front, and the participation of the Armenian volunteers in the defeat of the Ottoman Armies gave great cause for celebration to the Egyptian Armenians, who had done their utmost for the success of the volunteer movement. Now, a convalescence center in Zeitun (then, a quiet, residential neighborhood near Heliopolis) was prepared and administered by the Armenian community in Cairo for the care of the Armenian legionnaires.⁵¹⁷ Hopes for the materialization of an autonomous Armenia under Entente protection were at their height. But the post-war period brought with it the bitter realization that the Armenians, like the Egyptians, the Syrians and the Arab forces of the Hijaz were nothing but war-props at the disposal of the French and the British governments.

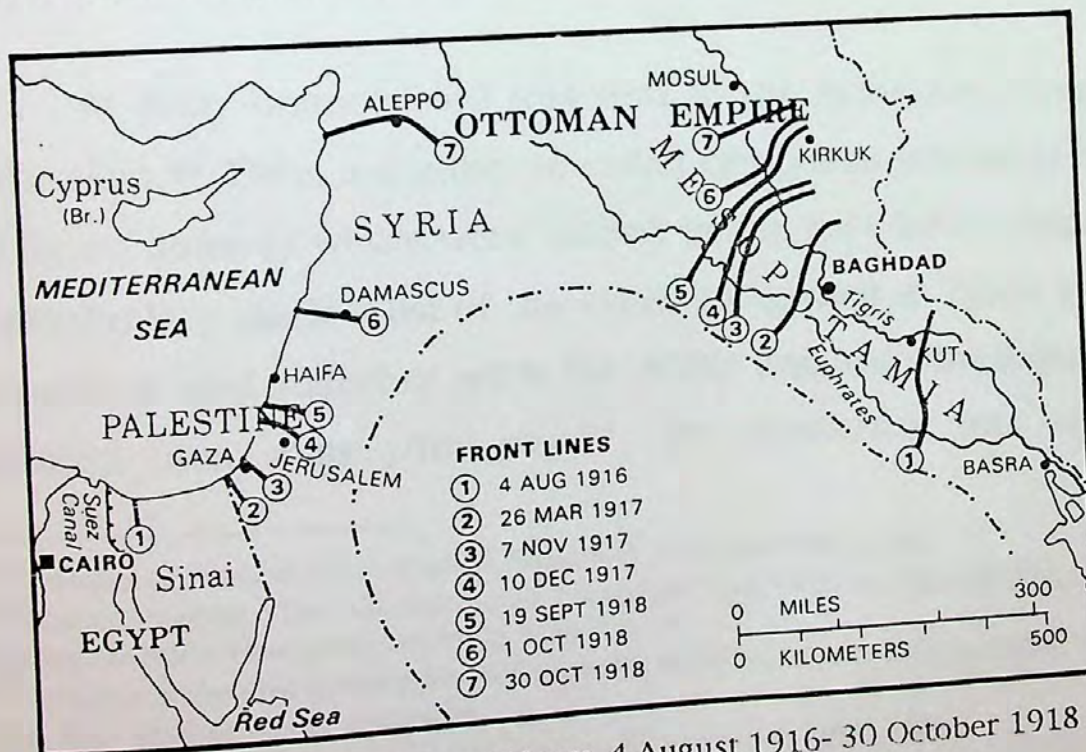
⁵¹⁵Ibid. pp. 91-3.

⁵¹⁶Government Press and Survey of Egypt, A Brief Record of the Advance of the Egyptian Expeditionary Force: July 1917-October, 1918, compiled from official sources and published by the Palestine News, Cairo, 1919, p. 45, plates 40-43; for details of the movement of the Armenian legionnaires consult Poyadjian, pp. 98-137.

⁵¹⁷Tigran Poyadjian, Haikakan legeone, pp. 156-8.

Middle Eastern Fronts and the Port Sa'id Camp: 1918-9

The advance of the Egyptian Expeditionary Force on the Palestinian front brought with it hope and distress to the Armenians in Egypt. With every retreat of the Ottoman forces the vision for an Armenian state brightened. With every forward move of Allenby's forces, hopes to save the remnants of the decimated Ottoman Armenian deportees increased. But with the advance of the Allied forces on the Palestinian and Mesopotamian fronts (Map 3.) gradually the curtain concealing the surviving debris of Ottoman Armenians was raised, unveiling agonizing scenes. Cries for help from Baghdad, Palestine and Syria filled the Armenian Prelacy in Cairo. Waves of surviving deportees reached the Armenian camp in Port Sa'id.



Map 3. Middle Eastern Front Lines: 4 August 1916- 30 October 1918
Reproduced from Natkiel, *Atlas of the 20th Century History*, p. 60.

The first appeals for help came from Baghdad in April 1917,⁵¹⁸ following the Allied occupation of the city on 11 March⁵¹⁹. However, due to difficulties of communication and because of the chaotic conditions in Baghdad, the Armenian Community in Egypt was not able to do much to help the deportees there.⁵²⁰ The year 1918 began with the appeals for assistance that arrived from Jerusalem which had been occupied by the Egyptian Expeditionary Force on 8/9 December, 1917.⁵²¹ A letter dated 24 December requested the Prelacy in Cairo to send a delegation to Jerusalem to arrange the problems faced by the Armenian monastery there, related with survivors of the deportations in the city.⁵²² Three weeks later, another letter from Jerusalem stated that the brotherhood of the monastery, the natives and the 600 refugees in the city were living in destitute conditions and that there was urgent need for loans and aid.⁵²³

At first, financial aid was sent to the Armenian clergy in Jerusalem.⁵²⁴ Then, a number of exiled clergymen started arriving in Egypt, some of whom were settled in the Port Saïd camp. The Cairo Prelacy made a list of the exiled clergymen in Egypt and in Jerusalem and together with the AGBU and the *npastamatuits*, allotted them a monthly pay.⁵²⁵ Dr. Arsharuni was sent to

⁵¹⁸ *Minutes of the Civil Council*/vol. 25, Session 61, 9/22 June 1917, p. 255.

⁵¹⁹ Richard Natkiel, "The Mesopotamia Campaign" (pp. 60-1) in *Atlas of 20th Century History*, (London: Hamlyn-Bison, 1982), Map B, p. 61.

⁵²⁰ *Minutes of the Civil Council*/vol. 25, Session 83, 10/23 November 1917, pp. 355-6.

⁵²¹ *A Brief Record*... facing plate 26.

⁵²² *Minutes of the Civil Council*/vol. 25, Session 92, 1 February 1918, p. 396.

⁵²³ *Minutes of the Civil Council*/vol. 25, Session 89, 4 January 1918, p. 382.

⁵²⁴ *Minutes of the Civil Council*/vol. 26, Session 95, 8 March 1918, p. 13.

⁵²⁵ *Minutes of the Civil Council*/vol. 26, Session 110, 13 September, 1918.

Jerusalem to establish an orphanage. Later, part of the orphans in Jerusalem were transported to the camp in Port Sa'id. The first group of 195 orphans was brought to Port Sa'id by Mrs. Arsharuni on 2 September 1918.⁵²⁶

As the Egyptian Expeditionary Force advanced into Ottoman territories the role and status of the Armenian Prelacy in Cairo increased. The British military authorities considered the Armenian Prelacy in Cairo the national center of administration of all the Armenians in the Enemy Occupied Territories (EOT) in the region.⁵²⁷ In the circumstances, the local authorities in Egypt recognized the Armenian Primate in Cairo as the sole official representative of the Armenians in the region. As such, he was the only authority who had jurisdiction in matters concerning the Armenian monastery in Jerusalem.⁵²⁸

The chaotic administrative and financial situation of the monastery threatened its existence. To prevent its total deterioration the Armenian Primate of Egypt who had gone to Jerusalem, was entrusted to make temporary reforms and expenses in the monastery till the war ended and final arrangements could be made.⁵²⁹

In November 1918 reports on the miserable conditions of the Armenian deportees in Syria arrived the Cairo Prelacy. In

⁵²⁶"Vranakaghaki taretsuitse 1915-1919", p. 257.

⁵²⁷ *Minutes of the Civil Council*/vol. 26, Session 102, 18/31 March 1918, p. 58.

⁵²⁸ *Minutes of the Civil Council*/vol. 26, Session 104, 15/ 28 June 1918, p. 63.

⁵²⁹ *Minutes of the Civil Council*/vol. 26, Session 104, 15/28 June 1918, pp. 63-5.

Damascus and Dar'a 2300 Armenian deportees dragged an inhuman existence.⁵³⁰ In November 1918, a letter from Damascus written by Sahak Catholicos of Cilicia stated:

"In regions occupied recently by the Entente armies, there are 35,000 Armenians in a state of indescribable destitution. The government provides only 1/2 okha bread to part of them. If place and nutrition could be provided, thousands of orphans who beg in the streets can be gathered".⁵³¹

The Prelacy sent copies of this letter to the AGBU, the *npastamatuits*, the *vorpaghnam* (a relief society activated to care for the orphans) and the Armenian National delegation. Already in December 1917, the Cairo Prelacy had sought the assistance of the British military authorities for the deportees in Palestine, pointing out that the enormous expenses needed for the nutrition and care of these wretched Armenians could not be provided solely by the Armenian community in Egypt for lack of funds.⁵³²

The tragic condition of the Armenian survivors in Syria came to add on the responsibilities of the Armenians in Egypt. Even if all the good will and resources of the Armenian community were amassed, it still could not materialize the anticipation directed to it by tens of thousands of refugees. Now, the Cairo Prelacy urged the Armenian National Delegation to double its efforts to attain a loan

⁵³⁰ *Minutes of the Civil Council*, vol. 26, Session 117, 8 November 1918, p. 124.

⁵³¹ *Minutes of the Civil Council*, vol. 26, Session 119, 22 November 1918, p. 133

⁵³² *Minutes of the Civil Council*, vol. 25, Session 88, 15/28 December 1917, pp. 376-7.

from the "protector-states", to be used in providing the enormous needs of the deportees, to save them from certain death.⁵³³

Meanwhile, waves of Armenian refugees had started to arrive to Egypt. The first group from Ottoman territories to arrive Port Saïd reached Egypt before Allenby's October 1917 offensive on the Palestinian front-line. This was a group of 23, natives of Kayseri who had come by route of ʿAqaba and arrived at the camp on 22 August 1917.⁵³⁴ Neither their point of departure nor their exact routing is explained. A probable guess is that they had somehow crept out of the Syrian Desert south into the Arabian desert, had reached ʿAqaba- which had been captured from the Turks on 6 July 1917 by the forces of the Arab Revolt⁵³⁵- and hence had crossed the Sinai desert to Port Saïd, either by route of ʿAqaba-Suez-Port Saïd or ʿAqaba-al ʿArish- Port Saïd.

By December 7, 1917, another 87 Armenians had arrived from ʿAqaba to Suez. Among these, 27 men joined the Légion d'Orient, 40 men were found too weak and unfit for recruitment in the Légion, while arrangements were made for the rest- 20 women and children- to be transported to the camp in Port Saïd.⁵³⁶ We are provided with some information on these Armenians arriving from ʿAqaba by a letter dated 21 December 1917, sent to the Armenian Prelacy in Cairo. The writer of the letter (Mr. Selim Kalpakji), informed the Prelacy that on a recent visit to ʿAqaba he had had

⁵³³ *Minutes of the Civil Council* vol. 26, Session 119, 22 November 1918, p. 133.

⁵³⁴ "Vranakaghaki taretsuitse 1915-1919", p. 256.

⁵³⁵ "The World Wars" in *The New Encyclopedia Britannica*, vol. 29, p. 972.

⁵³⁶ *Minutes of the Civil Council* vol. 25, Session 85, 7 December 1917, p. 363.

the chance to meet Prince Faiṣal and he had seen the great affection and care of the Prince towards the 187 Armenians there. He had visited the camp and had learned that some of these Armenians had left to be enrolled in the Légion d'Orient.⁵³⁷

Following the occupation of Jerusalem by the Egyptian Expeditionary Force on 9 December 1917, and the ensuing September 1918 advance of Allenby's forces towards Damascus⁵³⁸, larger caravans of Armenian survivors arrived at the Port Sa'ïd camp via Jerusalem. Table 9 (below) shows their numbers and the date of their arrival:⁵³⁹

⁵³⁷ *Minutes of the Civil Council*, vol. 25, Session 88, 15/28 December 1917, pp. 379-380.

⁵³⁸ For a detailed account of the movements of Allenby's army in 1918 consult *The Egyptian Expeditionary Force*, plates 32-55.

⁵³⁹ The table is formed on the basis of the data provided in "Vranakaghaki taretsuitse 1915-1919", in *Alyakner yev khlyakner*, pp. 257-260.

Table 9: Arrival of Armenian refugees in Port Sa'id camp,
April-December 1918

Date of Arrival	From	Number	Remarks
27 April	Jerusalem	150	Mostly natives of Mardin, some Gurin and Hadjin
10 June	el-Salt	180	-
17 June	el-Salt	-	2nd caravan
29 June	el-Salt	-	3rd caravan
2 July	-	-	4th caravan
8 July	-	280	-
1 August	el-Salt	350	-
19 August	-	330	-
25 August	-	236	-
2 September	Jerusalem	195	orphans
18 December	Baghdad	588	300 orphans +282 widows +5 men +1 priest
19 December	Jerusalem	166	-

The AGBU took upon itself the care of the orphans who had arrived via Jerusalem, as well as the protection of the widows who had arrived from Baghdad. The number of orphans in the Port Sa'id camp increased to 400-600. The orphans were settled in separate tents which became their orphanage, financed by the AGBU. A committee for the care and education of the orphans was formed to administer the orphanage-school. The AGBU also installed workshops for the newly arrived widows.⁵⁴⁰

⁵⁴⁰Gartashian, *Nuter...*, vol. 3, pp. 263, 288.

But the camp, originally installed as a refuge for 4,200 people, was now over-crowded. Of the initial refugees who had arrived in September 1915 there were still in June 1919, 3,404 individuals. On these had been added 4,740 refugees, bringing the number in the camp to 8,144 refugees.⁵⁴¹ The number of the pupils in Sisvan school increased from 1,200 to 2,345, not including the orphans who had a separate orphanage-school. At the end of 1918, the responsibility for the nutrition of the refugees was once more placed upon the British military authorities, while the administration and supervision of the well-fare of the orphans was entrusted to the American Red Cross,⁵⁴² though Armenian organizations like the AGBU and the Armenian Red Cross continued to contribute to the expenses and care of the refugees through funds and personnel.

Although as soon as the war was over the refugees from *Suediyeh* requested General Allenby to be returned to their homeland,⁵⁴³ the first caravan of refugees did not leave the camp until July, 1919. The following table⁵⁴⁴ (Table 10) shows the movement of the repatriation of the Armenians of the Port Sa'id camp in their homeland between July and November 1919:

⁵⁴¹ Grigor Gutulian, "Husher yev pusher" in *Alyakner yev khlyakner*, pp. 199-202. In this article, Gutulian, himself a refugee in the camp, gives a detailed statistics on the refugees in the camp in June 1919. Another source mentions 10,000 as the total number of refugees in the camp in 1918; see "Vkayutiun me" in Gartashian, *Nuter...*, vol. 3 pp. 184-5.

⁵⁴² Gartashian, *Nuter...*, vol. 3, p. 263.

⁵⁴³ *Minutes of the Civil Council*, vol. 26, Session 3, 9/22 November 1918, p. 135.

⁵⁴⁴ The table is formed on the basis of the data provided in "Vranakaghaki taretsuitse 1915-1919", *Alyakner yev khlyakner*, pp. 266-269.

Table 10: Return of Armenian refugees from Port Sa'id to homeland, July-November 1919

Date of departure	Number	Natives of
31 July	1st caravan	Suediyeh
27 August	1200	Suediyeh
30 August	300	Marash
15 September	600	Suediyeh
16 September	300	Marash
27 September	60	Suediyeh
28 September	340	Suediyeh
29 September	400	Hadjin/Lapash
1 October	100	Suediyeh
10 October	60	Suediyeh
20 October	400	mostly Garaturan; some Aintab, Marash
24 October	62	Suediyeh
25 October	300	Suediyeh
28 October	400	Suediyeh
29 October	800	Adana/ Kars-Bazar/ Deort-Yol/Elpek/Kilis
5 November	400	Marash/Rum-Galeh
6 November	400	Brusa/Zeitun/Sebastia
8 November	130	Chokmaklu and others; left for Aleppo
21 November	entire orphanage	transported to Mersin
23 November	180	mostly Constantinople; left for Beirut

Between 7 and 24 November all the "institutions" of the tent-city were brought down. Nothing remained of the school, the workshops, the bakeries and the kitchen. On 21 November 1919, the orphanage and its personnel were transported to Mersin (Cilicia). The last to leave the camp were the doctors and nurses of the Armenian Red Cross. On 24 November, after an existence of four years, the camp disappeared.⁵⁴⁵ The nightmare of war and genocide was thought to be over.

⁵⁴⁵"Vranakaghaki taretsuitse 1915-1919", Alyakner yev khlyakner, pp. 268-270.

Conclusion

Contrary to generally held views, the Armenians in Egypt at the beginning of the twentieth century were not rich and prosperous. At the turn of the 19th century, due to the 1894-1896 massacres in Ottoman Armenia waves of Armenian refugees had arrived in Egypt. After two decades from their arrival starting from 1895, though most of the new comers no more presented the destitute picture of the refugees they were at the end of the 19th century, neither had they made large fortunes.

The arrival of these refugees changed the socio-occupational patterns of the small Armenian community existing in this country prior to 1895. As the 1911 census of the Apostolic Armenians in Alexandria indicates, the refugees who arrived after 1895 greatly increased the proportional number of the Armenians in the lower socio-economic strata. Thus, on the eve and during World War I, the Armenian community in Egypt was highly stratified. Within the Communal structure, the arrival of the refugees resulted in the reorganization of the Communal Administration and the process of integration of the Armenians in Egypt was reshaped, finding a new balance on the large scale that lies between the assimilation and the alienation of ethnic minorities.

During the war years the Armenian community in Egypt faced a number of administrative and financial difficulties which in one way or another affected the lives of its individual members.

The administrative problems rose mainly from the breach of relations between Egypt and the Ottoman Empire, and from the policies of the British authorities in the country concerning residents in enemy territories. The financial difficulties were a result of the economic crisis that affected Egypt. The number of the unemployed and the needy in the community increased. As an integral part of the Egyptian socio-economic structure, Armenians in different occupations suffered, in various degrees, from the economic consequences of the war on the country in general.

Nevertheless, from 1915-1919 the majority of the members of the Armenian community hastened, in one way or another, to the aid of the 4,200 Ottoman Armenian refugees in Port Sa'id. Providing healthy nutrition for the weak and the sick, clothes for everyone in the refugee camp, schooling for the young and work for the adults were secured in the Port Sa'id tent-city through the efforts and contributions of Armenian organizations and individuals alike. Could the "rich" Armenian community have done more is a question that may never be resolved.

Two main factors had erroneously earned the Armenian community as a whole the reputation for being rich. The first was the fact that the Community, represented by the Armenian Prelacy in Cairo possessed numerous estates and institutions. However, as the custodians of this Communal wealth, the councils of the Communal Administration were often limited by numerous legal considerations in taking steps towards procuring large sums of money through selling or mortgaging these estates. On the other

hand, during the first three years of the war, the Communal revenues decreased, mainly as a result of the instable cotton policies of the government.

The second factor was the existence, in Egypt, of a handful of the remnants of the rich Armenian families of the 19th century. Therefore, it was only natural that in the days of the national crisis for the Armenians during the 1914-1918, all eyes were turned towards Egypt for help. This was enhanced by the geo-political situation of the Armenians in Egypt as the best organized community in proximity to Ottoman territories where the annihilation of the Armenians was in process and the fate of the Armenian homeland was being determined.

During 1914-8, in addition to maintaining their own communal institutions, namely, schools, churches, cemeteries and the deprived in the community, ethnic allegiance moved the Armenians in Egypt to aid their compatriots who had become victims of the war and genocide in Ottoman territories. On the other hand, Armenians in this country were concerned with the political future of Armenia, once the war would be over.

In 1915, Boghos *pasha* Nubar left for Europe hoping to win the support of the Entente powers to secure the future of the Armenian people and their homeland under Entente protection. Here, in Egypt, the Armenian community was mobilized to support the Armenian volunteer movement in Transcaucasia and to send material assistance to the Ottoman Armenian refugees who had

fled to eastern Armenia. The Jebel Musa refugees in Port Sa'id, the formation of the Légion d'Orient and the Ottoman Armenian deportees and orphans in the Syrian and Mesopotamian deserts became the primary concern of the majority of the Armenians in Egypt.

An assessment of the moral and material contribution of the Armenian community towards their unfortunate compatriots and homeland in Ottoman territories must reconsider Elgood's conclusions on the "national feelings" of Armenians in Egypt. Basing his judgment on the insensitive attitude of a handful of rich Armenians, Elgood writes:

"Nothing indicates more clearly how little national feeling exists among the Armenians than the poor response given by the well-to-do members of the community to the appeal from Port Sa'id.... Their patriotism was unequal to the suggestion. Few visited the camp: fewer still subscribed money to its support. Except a handful of the more humble members, the colony seemed supremely indifferent whether their unfortunate countrymen and women at Port Sa'id lived or died... The rich and influential Armenian in Egypt contributed little in proportion to his wealth and station".⁵⁴⁶

⁵⁴⁶Elgood, *Egypt and the Army*, pp. 187-8.

Not only is this an unfounded generalization, but it is also a classical example of distortion through mixing facts with falsehood. It is true that contemporary articles in the Armenian press also state that the contribution of the rich in the community was relatively meager, not only concerning the refugees in the Port Saïd camp, but also for all the other grievances of the Armenian nation during the war. However, it is greatly misleading to measure the humanitarian and ethnic pulse of the 10,000 Armenians in Egypt based on the lack of contribution of a few rich families for the relief of unfortunate compatriots, especially that these handful of prosperous Armenians were severely criticized by the Armenians themselves.

Second, those concerned with the fate of their compatriots in Port Saïd were not a "handful of the more humble members" of the community, but the overwhelming majority of the Armenians, not only in Cairo and Alexandria, but even those residing in the Egyptian provinces. The opposite of the picture presented by Elgood is shown in the example of an Armenian employee who had sent 200 P.T. for the refugees when all he received as a monthly wage was 250 P.T.⁵⁴⁷ Of course this case too, cannot be generalized. However, between the accusations of apathy directed towards the rich and the touching generosity of some of the poor, there was the concerned middle-class which largely participated in the fund-raising for the various needs of the Armenian refugees. Unfortunately, it seems that during World War I, in the Armenian

⁵⁴⁷Arev, 6 October 1915.

community in Egypt, the rich were not generous enough and the generous were not rich enough.

The end of the war came amid rising hopes for the attainment of national aspirations for the peoples in the Middle East. The Egyptians emerged from the war drained and weary by their participation in the British war effort, but looking forward to forging an independent state at long last. For a brief moment, the materialization of a unified, independent Arab Kingdom in Greater Syria and Mesopotamia seemed to be achieved. The Armenians, massacred and decimated, set out to return to their homeland which they were to reconstruct under Allied protection. They could not imagine then, that further massacres and re-deportation awaited them.

Egyptians, Syrians and Armenians alike were convinced that the time had come for a political compensation for their human and material losses in the war. The principle for national self-determination set forth by the United States and supported by Britain and France during 1918 had left no doubt in the minds of the political leaders of these nations of the good will of the West towards their national aspirations. The similarities in the unsuccessful missions of the delegates of these nations in post-war settlements are striking. Whatever their rivalries, the post-war settlements revealed that during the war the French and the British had surpassed each other in their skill to exploit the national aspirations of these peoples.

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APPENDIX A
Armenian National Union in Egypt

The following is the text of the founding principles of the Armenian National Union in Egypt, reproduced in the minutes of the Community Council (vol. 43, session 58, Friday 3/16 March 1917) from the text enclosed in Boghos pasha Nubar's letter (26 January 1917) from Europe.

S. Structure *Հայաստանի Եգիպտոսի Գործադիր Կոմիտեի 26 յանվար 1917 թ. արձանագրության հիման վրա*
1^o De fonder en Egypte un groupement de
nommé "Union Nationale Arménienne
d'Egypte", composé de leurs représentants, sans
distinction de religion, ni de parti, qui aura
pour tâche d'affirmer, de cimenter et de main-
tenir l'union de tous et de travailler sans aucune
préoccupation spéciale de parti ou de politique,
pour le bien de la cause arménienne, pour tous
les moyens et dans tous les domaines.

2^o De consacrer tous ses efforts exclusive-
ment à ce but sur le terrain des réalités, en
laissant à l'avenir et des temps plus propices
toutes les questions d'ordre théorique qui les ont
divisées jusqu'ici.

3^o En raison de l'importance capitale de la
tâche et de l'action de la Délégation Natio-
nale dans les circonstances actuelles, l'Union
Nationale Arménienne d'Egypte entrera en
rapport avec elle pour la tenir au courant de
ses travaux et pour agir en accord avec elle,
afin d'amener une unité d'action.

(continuation of document)

Dr. Nevruz, the Chairman of the National Union in Egypt has signed under the French text after adding: "We confirm that the above is the copy of the Union's programme which was formulated on the consent of our representatives and of His Excellency the President of the Armenian Delegation".

On behalf of the

Chairman (signed) Dr. Nevruz

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