

Raymond Kevorkian

# THE ARMENIAN GENOCIDE

A Complete History



I.B. TAURIS

**Raymond Kévorkian** is an historian who teaches at the Institut Français de Géopolitique, University of Paris-VIII-Saint-Denis. He is Director of the Bibliothèque Nubar – the Armenian Library in Paris – and the author of numerous works on the history of modern and contemporary Armenia and Armenians.

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“This mighty volume constitutes the most complete summary to date.”

***Histoforum, Paris***



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**A Complete History**

**Raymond Kévorkian**

**I.B. TAURIS**

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# Introduction

The destruction of historical groups by states is always the culmination of complex processes that unfold in particular political and social environments – most notably, in multiethnic contexts. The translation of genocidal intentions into action is systematically preceded by periods of maturation rooted in diverse experiences, collective failures, frustrations, and virulent antagonisms. It is justified by an ideological construction that envisages the elimination of “internal enemies” from the social body. Each instance of genocidal violence, however, obeys an internal logic that lends it its singularity. The physical destruction of the Armenian population of the Ottoman Empire has, in its turn, a singular feature: it was conceived as a necessary condition for the construction of a Turkish nation-state – the supreme objective of the Young Turks. The two phenomena, in other words, are indissolubly linked: we cannot understand the one if we ignore the other.

The present book is informed by this assumption and its structure depends on it. “Destruction as self-construction” might have been the slogan adopted by the Committee of Union and Progress (CUP) and that is the guiding thread of this study. In adopting it, I have decided to situate myself at a level of observation that privileges the Young Turk and Armenian elites; I have chosen methodically to examine the internal evolution of these limited circles; I have attempted to assess the reactions of the two groups in crisis situations; and finally, I have studied the nature of the interrelations between the two groups, their points of convergence and divergence, and even their ideological similarities. Thus, it is domestic Ottoman politics, examined from the level of the Empire’s elites, which serves as the frame of reference for this book and sets its problematic. This point of view distinguishes the present book from previous studies, which are generally organized around the “Eastern Question” and European interventionism in the Ottoman Empire. I have not felt the need here to evoke the historiographical traditions on the subject, so as perhaps to better distance myself from them. The historiography is, in any case, a complex matter calling for a study of its own, one that would divert us from our main subject.

That said, I have primarily interrogated the institutional, political, social, and even psychological mechanisms that culminated in the destruction of the Ottoman Armenians. In particular, I have sought to mark off the successive phases of the radicalization of Young Turk circles. I have paid special attention to decision-making processes, which are a complex phenomenon if ever there was one.

The debates over ideas within the Young Turk elite and the formation and subsequent radicalization of the Young Turks’ ideology are here set against the parallel development of the nationalism fostered by the Armenian revolutionary movements. These elites, both when they were in opposition to Sultan Abdülhamid’s regime and, later, when they were at the head of the state, endlessly discussed the destiny of their common society. I have tried to account for this. Particular attention has been paid to the troubling resemblance between the Armenian and Young Turk elites, both of whom saw themselves as the bearers of a “sacred” mission – saving the “nation.” The present study accordingly moves back and forth between examinations of the practices of each.

As a lens for the examination of the Young Turk regime's political practices, the April 1909 Cilician massacres have been privileged over every other pre-war event. My choice was dictated by the fact that this violence was a major issue in the dialogue between Turks and Armenians, one that provoked a crisis of confidence. The abundant documentation available on this intermediate period, which affords us insight into phenomena that are harder to discern in later periods, was another reason for my choice.

The geographical problematic is the second frame of reference for the present work. The regional approach, which requires that one descends to the micro-historical level, has never been seriously integrated into a global study. The immensity of the geographical area to be considered, together with its local specificities, makes the task a formidable one that has no doubt intimidated more than one historian. The historical vacuum that prevails in this domain is perhaps also not unrelated to the enormous mass of material that has to be patiently sorted out and worked through in order to establish the facts in the different regions. The bloody nature of the events to be examined may, in turn, have dissuaded some. It is not without apprehension that I have set out on this long adventure myself. But a plunge into the Ottoman provinces is also necessary, in that it alone allows us to draw macro-historical lessons from the strategy pursued by the central authorities and to single out the modifications of it that came about one at a time. A regional approach also authorizes conclusions about the fates of the Armenian conscripts which varied with their native region; it helps us identify the categories of Armenians likely to survive (that is, to be drawn into the "Turkish world" in formation); it throws a harsh but revealing light on the relationship between executioners and victims and on the reactions that the party-state's genocidal policies elicited from both society and especially certain officials; and it brings out the roles played by the administrative, army, political, and paramilitary groups linked to the CUP in the context of the extermination plan. What thus comes into view is a repetitive mechanism that consisted in entrusting the "legal" side of the process to the agencies of the state (identification of people to arrest, formation of convoys, seizure of property) and the "shadowy" side to the Special Organization, to whose activities we have paid very close attention. In this vast inventory of the realities that emerged in the Armenian provinces of eastern Anatolia and the Armenian communities of western Anatolia, each regional study contributes something to our understanding of the global process.

To round out this approach, I have made an inventory of the civilians, military officials, and local notables implicated, in one capacity or another, in this mass violence, in order to better discern the sociological profile of the men who took part in the Young Turk experiment. In response to the legitimate curiosity of the victims' descendants, I have also tried to determine as precisely as possible the dates on which the convoys of deportees set out, region by region and locality by locality. I have endeavored to retrace their trajectories, establish the location of the killing fields to which they were sent, and identify both the officers commanding their "escorts" and the heads of the Special Organization's squadrons of irregulars permanently assigned to "managing" the gorges that were most commonly used as slaughterhouses.

I have also taken an interest both in the activities of the commissions created by the Ottoman administration to deal with what was termed "abandoned property" and in the broader economic effects of the spoliation of the Armenians' property, which was carried out within the framework of the *Millî İktisat* ("national economy"). The importance of these expropriations can hardly be exaggerated: they constituted one of the major objectives of the Young Turk policy of ethnically homogenizing Asia Minor.<sup>1</sup>

Among the individuals and institutions representing the CUP at the local level, the Young Turk clubs and "responsible secretaries" delegated by the İttihad's (Committee of Union and Progress abreve Turkish form) Central Committee have held my attention because their activity exposes the hidden underside of the genocidal program.

Among the most innovative aspects of this present work are the lessons it draws from an examination of the legal actions brought by the state against both civilians and military personnel in the course of the war. This examination allows us to pinpoint the reasons why miscreants were indicted and the nature of the penalties imposed for economic “infractions” – misappropriation of real estate or moveable assets. It shows, as well, that no one was ever indicted for mass murder.

In studying the procedures the CUP used to liquidate the Armenian population, it seemed worthwhile to take a long look at the fate of the deportees who, in the “second phase of the genocide,”<sup>2</sup> were interned in Syrian and Mesopotamian concentration camps controlled by the Aleppo Sub-Directorate. Here, I zero in on the final decision of the Young Turk leadership, made in the first half of March 1916, which sealed the doom of several hundred thousand deportees. This decision illustrates the flight to the front by the Young Turk leaders with decision-making power.

In accordance with the methodologies of this book, I have also systematically examined the activities of the clandestine humanitarian networks, both Armenian and foreign, which strove to save orphans and intellectuals in particular.

I could hardly have brought this study to a close without considering the legal dimension and political effects of the destruction of the Ottoman Armenians. Therefore, the last part of the book discusses attempts by both the Ottoman authorities and international institutions to bring the authors of the genocide to justice, as well as the judgment passed on them. Such a discussion is essential. It allows us to measure the will of the state and society to face up to their responsibility in the eradication of the Armenians. It offers an occasion to analyze not only the way all the trials organized in Constantinople from February 1919 to spring 1921 were conducted but also the procedures applied in carrying out preliminary court investigations and validating the evidence accumulated by the commissions of inquiry, as well as the methods used to interrogate defendants or witnesses. It affords us a glimpse of the mental universe of the defendants, by way of their explanations, self-justifications, and perceptions of the criminal acts for which they stood accused. Finally, it allows us to bring out the basic element of the founding discourse that inspires the Turkish authorities even today. We are thus led to reflect on the ideological and cultural foundations of a society that rejects its past and is unable to come to terms with its history.

This examination of the legal proceedings also allows us to assess outside interference in the postwar trials, notably in the trial of the Young Turks who had withdrawn to Anatolia or were still in the Ottoman capital. We further discuss their Anatolian and, soon, Kemalist sanctuary in connection with the sabotage of the judicial procedure, the theft of incriminating evidence, the rejection of the very idea that the suspects should be judged, and the organization of their flight to Anatolia by CUP militants active in the eastern provinces.

Several points must be made about the materials to which we had access in carrying out the present study. Many may find the slow progress of research on the Armenian genocide puzzling. It is perhaps unnecessary to point out that since Turkish sources are scarce – in particular, the archives of the Young Turk Central Committee and its paramilitary extension, the Special Organization, are unavailable; one has to go to great lengths to make up even partially for such a handicap. Fortunately, well-documented works, such as those by M. Şükrü Hanioglu,<sup>3</sup> make it possible to understand the ideology that animated the Young Turk regime, its internal practices and gradual radicalization. For his part, Krieger (the pen-name of Father Krikor Gergerian), carried out the pioneering task of systematically collecting the available sources on the genocide of the Ottoman Armenians, even though he published only one work (in Armenian).<sup>4</sup> Vahakn Dadrian has taught the discipline to take its first steps, with his many scholarly articles and an essential book on the genocide.<sup>5</sup> The work of Erik J. Zürcher is no less important.<sup>6</sup> By carefully sifting through Turkish historiography,

notably on Mustafa Kemal, he has succeeded in casting new light on many facts that historians considered incontestable and in clarifying historical questions that had long remained obscure. The principal merit of his work is that it brought out the ideological and personal links between the Young Turks and Mustafa Kemal. There can be no doubt about their importance, even if Kemal worked hard to establish legitimacy in his own right in order to construct the Turkish nation-state whose foundations were laid by his predecessors.

Taking Turkish-Armenian relations as our guiding thread, I try to go one step further here. My work is largely based on material that for all intents and purposes had not been exploited previously – the archives of the Information Bureau created by the Armenian Patriarchate immediately after the Mudros Armistice. The main mission of this bureau was to gather information on the deportation and massacre of the Armenians for the indictments of the Young Turk leaders. We must first say a word about the importance of these materials and their origins.

Let us begin by recalling that the Armenian Patriarchate in Constantinople was dissolved in 28 July 1916 by decision of the Ottoman Council of Ministers<sup>7</sup> and that the Patriarch, Zaven, was exiled to Baghdad on 22 August. The Patriarchate was restored only after the Mudros Armistice brought an end to hostilities. The British High Commissariat then set up an Armenian-Greek committee<sup>8</sup> charged with rehabilitating the survivors of the genocide. When, on 19 February/4 March 1919, Patriarch Zaven returned to Istanbul,<sup>9</sup> one of his priorities was to create an Information Bureau (*deghegadu tivan*). He appointed Arshag Alboyanian (1879–1962), a young historian, to head it. Alboyanian was assisted by Zora Zorayan and, later, by Asadur Navarian (1875–1955) and the jurist Garabed Nurian, who became a member of the Armenian Political Council in 1920.<sup>10</sup> The Information Bureau set about gathering old and new documents on demographic issues, the anti-Armenian persecutions, massacres, deportations, and stolen property. It also compiled facts about the principal authors of the massacres and eyewitness accounts, corroborating evidence and statistics on people who had been abducted and held against their will.<sup>11</sup> According to a report of Nurian's, the Bureau also prepared files on the Turkish authorities' treatment of the Armenians after the Armistice, submitting three hundred reports on attacks on Armenian survivors to the British High Commission. Furthermore, it accumulated documented files on the authors of the deportations "whom the Turks were trying to exonerate" and published two books on "the massacres in Caesarea and Dyarbekir."<sup>12</sup> Thus, it can be seen that, as soon as circumstances allowed, Armenian institutions began to collect materials with the expectation that the Young Turk leaders would be brought to justice before an international "High Court."

On 21 November 1918, a commission of inquiry into the government's conduct, the "Mazhar Commission," was created within the Department of State Security by imperial *irade* (official decree).<sup>13</sup> The following month saw the creation of courts martial charged with trying the Young Turk criminals. Pretrial investigations of a large number of suspects were now opened. The Mazhar Commission, as soon as it came into existence, set about collecting eyewitness accounts and other evidence. It focused its inquiries on state officials complicit in crimes against the Armenian population. It had rather broad prerogatives, inasmuch as it could serve writs, search and seize documents, and also order the arrest and imprisonment of suspects by the Criminal Investigations Department or other state agencies. At the outset, Hasan Mazhar sent an official circular to the provincial prefects and sub-prefects, demanding the originals or certified copies of all orders received by the local authorities in connection with the deportation and massacre of the Armenians. The commission also proceeded to question witnesses under oath. In a little less than three months, it compiled 130 files, regularly transmitting them to the court-martial. These files contained numerous official or semi-official documents, only some of which were published in the legal supplement to the

*Official Gazette (Takvim-i Vakayi)*. Many others appeared in the Istanbul press of the day, in Ottoman Turkish, Armenian or French.

In their capacity as plaintiffs, the Armenians represented by the Constantinople Patriarchate had access to the prosecution's files on the accused. They also had the right to make copies or take photographs of the original documents or of certified copies of them. Although the court was an "extraordinary court-martial," it was originally "mixed" – that is, both civilian and military judges sat on it. Such, at least, was the case until 24 March 1919.<sup>14</sup> Although the Patriarchate and its lawyers enjoyed access to the files compiled by the prosecution for only a brief period – 5 February to 23 March – the Information Bureau was able to assemble a rather substantial mass of official documents; they were supplemented by material from other sources and the eyewitness reports that came flooding into the Patriarchate's offices.

In November 1922, faced with the Kemalist forces' imminent entry into the capital, Patriarch Zaven sent the 22 trunks containing these documents to the Armenian primate in Europe, His Grace Krikoris Balakian, who was then in Manchester. When Balakian was elected bishop of Marseille in 1927, he took the documents with him. On the express request of the retired Patriarch, who wished to consult this material in writing his memoirs, it was sent, early in 1938, to the Patriarch of Jerusalem, Torkom Kushagian. By then, Zaven Der Yeghiayan was living in retirement in Baghdad.<sup>15</sup>

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PART I

Young Turks and Armenians  
Intertwined in the Opposition  
(1895–1908)



## Chapter 1

# Abdülhamid and the Ottoman Opposition

A great deal of ink has been spilled on the virulence and diversity of the opposition to the regime of Sultan Abdülhamid II. His accession to the throne was tainted by illegitimacy and probably a regicide, but illegitimacy and murder were, after all, common in Ottoman court circles. A good many historians have also stressed the fierce hostility of conservatives, the clergy, and, more generally, Muslim Ottomans to the “Tanzimat,” a policy of reform and centralization designed to reorganize the state in central form and make all Ottoman subjects equal before the law. It can hardly be doubted that the centralization of power bred discontent among the *begs*, or tribal chieftains, accustomed to broad autonomy for centuries. It is still more certain that the foreseeable, if not indeed already accomplished, end of the traditional Ottoman system, based on a social hierarchy that put Muslim Ottomans at the top of the scale and “infidels” at the bottom, alarmed, the dominant group and its clerics.

While Abdülhamid II had not initiated the modernization process, he had nevertheless inherited its consequences, particularly the “Midhat Constitution,” the restoration of which would later figure as one of the Young Turks’ political demands. The fact that the sultan suspended this constitution in rather short order, dissolving parliament and relieving its author of his functions, did not prevent him from pursuing his predecessors’ policies of reforming the administration, reorganizing the army, creating a modern educational system, and, more generally, adopting Western models. Yet this was evidently not enough to satisfy the Young Ottoman “modernists.”

The Russo-Ottoman War of 1877–8, with which the sultan was confronted almost as soon as he acceded to the throne, reminded the dominant group that the Ottoman Empire had begun an irreversible decline and was losing its possessions one after another. The modernization of the Ottoman state and Ottoman society was, of course, a response to this decline. The new setback that the empire suffered in the Russo-Ottoman War indicated, however, that all the efforts it had made had not yielded the expected results, that the empire would continue to decline and was incapable of putting up effective resistance to the ambitions of the great powers. Such, at any rate, was the conclusion to which many figures associated with the government came, along with conservative and religious social strata.

How was the empire to be saved? Beyond a doubt, all the various Ottoman oppositions crystallized around this question, even if they answered it in diametrically opposed ways. As is often the case when a multicultural, multiethnic empire begins to fall apart, each of its component groups focused on its own future. This was most true, first and foremost, for the group that had held power for centuries.

The very nature of the system was such that the opposition to the sultan was, initially, internal and institutional. Thus, the most active opposition emerged from the ranks of state

officials, civilian or military, belonging to the dominant group. Historians have noted that the very idea of opposition to the sovereign and caliph was altogether foreign to the Muslim masses. Under Abdülhamid, one could be exiled to the empire's remote provinces, such as Yemen or the eastern provinces of Asia Minor, on mere suspicion. Indeed, the sultan's pathological suspiciousness, to which his contemporaries often pointed, helped the oppositional groups recruit new members throughout the 30 years of his reign. Members of the Ottoman elite, all educated in accordance with the same modernist model, sometimes found themselves in the opposition quite simply because they had fallen into disgrace, even though they had no fundamental disagreements with the regime. Their political discourse came down to a demand for restoration of the constitution.

This did not hold for the clergy, beginning with those clerics who had roots in the religious orders. They could not accept, as we have said, egalitarian ideology and the attendant risk of losing the superior status that Islam conferred on them. Since the clergy enjoyed, to some extent, ascendancy over the Muslim masses, they played an important part in shaping the public opinion that rejected Western innovations and looked askance at the increasingly influential role played by non-Muslims.

In contrast, the Young Ottomans, who in 1889 founded the *İttihad-ı Osmani*<sup>1</sup> at the *Tıbbiye Askeriye* (Military Medical School) – Mehmed Reşid,<sup>2</sup> the future vali of Dyarbekir, İbrahim Temo (1865–1939), Abdüllah Cevdet (1869–1932) and İshak Sükûti (1868–1903) – embodied the beginnings of a true political opposition. For they had assimilated a key source of the cohesion and, therefore, power of the Western societies of their day – namely nationalism. They had very little power in this period and were a school of thought rather than an organized movement, but their guiding idea was already making its way in the Ottoman world.

With regard to the burning question of the empire's future, however, the elements that were not associated with the dominant group were already wondering what was to become of them. Their status as *gâvurs* (“infidels”) had improved somewhat since implementation of the *Tanzimat*, yet they continued to be perceived by the Turkish population as ungrateful, deceitful, and disloyal groups with a penchant for profiting from all the others.<sup>3</sup> While some of the members of these *millet*s served in government, they had only subaltern functions and had no political responsibilities; in the everyday world, the courts and the administration in general maintained inegalitarian practices and taxed non-Muslims more heavily than others. The Muslim masses continued to regard the *millet*s as foreign elements, almost as domestic foes.

For the non-Turkish groups living in the European part of the empire, the 1878 Treaty of Berlin had plainly put a dent in the dogma of the empire's territorial integrity; it remained only to work out the final details of their divorce with Istanbul. This was not the case with the Arab, Armenian, or Kurdish elements of the empire, whose destiny was much more closely bound up with that of the Ottoman state, thanks to their implantation in the Asiatic part of the empire. The organic religious bond that tied the Arab world, practically severed from its Egyptian component, to the Ottoman capital and its Sultan-Caliph was by no means superficial, but it appeared too loose to hold forever. Egypt's impressive economic development did not go unnoticed and was the envy of many people from the clan-based or tribal world of Syria and Mesopotamia, or even Arabia and Yemen. This was the more so in that it brought out the contrast between modernization at a forced pace and an Ottoman society stagnating under an administration that many deemed inefficient and corrupt.

The Armenian-Kurdish Ottoman world was, in its turn, awakening from a slumber of several centuries. The Armenians saw the progress that had been made in the eastern part of their historical territory ruled by Russia, even if this progress went hand-in-hand with assimilationist, repressive policies. Officially, the *Tanzimat* had freed them of their dependency on Kurdish *begs*, but the result was to revive an ancient rivalry that had over the centuries

yielded to a sort of arrangement, or “symbiosis,” from which both parties benefited. The Kurdish chieftains, who had been replaced by officials appointed by the central government, found it hard to accept the loss of their long-standing privileges for the sake of modernizing the state and centralizing it in line with a European model about which they knew nothing. Yet, neither Kurds nor Armenians had as yet begun to envisage their future outside the Ottoman framework.

The “Armenian Committees,” which doubtless represented the most virulent wing of the opposition, were considered, both by the Hamidian government and many Young Turk opponents of the regime, to be terrorist organizations threatening the country’s domestic security and territorial integrity, helping to create through their propaganda a deplorable image of the empire in the West. For their part, the committees deemed themselves part of the enlightened element of Ottoman society, a kind of avant-garde imbued with socialist values that was endeavoring to free the masses from the reigning obscurantism and build a federal state.

It can readily be seen, then, that an immense gulf separated the ruling group, which was desperately seeking to preserve the empire and defend its privileges, from the Armenian activists who reasoned in terms of intellectual categories altogether foreign to the world in which they operated. Sultan Abdülhamid’s response to these movements was to massacre nearly 200,000 Armenians in the years 1894–6. These crimes, of which we still have no comprehensive study, had an organized character; it is beyond doubt that the Sublime Porte was directly implicated in them. Although they cannot be called genocidal, they seem to have been intended to reduce the Armenian population at large and weaken it at the socio-economic level. They also unleashed a debate within the Committees and the Armenian population about the revolutionary acts of self-defense supposed to have brought on this bloody repression. This debate lastingly poisoned relations within the Ottoman Armenian community: it of course raises questions about the psychological effects of mass murder, but also about the practices of the Hamidian regime, the role of violence in Turkish society, and that society’s way of dealing with political questions.

That said, the mobilization of Western public opinion that resulted from these events transformed the massacres into a sort of moral touchstone or yardstick that was later used in judging Ottoman oppositional currents. The massacres were thus a central topic of debate when the Young Turks and Armenian activists in exile began to discuss the future of the Ottoman Empire.

### ***Young Turks and Armenian Militants in Europe, 1895–1901***

Until 1895, Paris remained a place of exile for the Young Turks, including the most famous of them, Ahmed Rıza, who founded the Ottoman Committee of Union and Progress (OCUP) in this period. Rıza had gathered only a small group of Young Turks around him, but it was a very select one: it included Dr. Nâzım, a native of Salonika, who joined him in 1894 in Paris, where he also hoped to complete his medical studies,<sup>4</sup> and Ahmed Ağaoğlu (Agayev), a native of Shushi (the capital of Karabagh) who took courses in history and philosophy at the Sorbonne and the National Institute of Eastern Languages and Civilizations.<sup>5</sup>

Among the Armenians in Paris in the same period, Stepanos Sapah-Giulian was undoubtedly the most interesting figure.<sup>6</sup> A leader of the Hnchak Social-Democratic Party (SDHP), Sapah-Giulian was the moving spirit behind the Hnchak club in Paris. Here he rubbed shoulders with the Young Turk exiles, whom he claimed to know better than anyone else because he had had dealings with them for so many years.

In early 1895, in Parisian political and intellectual circles, conversation turned on the appropriate reaction to the anti-Armenian massacres perpetrated in Sasun in summer 1894 and the publication, in a British parliamentary *Blue Book*, of the damning conclusions of the European consuls who had served on a commission of inquiry into these events. The Sultan, many said, had to be confronted with a demand for “reforms” in the eastern provinces of Asia Minor that would put an end to the “insecurity” reigning there.

For the first time, the Parisian Young Turks were forced to consider the vexing question of the “reforms” that the European powers were seeking to impose on the Ottoman Empire. With this question, it was their conception of the Ottoman state, and the place and status of non-Muslim elements in it, that was put to the test. The publication of an article on the reform plan of “11 May 1895,” in the Parisian daily *Le Figaro*,<sup>7</sup> led to a meeting between the Parisian SDHP activists and the Young Turks, headed by Rıza and Nâzım, who had just been elected treasurer of the CUP. Sapah-Giulian’s account of their meeting shows that the two Turkish leaders were staunchly opposed to this reform plan<sup>8</sup> – that is to say, hostile both to European interference in what they considered an internal Ottoman affair, as well as the creation of a special status for certain provinces of the empire. They continued to argue for a policy of centralization, contrary to the Hnchaks, who simply denounced the tribal system and the violence prevailing in the eastern provinces and condemned the Sasun massacres.

What is more, the official leader of the Young Turk movement, Ahmed Rıza, rejected the revolutionary methods espoused by part of the anti-Hamidian opposition. He advocated, rather, a conservative policy<sup>9</sup> that was ultimately not very different from the sultan’s. However, Rıza needed support from the Armenians, among others, in order to make his political project credible in Parisian circles. He therefore asked to meet with Nubar Pasha,<sup>10</sup> an Armenian from Smyrna who had served as Prime Minister of Egypt and was the father of the Egyptian reforms, notably the creation of mixed courts. Rıza doubtless hoped to profit from the Egyptian pasha’s many connections to French politicians, and from his generosity as well.

In fall 1895, the “Armenian Students of Paris” organized a lecture in a hall in the city’s Grand Orient lodge. The invited speaker was Avetis Nazarbekian of London, one of the SDHP’s founders. The lecture and the response to it offer us an opportunity to evaluate the positions taken by the Parisian Young Turks on the most recent persecutions of the Ottoman Armenian population. Nazarbekian denounced Hamid’s policies, especially the generalized massacres of October and November and Europe’s indifference to them. “If the Armenians must die,” Nazarbekian concluded, “they will die, not as slaves, but as free men.” Yet, it was the part of his talk in which he questioned the Sublime Porte’s ability to govern its possessions that disturbed his Young Turk listeners, more than the crimes themselves. Sapah-Giulian later noted that the many Armenian students in the Young Turks’ ranks were surprised by their Muslim comrades’ negative reaction.<sup>11</sup>

The massacres contributed heavily to turning Western public opinion against the Ottoman Empire. This pained the Young Turk exiles in Paris. The violence also helped bring about a radicalization of the Armenian Committees, whose leadership bodies had established themselves in London, Geneva, and Paris. The Young Turk movement nevertheless profited from the diplomatic crisis that followed the Armenian massacres.<sup>12</sup> The French supplement to *Meşveret* (*Mechveret supplément français*), which Rıza had begun publishing in Paris in 1895, reveals the uncomfortable situation in which the Parisian exiles found themselves, torn as they were between patriotic feelings informed by official Ottoman discourse and their shame at the European reaction to the events. A May 1896 article by the movement’s master thinker includes a long demonstration in which Rıza endeavors to show that the anti-Armenian massacres organized by Abdülhamid “flew in the face of the traditions of Islamicism and the precepts of the Koran ... We wish to see the sultan surrounded by counselors who are steeped in both Muslim precepts and the ideas of order and progress.”<sup>13</sup> Rıza thus put forward the

thesis that responsibility for the massacres lay with the sultan's entourage, which had supposedly failed on this occasion to respect national traditions. He thereby exonerated the sultan himself of all blame, illustrating in the process his conception of the government and his attachment to the function of the Sultan-Caliph.

A few weeks later, Rıza expatiated on his approach to the notion of responsibility, thereby revealing his perception of the empire's Christian subjects. He confessed that he "defended the Muslims more often than the Christians." "This may seem exaggerated," he went on, "but the fact is that, in our country, there is no comparison between the fate of the Ottoman Christians and that of the Muslims. The Christians are by far happier, or, if one prefers, less wretched... If Christians are the preferred targets of looting, the reason is that they enjoy greater wealth and material comfort than the Muslims and that, either out of fear or suspicion of the victor, they generally keep their doors shut."<sup>14</sup> What the Young Turk leader says here is obviously rooted in a centuries-old Ottoman tradition, marked by the concept of the Christian "guest" who "takes advantage" of his happy lot and displays his lack of gratitude toward his masters by refusing to share what he possesses with them. Thus, the violence exercised by the dominant group is legitimized.

Jules Roches delivered a lecture in December 1895 at the *Hôtel des Sociétés Savantes* in which he denounced the horrors perpetrated by the Hamidian regime. The reactions that his lecture elicited are as revealing as Rıza's essay. One of the Young Turks present, who had taken a seat beside Rıza, was unable to contain himself and shouted out: "All this information is false; it has been made up by the Hnchaks." He then blamed the Armenians for the events that were sullyng Turkey's reputation.<sup>15</sup> This shows how deeply young "liberal" activists, albeit united in their combat against Abdülhamid's regime, were opposed on a great number of issues, prisoners of their respective cultural backgrounds and traditions.

For their part, the Armenian activists who sought to appeal to Western public opinion complained that the Parisian press depicted them as terrorists and willfully ignored the reality of the massacres.<sup>16</sup> According to Sapah-Giulian, this general trend was reversed by a conversation he had with Anatole Leroy-Beaulieu, his professor at the *École des Sciences Politiques*. Leroy-Beaulieu, known as an expert on the East, agreed to intervene in the debate.<sup>17</sup> His contribution also took the form of a lecture, "Armenia and the Armenian Question," delivered at the *Hôtel des Sociétés Savantes*. This event, which saw a distinguished French personality participating in the discussion, provided Young Turk and Armenian activists with a new opportunity to air their opposing views. It showed, as well, that Istanbul kept close tabs on its opposition in exile. Münir Bey, the sultan's ambassador, who had been given the task of monitoring the opposition's activities in Paris, recruited young Ottoman students, Sapah-Giulian reports, and had them introduced into the lecture hall, where Ahmed Rıza and his partisans were also present. One of Rıza's supporters, no doubt reflecting his comrades' mood as well, interrupted the lecturer to ask him whether a scholar like himself could seriously speak in such terms about a "religious group."<sup>18</sup> In thus seeking to downplay Armenian identity, the Young Turks were in fact voicing the apprehensions they felt at the campaign mounted by the Hnchaks, who, adding insult to injury, had invited a "foreigner" to join a debate on an "internal matter" and so incited the European chancelleries to intervene in Turkey.

Other examples, however, illustrate the solidarity prevailing between the oppositional groups in Paris and the fact that their relations, while sometimes stormy, were quite close. A meeting that took place between the Young Turk leaders and the Hnchak revolutionaries shortly after the events just discussed was one of the most revealing in this respect. Rıza and Nâzım proposed to the SDHP representatives that they collaborate and "make a joint contribution to the movement of national renewal." He suggested that, to this end, they "put old quarrels behind them."<sup>19</sup> In view of Rıza's frank aversion to his Armenian interlocutors'

revolutionary methods, it is not easy to say what impelled the Ottoman Committee of Union and Progress to seek a rapprochement with the Hnchaks. Possibly Rıza and Nâzım were hoping to profit from the popularity that the Hnchaks enjoyed at the time or even from their relations with certain Parisian intellectual circles. They may also have been seeking to curb the Hnchaks' anti-Hamidian campaign, which they deemed anti-Ottoman.

The seizure of the Banque Ottomane by militants of the Armenian Revolutionary Federation (ARF) on 26 August 1896 is another event that serves as a yardstick with which to measure the Young Turk and Armenian positions. The operation, the kind that the press delighted in covering, found a much broader international echo than the massacres of autumn and winter 1895–6, doubtless because it struck directly at European financial interests.<sup>20</sup> This was, however, not a peaceful demonstration like the one that had taken place in October 1895; most of the French press reacted very harshly, painting the Armenians as terrorists. The Paris Hnchaks suddenly felt that they had lost the fruits of the public awareness campaign that they had been waging for the past year. The SDHP therefore requested a meeting with the leaders of the ARF, who agreed to make the trip from Geneva – their European headquarters and the city in which they published their official organ, *Droschak*. Sapah-Giulian asked them why they had mounted this operation. He seems to have received an embarrassed response; it came down to the idea that the ARF wanted to make an attention-grabbing appeal to Europe in order to bring an end to the Armenian massacres. In private, the Hnchak leaders did not hesitate to speak of “political immaturity.”<sup>21</sup> It seems reasonable to suppose that the competition between the two organizations for leadership of the Armenians had helped motivate the ARF's spectacular strategy.

Leaving a meeting with the historian Ernest Lavisse and the academician Albert Vandale, Sapah-Giulian, who had asked the two Frenchmen to intercede on the Armenians' behalf, ran straight into Rıza and Nâzım, “arm-in-arm” in front of the main entrance to the French Senate building. Rıza exclaimed, “Mr. Sapah-Giulian, this time they are massacring people by the tens of thousands... What remains of the Armenian Question, the 11 May plan and European intervention?” Nâzım added, “The [death toll] of the massacres of the past few days is over one hundred thousand; it seems that they are not going to leave a single Armenian [alive].”<sup>22</sup> The Hnchak leader did not fail to note the ironic tone adopted by his interlocutors, who did not for a moment consider condemning these crimes, but had already begun calculating their demographic and political impact.

The Hnchak Committee finally decided to turn to a “heavyweight” in an effort to reverse the anti-Armenian trend. It sent a memorandum to Jean Jaurès defending the Armenians' struggle against Abdülhamid's regime and asking Jaurès to take a public stand in order to stem the flood of anti-Armenian propaganda in the French press. Sapah-Giulian points out that the socialist leader had previously rejected this suggestion because of his apprehensions about “Armenian nationalism.” After a conversation with Sapah-Giulian, however, he decided to throw himself into the fray. At the same time, he confessed that he had misgivings about the fact that he would be defending the same position as certain conservative pro-Armenian circles in France.<sup>23</sup>

Jaurès's first intervention came on 3 November 1896, at the podium of the French Parliament, which was full to the point of bursting. The session was opened by Denis Cochin, but Jaurès did not take the floor until the conservatives had finished speaking. His entry into the lists came as a surprise, for no one had been expecting him to address a foreign policy issue. He made a strong impression on those present and on public opinion generally, in particular by indicting the French government for its policy on Turkey of the past four years.<sup>24</sup> Jaurès's one-and-a-half hour speech marked the real beginning of the pro-Armenian movement in France. The Parisian newspapers, which, as everyone knew, pocketed generous subsidies from agents of the Ottoman sultan, now struck a new tone.

There was a perceptible détente in relations between Young Turks and Armenian activists in late 1895. Changes within the Young Turk movement undoubtedly helped create the conditions for real cooperation among the various opponents of the Hamidian regime. Murad Bey Mizancı's arrival in Europe earlier in the year had already established a connection between OCUP circles in Istanbul and Europe, long isolated from each other. Unlike Rıza and Nâzım, Murad Bey, who had worked for a long time in the Hamidian administration, favored European intervention as well as rapprochement with the Armenian revolutionary committees and the formation of a united front. In December 1895, he began publishing the review *Mizan* (Balance) in Cairo, which had considerable impact in circles sympathetic to the Young Turks.<sup>25</sup> In this review, Murad Bey challenged Rıza's anti-revolutionary positions. He dealt Rıza the deathblow upon his return to Paris in July 1896, in the course of a meeting at which a new central committee was elected after Rıza had lost the support of the majority. Murad assumed leadership of this committee, with Nâzım as his second-in-command.<sup>26</sup> On his initiative, the Young Turks apparently established warmer relations with the ARF in particular.<sup>27</sup> In April 1897, the Turkish intelligence service intercepted a message from the ARF's Paris branch to the committee in Erzerum; it indicated that the Armenian organizations and the CUP had now come together around a common goal, dethroning the sultan.<sup>28</sup> No trace of such an agreement is to be found in Armenian sources, but it is the more plausible in that all branches of the CUP had been directly linked to Paris after the Constantinople branch was dissolved under pressure from the Hamidian political police.<sup>29</sup> For a long time to come, the ARF was the Young Turks' main Armenian interlocutor, even if we should not attach undue importance to this initial rapprochement.

That the ARF and CUP united around common goals is more likely; the social complexion of the Turkish organization had changed with the 1896–7 arrival in Paris of officers and army doctors.<sup>30</sup> However, thanks to the defection of *Mizancı* Murad, who in July 1897 agreed to return to Istanbul after negotiations with representatives of the sultan, Rıza had again assumed the dominant role in the CUP,<sup>31</sup> putting a damper on the plans for a rapprochement between Young Turks and Armenians. The salient feature of this period, however, was the growing influence of the CUP's Cairo branch, which helped change the Union's orientation.<sup>32</sup> As Hanioglu points out, after first promoting a union of all Ottoman groups behind Rıza's idea of Ottomanizing society and secularizing the state, and then defending Murad Bey's conservative political line, which was favorable to outside intervention, the CUP adopted a new program that called for reconciling Islam with modernity on the basis of a constitutional system.<sup>33</sup>

The Armenian Committees probably took note of these transformations. At all events, a Turkish-Armenian oppositional delegation, headed by Rıza, participated in the 1899 Hague Peace Conference, where it distributed a joint memorandum. The Turkish leader was accompanied by an Armenian, Minas Tchéraz, a well-known yet independent figure to be sure, and Pierre Anmeghian, one of Tchéraz's most faithful followers. In other words, he was not accompanied by representatives of the Armenian revolutionary parties. Yet, the idea of sending a joint delegation to the conference was a success, for it attracted favorable attention from the European delegates.<sup>34</sup> The fact that the Armenian delegates were not altogether representative of their people should not obscure the novelty of this public initiative, from which the Young Turks, who were seeking to enlist European public opinion in their cause and profile themselves as liberals, derived the greater benefit. Abdülhamid seems to have understood this quite well, for he included Diran Kelekian,<sup>35</sup> a journalist well known for his perceptive analyses of Ottoman society, in the official Ottoman delegation.<sup>36</sup>

The positions that the Armenian Revolutionary Federation put forward, after the OCUP issued its call for a union of all oppositional forces in spring 1898,<sup>37</sup> provide a good index

of the positive but skeptical attitude reigning in Armenian circles. The Armenian leadership thought that it had detected a change in the OCUP, which, it felt, “had resolved to abandon its passive position once and for all and enter an active phase.” “To date,” *Droschak* went on,

we have tended to take a skeptical view of Young Turkey’s capacities, course of action and principles, as well as the seriousness of its desire for reform. Long experience has convinced us of the need for this. In the last twenty years, we have never once seen this party attempt to protest the crowned murderer’s unexampled injustices and outrageous crimes in *active* form. We have never laid eyes on Turkish revolutionaries; we have seen only Turkish “liberals” or “pacifists,” who are present in large numbers among us [the Armenians] as well. We have had our fill of vain memoranda; we have had our fill of begging and imploring Europe, of sighs and lamentations... The ideas that Young Turkey preaches have unfortunately not found fertile ground in the Turkish people or created a public movement among the Turks. The Young Turks’ program was utopian. They made an enormous mistake in proclaiming “that the revolution would come from above”... Today, however, we are happy to be able to point out that groups which... have split off from this movement are professing more radical ideas [and] have invited us to show our solidarity with them... If, today, there exists a degree of national antagonism between Ottoman Turks and Ottoman Armenians, the blame for it lies primarily with the government. We are convinced that, in future, once acceptable political conditions have been brought about in Turkey, our two nations will continue to live in peace and harmony and will, united in a common effort, make their way toward the highest form of civilization... It matters little that certain decrepit representatives of Young Turkey, who are utterly ignorant of our activities, spread insinuations against us, holding up the Armenian Committees before all Europe as “destroyers of Turkish villages” and casting the word “separatist” in the Armenian revolutionaries’ teeth... Gentlemen, you have doubtless firmly resolved to have done with your old delusions, with moderation, slow progress, evolution and other such vague notions, in which your senile brothers are steeped. There are, among us Armenians as well, empty-headed philosophers who call themselves “evolutionists” and shun revolution. Evolution, however, is an undefined concept that everyone, the unbridled Tyrant included, can exploit to his own ends in elaborating programs, whether political or of some other kind... You, too, should galvanize your own people, whose bitter sufferings you know very well. That unfortunate people is also being tortured... Enslaved, it has, like the slaves of other faiths, crawled before tyrants and exploiters belonging to its own race... Your clergymen, invoking the Koran, are unfortunately reinforcing and sacralizing hatred of all that is new. Rescue the people from this deadly immobility.<sup>38</sup>

This long response from the ARF, cast in the form of a lecture delivered in an occasionally peremptory tone, sums up the party’s perception of the Young Turk movement. This perception, based on “long experience,” confirmed, in the Armenian party’s view, that “Young Turkey” had not adopted the “radical” methods of which the ARF considered itself the champion. It must be said that, in this period, violent clashes between the army and groups of Armenian *fedayis* in the eastern provinces were occurring almost daily; every issue of *Droschak* between 1890 and 1900 describes such clashes and gives the biographies of the fighters who fell in battle. The “martyrs” that the ARF’s resistance to Abdülhamid’s regime cost it no doubt explain the party’s feeling that it was the sole opposition movement to combat the sultan’s “tyranny” at the practical level.

The ARF's reaction to the 1899 Hague Peace Conference is also rather revealing of its irritation with the European powers. The tone of the "Declaration Addressed to the Public Opinion of the Civilized World" on the occasion of the conference is sarcastic, almost cynical, and in any case disillusioned in the passages that evoke the Europeans' foreign policy or their indifference to the 1894–6 massacres.<sup>39</sup> The "Declaration," however, says not a word about Rıza's decision to attend the conference as part of a delegation made up of Turks and Armenians.

Also worth pausing over, because they illustrate both the political game as it was played in the Ottoman family and the ARF's openness to dialogue, are the maneuvers that Sultan Abdülhamid undertook to silence the Armenian opposition in exile, as he had partially succeeded in doing with the Young Turks. He proceeded by engaging in political negotiations with the party even while pursuing repressive domestic policies. To open discussions between the Sublime Porte and the ARF, which did not become public knowledge until after they were broken off on 11 March 1899, Abdülhamid delegated his undersecretary of state for foreign affairs, Artin Pasha Dadian, a scion of one of the grand Armenian families that had served the Ottoman state for generations. On 28 October 1896, Dadian's son, Diran Bey Dadian, arrived in Geneva and met with the ARF's Western Bureau, which was grouped around the monthly *Droschak*. The message he bore was clear: the ARF had to abandon its violent activities. In exchange, the sultan pledged to carry out fundamental reforms in the country over the coming nine months.<sup>40</sup> According to *Droschak's* editors, the "Khanasor" operation – a commando raid on 25 August 1897 (6 September, new style), that had taken retaliatory measures against a Kurdish tribe that had participated in anti-Armenian massacres in the Van region the year before – and the abortive attempt to blow up Yıldız Palace on 6/18 August had forced Abdülhamid to take the ARF's demands seriously.

An accomplished politician, the sultan resorted to his usual methods, seeking to pull the wool over the eyes of the Armenian revolutionaries as he was also attempting to do with the Young Turks. On the sovereign's orders, Drtad Bey Dadian, a nephew of Artin Pasha's, spent almost eight months in Geneva, leaving only in March 1899. The length of his stay indicates the seriousness and determination of this initiative. While it proved unsuccessful, it nevertheless enabled the Sublime Porte to take the measure of the Armenians' demands: at Artin Pasha's request, the ARF drew up a list of the reforms that it was seeking.<sup>41</sup>

Manifestly, since *Mizancı* Murad's "surrender," the Young Turk movement in exile had once again adopted the positivist leader's moderate line, even if it did not command unanimous assent. In other words, the movement was paralyzed and found it difficult to recruit new members from the circles opposed to the sultan. It was repeatedly criticized for failing to commit itself to action.

In 1899 and 1900, the discussion between Young Turks and Armenians was carried on in their respective newspapers, which indicates that the parties were, despite everything, interested in each other. The old debate about whether or not it was necessary to build a common front of all those opposed to the Hamidian regime flared up frequently in these papers. Thus, an anonymous letter, published by *Droschak*, revealed that toward the middle of 1899, Tunalı Hilmi<sup>42</sup> had circulated in Cairo a declaration calling for a congress of "Muslims and non-Muslims" aimed at creating an "Ottoman Committee," and that Damad Mahmud Pasha and his two sons, members of the imperial family, had fled Istanbul to join the Young Turk opposition in exile. The anonymous author of the letter notes, finally, as if in response to his Armenian interlocutors' criticisms, that *Osmanlı* did not share *Meshveret's* anti-revolutionary positions and that "a good many Young Turks advocate revolutionary methods."<sup>43</sup> This is one index of the fact that the ARF embodied the idea of revolution for certain Young Turk circles, especially officers who had graduated from the Military Academy.

Damad Mahmud Pasha's "Open Letter to the Armenians," sent out from his Parisian exile in summer 1900, was the first credible sign that the Young Turk opposition wanted to pool the energies of all those opposed to the sultan, even if the letter blamed Abdülhamid alone for all the empire's ills. Mahmud expressed his regrets over the "appalling massacres" organized by the sultan, while also criticizing the Armenians for maintaining too great a distance from the Turks. He ended his letter with a call for unity, restoration of the constitution, and "federation with the Turks."<sup>44</sup> The last formula was unprecedented: coming from someone of Damad's stature, it was no mere rhetorical flourish, but a promising invitation to construct "the new Turkey."

The response of *Droschak's* editors shows that they took Prince Damad's offer seriously:

There was a time when we were constantly inviting the Turks, perplexed as we were by their indifference to Turkey's dire plight, to unite with us in struggle... Now the roles have been reversed: Turkish calls for "union" are raining down on us, while we are unfortunately obliged, despite our deep-felt sympathy for the principle, to maintain an uncertain position... "Let us unite": that is a superb idea. But with whom, and how? The Armenian revolutionaries have been on the scene for a long time and are already waging the struggle in whose name we are invited to unite. But where are the Turkish fighters? To date, we have encountered only individuals, groups, people busy making propaganda on paper; we have yet to see active fighters and agitators. Cut off from the real Turkish populace and depending for support on a negligible fraction of the Turkish intelligentsia, the Young Turks are still politicians who look to "the revolution from above"; they are weak, disorganized and, consequently, still inactive; they are men who prefer talk to action... Would that they had, at the very least, waged a verbal propaganda campaign tending in the right direction and geared to the present cultural needs of the Turkish people. But read through the Young Turks' publications: you will not find a single challenge to the internal forces smothering Turkish society... "Our history is superior to the Europeans', and we have more patience," someone writes. Someone else scurrilously repeats that "there exists no evil in Turkey that does not exist in still greater measure in so-called enlightened Europe." The only evil, we are told, is Sultan Hamid's person; the crisis that Turkey has been enduring for a quarter of a century is wholly due to his caprices. If Hamid disappears, Turkey will become a model country: this is what all the Young Turks repeat in chorus.<sup>45</sup>

The ARF was not the only organization to respond to Prince Damad's overtures. The SDHP also made itself heard in the person of Sapah-Giulian. He pointed out that the state was organized in such a way that there were no real bonds between its various constitutive elements, that no institution had sought to unite them in a bond of solidarity with the throne, and that, if the country were not reorganized on new foundations, it was condemned to disappear.<sup>46</sup> Finally, Sapah-Giulian reminded his readers that

the very moderate desires and the short-term goals put forward by the Armenian nation and the Armenians' fighting forces have never stood in opposition to the real, permanent interests of Turkey considered as a state. What the Armenians are demanding today is not in any way intended to weaken or paralyze Turkey, to dismember and, ultimately, destroy it, to pulverize the Turkish people and, on its ruins, re-establish the Home of the Armenians. The Armenian people's modest desires for reform and all the political, economic and social institutions to which it aspires contain, not the seeds of Turkey's destruction, but, abundantly, the seeds of its renewal.<sup>47</sup>

These reactions to Damad Mahmud Pasha's invitation sum up the Armenian Committees' political vision and reflect their determination to help rebuild a common state. The Ottoman dignitary's proposal to forge an "Armenian-Turkish federation"<sup>48</sup> doubtless reflected an option for founding the state anew shared by certain liberal circles that had emerged from the Ottoman elite. However, the Armenian Committees, still shaken by the violence inflicted on their compatriots in the eastern provinces, remained skeptical about the possibility of yoking their fate to that of this opposition, whose weakness and unrealistic objectives they had pointed out.

The end of the first stage of the rapprochement between Young Turks and Armenian revolutionaries throws up a crucial question: why did the largely legitimist Young Turk opposition seek to cooperate with the revolutionaries? On the face of it, everything separated a prince of the house of Osman from an Armenian intellectual who pleaded for socialism and even espoused revolutionary violence. Part of the answer no doubt lies in the common education and shared cultural references of the members of these two elites, who both spoke French and were steeped in European sociopolitical concepts. Another reason is to be sought in the existence of a vast network of Armenian militants, capable of operating in many different regions of the empire and characterized by their iron discipline, spirit of self-sacrifice and unwavering dedication: the Young Turk movement lacked any such base. We should also not overlook the fact that the Young Turk elite, especially the elite with roots in the Ottoman court or the upper echelons of the state administration, had necessarily come into contact with the high-ranking Armenian officials who had chosen to serve the state and did so with an effectiveness that no one dreamed of contesting. In addition, the same Young Turk elite was aware of the importance of the Armenian and Greek businessmen who were the moving spirits behind the industrialization of the country. Finally, we must not underestimate the pro-Armenian network that the Armenian Committees had succeeded in building up in Europe. Its by no means negligible ability to mobilize Western public opinion constituted the essential antidote to the propaganda campaigns of Abdülhamid and his agents, waged with the help of large "subsidies."<sup>49</sup>

The first phase of the Armenian-Turkish negotiations also revealed, however, the antagonistic positions of the two main Young Turk groups on basic issues such as foreign intervention or local autonomy. The organizing committee, indeed, had not so much as asked Rıza for his opinion before compiling the lists of invitees. It would seem that the members of the old OCU were hostile to the Armenian Committees and, especially, the ARF.<sup>50</sup> But Damad Mahmud's whole strategy turned on the idea of a rapprochement between Young Turks and Armenians.<sup>51</sup> He therefore sought to neutralize Rıza while arranging to invite the three Armenian parties – the ARF; the Verakazmial Hnchaks, who accepted the offer; and the Hnchaks, who turned it down.<sup>52</sup> Each committee was represented by three delegates and agreed to work in coordination with the others. In January, they held preparatory meetings with the two princes and İsmail Kemal Bey to make certain that the negotiations would take Article 61 of the Treaty of Berlin and the Memorandum of 11 May 1895 as points of departure. Avetis Aharonian headed the Dashnak delegation.<sup>53</sup> The Armenian side was further represented by three Paris-based veterans of the anti-Hamidian opposition – Minas Tchéráz,<sup>54</sup> Garabed Basmajian<sup>55</sup> and Archag Tchobanian.<sup>56</sup> The Young Turk delegation included, among others,<sup>57</sup> Hüseyin Tosun,<sup>58</sup> İsmail Hakkı,<sup>59</sup> Hoca Kadri, Çerkez Kemal, Dr. Lütfi, Mustafa Hamdi, Ali Fehmi,<sup>60</sup> Dr. Nâzım, and Yusuf Akçura.

The congress was opened by Prince Sabaheddin (whose father had just died) on 4 February 1902. There were six sessions conducted, at the Armenians' request, in French as well as Turkish. Only a few Greek, Albanian, and Kurdish delegates took part. As for the Macedonians, they had not even been invited. Thus, the congress rapidly evolved into a tête-à-tête between the Young Turk groups and the Armenian delegation. One of the pivotal questions posed from the outset bore on the principle of foreign intervention. Sabaheddin and some of those

participating in the congress were in favor of it. Those who voted against it, according to Bahaeddin Şakir's archives, were Abdülhalim Memduh, Abdurrahman Bedirhan (representing the newspaper *Kurdistan*), Ahmed Ferid, Ahmed Rıza, Ali Fahri (on the editorial board of *Osmanlı*), Albert Fua, Mustafa Hamdi, Dr. Nâzım, and Yusuf Akçura.<sup>61</sup> A majority of the 25 delegates voted down a motion, put forward at the third session of the congress by the 18 representatives of the minorities, to discuss the question of foreign intervention again.

A joint declaration was nevertheless hammered out, to "remind the European powers that it was their duty, and also in the general interests of humanity, to see to it that the clauses of the treaties and international agreements between them and the Sublime Porte be carried out in such a way as to benefit all parts of the Ottoman Empire."<sup>62</sup> The declaration had the merit of summing up both the question of outside intervention and the no less controversial question of how to implement the promised reforms – subjects that obviously concerned the Armenians and Macedonians above all others. Yet, it had undoubtedly been too heavily diluted from the standpoint of the Armenian delegation, which solemnly declared that the Armenians were "ready to collaborate with the Ottoman liberals in every joint activity aimed at changing the present regime"; that "beyond such joint actions, the Armenian committees [would] pursue their particular activities, it being well understood that these activities are directed against the existing regime, not the unity and organic existence of Turkey"; and that "their particular activity has no other goal than to bring about the immediate enactment of Article 61 of the Treaty of Berlin as well as the Memorandum of 11 May 1895 and the appendix to it."<sup>63</sup> This came down to agreeing to cooperate to preserve Turkey's territorial integrity while maintaining complete autonomy when it came to bringing about reforms in the eastern provinces.

Ahmed Rıza and his partisans were, obviously, opposed to this declaration,<sup>64</sup> so Sabaheddin had to propose a variant. It called for "realizing the Armenians' legitimate desires in connection with the organization and local administration of the provinces that they inhabit and of all other provinces; establishing a central government based on liberal ideas, the best way of guaranteeing the maintenance of national rights as well as the regular functioning of the provincial governments, from which the Armenians would benefit on the same footing and in the same measure as all the other peoples of the empire."<sup>65</sup> In this way, the prince tried to satisfy the Armenians' desire to have a hand in governing the provinces in which they lived while simultaneously envisaging an extension of the principle of "administrative" decentralization to the other provinces of the empire. But, in fact, he succeeded only in displeasing both sides: the Armenians left the congress before the last session, held on 10 February 1902. Nevertheless, the new organization's central committee was elected – by secret ballot.<sup>66</sup> The vote confirmed that Sabaheddin and a majority favorable to British intervention had taken control of the movement, which now included, among the accusations it leveled against the Hamidian regime, the sultan's policy of "suppressing the Armenians."

However, the majority also provoked the formation of a minority "coalition" within the movement.<sup>67</sup> This coalition brought together Ahmed Rıza and the activist young guard, which included many officers. It accused the majority of collaborating with the Armenians and Macedonians and consequently working against the interests of the empire. It accused it particularly of basing its strategy toward Europe on a defense of the Armenians, so as to legitimize the movement, as it were, in the eyes of the European chancelleries.<sup>68</sup> Thus, we see here the emergence of a group of Young Turks whose convictions were in every respect at variance with the activity of the Armenian committees – even if, like the ARF after the 1902 congress, this minority took positions shaped to some extent by the desire to remain open or even conciliatory.

In the wake of the congress, negotiations were opened between the majority and the ARF on the one side, and the Macedonian Committee on the other – represented by Aknuni (Khachadur Malumian) and Boris Sarafov, respectively.<sup>69</sup>

To arrive at a comprehensive view of the positions of the other Armenian Committees and understand their perceptions of the Young Turk movement, let us examine the way the SDHP reacted after the 1902 congress. A long article by the editorial board of the SDHP's official organ, published in London, begins by recalling that the SDHP had been the only party not to participate in the February 1902 congress and that it had made the decision not to attend "based on a thorough-going analysis of the situation." At the general congress that the SDHP held in the same period, the article declares, the party came to the conclusion that it was not possible to work with the Young Turks, for "dissatisfaction [with the current regime] is not sufficient grounds for collaboration," which could only be based on common leadership and common political goals. However, the editorial board contends there is "a towering barrier between the two groups," even if this is not obvious, for the Young Turks' "sole objective is to put the 'pitiful' Midhat Constitution into effect, without in any way altering the absolute tyrant's irresponsible status."<sup>70</sup>

The author then turns to the heart of the matter. He explains his party's position:

The Young Turks like to say that they want to propel the country by peaceful means down an evolutionary path toward a purely internal revolution of all state functions and all laws. But they do not for a moment consider giving up an inch of the state... The preservation of the state's territorial integrity is as much an article of faith for them as it is for the sultan and all the Old Turks. In that respect, they are as stubbornly patriotic as the sultan and the Old Turks, if not, indeed, more so. Their revolutionary aspirations and spirit are, consequently, strictly internal. They want to reform Turkey, revive it, and rejuvenate it, without, as we have said, calling state boundaries into question. It follows that, when the moment comes to defend the state against foreign encroachment or the kind of domestic discontent and revolt that threatens to violate its territorial integrity (elevated to the level of a sacred dogma) and undermine its organic unity – in a word, to divide or dismember that organic unity – then, we say, the Young Turks will readily forget, at once, all the divergences that distinguish them from their compatriots, the Old Turks and the sultan, and will join with them to defend, like a single man, their common *vatan* [fatherland] against foreign and domestic foes. The Young Turks say, "let us revolutionize the country, but first let us preserve its territorial integrity." We have nothing to object to this; how could we? One cannot ask them to unite with the enemies of the state in order to help dismember their fatherland.

There, however, at the root, at the foundation, lie the beginnings of the gaping abyss, the unbridgeable gulf that makes it impossible to envisage any sort of cooperative solidarity between the Young Turks and any revolutionary Armenian movement or political party. Given the Armenians' diametrically opposed aspirations, which are fundamentally national and fundamentally separatist, the two parties' basic, profound conflict of interest (economic, political and social) shows, as soon as they confront one another in any concrete domain, that they are nothing more nor less than enemies, deceptive outward appearances notwithstanding.

Certain revolutionaries, the author goes on to say, "are making a very big mistake." They wish "to overturn the regime currently dominating the Turkish state in order to replace it with a new regime of a high cultural level, like the regimes of the civilized nations of Europe." However,

the Armenian revolutionary does not have a mission of this kind. The Armenian revolutionary has no mission other than to shake off the servile yoke under which

the Armenian people has been...groaning for centuries... It follows from all that has already been said that there can be no cooperative solidarity and no federation of any sort between us Armenian revolutionaries and the Young Turks... The Young Turks themselves have understood very well where our aspirations lead; they have very clearly sensed the irreconcilable antagonism between us. The organizers of their Congress, their big wheels, those wily future candidates for posts as wily Turkish diplomats, capitalized on the naïve flirtation with Ottoman liberals in which the Armenian revolutionaries have engaged and are still engaging and invited the Armenian revolutionaries [to participate in their congress]. They invoked a general union of the peoples of the Ottoman Empire and general reforms in order to stifle or annihilate the Armenian cause, to evict it without a trace from the political arena.

Finally, the author affirms that,

to date, in speaking of the Young Turks, we have assumed that they were an organized group. But that is not the reality of the matter. There is in fact no Young Turk organization and no organized Young Turk party. There are isolated individuals and small groups scattered here and there, without firm internal unity or an organizational structure based on rules and regulations. They are held together less by political or social ties than by a kind of familiarity typical of the East. There is no Young Turk party with branches reaching into the various strata of the Turkish population. The two entities known as Young Turkey and the Turkish people comprise two distinct worlds utterly foreign to each other.<sup>71</sup>

Compared to the moderate position laid out by Sapah-Giulian in February 1901, this declaration is surprisingly radical. How are we to explain this change in tone, this definite rejection of the Young Turk experiment? The line of argument developed in the text gives us an idea of the party's opinion of the Young Turks: they are accused of nationalism and of pursuing shadowy objectives designed to bury or instrumentalize the Armenian cause. By itself, however, this does not suffice to explain the disconcerting bluntness of the article, this "declaration of war." The internal debates and the reunification of the Hnchaks and the Verakazmial Hnchaks that took place at this time,<sup>72</sup> or even the information that reached the party's central committee at this time, may have induced the Hnchak leaders to radicalize their discourse and attack not only the Young Turks but also the ARF's policy of collaborating with them. As if to take their distance from ARF positions, the Hnchaks rejected, above all, the principle of Turkey's territorial integrity, which constituted the obligatory basis for dialogue between the Young Turk opposition and the Armenian activists.

### ***The Young Turk Coalition: An Ideology in Gestation***

The bitter debate that took place at the February 1902 congress of the Ottoman opposition, between the majority that had coalesced around Prince Sabaheddin and the minority led by Ahmed Rıza, finalized the break between the proponents of decentralization and dialogue with the other nationalities and the partisans of a centralized state hostile to non-Turks. This debate was all the more important in that it helped weld together the little group of activists who would produce the Young Turk ideology that dominated the movement between 1908 and 1918.

The August 1902 creation, in Paris, of a distinct central committee of the *Terakki Cemiyeti* (Committee of Progress), which comprised Rıza, Nâzım, Ahmed Ferid, Abdülhalim

Memduh, Mahir Sa'id, and Hikmet Süleyman, confirmed this divorce and illustrated the exclusively Turkish make-up of the minority.<sup>73</sup> The new central committee's official organ, *Şûra-yı Ümmet*, declared in its very first issue: "If Europe came to rescue us by accepting our invitation she would at first try to separate the Armenians and Macedonians from us."<sup>74</sup> This is a valuable index of the ideological evolution of the Committee of Progress. There was, to be sure, an antagonism of sorts between Rıza and the activists: Rıza remained opposed to revolution and violent action and "dreamed of creating a liberal 'public opinion' and thereby changing the regime," while the activists held that the time had not yet come to educate the population and bring a public opinion into being, since "a revolution to dethrone the sultan can be achieved only by high-ranking statesmen and the military." The two groups had, however, a point of convergence – Turkism. It was championed particularly by Yusuf Akçura, an eminent member of the new coalition.<sup>75</sup>

Nationalism and Turkism, the ideological expressions of centralization and the exclusion of non-Turks, constituted a kind of response to not only Sabaheddin but also the Dashnaks, who were struggling to win administrative autonomy for the eastern provinces. In fall 1908, the coalition's organ denounced the prince's political line, since,

union with the non-Turkish opponents of the sultan was chimerical: "If a Christian ... is an Armenian, he dreams about the establishment of an independent Armenia... Now the Bulgarians and the Armenians are engaged in armed rebellion. Turks are witnesses to all this, and naturally are saddened and feel that the Christians have hurt them."<sup>76</sup>

Unremarkable and widespread among the members of the coalition, these views show the similarity between their discourse and the Sublime Porte's when it came to the question of the nationalities – that is, the territorial integrity of the empire.

"Turkish" nationalism thus would appear to have coalesced in reaction to the emergence of national sentiment among the other groups in the empire. Doubtless because they were still marked by the Ottoman heritage, the Young Turk activists initially seem to have perceived only the movements formed by groups with roots in the Ottoman Christian world, which they clearly distinguished from Europe – itself perceived, first and foremost, as Christian. Both *Şûra-yı Ümmet* and the October 1903 issue of *Mechveret* introduced a nuance when they affirmed that to be anti-Islamic came down to being anti-Turkish. They also bitterly criticized Europe for discerning fanaticism in Islam alone: "if the Turks eradicated the Bulgarian race or massacre the Armenians, they are driven to do so by Muslim fanaticism."<sup>77</sup> In essence, they accused Europe of Turkophobia and attributed this attitude to the anti-Turkish propaganda of the Armenian Committees.

These committees had indeed been striving for more than a decade to capture the attention of the European intelligentsia. Especially in France and Great Britain, especially in the wake of the 1894–6 massacres, they had succeeded in creating a pro-Armenian network that directed its blows, first and foremost, against the Hamidian regime.<sup>78</sup>

Incidents that occurred during a summer 1904 Anglo-Armenian congress in London nicely illustrate the struggle between the Armenian Committees and the Young Turks of the coalition. Rıza, who had, after some hesitation, been invited to the London congress in his capacity as "leader of the party of Young Turkey," asked for the floor. The organizers suggested that he speak at the congress's closing banquet. During his address, delivered to an audience of Armenian activists, British intellectuals, and members of parliament, he faithfully repeated his faction's line. He was attacked by delegates from France and Italy, who criticized him for defending the sultan's policy and using the language of the Sublime Porte, and asked that he end his address.<sup>79</sup>

These circumstances reveal how difficult it was for the coalition to understand, even if it was somewhat familiar with the major intellectual debates agitating the West at the time, the objective reasons why much of Europe had rejected the sultan's policy toward the nationalities of the empire. In other words, they were hard put to see why what appeared to be "natural" to them as members of the "dominant group" was unacceptable to Western society. Doubtless, these Young Turks perceived anti-Hamidian discourse as anti-Turkish – and by extension, anti-Muslim – leading them to reject the West in turn. It is also probable that experiences of this kind eventually left them with a perception of Armenians as associated with Europeans and, concomitantly, with European colonial plans.

In any event, the coalition, which its opponents accused of continuing to be "nationalist, royalist, and Muslim," considered the problem a matter of pulling the wool over the eyes of a liberal Europe.<sup>80</sup>

The Cairo newspaper *Türk*, the organ of the Egyptian branch of the Young Turk movement, edited by Ali Kemal,<sup>81</sup> developed a still more radical nationalist ideology. "One day in the future," it wrote,

history, the eternal mirror of the truth of events, will precisely show that one nation that has been unjustly confronted with the entire world's enmity is the Turks... Is it not unjust to ignore the distinct native talents of a nation which has developed from a small tribe into a magnificent state?<sup>82</sup>

In other articles in this newspaper, the Turks are presented as "the British of the East." We glimpse here the foundations of the Young Turks' ideological edifice, which associated consciousness of the past and of history with pain, but also with the frustration bred by the end of a golden age, which the new Turks dreamed of restoring in the guise of a modern state.

*Türk* repeatedly denounced Western economic penetration of the empire, which it said went hand-in-hand with a "crusade of European powers against the Turks."<sup>83</sup> This theme hit home because it reflected a frustration that many felt. Unable to offer a solution to these problems, the editors of *Türk* contented themselves with denouncing them. Many authors have pointed out the importance of Yusuf Akçura's famous manifesto, published in *Türk, Üç Tarz-ı Siyaset* (Three Political Systems). Here, the ideologue sketches the beginnings of an answer to the questions that one segment of the Turkish elite was asking itself. He lays out three alternatives – Pan-Ottomanism, Pan-Islamism, and Pan-Turkism – and identifies the third option as the right one.<sup>84</sup> Akçura's approach, which called for taking over certain features of the Western world for purely utilitarian purposes while rejecting the West's humanist values and, simultaneously, the political principles of Islam, illustrates the complexity of the equation to be solved and the intellectual flexibility required to close this yawning gap. Akçura attempted to do so by recommending that the Turks "take their inspiration from the West in order to become stronger and make progress."<sup>85</sup> This was, in some sense, an obligatory passage that would allow the pupil to acquire the means with which to hold his own with his teacher.

Turkism, however, also required a theoretical grounding on which to found its own procedures and build up its own intellectual constructs. To that end, it had no choice but to "take its inspiration" from the vast corpus of social science being developed in Europe in this period. It did so in the sense that one goes shopping to meet one's basic needs for food and clothing. Notions such as the state, the nation, race, and society, and their positivistic and, especially, evolutionist translation, became the new Turks' daily bread. A good many authors have dwelt on the new Turks' fascination for Social Darwinism and its biological and "scientific" conception of human societies.<sup>86</sup> These ideas were then popularized in the Turkish context. They were a source of inspiration for certain militants, who asked for nothing more than to translate them into practice in the Ottoman world.<sup>87</sup>

In the Young Turks' vision, the Turkish "dominant nation" had to assume the supremacy that Osman's descendants had exercised over the empire for more than five centuries. The Turkish nation was to be invested with the special status that had been reserved for the "Old Turks" and, above all, with the legitimacy that they had enjoyed – their "natural" right to govern. But the Young Turks had to ground this legitimacy whose transfer they were advocating in a Turkish identity whose contours were still blurred. The editors of *Türk* systematically highlighted the virtues of Turkish cultural heritage and presented the Turkish language, "with its present-day eloquence and perfection as the language of a civilized nation," as the most important and most highly developed eastern language.<sup>88</sup> This affirmation, which makes no mention of the Persian and Arabic contributions to Ottoman Turkish, contains the seeds of the thesis, put in final form by the Young Turks' Kemalist successors, claiming that Turkish is the "solar tongue" and the mother of all other languages.<sup>89</sup>

Clinging firmly to the notion of their legitimate authority, the Young Turks assumed only part of their heritage when it came to the non-Turkish nations of the empire – the part that gave them the right to "rule" and to take the state's destiny into their own hands. They did not accept the obligations that formed the pendant to it. Modernization of the state and society was a task incumbent on the "noble Turkish people."<sup>90</sup>

Behind the construction of a Turkish identity lay the need to transform the Ottoman Empire into a modern state with the help of a preferably Turkish entrepreneurial class. Thus, alongside the stock image of the terrorist Armenian revolutionary manipulated by the Western powers, there also appeared in Young Turk discourse that of the Armenian profiteer and usurer. Evoking this image, an editor of *Türk* wrote that, "the fortunes that they have made, the arts that they have mastered all arise from the fact that they have lived at our expense," and suggested that his readers draw their own conclusions and boycott these merchants and craftsmen who "would [otherwise] increase as a natural consequence."<sup>91</sup> We can already discern in such affirmations the theory of the Millî İktisat (National Economy), which would seek to replace Armenian or Greek businessmen with "Turks" and Muslims or, at the very least, to ruin the Armenians and Greeks. Also adumbrated is the rejection of the idea that personal merit had something to do with the Armenians' or Greeks' successes, which are here attributed exclusively to abuses whose victims are said to be Turks.

However, as we have already said, the principal determinant of the ideological orientations and mental universe of the Young Turk coalition was an obsession with the dismemberment of the empire, which the coalition sought to forestall by affirming a form of Turkish nationalism sustained by an elite that was cast as "the potential liberator of a fatherland that, inevitably, would be confronted with a catastrophe."<sup>92</sup> The Young Turks' frequent contact with Armenian activists and the sight of their determination and courage only reinforced Turkish apprehensions about the empire's future. In the face of these tightly structured organizations of devoted militants, revolutionary intellectuals, and *fedayis* fighting the Hamidian regime on a daily basis, the Young Turks probably questioned their own capacity to organize a movement and shape the destiny of the country. They may even have developed a sort of complex and erected the Armenian organizations into models whose methods they sought to adopt. Although such ideas could obviously not be expressed in public, they nevertheless made headway with the Young Turks and surely contributed to the evolution of their positions.

The positions taken by the Young Turks toward the Armenian initiatives that we have already described constituted an ideological corpus in their own right. Some of the concepts involved were already well developed while others were still emerging. These positions, too, were shaped by the Young Turks' relations with the Armenian activists.

In other words, the image of the Armenians as submissive, deceitful, and disloyal, handed down to the Young Turks by the Ottoman tradition, was being recomposed in this period.

Emerging out of it was a perception of the Armenians as an alien, albeit familiar, ethnic and religious group that threatened the ruling group – that is, the Young Turks – who saw themselves as the Turks' enlightened avant-garde.

### *Prince Sabaheddin's League for Personal Initiative and Decentralization: A Partner for the Armenian Committees, 1902–7*

Historians have observed that the ascendancy of Prince Sabaheddin's majority over the movement was not immediately translated into a program of action and that the alliances concluded with the other elements of the Ottoman opposition produced no concrete effects.<sup>93</sup> Not only were no operations conducted against the Hamidian regime for three years (that is, until 1905), but the prince actually said very little about the situation in Turkey either.

Sabaheddin had, however, founded a League for Personal Initiative and Decentralization. Since the January 1902 congress, he had been assisted in this undertaking by Abdüllah Cevdet, the founder of the first small group of Young Turks. The name of the organization indicates what it considered the best way to pull the empire out of crisis. The prince, an avid student of the social sciences, was convinced that one of the conditions for the country's survival was the creation of a decentralized administrative system "guaranteeing the moral and material interests of the different races living on the soil of the empire."<sup>94</sup>

Prince Sabaheddin seemed to believe that the subordinate status imposed on non-Turkish groups in the empire was standing in the way of modernization process. Without abandoning the principle that the Turks should govern, he envisaged a kind of division of labor that would allow the empire to benefit from the "know-how" of each group. Thus, he observed that

the Christians have developed private enterprise most fully; its absence is paralyzing the Muslims. Unlike the Muslims and, in particular, the Turks, the Christians do not expect to be rewarded with a civil service job, but attend to their own individual interests.<sup>95</sup>

In this way, Sabaheddin posed the question of how to transform the relation between the ruler and the ruled; only such a transformation, in his view, could liberate creative energies and bring non-Turks to commit themselves to the project of a common state. It goes without saying that this conception, although it ruled out division of the political sphere among the different groups, ultimately implied dismantling the Ottoman model and replacing it with a state not of subjects but of citizens.

From his position as a prince of the house of Osman, Sabaheddin analyzed the situation rather perceptively:

If the minorities had discovered that the opposition wielded real power, they would have changed their minds. But they see a notoriously baneful force in the regime and, in the opposition, a vacuum in everything touching on the future. Hence it is not surprising that they should look to separatist solutions. We should also bear in mind that we have, for centuries, considered the Christians' privileges not as rights, but as gifts granted to them. We and the minorities have lived separately. We have thought separately. Nothing has ever succeeded in bringing our social perspectives closer together. Since we are the ones who have marched on their lands and conquered them, it is now incumbent on us to soften their hearts. Our duty and our interests alike require that we do so.<sup>96</sup>

This declaration may no doubt be regarded as the first introspective reflection of an Ottoman statesman about the dominant nation's traditional attitude toward the subject peoples, the fruit of an effort to understand their position.

As we noted in discussing the first congress of the Ottoman opposition, Prince Sabaheddin devoted special attention to the Armenians from the beginning. He continued to do so in the years ahead, proposing the creation of a "common fatherland" in which Armenians would have the same rights as Turks.<sup>97</sup>

Sabaheddin laid down conditions, however. In an "Open Letter to the Armenians," published in September 1905, he condemned terrorism while inviting the Armenians to participate in a common project: "Our Armenian compatriots, instead of pursuing a propaganda of the deed, would be acting in a way much more favorable to their interests if they pursued a propaganda of ideas in Turkish circles."<sup>98</sup> The Armenian Committees had in fact been striving, since their inception, to heighten awareness among the Turkish and Kurdish masses, but had not had much success with these conservative or tribal societies. Moreover, the prince observed:

There exists, whatever the Armenians may say, a perfect harmony of interests between them and the Turks. These two groups make up a society of peaceful laborers who dream of order and peace and are exposed to the same danger: the periodical attacks of tribes of Kurdish nomads.<sup>99</sup>

Although he does not use the word, the prince probably had the complementarity of the two groups in mind.

Sabaheddin's political program was moderate in comparison with that of the Turkist members of the coalition. Hence, it was capable of appealing to the non-Turkish groups. The official organ that he began to publish in April 1906, *Terakki* (Progress), promoted individual freedoms, social prosperity, good relations among the empire's different groups, and the rights of the Ottomans in the face of the developed nations' aggression. Sabaheddin even proposed a platform for the defense of the rights of the empire's non-Turkish elements. His program called for political reform based on the principle of devolution and the idea that a decentralized system of administration should be established in the provinces, the election of local governments that would take part in the decision-making process, the consolidation of relations between the central government and the local authorities, proportional representation for different groups in local government, equal rights for all Ottoman subjects regardless of their ethnic background, and so on.<sup>100</sup>

Hanioglu has surveyed the reactions that Sabaheddin's program elicited from the Turkist members of the Young Turk minority. They allow us to assess the Turkist positions on the questions raised by the program.

Rıza described it as "elastic, vague and obscure." Şakir, who had only recently arrived in Paris, noted that the prince's program would inevitably bring on division of the empire, would benefit non-Turks above all others, and could only be realized at the Turks' expense. In their secret correspondence, the Young Turk leaders, who considered themselves to be the legitimate defenders of their fatherland, repeated in chorus that Sabaheddin's plan could not but lead to disaster for the empire and that Sabaheddin was a traitor and a lackey of the separatist committees.<sup>101</sup> Şakir and Nâzım accused him of being "a British agent" and added that he "approved of the program of the Armenians, who want to leave us." The Unionists also flung an accusation at the prince that they believed robbed him of all credibility and legitimacy – namely, that he had Georgian blood in his veins. Finally, they urged that "this man be stopped, because he defend[ed] decentralization."<sup>102</sup>

The attacks of the Committee of Union and Progress were also directed against Sabaheddin's supporters: "Decentralization [was] a policy the Europeans and Armenians

wished to see enacted in order to annihilate Ottomanness.” Şakir went so far as to accuse the prince of accepting the principle that Christians were superior to Muslims, then launched an attack on the Armenian Committees. Alluding to the massacres of Armenians under Abdülhamid, he wrote:

The real authors of the disaster of our Armenian compatriots are some stupid people among the leaders who were running and administering the Armenian community, the many vagabonds carrying out provocations under the title of committee members... In his memoranda, Sabaheddin bey portrays Armenian committee members as innocent children and places all the responsibility on the government.

Şakir also contended that these militants were being manipulated by the Russian Armenians who controlled the movement. He added that they defended a rash political line that jeopardized the empire’s territorial integrity, inasmuch as they were seeking to bring on a foreign intervention. They could therefore be considered, he concluded, a people in rebellion against “our nation.”<sup>103</sup>

These reactions of the Young Turk coalition were apparently a response to Prince Sabaheddin’s efforts to create an “organizational network from the west to the east of Asia Minor with agents” – to develop such an organization, the League depended on support from the ARF’s local networks. Once again, the Young Turk movement was confronted with the problem of finding intermediaries in the population in order to promote its ideas. In the capital, Prince Sabaheddin’s League tried to elude the surveillance of the sultan’s political police by creating a student organization, the Cemiyet-i Inkilâbiye (Revolutionary Committee).<sup>104</sup>

Can the revolts that broke out between 1905 and 1907 in eastern and western Anatolia be imputed to the League and other revolutionary movements such as the Dashnaksutiun? Despite the absence of conclusive documents, there is every reason to believe that Sabaheddin and the ARF leadership concluded a secret agreement to work together by the first half of 1905, at the latest. In May 1905, a member of the Western Bureau of the Dashnaksutiun, Aknuni, accorded an interview to Abdüllah Cevdet, a close associate of Sabaheddin’s, the tenor of which leaves little doubt about how close relations between the two parties were.<sup>105</sup> When a representative of the League, Captain Hüseyin Tosun,<sup>106</sup> was dispatched to eastern Anatolia to organize revolutionary activities there, the ARF took him under its wing. As soon as he arrived, Tosun was arrested by a military patrol, which suspected him of being an Armenian revolutionary. He emerged unscathed only because the commander of the patrol turned out to be an old classmate. All available sources indicate that it was Tosun who created the local committee and was at the origin of the revolt that erupted on 5 March 1906, where the rebels demanded exemption from local taxes as well as the tax on domestic animals. We should add, however, that the main lay and religious dignitaries in Erzerum put themselves at the head of this rebellion.<sup>107</sup> This indicates that the movement’s founders took pains to lend the protest a social coloring, relegating whatever role the Dashnaksutiun’s militants may have played to the shadows. The reason, doubtless, was their fear of hostile reactions on the part of the populace if their collaboration with “infidels” became a matter of public knowledge.

The presence of just one delegate from Prince Sabaheddin’s League cannot, however, explain the protest movement that erupted in Sinop, in the vilayet of Kastamonu, on 9 December 1905 and resurfaced in October 1906 and December 1907. There was, to be sure, nothing revolutionary about it.<sup>108</sup> At most, we can assume that these local phenomena inspired or encouraged the resolve of the two Young Turk movements to foment rebellions. The revolt that was smoldering in Dyarbekir in August 1905 is equally unconvincing, although it had the support of the city’s *mufti*: it was a protest against acts of pillage and other crimes committed in the villages of the vilayet by the chieftain of the Kurdish Milli tribe,

İbrahim, whom Abdülhamid had elevated to the rank of pasha in 1902.<sup>109</sup> These were all ordinary phenomena in regions marked by tribal organization.

As to the events that occurred in Van after the 23 March 1908 murder of an informer by the name of David, they were merely one more chapter in the ongoing wrestling match between the ARF's revolutionaries and the government. In his memoirs, Goms (the pen name of Dr. Vahan Papazian) gives a detailed account of the skirmishing that took place at the time, as well as of the ARF's attempt to spring the famed Vartkes Seringiulian from prison. Seringiulian would later become one of the CUP's main Armenian interlocutors.<sup>110</sup>

Hanioglu mentions a "bogus" Turkish organization, the Liberal Turkish Action Committee or Turkish Revolutionary Federation, which the ARF created out of whole cloth in an attempt to make its message more credible in the eyes of the Turkish and Kurdish populations of eastern Anatolia. Papazian, the chief of the party in Van in this period, reports that in summer 1904 a certain Haci Idris, a Turkish landowner, contacted him with the intention of collaborating with the ARF. Idris was soon joined by the *emlak müdürü* (the head of the land registration office) in Van, Şeref; the assistant chief of the telegraph office, Halil; and a tax official, Hakki, all of whom were opponents of the regime.<sup>111</sup> He also notes that he had some of Sabaheddin's and Rıza's publications brought from Europe for his Turkish friends, adding that they were a distinct success and that, finally, in fall 1906, at Şeref's request, "we decided to publish a bimonthly periodical in Turkish, which we wrote, edited and printed ourselves, while they were responsible for distributing it."<sup>112</sup> *Sabah ul-Hayr* (Good Day), which called for joint Armenian-Turkish action, was well received, according to Papazian. Şakir, however, was convinced that "such a committee could never be Turkish or Ottoman."<sup>113</sup> Hanioglu goes so far as to describe it as a "bogus organization of the Dashnaksutiun" because he is unaware of the part, however modest, played in these anti-Hamidian propaganda campaigns by a handful of Turkish notables from Van.

The Parisian League seems to have been directly involved in the creation of the Ottoman Constitutional League (*Şûra-yı Osmani Cemiyeti*) in Cairo late in 1906 by Arab, Turk, Circassian, and Armenian intellectuals on the initiative of Ahmed Saib Bey and Abdüllah Cevdet, as is clearly indicated both by the identity of its founders and its program. It was doubtless not by accident that the coalition's official organ, *Şûra-yı Ümmet*, which regularly described *Pro Armenia* as a newspaper "hostile to the Turks and an enemy of Ottoman institutions," described the League formed in Cairo in much the same terms. Moreover, the Ottoman Constitutional League had close ties with the ARF's Egyptian Committee. *Şûra-yı Osmani*, the organ of the Cairo League, illustrated how close they were when it declared that "a purely Turkish revolution might cause the end of the existence of the state"<sup>114</sup> – in other words, that a rapprochement with the Armenians could do a great deal more to maintain the unity of the country than unilateral action.

In his "Memorandum of the Turkish Liberals with respect to the Eastern Question," written in late 1906, Sabaheddin returns to the theme of the importance of coming to terms with the Armenians. "The Turks," he declared, were "an unquestionable and indispensable element of equilibrium" in the Ottoman Empire. The Armenians, for their part, were "persecuted for political reasons, which are not at all connected with religion... An attempt was made at suppressing them because they were the future allies of the Turkish Liberals."<sup>115</sup>

### ***The Committee of Union and Progress and the Armenians, 1905–6***

The Young Turk Coalition, which from 1902 to 1905 only just managed to survive in the shadow of Prince Sabaheddin's League, was in the space of a few months transformed into

so powerful an organization that it appeared by early 1907 as a credible committee of activists capable of attracting new members – or even taking power. According to Hanioglu, this turn came about thanks to two little-known men who remained in the shadows and worked exclusively within the Central Committee of the Committee of Union and Progress until 1918.<sup>116</sup>

The first of these two men, Dr. Bahaeddin Şakir,<sup>117</sup> is without a doubt the one who succeeded in forging the synthesis on which all energies were focused. Şakir had had a career. Hardly had he graduated the Imperial Medical School then he became the personal physician of Prince Yusuf İzzeddin, second in the line of succession to the throne. He took advantage of his position to establish relations with Ahmed Celâleddin Pasha, the former head of the Ottoman Intelligence Service who had fallen into disgrace and, naturally, joined the opposition in Cairo. Şakir, who was in contact with the members of the coalition in exile in Paris, convinced the prince to finance their activities. Unmasked by the political police, he was arrested and banished to Erzincan. He managed to flee to Trabizond and, from there, board ship for Marseille. He arrived in Paris in September 1905.<sup>118</sup>

The young man of 26 presented himself in Paris as Yusuf İzzeddin's emissary, but also as an intermediary between the coalition and Ahmed Celâleddin. Two former Young Turks describe him as a "very vindictive character" and "a very narrow-minded individual."<sup>119</sup> Narrow-minded or not, Şakir understood the situation perfectly well. He himself confesses that he had already imagined uniting Rıza's coalition, Prince Sabaheddin's League, and the circles grouped around Celâleddin in Cairo. In Cairo, precisely, his privileged interlocutor was Diran Kelekian, responsible for the political section of the *Journal du Caire*.<sup>120</sup> Close to the former head of the Ottoman Intelligence Service and also to Prince İzzeddin, Kelekian had agreed, at the prince's request, to help Şakir put his plans into practice. The doctor needed help publishing a revolutionary journal that appeared every ten days, and the idea was to convince the former chief of intelligence to help finance it. The members of the coalition, however, did not want to collaborate with Diran Kelekian, and wanted even less to be financed by Abdülhamid's former top spy. The Armenian journalist nevertheless suggested that Şakir remain in Paris and try to come to an agreement with the coalition.<sup>121</sup>

Şakir rapidly found acceptance in Paris with help from Nâzım, who encouraged Rıza to undertake the complete reorganization suggested by Şakir and join the new committee that had been created late in 1905 without his knowledge. In the newly founded organization were Sâmî Paşazâde Sezaî Bey, Prince Muhammad Ali Halim Pasha as its treasurer, Nâzım, and Şakir, who was put in charge of internal organization and relations with the sections.<sup>122</sup> Rıza now lost his position as head of the organization (the post of president had been abolished) and Şakir and Nâzım took de facto control of the committee. They would continue to control it until the party was dissolved in October 1918.

The next order of business was for Şakir to convince Prince Sabaheddin and his associates, Nihad Reşad and Ahmed Fazlı, to join his enterprise. He failed. With Ahmed Celâleddin Pasha, who had himself founded an oppositional party in Cairo together with "Bedri Bey" (the pseudonym of Diran Kelekian), he envisaged not a mere alliance, but a merger. It would, he hoped, put the financial resources of the Egyptian network at his disposal.<sup>123</sup>

In this matter as well as in many others, Kelekian, who had been active in Rıza's CUP in 1895–6 in Paris, became the Young Turk physician's confidant and counselor. He pointed out to Şakir, for example, that in its present form *Şûra-yı Ümmet* could not play the role of an "opposition journal [, which] should carry out the function of a banner." As for the new organization, he recommended that his friend find a prestigious successor for Ahmed Rıza

and give the group a new name. Finally, he evoked the negotiations with Celâleddin Pasha and the possibility of bringing him into the Central Committee, although not necessarily as its leader.<sup>124</sup>

The former head of intelligence agreed to join the organization on four conditions. Firstly, that it abandon the form “Young Turkey”; secondly, that the ARF and the SDHP be included in the union, a move that, he said, could have very positive effects; thirdly that Rıza’s role be restricted to that of a rank-and-file member – in other words, that he not be given any post allowing him to take part in the decision-making process; and finally, that *Şûra-yı Ümmet* continue to appear as the new party’s organ. Finally, Celâleddin demanded that Kelekian draft a declaration calling on all the sultan’s opponents to unite under the wing of the new organization. The coalition rejected these conditions. Celâleddin Pasha nevertheless agreed to provide a monthly subsidy to the newly formed Central Committee.<sup>125</sup>

To put the finishing touches on his project, Şakir drew up a draft agreement with the non-Muslim committees, in particular the Armenian organizations. He wrote a memorandum about this move, in which he asked Kelekian for advice. In his 9 April 1906 response, Kelekian noted that Şakir’s text deviated from Rıza’s program, which, if it was “more favorable toward the non-Muslims subjects, [was] not adequate for the purposes of achieving a union.” If he wanted union, he would have to suggest a more far-reaching decentralization plan. Kelekian reminded Şakir, as if to lay his apprehensions on this score to rest, that there was nothing political about provincial government, which, “within the limits of *autonomie locale*, should be extended, with more substantial rights in appointing officials and in discussing and approving provincial budgets.” He also suggested the possibility of using local languages in the provincial administration, alongside the country’s official language, Turkish. More generally, he contended that the “nations” could receive equal treatment “without causing disorder in the government’s administrative affairs,” asking why some enjoyed this privilege – such as the Greeks on the Aegean islands or in Ionia and the Arabs in Beirut – whereas others, such as the Albanians and Armenians, did not. The follow-up to this exchange was equally frank. Kelekian wrote:

I am aware that your friends would not agree with this opinion. Events would demonstrate to them, however, that the country can only be saved by such a liberalism, and that nobody can be deceived by a liberalism based on the principle of Turkification. The non-Muslim subjects are ready to become Ottomans, because they hope that by preserving their nationality and making their nationality a component of Ottomanness they would become Ottomans. Becoming Christian Turks by gradually forgetting their racial [origins], however, would not be found beneficial by them. Despite this fact, even if this program was accepted, most of the discontent caused by *Mechveret* would disappear.<sup>126</sup>

In response, Şakir asked Kelekian to draft a memorandum on the subject so that he could discuss it with the members of the coalition. This time, Kelekian dealt head on with the key questions, identifying what he considered and did not consider acceptable in the program of the Committee of Union and Progress. He noted that the

Turkish nation, which has pursued a “dominant nation/religious community” policy since the establishment of the sultanate, wishes to save the freedom that it wishes for the country on this condition... The offer by the Turks to the non-Muslim nations is simply inviting them to a union based on “*égalité individuelle*.” I wonder if the non-Muslim nations would accept such a union? The experience of the last ten years

indicates that they would not ... The elements which find individual equality inappropriate and demand “*égalité raciale et sociale*” would naturally act as they wish.

With regard to the risk of European intervention, Kelekian added that it could be obviated only by “basing domestic politics on maximal liberalism and unequivocal justice.” He concluded his memorandum by emphasizing that “it is necessary to regard the fatherland as common for all, to abandon the claims of superiority and hegemony, and to limit oneself to being a ‘partner’ instead of a ‘superior.’”<sup>127</sup>

The opinions formulated in this document by Diran Kelekian, the former editor-in-chief of the Istanbul daily newspaper *Sabah*, well known for his pertinent analyses of Ottoman society, sum up all the questions confronting the “non-Muslim nations.” Hence they also shed light on the solutions proposed in the Young Turk organization’s emerging program.

It hardly need be said that Kelekian’s suggestions did not find grace in the eyes of the Young Turk leaders. Şakir, nevertheless, decided to engage a dialogue with the Armenian Committees after familiarizing himself with these revolutionary parties’ founding principles, with Kelekian’s help.<sup>128</sup> One of the members of the SDHP’s Central Committee, Stepanos Sapah-Giulian, has given a detailed account of his meetings with the Young Turks,<sup>129</sup> in which another eminent member of his party, Murad, also took part.<sup>130</sup>

Late in July 1906, Şakir visited the SDHP’s Parisian headquarters. He introduced himself as the former personal physician of the prince and heir to the throne Yusuf İzzedin, mentioning his clandestine activities in Constantinople and the Hnchak militants who had been hanged at Trabizond, as well as those he had known in Kirason and Samsun, on the shores of the Black Sea. After this preamble, he revealed that he was a member of the Committee of Union and Progress. The two Hnchak leaders pointed out that Rıza and Nâzım were very hostile to the SDHP. Şakir answered that Rıza and Nâzım were not representative of the party as a whole and that there were more open-minded people in it. After several informal meetings, he suggested that his interlocutors organize official meetings between the two parties. The first of these meetings was attended by Şakir, Rıza, and Nâzım, on the one hand, and Murad (Hampartsum Boyajian) and Sapah-Giulian on the other. Rıza began with the remark that, in view of the country’s current plight, it was crucially important that they come to an agreement and that he was determined to do all in his power to bring one about. He added that he had received, from activists in the Caucasus,<sup>131</sup> Egypt, and Bulgaria, and from Turks in responsible positions as well, letters demanding that an accord be reached on the basis of mutual concessions. Şakir, for his part, said a few words on the party’s situation in Salonika, Smyrna, and Macedonia.

Sapah-Giulian observes, in his description of this initial encounter, that the evolution of European policy toward the Ottoman Empire had certainly helped convince the Young Turks to modify their positions. They sensed, he says, that the empire would collapse and disintegrate if nothing was done. They were alarmed by the Arabs’ anti-Turkish position, as well as by the agreements that the Armenians “had reached with Arab intellectuals.” Without fully understanding the direction in which the Balkan states were moving, they had also perceived that the situation in Macedonia was explosive. Finally, Sapah-Giulian notes that they continued to believe that all was not lost and that they could still save their empire. The Armenians were, in their view, in a better position than the Arabs to help them do so, and it was no longer possible to postpone coming to an agreement with the forces of the internal opposition if the external dangers threatening the empire were to be warded off. Rıza also asked Murad – who had just spent ten years in prison – to forget the past and “act like a patriot.” Finally, he said, “if I were Armenian, I would have taken the position that you have taken, but I don’t think that you would have taken a position different from mine.”<sup>132</sup>

It was decided that both parties would study all these questions one by one before any further meetings were held. The following points were to be examined in the following order: 1) the Armenian question and the goal of a single state; 2) autonomous Armenia and Turkey; 3) a democratic constitution and the Midhat Constitution; 4) the Armenian question and foreign intervention; 5) socialism and nationalism; 6) nationality and Ottomanism; 7) organization, propaganda, and revolutionary actions; 8) organs of liaison and relations between the parties; and 9) the question as to what parts of any agreement reached should be made public.<sup>133</sup>

With regard to the first point, the Young Turks proposed to resolve the Armenian question within the framework of a single Ottoman state. On the second, Nâzım sought to show that foreign intrigues would render reforms ineffective – until the state was reformed and modernized, he suggested, broad local reforms were all that could reasonably be hoped for. The Hnchak leaders contested this approach, which came down to postponing reform until the arrival of better days at some unspecified point in the future. Şakir then asked “what the Armenians were going to do with the Turks and Kurds living in Armenia.” He was told they would stay where they were, enjoying all the political, economic, and social rights that Armenians did.<sup>134</sup> Nâzım raised the question again, in these terms: “Since the majority is Muslim, what purpose would autonomy serve?” Sapaĥ-Giulian retorted: “The overwhelming majority is on our side, although the question is more meaningfully posed in historical, cultural and national, rather than in quantitative terms. Hence the number of non-Armenians can in no case play a decisive role.” At this point, Rıza announced that in order to reach an agreement, the Young Turks were prepared to accept the principle of an autonomous Armenia, but that they wished to familiarize themselves with the details, such as the proposed region’s borders (that is, the villages and towns it was to include), as well as the form of autonomy proposed, the conditions under which it was to be realized, and the nature of the proposed region’s connection with, and relations to, the Ottoman state.<sup>135</sup>

This last discussion, although it created the impression that the Young Turk leaders were ready to make concessions, seems in fact to betray their underlying objective of making a precise assessment of the SDHP’s position on these fundamental questions.

At the next meeting, Murad and Sapaĥ-Giulian presented Kiepert’s “Map of Historical Armenia,”<sup>136</sup> on which Russian and Persian areas were marked off. They showed their interlocutors the borders laid down in the agreement of 11 May 1895. The Young Turks reacted rather coldly – indeed, they even said that they were stupefied by these pretensions. The two Hnchak leaders replied that autonomy did not mean independence. Nâzım retorted that “if separation does not come about today, then it will come about in five to ten years.”<sup>137</sup>

The basis for examination of the remaining points was, broadly, the plan of 11 May 1895 – administrative autonomy, participation in the general budget, a governor general whose appointment was to be confirmed by the Council of Ministers, a parliamentary regime, and so on. Disagreement persisted on Cilicia. Here, the Young Turks were willing to accept nothing more than local reform. For Armenia itself, they were prepared to accept “autonomy on non-secessionist bases.” Sapaĥ-Giulian concludes: “This was hard for them to swallow, but history and the general political situation forced them to come to this conclusion... We understood that the knife had reached the bone.” The solutions considered at these negotiations, which were, after all, binding on only two opposition groups, clearly showed just how far the Armenian demand for local autonomy went. This was no doubt what Şakir, Nâzım, and Rıza were after. It explains their willingness to “negotiate” with the most uncompromising of the Armenian Committees.

Calling for the adoption of a democratic constitution stripped of all references to divine right and theocratic institutions, the Hnchaks reminded their interlocutors that they

advocated secularization of the state even as they envisaged the future in an Ottoman framework. The unanimous response of the Young Turk leaders showed that this demand was out of the question: adopting a constitution of that type, they replied, was tantamount to handing “state power over to the non-Turkish elements.” The Midhat Constitution, “with which the Turkish population [was] already familiar,” was more appropriate in their view.<sup>138</sup> Socialism was rapidly dropped from the discussions. The question of Ottomanism, on the other hand – the affirmation that there was only one nation in Turkey into which all the others should melt – remained a major, non-negotiable Turkish demand.

We cannot rule out the possibility that both sides sincerely wished to reach an agreement. The SDHP’s proposals to create common propaganda organs and committees responsible for organizing revolutionary actions were not, however, seriously entertained. Confronted with the telling silence of his interlocutors, Sapah-Giulian told them that the ideological distance between their two formations was decidedly too great to be bridged.<sup>139</sup> We are accordingly inclined to believe that the sole purpose of the Hnchaks’ proposals was to test the Young Turks’ willingness to collaborate, while the Young Turks, for their part, were merely sounding out their interlocutors’ positions. Indeed, in an essay published immediately after these negotiations, Sapah-Giulian felt obliged to rebut accusations of “nationalism” and isolationism.<sup>140</sup> Referring to the situation in the eastern provinces and the threats hanging over the Armenian population, he pointed out that,

between Armenians, on the one hand, and Turks, Çerkez and Kurds on the other, there is an essential difference, even if all of them are in much the same economic and political situation. Unlike the Armenians, the other groups are not threatened with complete annihilation. The Turkish government does not have, vis-à-vis these other groups, a domestic policy the purpose of which is to liquidate them. “To resolve the Armenian question, it is necessary to eliminate the Armenians – to leave only groups of Muslims in the heart of the Taurus Mountain region.” This sword of Damocles is not dangling over the heads of any group living in Turkey, with the exception of the Armenians.<sup>141</sup>

As for solidarity with the Muslim groups living in the eastern provinces, Sapah-Giulian observes that years of effort have failed to produce results. Such solidarity is fine in theory, he writes, but unattainable in practice: the internal workings of the Muslim societies in these provinces and the local context make it difficult to recruit individuals caught up in the clan or tribal system.<sup>142</sup> He points out that if Turkey is to preserve its territorial integrity, the different elements it comprises have to want to live together. “But do they?” he asks. Macedonia wishes to secede; “this is clear as day.” “As for Crete,” he writes,

it is now only a matter of time, of days... Arabia has a certain inclination to break away... Who is left? The Kurds, the Çerkez, the Avshars, the Laz? Are these groups capable of working toward the creation of a new state out of a crumbling Ottoman empire, when some of them are still not sedentary and others are still half barbarian?

Sapah-Giulian’s essay delivers an uncompromising verdict on the Young Turk movement:

As for the dominant Osmanlı element... there are currently two small groups among Turkish youth: one is gathered around *Terrakki*, the other around *Meşveret*. The first accepts, together with the Midhat Constitution, a system of administrative decentralization for the other peoples, but this movement... has attracted only a handful of

individuals and has no organization or local branches. The members of this movement have set all their hope on intervention from the outside by the European powers and their “great men.” The *Meşveret* group, as is well known, is made up of out-and-out nationalists who are so intolerant that they do not even want to hear the Armenian question or [reform] plan of 11 May mentioned. They do not have a functioning organization, either... They want merely to restore the Midhat Constitution... which, in its [current] form, cannot satisfy any of the groups in the empire or bring about an improvement in the situation.

Sapah-Giulian further contends that the history of the past few decades has shown that all attempts to achieve reform in Turkey have failed: “Everything goes to show that it is impossible to reform Turkey in general, absolutely impossible.” He concludes:

May Turkey continue to live; but we, too, must live. Yet, given that neither the old nor the new dominant element in this country will grant us even minimal conditions of existence and both are opposed to implementation of the project of 11 May, we are not the one who can reverse the historical current and, with our very limited forces, accomplish what the European powers themselves have not succeeded in accomplishing for centuries.<sup>143</sup>

After these negotiations came to an end in October 1906, Murad proposed to convene a congress of Armenian revolutionaries. This initiative, however, came to naught.<sup>144</sup>

In December 1906, Sapah-Giulian again considered the possibility of joint action with the Young Turks. He remained skeptical, however, in the face of those he called “radical nationalists,” who had not evolved in the least, and went so far as to ask whether “it was wise” for the Armenians “to put [their] hopes of survival in general reforms.”<sup>145</sup> He was equally skeptical about the Midhat Constitution, which he analyzed in considerable detail, only to reaffirm that “it would bring nothing of a constitutional nature, even if it was an application of [constitutional] principles.” The Young Turks’ attempt to bring the Armenians to commit themselves to the struggle to restore it, he added, was intended only to bury the Armenian question: the constitution “merely confirms, legalizes and popularizes the government’s unreservedly theocratic, despotic and tyrannical principles.” The Hnchak leader emphasized, in this connection, that the articles of this constitution, notably articles 3, 4, 7, 11, 27, and 87, which spelled out the sultan’s political-religious prerogatives, were purely theocratic in nature, and that article 5, which absolved the sovereign of all responsibility for his actions, also gave him the power to appoint and dismiss ministers. The only important novelties introduced by this constitution, Sapah-Giulian contended, were its recognition of individual liberties, which had earlier been denied, and the fact that it acknowledged that state power was held and exercised by men, “not an entity desired and created by divine pronouncement.”<sup>146</sup>

The event that left the deepest mark on the years 1905–6 was the ARF’s assassination attempt against Sultan Abdülhamid. It took place on 22 July 1905, at 12:30 p.m., in the square before the Hamidiye Mosque, and left 78 people dead or wounded.<sup>147</sup> It might even be said that this operation constituted a turning point in the evolution of the anti-Hamidian opposition, for it showed that a well-organized group, even one whose members came from the ranks of a “subject people,” could make an attempt on the life of a sultan. The archives of Operation Vishab (Dragon), an operation entrusted to the “cell for demonstrative operations” (tsutsagan marmin), illustrate the logistical problems that this ARF commando had to resolve. In summer 1904, for example, the members of the commando, meeting in Piraeus, discovered that it was not possible for people with Armenian names to enter Istanbul safely, since those who did so were immediately tailed by the secret

police. The commando also observed that the sultan very rarely left Yıldız Palace. He went only twice a year to Dolma Bahçe during the Bayram festivities, in order to receive the homage of various state bodies, and was then escorted by thousands of armed men.<sup>148</sup> From the commando's report on the operation, we learn that the terrorists finally succeeded in making their way into Istanbul by presenting themselves as married couples, less suspect in the East than bachelors.<sup>149</sup> The report also contains a detailed description of the methods it used to bring explosives into the city.<sup>150</sup> It further points out that all the houses around the square in front of the Hamidiye Mosque had been demolished, so that it was impossible to come within more than a half a mile of it. Several options were therefore examined: shooting from rooftops a half a mile away, packing a car full of explosives (melinite), or launching grenades from a pavilion reserved for foreign visitors.<sup>151</sup>

Most instructive of all, however, are the Young Turks' reactions to this assassination attempt. Many members of the opposition, despite their hatred for the sultan, were shocked at the idea that Armenians had dared to get mixed up in what the Young Turks considered to be a purely "family affair."<sup>152</sup> Kâzım Karabekir declares in this connection that the Turks "would have regarded the assassination of a Turkish padishah by Armenians or other non-Turks as a blameworthy act."<sup>153</sup> In other words, as the Young Turks saw matters, the fact that "foreigners" had presumed to settle Turkish "family problems" was intolerable.<sup>154</sup> Or, if one likes, it was intolerable that others had very nearly succeeded in doing what the Young Turks themselves were unwilling or unable to do.

### *The Transformation of the Committee of Progress and Union and Its Fusion with the Ottoman Freedom Organization: the Decisive Turning-point*

While Şakir's attempts to unify the Ottoman opposition did not produce the desired results, the reorganization of the CPU was successful. It succeeded, notably, in bringing the movement to adopt revolutionary practices, previously limited to the non-Turkish opposition, and to "secretly assemble under the same banner" men who had the same ideas. Drawing the lessons of its past failures, the CPU drew up new party statutes, including internal regulations of decisive importance. As Hanioglu notes, the CPU was at this time more interested in order than in ideology.<sup>155</sup>

The new statutes provided for the nomination of a director and four autonomous sections of the Central Committee, each of which could work independently of the others and had the right to stamp the results of negotiations with the seal of the Central Committee. The first section, headed by Rıza, was responsible for publishing *Mechveret Supplément Français* and for relations with foreign groups. The task of the second, led by Sâmi Paşazâde Sezaî Bey, was to publish *Şûra-yı Ümmet*. The third, led by Nâzım, was responsible for party finances. The fourth, jointly directed by Şakir and Nâzım, was charged with working and corresponding with all the branches of the party – that is, with attending to internal business. The Central Committee also included two young officers who had broken with Istanbul, Lieutenant Seyyid Ken'an and Lieutenant Mehmed Fazlı, as well as two princes in disgrace, Mehmed Said Halim and Mehmed Ali Halim. In 1907, let us add, when the Central Committee decided that *Şûra-yı Ümmet* would henceforth be published in Paris, not Cairo, Şakir became its de facto editor-in-chief. Thus, he assumed effective, albeit unofficial, control of the party apparatus, seconded, as always, by Nâzım.<sup>156</sup>

At the time, the CPU did not have a single branch worthy of the name, except perhaps for the one in Cairo, which was, however, confined to the house and person of Ahmed Saib.

A specialist points out that the CPU took its inspiration from the organizational structure of the ARF, a revolutionary federation of branches linked in a network, as it was putting its own loose network of Young Turk groups in place.<sup>157</sup>

While there was progress in this domain, it should be emphasized that it was registered in the Balkans, among the Muslim population, in particular the officers in the many Ottoman units that controlled or tried to control this explosive region, regularly plundered by armed bands.

The 18 September 1906 creation of the Osmanlı Hürriyet Perverân Cemiyeti (Ottoman Freedom Organization/OFO) in Salonika was, precisely, the result of a fusion between these young officers serving in the Balkans and the “veterans” of the CUP.<sup>158</sup> The small group of the OFO’s founders comprised Mehmed Talât,<sup>159</sup> Midhat Şukrî (Bleda),<sup>160</sup> Mustafa Rahmi (Evranos),<sup>161</sup> Lieutenant İsmail Canbolat,<sup>162</sup> Major *Bursalı* Mehmed Tahir,<sup>163</sup> Lieutenant Ömer Naci,<sup>164</sup> İsmail Hakkı,<sup>165</sup> Major Naki Bey (Yücekök), Captain Edib Servet (Tör), Captain Kâzım Nâmi (Duru), and Lieutenant Hakkı Baha (Pars). The composition of the first “Supreme Council,” made up of Mehmed Talât, Mustafa Rahmi, and İsmail Canbolat, attested that leadership responsibilities were shared out among civilians, notables, and officers, while also evincing the radicalization of the movement, the statutes of which excluded non-Muslims and *dönmes* from the committee. Some of these men had been members of the first CUP cells and had kept up relations with Paris: thus, Midhat Şukrî was still in contact with Nâzım, and Mehmed Talât with Ahmed Rıza.<sup>166</sup> But it was the arrival in Paris of Lieutenant Ömer Naci (in May 1907), and Captain Hüsrev Sâmî (Kızıldoğ’an)<sup>167</sup> (in August 1907), and their adhesion to the movement, which speeded up the rapprochement between “Parisians” and “Salonikans.” After Talât presented Nâzım with the proposal to merge the two organizations, Nâzım, himself a native of Salonika, left for the Balkans.<sup>168</sup> After discussions lasting several weeks, he sent, on 27 September 1907, a unification plan back to the CPU’s Central Committee. Paris unanimously approved it on 16 October of the same year. From this point on, the CPU was represented by a domestic Central Committee based in Salonika and an external Central Committee based in Paris.<sup>169</sup> Thus, from 1908 to 1918, the members of the CUP’s Central Committee came mainly from the two entities that fused at this time: Şakir, Nâzım, Rıza, and Naci had roots in the Parisian CPU, while Talât and Şukrî came from the OFO in Salonika.

It seems plain that Şakir and Nâzım played equally important roles in this unification process and that Şakir led the reorganization of the new party with firm resolve. Complaining that the domestic Central Committee took too many chances, he suggested that it adopt the underground methods of the non-Muslim committees, especially the program and statutes of the ARF, which were used in elaborating the internal operating principles of the unified CPU.<sup>170</sup>

Among the innovations inspired by the Dashnaksutiun’s methods was the creation of local sections made up of volunteers prepared to make the supreme sacrifice – the *fedayis*. The local executive committees alone knew the identity of these men, whose mission was to carry out “special operations.” The ceremony at which new members of the committee were inducted also seems to have been modeled on that of the Armenian revolutionaries: new members swore an oath of loyalty to the party while holding a Koran in one hand and a dagger or revolver in the other. Also taken over from the Armenians was the custom of keeping Central Committee members’ names and the location of party headquarters a secret.<sup>171</sup>

Among the profound changes the CPU underwent in this period, the most decisive would appear to be the growing influence of young officers on the Committee. Responsible for this freely made choice were, it seems, two physicians on the Central Committee who were convinced of the need to attract “young officers ready to sacrifice themselves” rather

than pashas and *beys*. It was in this way that there began to flourish in the official organ of the party the militaristic discourse that made officers the “guides” of the nation and the “light of the eyes of our society,” for the army was “the only institution capable of carrying out a revolution.”<sup>172</sup> This choice also allowed the CPU to organize bands of irregulars, modeled after those Bulgarian, Macedonian, and Greek ones infesting the Balkans in this period, that were capable of carrying out armed raids and political murders. Involved here was both a response to what the Young Turks considered to be the challenge thrown down by the non-Muslims, and also a way of financing the party similar to the one used by the Armenian Committees.<sup>173</sup> The logical next step for these bands, under the command of young officers who were members of the party, was to recruit criminals and deserters who had become highwaymen. Major Enver (the future minister of war) and Major Eyüb Sabri (Akgöl) were the first to recruit such criminals, in Macedonia early in 1908.<sup>174</sup> Doubtless, these initial experiments can be considered the origin of the Special Organization, which was to constitute the military wing of the Central Committee of the CUP during the First World War. Then, however, it was no longer a question of armed raids, but of the systematic liquidation of a civilian population.<sup>175</sup>

Among the many officers who joined the OFO in fall 1906 were Ahmed Cemal<sup>176</sup> and Halil (Kut),<sup>177</sup> the uncle of Major Enver, who himself joined the organization on 9 October 1906 and founded a branch of the party at Manastır.<sup>178</sup> Unification with the OFO, a process in which Nâzım played a major role, enabled the CPU to put down deep roots in the Ottoman Balkans, but was obviously only the opening stage of the two CPU leaders’ plan. In December 1907, Nâzım again went secretly to Smyrna, this time in order to create a Young Turk branch there. He turned for support to the ARF’s local networks, which were solidly implanted in the port city.<sup>179</sup> A few months earlier, in May 1907, Şakir, for his part, had traveled to Istanbul on a false passport in order to reorganize the branch of the CPU there.<sup>180</sup> Profiting from the relations of his confidant in Cairo, Diran Kelekian, he met with Armenians from the capital who agreed to help create a local committee. Kelekian and Şakir also envisaged assassinating the sultan with the help of subsidies that Kelekian had obtained from Ahmed Celâleddin Pasha – the former director of Ottoman Intelligence was still living in Cairo – and Yusuf İzzedin.<sup>181</sup> These efforts did not, however, yield the expected results. It was, in the end, the OFO’s networks that united the different groups in the capital under Silistreli Hacı İbrahim Paşazâde Hamdi’s lead: they had a membership of 70 at the time, including a fair number of officers, such as Kâzım (Karabekir).<sup>182</sup> Moreover, on his return trip to Paris in June 1907, Şakir met in Bucharest with the famous İbrahim Temo, a historic figure of the CUP, and succeeded in convincing him to organize branches in Romania and among the Albanians. The historical CUP leader even obtained the support of leading Albanian Muslims for the CPU.<sup>183</sup>

Also indicative of the CPU’s ambitions was, finally, Ömer Naci’s November 1907 journey to eastern Anatolia for the purpose of founding local sections of the party.<sup>184</sup> These conservative tribal regions did not, however, offer the advantages that the Balkans did. Only the Armenian Committees could survive there.

### ***The ARF’s Fourth Congress: Vienna, 22 February to 4 May 1907***

When the Fourth General Congress of the ARF opened in Vienna on 22 February 1907 in a building belonging to the Austrian Socialist Party,<sup>185</sup> the Young Turk opposition was, as we have just seen, going through a period of profound changes. The same held for the Dashnaksutiun itself, which capitalized on the opportunity offered by the congress to draw

up the balance sheet of its past actions in the field and also assess the evolution of the Young Turk movement. Those present at the congress – 24 delegates from the local committees and the party's Eastern and Western Bureaus<sup>186</sup> – were intellectuals and also militants active at the practical level. They held more than one hundred sessions, during which many issues were examined in depth, notably the question of collaboration with the Ottoman opposition.

Although the ARF was democratic in its internal functioning, it was handicapped by the fact that, first, socialists, anarchists, and nationalists – all with very different working methods – coexisted within it. Second, it was led by “a voluntaristic, traditional oligarchy.”<sup>187</sup> This leadership comprised the party's two supreme bodies – the Western Bureau, which had jurisdiction over the committees in Europe and those in the Ottoman Empire lying west of a line that ran north-south from Kirasun through Harput to Dyarbakir, and the Eastern Bureau, which had jurisdiction over the regions to the east of that line and also over the committees in Russia (it appears from this division that the ARF conceived of Armenian political reality as a unity). These two bodies were elected by a congress that convened, in principle, every four years. This congress alone was empowered to define and adopt the party program and budget. The ARF consequently functioned in somewhat rigid fashion, even if its regional committees enjoyed broad autonomy of action. Thus, when the Young Turks in exile sought contact with the Dashnaktsutun, they applied to its historical headquarters in Geneva, where the editorial board of *Droschak* had had its offices since the party's foundation. The Young Turks were probably unaware that Geneva also happened to be the seat of the party's Western Bureau.

The Fourth General Congress published a declaration of principles as soon as it had finished its work:

To put an end to baseless misunderstandings widespread among the Turks, the Congress deems it necessary to declare that the Dashnaktsutun has never had and does not now have secessionist aspirations in Turkey, but that its objective has, rather, always been complete equality among the nations constituting the country and, in accordance with the principle of broad local autonomy, the establishment of administrative autonomy in the six Armenian *vilayets*. This is not contrary to the rights of the other nations.<sup>188</sup>

This profession of faith, in which the ARF firmly rejected the recurrent accusations of secessionism that the “Turks” leveled at Armenians in general and the party in particular, ratified the conclusions reached at the congress. It reaffirmed a principle that had not once been challenged during the discussions held there. The logged minutes of the congress show that the party's primary concern was the disastrous economic and social plight of the Armenian provinces and the insecurity that permanently reigned there. The first delegate to address this subject, Vana Ishkhan, representing Lernabar (Rshtunik/Moks), painted a bleak picture. He stressed, to begin with, that the situation had grown worse since the massacres of 1895–6. The Kurds, encouraged by the government, had acquired greater influence since then, and the mountain districts found themselves in the worst situation, since they lived almost exclusively from animal husbandry. Famine also was now chronic in the region because the population no longer had the right to seek work in other regions of Turkey, given the restrictions that had been imposed on circulation. Finally, Ishkhan brought up the land question, which he declared to be of vital importance. The shortage of arable land, he said, as well as pressure from tribes of mountain Kurds who harassed and plundered both the Armenians and sedentary Kurds aggravated the problem. He noted that, on the plain of Vasburagan, 70 per cent of the

land belonged to village communities and 20 per cent to individual landowners or stock-breeders, whereas in the districts of Kiavash, Khizan, and Spargerđ, where large numbers of Kurds lived, the Armenian peasants paid tribute to Kurdish chieftains. In Shadakh, Hayots Tsor, and Timar, the peasants lived in dire poverty and rejected the demands of the Kurdish tribal chiefs.<sup>189</sup>

Thus, the land question was at least partially bound up with the state of relations between Kurds and Armenians. The sedentary Kurds, with whom the Armenians worked on a day-to-day basis, did not represent a problem, according to Ishkhan, whereas the tribal populations harassed their sedentary neighbors, especially in areas where the latter had not organized their self-defense.<sup>190</sup> Antranig's contribution to the discussion, which bore on the situation in the region he represented, Mush-Sasun, confirmed that relations with the Kurds were quite simply power relations: the Armenians' erstwhile friends turned against them just as soon as an order from the national government authorized them to act with impunity.<sup>191</sup>

The seventh chapter of the Western Bureau's report, presented by Aknuni,<sup>192</sup> broached the subject of greatest interest to us here: the relationship between the party and the other organizations struggling against the Hamidian regime. The preceding congress had assigned Aknuni responsibility for this question.<sup>193</sup> A number of speakers focused on relations with the Young Turk movement. Aram-Ashod (Sarkis Minasian),<sup>194</sup> a delegate from the committee for the Balkans, recalled the antagonism between the CPU, which he described as "exclusively nationalistic and constitutionalist," and Prince Sabaheddin's liberal tendency, which "accepted a system based on a degree of decentralization." The CPU, he went on, was firmly opposed to the liberals' political program, because "it believe[d] it contained the seeds of a future partition of Turkey." Aram-Ashod noted that, in late 1902, an editorial committee including Turks, Armenians, Albanians, and Macedonians had been formed to publish *La Fédération Ottomane*, but that the Turks had suspended their collaboration after one or two issues had appeared. He nevertheless believed that it was necessary to cooperate with and even to take the initiative of reunifying the opposition. "The nationalities," he said, "by preserving their identity on their native soil – something that is vital for us – will also ensure the territorial integrity of the Ottoman Empire."<sup>195</sup> Aram (Manukian), the delegate from Van, approached the same question from a different angle, contrasting the Young Turks in exile with "the activists who live among the Turkish masses":

I place no great faith in the Young Turks who have found refuge in Europe; they are, for the most part, palace revolutionaries who in one sense or another have dynastic interests. If we begin with them, we are going to encounter a great many problems. In any case, it is more appropriate to begin with the activists who live in the country and among the Turkish masses as they actually are. I must say that these movements have no ties to the Young Turks abroad. Indeed, we are the ones who distribute the newspapers and literature of the Young Turks in exile inside the country. I propose that we create, with the Turks in Turkey, mixed committees in which our forces are united. These communities should deal, in particular, with questions common to all nationalities, such as propaganda, political terrorism, protests based on our united forces, boycotts, and so on.<sup>196</sup>

This approach, reflecting tendencies observed among activists doing practical work, was contested by Rupen Zartarian, a delegate from the committee for the Balkans. Zartarian said that he was skeptical about the "Turkish masses'" inclination to make a revolution in

the near future. He also reaffirmed that the party had never had separatist goals, but on the contrary wished to keep within an Ottoman framework.<sup>197</sup> However, Avetis Aharonian, a delegate representing the Kars committee, pointed out that this was not how the Young Turks perceived the ARF:

The Young Turks discern a separatist tendency in our movement because we are working toward the creation of a special administrative regime for the six vilayets inhabited by the Armenians... This is by itself enough to convince the Young Turks that we are not far from having separatist tendencies, while their objective is to maintain Turkey's territorial integrity. At the [1902] Paris Congress, in which I participated,<sup>198</sup> Rıza turned to us and said "you are Ottomans." Sabaheddin, who wanted to collaborate with the Armenian revolutionaries *à tout prix* [at all costs], remarked that "what you are demanding for the six vilayets, we should demand for all the others as well."<sup>199</sup>

At the ninety-ninth session of the congress, held on 23 April, the subject came up again during a discussion of two motions on "solidarity among the oppositional groups in Turkey." The first to take the floor was a figure of historical importance in the ARF, Rostom (Stepan Zorian).<sup>200</sup> He recalled that the party had proved more than once that it did not harbor "separatist tendencies," as the decisions of the 1904 congress "distinctly" showed. He added that he was in favor of a policy of solidarity with the opposition, but noted that the party had made great efforts to this end without having tangible results to show for it. He was even more dubious when it came to the creation of "mixed committees with the Turks and Kurds, because the Kurds are led by their affluent class and *begs*."<sup>201</sup> As for Zartarian, he was firmly opposed to the creation of local mixed committees, "for the Turkish masses are not sufficiently educated and, what is more, such collaboration could lead to new massacres." The socialist sensibility of certain party members makes itself clearly felt in their inclination to endorse a common struggle against the sultan, yet their awareness of the gap between these ideals and practical social realities is also evident.

Aram (Manukian), in defending his motion for unity of action with the whole Ottoman opposition, made an interesting remark about the protest movement that had emerged in Asia Minor over the past two years. "It is a fact," he said, "that the movements with a political coloration that have appeared in Turkey have been led by us. It is possible that a good many of our comrades are unaware of this." This very general remark should be taken with a grain of salt. A penchant for secrecy and the obvious desire of the author of the motion to convince his comrades of his point of view may have predisposed him to attribute all the acts of political "rebellion" observed in Turkey to the ARF, even if it was obvious that some of them lacked all "political coloration" and owed nothing to the party. Drawing the conclusion that followed from his premises, Aram argued that the ARF should meet the opposition's expectations and join it in its efforts.<sup>202</sup>

Murad Sepastasi,<sup>203</sup> a delegate from Lernabar, declared that he found some of his comrades rather too optimistic. He did not share their feelings, he said (with, of course, Aram's remarks in mind), for he had doubts about "the revolutionary nature of the movements that [were] emerging among the Turks."<sup>204</sup> Arshag Vramian, invited to take part in the congress as a delegate-at-large, took a similar position. He urged prudence, suggesting that the party limit itself to making financial contributions to the opposition movements that sprang up in the provinces of the empire, without coming forward openly.<sup>205</sup> Aharonian returned to the accusations of separatism, refocusing the debate on the ARF's relations with the Young Turks in exile: "Yes, we are simply regarded as separatists. The Turks propose that we support

Sabaheddin's project. If we refuse, we will be considered separatists."<sup>206</sup> Vramian<sup>207</sup> reacted in these terms:

No one is considering secession from Turkey. That would be stupid, not because we are not capable of achieving it, but because our socio-economic interests mandate that we remain part of the country. The Turks do not understand the nature of the federation we are demanding; they take it as evidence of separatism. It is crucial that we bring the Turks round and make them understand that this is the only way of [preserving] Turkey's territorial integrity. The alternative is the partition of Turkey.

Minasian added:

Not even the Young Turks can grasp our conception of solidarity; how can the untutored Turkish populace be expected to? The Turks are still guided by religious thinking; if Turkey should go to war with a Christian state, any Christian state, they would immediately turn on the Armenians.<sup>208</sup>

After this discussion was closed, Manukian's motion in favor of concerted action with the opposition was carried. The ARF thereby effectively agreed to make concessions as to the type of reforms to be introduced in the eastern provinces so as to lay the accusations of separatism preoccupying the party to rest.<sup>209</sup> An article published in its official organ, *Droschak*, shortly after the congress was adjourned, tends to show that the party leaders had taken due note of the ongoing mutation of the Young Turk movement under the influence of Şakir in particular. They did not hesitate to declare:

We have not forgotten the positions taken by the leaders of the "Turkish liberal parties" when the Armenian movement was in its infancy. While we applauded all their declarations of hostility to the sultan's regime, they constantly embittered and disappointed us. A Murad Bey, a well educated, pragmatic man considered to be the sole leader of "Young Turkey," declared one fine day, in the name of his party in Europe, in a brochure written in French, that the Armenian revolutionaries were vulgar bandits or criminals whose actions invariably targeted the Muslim peoples and whose objective was to massacre them. As for Murad Bey's faithful successors – Rıza Bey, Ottomanus [Pierre Anmeghian] and so on – they presented the Armenian revolutionaries to Europe as Russian government mercenaries... Now, however, things have changed... It would appear that a new generation is coming up that has renounced passivity... a generation quite different from its predecessors, who, only yesterday, under the flashy, seductive name "Young Turkey," were wasting their days bombing their surroundings with paper, in the form of naïve exhortations and appeals addressed to Europe. [The younger generation] takes its inspiration from new slogans; it appeals to the noble "principle" of self-reliance. Let us hope that our premonitions are not mistaken; let us hope that fate will at last smile on our unfortunate peoples and the whole of our bloodstained country, which has long stood in need of cooperative cultural action. Let us wipe the last remnants of prejudice from our hearts; let us stretch our hands out to our neighbors with love as they wake from their slumbers.<sup>210</sup>

This official declaration was, very probably, a direct consequence of the negotiations engaged a few months earlier with the CPU's new leaders. It was a profession of good will.

## Chapter 2

# The December 1907 Second Congress of the Anti-Hamidian Opposition: Final “Preparations for a Revolution”

We have already discussed, among Bahaeddin Şakir’s other preparatory work, the fruitless overtures that he made to the leaders of the Hnchak Party in summer 1906. His exchanges with the ARF seem to have been more productive. According to Hanioglu, the initial negotiations between the two parties were conducted amid the greatest possible secrecy; no public declaration was ever made about them.<sup>1</sup> We know only that Ahmed Rıza was sent to Geneva by the CPU to engage in discussions with the ARF’s Western Bureau and that the ARF, for its part, sent Aknuni to Paris to continue the negotiations there.<sup>2</sup>

During his stay in Paris, the Dashnak leader had a conversation with his classmate from Tiflis’s Nersesian Academy, the Hnchak Stepanos Sapah-Giulian, at the latter’s request. The Dashnak representative informed Sapah-Giulian that he had come to carry out a decision reached at the Vienna Congress, which had voted to organize a second congress of the opposition in collaboration with the Young Turks, with the objective of coming to a general agreement with them. Sapah-Giulian and Aknuni wished to come to terms themselves before pursuing their dialogue with the CPU.<sup>3</sup> Before entering into the discussion proper, Sapah-Giulian asked his interlocutor if it was true, as Şakir had told the Hnchaks, that the ARF had already established relations with the CPU and had begun to negotiate an agreement “about the option of a centralized state, with preconditions such as abandoning the Armenian question.” According to Sapah-Giulian, Aknuni confirmed that this was indeed his party’s orientation.<sup>4</sup> Examination of the preparations for the congress makes this plausible.

Şakir’s private correspondence suggests that he was, for his part, persuaded that the Armenian Committees had no choice but to rally to the CPU, since the Armenian people was threatened with destruction by the Czarist regime as well as by Abdülhamid, while the policy of the great powers was, at the time, non-interventionist.<sup>5</sup> We can form a more precise idea of the CPU’s objectives and Şakir’s strategy by examining their correspondence. It shows that the CPU leaders’ maneuvers were informed by a certain cynicism: they invited the non-Turks to take part in joint actions revolving around Ottomanism, even while reaffirming, internally, that they had rejected this concept of the nation and adopted a clear policy of excluding non-Turks.<sup>6</sup>

The 1905–6 “events” in the Caucasus – that is, the eruption of violence between Armenians and “Muslims,” especially the Turkish-speaking population of Baku – probably had a greater impact on Young Turk circles than has previously been supposed. While this violence resulted, on the analysis of the Armenian Committees, from a policy of

provocation orchestrated by agents of the Czar's regime,<sup>7</sup> Turkish-speaking circles perceived it as a Turkish-Armenian conflict for control of the South Caucasus. Bahaeddin wrote, in response to a March 1906 letter in which the Tatars of the Caucasus complained about Armenian "encroachments," that "the authors of the detestable massacres are not you, but those Armenian revolutionaries who are enjoying themselves by offending humanity."<sup>8</sup> In public, the CPU's official organs took a vaguely neutral stance toward the Armenian-Tatar conflict. In private, however, Şakir suggested "putting an end to Armenian wealth and influence in the Caucasus." He also suggested to his "Muslim Brothers" that they propagate "the patriotic idea of unification with Turkey" while simultaneously declaring to the Russians that they were "loyal to the Russian government" and not engaged in a religious war, but "in a struggle against Armenians only because [they] have wearied of Armenian acts of aggression, outrages, and atrocities, and only in order to defend [their property and honor]."<sup>9</sup> These Turkist positions obviously did not prevent the CPU from negotiating with the Armenian Committees and even, as we have seen, from cooperating with independent Armenian personalities.

To date, the ARF has been credited with initiating the organization of the second congress of the Ottoman opposition, approved of in principle by the Party's Fourth General Congress. Documents presented by Haniöğlü seem to suggest, however, that it was in fact the CPU which took this initiative.<sup>10</sup> In any event, both organizations expressed a desire to collaborate. Thus, Şakir observed that Aknuni was "extraordinarily favorably disposed" and showed great flexibility during the preliminary discussions, so much so that the Young Turk leaders became rather suspicious of his motives. At the Dashnak leader's request, Prince Sabaheddin's League for Personal Initiative and Decentralization was associated with the mixed commission that was to prepare the congress. This commission comprised Ahmed Rıza and Sâmî Paşazâde Sezaî Bey, members of the CPU's Central Committee, Dr. Nihad Reşad and Ahmed Fazlı of the League, and Aknuni, the ARF's official representative. Şakir was not a member of the commission, but archival material shows that he was the real initiator of the congress.<sup>11</sup>

Interestingly, the twelve-point document drawn up by the mixed commission begins by laying down the principle of the territorial integrity of the Ottoman Empire and the inviolability of the order of succession to the throne, and concludes with a mention of the "legal and revolutionary" means to be mobilized to bring down the Hamidian regime and restore the constitution. It also rejects all foreign intervention and "terrorism," even while allowing for the possibility of violent action in certain circumstances requiring further definition. The last stipulation states that "the Armenians especially should not participate in the revolt in Erzerum unless we [the CPU] approve it."<sup>12</sup>

The three "*puissances invitantes*," – the CPU, the ARF, and Prince Sabaheddin's League – invited the committees of the SDHP and the Verakazmial to take part in the congress. Both refused. The Hellenic League in Paris also received an invitation. Given the League's relative lack of influence, the debates were in fact an exchange between the CPU and the ARF. A problem cropped up when it came to choosing a name for the national representative body of the "*régime représentatif*" with which the country was supposed to be endowed. The Young Turks categorically rejected the formula "*assemblée constituante*" proposed by the Dashnaksutiun. After an exchange between the ARF's Western Bureau on the one hand, and the Salonika Committee on the other, an agreement was finally reached on the term "national parliament."<sup>13</sup>

Besides these questions of principle, which are indicative of the two parties' objectives, bitter debates raged around the decision to use "legal and revolutionary" means to bring down the government. It is easy to imagine the uneasiness that the ARF's revolutionary practices caused the CPU's leaders, and we may suppose that, in negotiating with the Armenian Party,

they intended to bring these practices under control. Among the means proposed by the Armenian revolutionaries were civil disobedience, draft resistance, the organization of armed bands, a general insurrection, a general strike with the participation of government officials and the police, and, finally, terrorist acts with individual or institutional targets. This vast program, coming from militants who had already proved that they were capable of carrying out extremely difficult operations, panicked the CPU leadership, since it maintained, despite all, a legalistic approach and was preoccupied with the fate of the Ottoman Empire. Thus, it made sense that the Young Turks should demand that the activities of the armed bands be closely supervised, that there be no call to resist the draft (for reasons of national security and so as not to weaken the army), and that the ARF abandon collective terrorist action, limiting itself to actions targeting specific individuals.<sup>14</sup>

When all was said and done, the ARF had made major concessions, agreeing not to call for implementation of the reforms in the eastern provinces or great power intervention in the empire's internal affairs, while rallying to the idea of a centralized state.<sup>15</sup> In exchange, the Armenian party doubtless hoped that the future state would, at least to some extent, have a representative character and respect democratic rules. The ARF may even have expected to acquire a degree of influence over state affairs. Despite this conversion, the Young Turks, who were used to battling their Armenian compatriots' plans for administrative autonomy, apparently displayed some reluctance to collaborate with them. The Armenian Committee, in turn, had to find acceptable foundations on which to ground its legitimacy in its own community. Precisely because Sabaheddin's League was among the organizers of the congress, the inclusion of other non-Turkish components of the anti-Hamidian resistance among the prospective participants helped to legitimize the ARF's choices, since it was now acting in the framework of a vast Ottoman opposition rather than allying itself with the Young Turks alone, a move for which it was harder to gain acceptance.<sup>16</sup> Negotiations with opposition movements such as the Interior Macedonian Revolutionary Organization (IMRO) proved much more difficult and ended in failure despite the efforts of the ARF, which had long-standing ties to this movement. A few Jewish and Arab delegates took part in the work of the congress, but exercised no real influence over it.<sup>17</sup>

Once all the preliminaries had been completed and the work of the various commissions cleared away, the congress could finally take place. It lasted for three days, from 27 to 29 December 1907.<sup>18</sup> The preliminary work performed by the commissions notwithstanding, several proposals caused problems. Rıza's last-minute appeal to the Armenian delegates to acknowledge the rights of the Ottoman Sultan in his capacity as Caliph, for example, led to a heated exchange. These socialist militants, who considered religion proof of obscurantism, can only have perceived this demand as one more manifestation of the "positivist" leader's conservatism. Fazlı and Şakir managed to resolve the problem by wringing an admission of "the issues of the caliphate and the sultanate which have been considered sacred by [their] Turkish compatriots" from the Armenians. The other source of tension, needless to say, had to do with the adoption of revolutionary methods. In this connection, Hanioglu nicely brings out the difference between the conceptions of the members of the CPU and the Dashnak militants – that is, between the approach of the former, for whom such methods were simply a form of activism by which to attain their objectives, and the socialist vision of the latter, who were revolutionaries in the true sense of the word.<sup>19</sup> The bitter discussion of this issue was carried to its conclusion during the closing banquet, a rhetorical exercise during which all the participants expounded their conceptions of society and the state, without calling the final declaration into question. This declaration called, on the one hand, for the abdication of the sultan, a radical transformation of the existing administration, and the establishment of a consultative system and a constitutional government; and on the other, as a means of arriving at these objectives, it envisaged armed resistance, a general strike, non-payment of

taxes, and propaganda activities in the armed forces. Finally, the congress decided to create a “standing mixed committee” responsible for organizing propaganda work and sending out calls to all social classes and the constitutive groups of the empire.<sup>20</sup>

This *accord historique* found a by no means negligible echo in the Western press of all political tendencies, including the socialist press, which, as might be imagined, had no love for the CPU. At the same time, the Young Turk Central Committee instructed its local branches to monitor the Armenian Committees and, in particular, report whether they respected the Paris accord. It also called on them to launch a systematic boycott of Prince Sabaheddin, who continued to be accused of disseminating “seditious ideas.”<sup>21</sup>

The active role played by the Young Turk Central Committee in Paris, especially when it came to relations with the other Ottoman groups, should not blind us to the Salonika Central Committee’s growing influence in the party. On the eve of the July 1908 “revolution,” a good many of the six thousand members of the OFO were army officers by background,<sup>22</sup> recruited from the forces concentrated in the Balkans that were supposed to keep these regions under control. The creation of numerous Balkan branches of the party, notably in Manastir,<sup>23</sup> Serres, Skopje, and Resen, was a direct result of this internal transformation. The Salonika Central Committee, which included Mehmed Talât, adjutant Major Hafız Hakki, Captain İsmail Canbolat, Manyasizâde Refik, and Major Enver,<sup>24</sup> was, with its majority of officers, itself militarized like the party as a whole. Yet, the CPU was still far from being able to carry out spectacular operations capable of hastening the fall of the regime. Mehmed Talât’s vain attempts to convince his friends in the ARF to launch bombs “to Salonika and Istanbul”<sup>25</sup> revealed a certain powerlessness, even as they attested to the CPU’s utilitarian approach to its Armenian allies.

Most historians agree that the implementation of reforms in Macedonia (the Mürtzeg Plan), occurring against the background of the diplomatic crisis between Russia and Great Britain, facilitated the recruitment of rebel officers and made it possible to mobilize Muslim public opinion in the Balkans, which had been unsettled by the prospects opened by the European plans for the region. It is also commonly assumed that these reforms undermined the position of the Sublime Porte, whose main priority remained the maintenance of military control over the region.

The reinforcement of the British commitment to the reforms in Macedonia that came in March 1908 was perceived by the CPU’s Central Committee as an imminent threat of “partition and extinction of the Ottoman State and expulsion of Turks from Europe.”<sup>26</sup> The CPU’s reaction showed what the Young Turks understood “reform” to mean: it was, for them, tantamount to “partition.” They even feared that the European plan for Macedonia could well lead to the loss of Albania, push their capital out of Europe, and “make us a second or even a third class Asiatic power.”<sup>27</sup>

The 9–12 July 1908 meeting at Reval between the Russian Czar Nicolas II and the British sovereign Edward VIII seems to have been the event that finally convinced the CPU to throw itself into the battle against the regime. It is also likely that the sultan, whose political acumen is universally acknowledged, concluded at the same moment that he was no longer in a position to resist the pressure of the great powers – in other words, he had no choice but to yield to the pressures of the CPU in the hope that he could take matters back in hand once the crisis had passed. When he decided to restore the Midhat Constitution and allowed the Young Turks to make their entry onto the stage of history, he was probably well aware that they were much more legalistically minded than many supposed and were by no means averse to maintaining the monarchy. The main objective was to call a halt to the reform process in Macedonia, sure to lead, ultimately, to the partition of the empire.

On of the best experts on the Balkans at the time, the journalist Aram Andonian, points out that “the Young Turks very adeptly took advantage of the enthusiasm [engendered by

the revolution] to send the European officials who had just taken up residence in Macedonia politely back home."<sup>28</sup> The Young Turk revolution, which was supposed to make good the democratic deficit and ensure the security of all the empire's subjects, had another effect as well: it brought all armed activity conducted by Albanians, Macedonians, or Armenians to an end, for they all supported the new regime. However, as Andonian points out, "in putting a successful stop to the scheduled reforms in Macedonia, the Young Turk regime paved the way for events that eventually led to the Balkan War." In other words, in refusing to heed those who advised it to enact reforms in order to allay separatist tendencies, it simply postponed the day of reckoning. Austria-Hungary compensated for this Young Turk success by annexing Bosnia-Herzegovina, while Russia seized the occasion to intervene in the Balkans, well aware that the new regime would not implement reforms there and would thus spark new revolts with its political intransigence.<sup>29</sup>

However that might be, the CPU immediately understood that it was by setting out from the Balkans, where it had found a fertile breeding ground, that it was most likely to succeed in bringing down the regime and taking power. Its commitment to the region, especially Macedonia, made a rapprochement with the local committees indispensable, beginning with the Macedonian IMRO. The revolution would come from Europe, not Anatolia. The alliance with the ARF accordingly lost some of its relevance or even utility.<sup>30</sup> It is not our task here to review the circumstances that brought about the neutralization of the Macedonian committee, but it may be noted that the process was greatly facilitated by the assassination of its leaders Boris Sarafov and Ivan Garvanov, militants who were close to the Armenian revolutionaries. The Greeks, for their part, remained passive, refusing to take part in these operations.

The CPU nevertheless needed the support of local organizations struggling for autonomy, which of course comprised non-Muslim elements, and even had to recruit members or volunteers directly from their ranks. At the same time, it could not reject the principle of the exclusively "Turkish" nature of the party. As often in the past, the Albanians provided the contingents that would carry the day; they were backed up by Muslim recruits from the Balkans. A few promises from the CPU to satisfy the Albanians' demands, revolving around the preservation of their identity, allowed the Turks not only to weld together substantial local forces, but also to extinguish a revolutionary project that had been smoldering for months. The work of Ahmed Niyazi, himself of Albanian origin, facilitated recruitment in Resen, Manastir, and Ohrid. There can also be little doubt that Albanian notables played a crucial role in rallying local forces to the Young Turks' cause. They doubtless hoped to receive special treatment in return, particularly regarding the cultural rights that they had been calling for, a demand that the CPU already regarded as a separatist tendency.<sup>31</sup> The CPU leaders' discourse had not been quite as successful when it came to rallying Jewish circles in Salonika, who had already been giving the local Young Turks logistical support for several years, although the CPU had made no concessions to speak of. The relations they forged with the Jews were nevertheless sufficient to provide conservatives all the occasion they needed to describe the revolution as "a cabal of Salonikan Jews, Freemasons, and Zionists."<sup>32</sup>

The latent revolt simmering in the armed forces, the first signs of civil disobedience, and the fact that it proved impossible to carry out the Sublime Porte's orders to bring the situation back under control left the sultan no other choice than to sign the decree restoring the constitution. It was promulgated on 24 July 1908.<sup>33</sup>

In Paris, the opposition in exile packed its bags and set out for its native land. In late July 1908, the Ottoman Consul General and Ahmed Rıza visited the Paris headquarters of the SDHP in order to invite the party's leaders to return to Constantinople. They promised the Hnchaks that they could operate there as they saw fit, even, if they wished, as an opposition

party. This invitation, extended to the CPU's most uncompromising opponents, can be interpreted in various ways. It is likely that, in opting for this course of action, the Young Turks were seeking to neutralize external sources of opposition – they doubtless preferred to have them close to hand in the capital, where it was obviously easier to keep an eye on them than if they remained abroad. When Murad and Sapah-Giulian paid their visit to the Young Turks, they learned from Rıza that a CPU Congress would soon be held in Salonika. True to form, the positivist leader asked that they cease to attack Abdülhamid, who was now their sovereign and caliph.<sup>34</sup>

The next day, the two Hnchak leaders met with Prince Sabaheddin, who told them:

If the Ittihad controls the government for more than eight months and runs the affairs of state, rest assured that the future of all the nations making up the empire, especially the Armenians, will be compromised and then finished... Certain persons have held confidential conversations with me: we spoke openly with each other, as Turks. What I say appeared clearly in their declarations and admissions. That is why you must immediately consider your own situation and decide what you have to do.<sup>35</sup>

This prophetic warning, coming from a leader who had been relegated to the margins, bears witness, at the very least, to the mood prevailing among the Young Turk leaders from the moment they took power, and to the duplicity of their discourse.

On 15 August 1908, Sapah-Giulian and Murad left Paris for Constantinople.<sup>36</sup> The Dashnak leaders, too, turned their backs on Geneva and set out for the Ottoman capital. Bahaeddin Şakir reached it first.

PART II

Young Turks and Armenians Facing  
the Test of Power (1908–12)



## Chapter 1

# Istanbul in the First Days of the Revolution: “Our Common Religion is Freedom”

In an editorial published late in July 1908, doubtless a few days after the restoration of the constitution, the Hnchak leadership observed, clearly alluding to the CUP: “In order to develop, Turkish nationalism needs more liberal political conditions than those the Hamidian regime offered it.” In the same text, the Hnchaks reminded their readers of the SDHP’s positions: “We are opposed to ‘Young Turkey’ if it proposes to establish the rule of one nation or race over the others... Complete equality of all nations has to be an inalienable right. We reject the absolute centralism defended by the Party for Union and Progress.” The Hnchaks also continued to advocate the establishment of local autonomy, of “autonomy for Armenia,” and a truly democratic constitution. Thus, they returned to Constantinople without excessive enthusiasm.<sup>1</sup> Yet, they boasted that they had sparked the Young Turks’ activism. “As far as revolution is concerned,” wrote the official organ of the Hnchak party, “the Armenian people has been the educator of the Turkish people.”<sup>2</sup>

Despite the fact that the SDHP maintained these positions, which illustrated the constancy of its leaders’ political choices, the Young Turks did not give up hope of changing their Armenian compatriots’ minds. Thus, the Hnchak leaders Stepanos Sapah-Giulian and Hampartsum Boyajian received a visit from Dr. Bahaeddin Şakir a mere ten days after their arrival in Istanbul. Şakir had arrived in the capital a little earlier and had already assumed leadership of the local Ittihadist clubs. He informed the Hnchaks that his colleagues on the Central Committee of Salonika had just arrived and wanted to meet them. Sapah-Giulian and Murad accepted the invitation, their reservations about the Young Turks notwithstanding. They were received at the headquarters of the Committee of Union and Progress by Şakir, Mehmed Talât, Şazâde Başı, and Enver. Talât informed them that the Central Committee of Salonika had sent him to the capital to meet with all the leaders of the various parties and study all the existing currents, and that he was therefore hoping that the Hnchak leaders would explain the basic principles of their movement to him. This way of broaching matters was no doubt designed to sound out the Hnchaks’ attitude toward the CUP in its new role as a party of government and also to discover the nature of the relations between the SDHP and the ARF. Talât did in fact ask his interlocutors what they thought of the Dashnaks; the Hnchak leaders responded that he should address himself to them directly. He also wondered how the Dashnaks “could include the term ‘revolutionary’ in their name.” “Has anyone ever seen the government of a country,” he asked, “authorize the existence of a party calling itself ‘revolutionary?’”<sup>3</sup>

To Talât’s suggestion that the SDHP position itself on the terrain of Ottomanism, Sapah-Giulian and Murad replied that “Ottoman and Turkish were synonyms” for each other.

“There are no Ottoman Armenians,” they said, “and there cannot be; there are Ottoman subjects, there are Armenians who are Ottoman citizens.”<sup>4</sup> Despite this response, the Young Turk leader proposed that they try to come to an understanding and establish the basis for an agreement – he even promised them that the Hnchaks would have total freedom of action as a political party.<sup>5</sup> A few days later, Hagop Babikian, an Armenian jurist who was a member of the Young Turk movement, was sent to SDHP headquarters in order to bring his compatriots around. He affirmed that the Ittihadists wished to reach an agreement with the Hnchaks, were prepared to guarantee them the number of parliamentary seats they had demanded, and would make all other necessary concessions because they wanted to make sure that the country would enjoy a period of political calm.<sup>6</sup>

The basis of the deal that the Young Turks doubtless proposed to all the Committees consisted of a few verbal concessions, combined with a promise of support in the upcoming elections for the Ottoman National Assembly. Armenian circles surmised that the CUP was attempting to exploit the old antagonism between the ARF and the SDHP fanning the flames of their rivalry by promising more parliamentary deputies to both sides, all the better to bind each of them to itself. Thus, the official organ of the Dashnaksutun defended itself against the Hnchaks’ acerbic criticisms of the ARF for its cooperation with the Young Turks.<sup>7</sup>

As we have already seen, the agreement reached at the December 1907 second congress of the opposition had no real impact on the course of events. The Dashnaks seemed to be aware of this. However, they consoled themselves with the observation that

after hesitating for a long time, the Young Turks, once they felt that they had become strong enough to do so, adopted terrorism as the most appropriate means of struggling against the network of spies and terrorizing the regime’s protectors as well as the Sultan’s entourage.<sup>8</sup>

*Droschak* hastened to quote a statement that Dr. Nâzım had made in Smyrna: “We owe the Armenians rather than the Ottoman army a debt of gratitude, for it is the Armenians who accompanied us on the path to liberty.”<sup>9</sup> These words are puzzling. Can we reasonably attribute such flattery to feelings of gratitude on the part of one of the oldest Young Turk militants still active? Probably not. Yet, Nâzım’s remarks sufficed to give the Armenian committee the impression that it had played a role during the “revolution” in one way or another, and had accordingly acquired a new legitimacy. If it is borne in mind that the ARF’s revolutionary activities in Sultan Abdülhamid’s day were severely criticized in Armenian circles in the capital, it becomes easy to understand how important it was for the party to gain a degree of recognition. From this standpoint, the revolution represented a triumph for the ARF within the Armenian community. Overnight, it opened the doors of all the Armenian national institutions before the Dashnaks. This should not, however, blind us to the bitter debates that occasionally raged within the party leadership. Although some ARF leaders, such as Mikayel Varandian or Aknuni, both members of the Western Bureau, saw 1908 as a “golden age,”<sup>10</sup> others such as Ruben Ter Minasian and Antranig were more skeptical: they pointed out that the sole objective of the officers’ *coup de force* was to preserve the territorial integrity of the empire, and expressed concern about “a revolutionary party’s chances of survival in a period of peace.”<sup>11</sup> The broad majority of the party leadership, however, crystallized around Ottomanism and the principle of the integrity of the empire. In other words, it decided to pursue its collaboration with the CUP on the Ottoman political scene, placing its bets on the establishment of a liberal regime.

The position taken by Aknuni, the leader of the ARF delegation to the December 1907 Paris Congress, doubtless played a determining role in the party’s decision to collaborate

with the Young Turks. Arriving in the Ottoman capital before all the others in August 1908,<sup>12</sup> he wrote to his colleagues at the Western Bureau in Geneva:

You cannot imagine how happy I am to be able to write you from this city without the slightest censorship or control. After thirty-two years of silence, the city is chanting "Freedom"; the crowds are drunk with joy. No matter: thirty years of silence are well worth thirty days of inebriation... When the reaction re-establishes its rule, we shall rejoin the "club of the mute."<sup>13</sup>

This enthusiasm becomes easy to understand when we recall that it was the enthusiasm of a militant who had spent long years in exile and whose party had been persecuted in both Russia and the Ottoman Empire. The restoration of the constitution opened up heady prospects: the ARF could now hope to lead a fully public existence, become a legalized political party, and play its role in the political, social, and cultural life of the Armenian nation, while also participating in the Ottoman political game.

Another event that occurred in the same period and had symbolic value was the September 1908 return of the exiled Prince Sabaheddin to the Ottoman capital. To mark the occasion, a ship with "occupants of the Palace and nobles" aboard went out to welcome Sultan Mejid's grandson. The SDHP created another powerful symbol when it decided to hire to go out to meet the prince a ship bearing Stepanos Sapah-Giulian and Murad, among others. The two revolutionaries were invited aboard the ship of the "occupants of the Palace," where they were received by Deli Fuad Pasha, who had just returned from exile. Before this constellation of dignitaries, including Ahmed Rıza and Bahaeddin Şakir, the pasha waxed eloquent on the role played by the Hnchaks: "[they have] done much to help rouse the country from its torpor and bring down the Hamidian regime."<sup>14</sup> These militants, villains only yesterday, were suddenly being celebrated as heroes. They were not alone: an Armenian delegation representing the Patriarchate had set sail from the Golden Horn on the Princess Maria on 2 September, around 11 in the evening, making for the Dardanelles in hopes of welcoming Prince Sabaheddin before the others. The delegation included the lawyer Krikor Zohrab, who had himself returned from exile a few days earlier.<sup>15</sup> These signs of Eastern courtesey, however, only thinly veiled the CUP's hostility. The very day the prince arrived, the Istanbul press launched a vilification campaign against him: it was rumored that he had arrived in the capital in the company of 300 French nuns with the intention of "modernizing" Turkish women and 300 *paters* who would lead Turkish youth to atheism. The authors of this campaign, which we have every reason to believe were of Young Turk origin, had not misjudged their audience. Their strategy for denigrating the prince, whose long stay in France was supposed to have warped his moral fiber, relied on the public's conservative reflexes, particularly its rejection of "Western ways."<sup>16</sup>

The CUP's first "secret" congress to be held on Ottoman soil opened on 18 September 1908. It showed that the Young Turk Central Committee was now controlled by the leaders from Salonika, as well as Dr. Nâzım and Dr. Şakir. Ahmed Rıza had been quite simply pushed aside. It was also clear that Mehmed Talât and the two physicians had come forward as the true masters of the committee and were more powerful than the Council of Ministers.<sup>17</sup>

The eternal question about these much-discussed "secret" conferences is just what was decided at them. Sapah-Giulian, about whose revolutionary activity we hardly need say anything more, was a privileged witness to these events; he affirms that he sent one of his agents, Bedir Bey Bedirhan,<sup>18</sup> to Salonika to gather information on the decisions made by the Young Turk congress. According to this informant, the CUP decided to check the development of other political parties, to continue to struggle against Sabaheddin and his liberal ideas, to bear with the Armenian parties until the committee was stronger, to keep the Hnchaks

under surveillance, to propagate the principle of Ottomanism, to promote Muslim control of the economy and foster the development of industry and trade among the Turks, and to maintain a Turkish majority in the Ottoman National Assembly at all times.<sup>19</sup> Of course, this information must be taken for what it is – a series of “revelations” that were put in writing in 1915 – but it should not therefore be dismissed out of hand. The secret correspondence of the Young Turk leaders unearthed by Hanioglu<sup>20</sup> clearly shows that they systematically used a double language or adapted what they said to the context, without deviating an inch from the pursuit of their political objectives. These documents indicate that the CUP decided to maintain its military character at this congress, and also to have loyal members of the committee as well as *fedayis* appointed to all important posts. This meant all rectors and university professors, as far as the posts under the authority of the Ministry of Education were concerned; all *valis*, *mutesarifs*, and *kaymakams* for those falling under the authority of the Ministry of the Interior; and, at the Ministry of Justice, all judges.<sup>21</sup> This is another way of saying that the CUP’s objective was to bring the whole machinery of the state administration under its control and leave nothing to its political “allies.”

We should note one last element that was characteristic of the Young Turks’ debut on the Ottoman political scene – the CUP’s attachment to the Ottoman throne. Those who had participated in the December 1907 second congress of the Ottoman opposition in Paris were not surprised by this, for they had already observed that, when all was said and done, the Young Turks had a rather conservative conception not of society, but of the state. It does not matter much that it was Ahmed Rıza who came forward as the sultan’s main defender at the congress: he simply said what his young comrades thought but could not openly express without risking their credibility as determined activists. Thus, one understands why, “after 1908, Ahmed Rıza had become the beloved child of Abdülhamid, who carried courtesy to the point of personally serving him a glass of water.”<sup>22</sup> The positivist leader, who came from a milieu with ties to the Ottoman court, was, after all, in his element when he was received at Yıldız palace. In contrast, young men who had barely reached their thirties, such as Talât, Nâzım, and Şakir, must have been intimidated by the idea of taking the reins of power directly, to say nothing of the aversion to appearing in public common to all these militants, who were used to secrecy and had become veritable *komitacis*. The weight of Ottoman tradition, the prestige of the Sublime Porte, the handicap represented by their age – an important factor in Eastern societies – and their lack of experience<sup>23</sup> unquestionably increased this hesitation to assume power forthrightly, which would be unprecedented in the Eastern world. Herein, no doubt, lies the explanation for the fact that no fewer than 11 cabinets were formed between July 1908 and June 1913.<sup>24</sup>

When the restoration of the constitution was officially announced, the reactions that most surprised observers were the scenes of wild rejoicing by the broad masses of the people as well as the demonstrations of fraternization that could be observed not only in the capital, but also in the provinces. How are we to interpret the display of mutual respect or the homage paid to the victims of the 1895–6 massacres in a capital in which a little more than ten years earlier thousands of Armenians had been publicly disemboweled? Can these reactions be explained as an effect of what sociologists call “the trauma of the executioner,” a sort of public display of bad conscience? This was the case with some people, at any rate. Or was the phenomenon the result of instructions that the CUP had issued to its networks in order, say, to show the world the image of a country all of whose component groups had come back together after thirty years of Hamidian “tyranny”?

To make a public display of its bad conscience over its treatment of non-Muslims was unthinkable for the dominant group. Moreover, Ottoman society, which was sharply hierarchical, was known not for its tendency to react spontaneously to events, but rather for its inclination to follow instructions from its clerics or government officials. It is thus hard to

imagine that Muslim clergyman suddenly drew closer to their Armenian compatriots on their own initiative. This no doubt explains the stupefaction of the Armenians in the capital when they learned that a mullah had summoned the faithful to go to pray on Armenian graves at the cemetery of Balıklı in homage to the victims of the 1895 and 1896 massacres. Another circumstance would seem to indicate that this was no spontaneous outpouring: in the eastern provinces of Van and Mush, it was the local civilian and military authorities who organized receptions, complete with bands and “fraternal” banquets, for the Armenian *fedayis* who had come down from the mountains. No popular movements of the sort were to be observed.<sup>25</sup> The explanation may well reside in the complete lack of Young Turk networks in these regions in this period. Thus, it is probable that the authorities were instructed by the national government to invite the Armenian militants to abandon the maquis.

The CUP seems to have taken special pains to convince the Armenians of its benevolent attitude. According to a French diplomat, one of the first proclamations that the CUP made during the July 1908 revolution had to do precisely with the Armenians: “You are no longer confronted by a troop of Armenians endeavoring to re-establish an Armenian kingdom, as the government led you to believe. From now on, the Armenians will be struggling alongside us to deliver our fatherland from tyranny.”<sup>26</sup>

A report on a conversation that Dr. Nâzım, “one of the main leaders of the movement,” had “with the representative of a great power” is our richest source of information on the CUP’s role in the first days of the revolution:

We found a terrain admirably prepared by the suffering that the Turkish people endured for more than thirty years. Yet it took the qualities of this admirable people [the Armenians], qualities of patience and firmness of character, integrity and honesty, to convince a people – one whose most savage instincts [its masters] had striven to arouse, one that had been set upon the Christians and taught to slaughter and plunder them – to mend its ways, comprehend the horror of the acts that it had been led to commit and prove itself worthy of the freedom that we allowed it to glimpse... Wherever, in times past, massacres had occurred, we organized ceremonies of expiation; and when I saw tears streaming down the cheeks of officers and soldiers rarely given to such manifestations of tender feeling, I only needed to put the question to them to confirm that they had taken part in these massacres and were cognizant of the crime whose active, irresponsible agents they had been.<sup>27</sup>

Such rhetoric leaves little doubt about the “pedagogical” intent of the scenes of fraternization staged in this period.

Whatever the origin of the phenomenon, the immense majority of the Armenians in the capital became convinced supporters of the new regime. The lawyer Krikor Zohrab, an emblematic figure of the Istanbul intelligentsia, had returned from exile on 2 August. Three days later, he announced that he wished to found an Ottoman Constitutional club. On 13 August, this club organized a public meeting in the Taksim gardens attended by 50,000 people of all origins. Zohrab addressed the crowd in Turkish, arousing its enthusiasm with the declaration: “Our common religion is freedom.”<sup>28</sup>

Another example from the Armenian world is indicative of the way it responded to the revolution. On 30 August, the Sahagian Middle School in Samatia organized a lecture on the revision of the constitution. Zohrab, who had a reputation as an orator, spoke this time in Armenian; he underscored the necessity of recasting this Constitution, which no longer met contemporary needs. Two Dashnak leaders, Rupen Zartarian and Aknuni, were present at the meeting and engaged in a dialogue with Zohrab on the burning questions of the day.<sup>29</sup>

In the capital, the ARF was led by the *frères ennemis* Aknuni and Simon Zavarian; they were gradually joined by exiles from Europe and the Caucasus, all of whom were apparently optimistic about the future and in favor of collaborating closely with the CUP.<sup>30</sup> The central Committees of the eastern provinces were, moreover, put under the authority of a *badaskhanadu marmin* ("responsible Committee") in Istanbul that was headed by Aknuni.<sup>31</sup> The revolutionary network in the capital was dissolved immediately following the July 1908 crisis. The party had to think about finding civilian occupations for its fighters, since they had been ordered to give up their arms under pressure from the CUP.<sup>32</sup> "The ARF wishes," Aknuni declared, summing up his party's hopes, "to open a window between Turkey and the civilized world of Europe; Turkey is going to follow the example of the French Revolution."<sup>33</sup> Concretely, these tendencies led to an August 1908 meeting between Major Cemal (the future pasha) and Aknuni, at which the two parties envisaged carrying out common projects.<sup>34</sup>

The sultan's general amnesty for common-law prisoners also benefited Dashnak activists such as Aram Manukian, an ARF leader in Van, or the *fedayi* Farhad, who was released from prison on 1 August 1908 along with 19 other Armenians.<sup>35</sup> This goodwill gesture was very well received by the Armenians, but nothing indicates that the CUP was behind it. It was, more likely, a general measure taken by the government to mark the beginning of a new era, one that happened to redound to the benefit of Armenian revolutionaries as well.

In contrast, the 10 September 1908 arrest of one of the participants in the 1905 assassination attempt on Abdülhamid, Kris Fenerjian (alias Silvi Ricchi), on the orders of the prefect of police in the capital, Azmi Bey, stirred up a veritable storm in Istanbul. The day after Fenerjian was apprehended, the Council of Ministers ordered his release, the Patriarchate and Zohrab having interceded on his behalf.<sup>36</sup> As in the preceding case, there is every reason to believe that the move was initiated by the government or, more precisely, that what was involved was a knee-jerk reaction on the part of the Hamidian administration.

According to Vahan Papazian, the ARF maintained friendly relations with the Ittihad during the latter's first few months in power. The CUP preached patience. The country, it said, was in an anarchic state: the state apparatus had ceased to function properly and the conservative social strata were still influential. It was therefore necessary to strengthen the constitutional regime. To do so, it told the ARF it was counting on the Armenian party's support. This discourse was intended to bridle the impatience of the Dashnak leaders, who had to deal with the frustration of militants in the provinces irritated by the slowness or even total absence of the promised changes.<sup>37</sup> The Armenian activists were at a loss to understand certain events, among them the fall 1908 arrival in the Ottoman capital of people from the Caucasus, such as Mardan Bey Topçibaşev or Ahmed Agayev. Agayev had been accused by Papazian (who took part in the operations conducted by his party during the conflict between Armenians and Tatars in the Caucasus) of being one of the organizers of the 1905 massacres of Armenians in Baku.<sup>38</sup> The arrival of these men in Istanbul was the more perplexing in that they openly advocated Pan-Turkist ideas. Although a part of the Ittihad rejected such ideas, the mere presence of Agayev or Topçibaşev in the CUP alarmed even the most imperceptible observers.<sup>39</sup> Papazian later summed up the reasons for their uneasiness: "We clearly felt," he wrote in his memoirs, "that the dominant element would sooner or later curtail the rights of the minority nations."<sup>40</sup> However, the ARF had its priorities at the time, such as its desire to become an established Armenian institution and also to be represented in the Ottoman parliament, in which it hoped to play a political role. To ensure that its deputies would be elected, it had to come to an understanding with the CUP. In particular, it had to conclude agreements to cooperate with it in the provinces.

The Hnchaks took a fundamentally different approach to the political situation. Their Central Committee nevertheless drew its conclusions from the changes that had occurred in the country and abandoned all notions of subversion. It decided to develop a network

of cultural centers with libraries, reading rooms, and theater groups, which together constituted, in some way, the educational aspect of the SDHP's activity.<sup>41</sup> Yet it by no means quit the political arena. On 24 November 1907, the party reached an accord with the Verakazmial Hnchaks, represented by Bishop Mushegh (Seropian), Mihran Damadian, and Vahan Tekeyan, to unite their forces or, at the very least, work together in the Ottoman political sphere. The two parties renewed their relations as soon as they returned to the capital. The SDHP suggested that its former dissidents found a Ramgavar ("liberal democratic") party capable of recruiting among the Armenian bourgeoisie and conservative social strata, which could thus be brought into the political domain. In the following months, the Armenian Democratic Liberal Party (ADLP) was indeed brought into being with the help of the SDHP, which provided the elements required to develop the ideological bases of the new party. With this, the Armenian political landscape took its final form. Shortly thereafter, the ADLP enthusiastically embraced Ottomanism. This was a bitter pill to swallow for the Hnchak leaders, who denounced Ottomanism as a form of Turkism.<sup>42</sup>

Rather soon, to be sure, opposition to the Young Turks broadened to take in certain "Muslim" circles as well. Their combined hostility to the CUP was variously motivated, but focused above all on the way the Young Turks distributed lucrative posts in exchange for bribes and also on the fact that the highest offices were systematically handed out to the Ittihadist leaders' close friends and relatives regardless of how little competence or experience they had.<sup>43</sup> Thus, there existed fertile ground for the emergence of an organized opposition among the Turks. The SDHP in particular worked toward creating this with Maniasazâde Retik Bey, a well-known lawyer respected by both Turkish liberals and Muslim circles. After a meeting organized by the SDHP in Kadiköy that was attended by 6,000 people – the majority of them Turks – the party drew still closer to this lawyer, who had defended Hnchak militants in court at no charge under Abdülhamid. In a series of meetings, Retik and the SDHP elaborated a platform capable of bringing together those dissatisfied with the prevailing situation in a dynamic party of opposition to the Ittihadists. These circles made no secret of their hostility to Young Turk nationalism and especially to Ahmed Rıza, who took a public position against the "modernity" of women, which he said was contrary to Koranic law.<sup>44</sup>

The SDHP campaigned consistently for Retif Bey, a candidate in Istanbul during the first November–December 1908 legislative elections.<sup>45</sup> Things did not take a serious turn, however, until Retif and the SDHP were joined by forces from the Çerkez and Albanian democratic opposition. They met quietly near Sirkeci, in the home of one of the CUP's historical founders, Dr. İbrahim Temo, who had broken with his former Young Turk friends.<sup>46</sup>

To be sure, a key figure was absent from this nascent movement – Prince Sabaheddin. The smear campaign launched against him as soon as he returned to Istanbul had of course had its effects. However, as Sapah-Giulian points out, the prince did not follow through on his ideas. Their exchanges did not produce the results Sapah-Giulian had been hoping they would, for Sabaheddin, he writes, "had considerably watered down his principles." It must be added that his palace had "accidentally" caught fire shortly after he resettled in Istanbul and that he had been obliged to leave for Europe again for a certain period.<sup>47</sup> Moreover, by 1908, "the committee considered even Muslim non-Turks as potential enemies or traitors."<sup>48</sup> That is, at any rate, what the private correspondence of its leading members suggests.

Very quickly, the Young Turk Central Committee had taken to playing the role that had earlier fallen to Yıldız Palace, issuing decisions by the hundreds just as the sultan had issued his imperial decrees.<sup>49</sup> Apart from its methods of filling government posts mentioned a moment ago, it had taken on the role of a kind of "Committee of Public Safety," interfering in the nomination of all high-ranking officials, *valis*, diplomats, and so on. The committee sent directives to the ministers, without paying undue attention to the grand vizier, with

whom it corresponded directly.<sup>50</sup> It governed without saying so by means of a “phantom cabinet” and sought to block the development of a pluralistic political system. By creating specialized satellite organizations for the *ulemas*, women, and guilds, it endeavored to control the networks that had influence over Ottoman society. In many respects, it evinced a desire for hegemony that even the most powerful sultans had not dared admit.<sup>51</sup>

One can readily imagine how hard it was for the parties of the opposition to maintain a place in the public sphere under these conditions. They were not mistaken when they said that the CUP conducted itself not like a political party, but like a cabal. Although the Ittihad officially created a parliamentary faction in 1909, it was merely a transmission belt for the Young Turk Central Committee, which continued to meddle in everything. Indeed, one faction in the committee, representing *fedayi* officers, was opposed to the transformation of the CUP into a classical political party; it rejected constitutional rights and tried to impose a more radical political line.<sup>52</sup>

It is also important to note that the CUP already saw itself as a “Holy Committee” which had the self-imposed duty of creating a governing civil-military elite.<sup>53</sup> With its *fedayis* and officers clubs, it was effectively a paramilitary organization, and set about restructuring not only the army – by placing members of these clubs in the military – but the civilian administration as well.<sup>54</sup> Nothing better illustrates this orientation than the fact that both soldiers and the sultan were obliged to take an oath of allegiance not to the constitutional regime but to the committee. Furthermore, schoolchildren were required to learn the CUP’s military anthem, with its opening words: “Oh, glorious, grand, honorable organization / Your name and renown are the pride of a nation.”<sup>55</sup> Such lyrics had probably been composed by one of the Ittihad’s leaders. The oath that new CUP members had to take included, moreover, a clause revealing its conception *sui generis* of political struggle: “I swear,” it ran, “to kill ... anyone who fights against the [committee] with my own two hands.”<sup>56</sup>

A few statistics provide the best proof of the Young Turk Central Committee’s program having indeed been translated into reality. Between July 1908 and March 1910, all the *valis* of the empire’s twenty-nine vilayets were replaced. Ninety-three per cent of the directors of regional telegraph offices, 93 per cent of provincial directors of education, 100 per cent of the empire’s ambassadors, and 94 per cent of its *chargés d’affaires* were dismissed and replaced by men loyal to the regime.<sup>57</sup>

It is thus easy to understand why one of the committee’s pivotal figures, Bahaeddin Şakir, could proudly announce late in 1909 that the CUP had 360 clubs in the country and a membership of over 850,000, and that it had won the battle for “public opinion.”<sup>58</sup>

### *The Revolution in the Eastern Provinces in the First Electoral Period*

We have said that the July 1908 revolution was basically “Balkan,” with the result that it was only feebly implanted in the provinces of Asia Minor. This state of affairs was a major handicap for a Committee that aspired to extend its influence throughout the empire. Hence, one of the first tasks the CUP undertook was to send delegates to Asia Minor to explain its political project there and set up local Young Turk clubs. It was not hard to create such clubs in these sometimes remote regions, which continued to function in accordance with clan-based and, even more frequently, tribal traditions. As frequently happens in environments of this kind, a number of traditional leaders lost no time rallying to the new regime. According to Hanioglu, the resulting network was made up of local notables as well as high-ranking military and civilian officials. They so often took advantage of their new positions to enrich themselves or meddle in local affairs that the CUP was very soon forced to purge its ranks

and put young officers known to its central leadership at the head of local party branches.<sup>59</sup> Of greater relevance to our purposes, these CUP projects also provided the Ittihad with an occasion to test the solidity of its alliance with the ARF.

How much real political strength did the ARF have in the eastern provinces in this period? According to historians of this party, it was implanted, above all, in areas that had a large Armenian majority, such as the Van region, the area south of Lake Van, the Sasun district, the plain of Mush, the Dersim district, and the Erzincan region. It often had, however, a merely symbolic presence limited to a few dozen militants whose relationship with the Armenian peasantry was ambiguous, to say the least. The villagers were proud of their heroes, these resistance fighters who defied insuperable odds. At the same time, they were aware that they themselves, as the targets of state retaliation, had to pay a heavy price for every operation the *fedayis* undertook. Opinion was accordingly divided among the populace. Some believed that self-defense was a necessity, even if it brought on reprisals; others considered the presence of the fighters to be a burden and held them responsible for every imaginable ill.

The clandestine Dashnak leaders, long the only ones to put up resistance to Abdülhamid's regime, now emerged from underground. In Van, Vahan Papazian<sup>60</sup> and his men were in their mountain refuge when they received confirmation of the news that the Constitutionalists had carried the day. Aram Manukian, one of the ARF's local leaders, had just been released from prison – he invited Papazian to join him in Van to celebrate the restoration of the constitution. Harassed by Ottoman troops only yesterday, the *fedayis* had a hard time persuading themselves of the reality of the new situation: they did not return to Van until 31 August. Papazian and Manukian were invited to the *konak* (local authorities building or palace), where the *vali* received them with honors. “We were foes; from now on, we are friends. Yesterday, tyranny reigned; today, the Constitution does. I am convinced that we shall defend it together,” declared their enemy of yesterday before the stunned Armenian leaders.<sup>61</sup>

In Mush/Muş, the ARF's local military chief, Ruben Ter Minasian, was just as surprised by the news – it was some time before he decided that it was not a trap set by the Hamidian regime. A message sent by two militants, Dadrak and Carmen, read:

God's grace is upon us. Today, the prefect visited the prelate; he told him that, thanks to a revolution, “Sultan Abdülhamid has promulgated the Constitution. All prisoners are going to be set free. Write to Ruben and tell him to remain calm; a decree amnesty-ing him, too, is on its way.”<sup>62</sup>

When he reached the center of Mush, Ruben was stupefied by the official reception, complete with a marching band, that the governor, Salih Pasha, gave him in front of the *konak*. No fewer than nine regiments marched past the Armenian *fedayis*, who watched them with mixed feelings: “There are the *fedayis*, our brothers. We used to point our bayonets at them, because there were blindfolds on our eyes. The old regime was to blame. Long live the Constitution! Long live the revolutionaries!”<sup>63</sup>

Ceremonies of the same sort were staged elsewhere as well. In Smyrna, the local ARF representatives, Hrach Tiriakian and Harutiun Kalfayan, listened as Dr. Nâzım, who had been living in the city since December 1907,<sup>64</sup> spoke of the “indissoluble bonds” between Armenians and Turks.<sup>65</sup> In Dyarbekir, in a Kurdish environment, Vartkes Seringiulian, the former head of the party in Van who had only recently been set free after spending several years in prison, enthusiastically participated in the official receptions alongside the local Young Turks. The Dashnak militants of Dyarbekir, however, remained on their guard, “refusing to reveal, notwithstanding the opinion of the future parliamentary deputy, their

organizational structure or the source of their arms.<sup>66</sup> It must be added that these militants had witnessed the re-appearance on the local scene of two former executioners of Armenians, Arif and Feyzi Bey, who had recently rallied to the CUP's cause.<sup>67</sup>

This handful of examples leaves us with the general impression that the militants active in the field were skeptical and suspicious of the new regime, in contrast to the leaders who had returned from exile and settled in the capital.

A symptomatic episode says a great deal about the relations between the ARF and the CUP. Early in August 1908, Ömer Naci Bey, a member of the Ittihad's Central Committee responsible for inspecting the local CUP branches, arrived in Van together with Mirza Said, an Iranian Constitutionalist, and two leading Dashnak militants from Persia, Marzbed<sup>68</sup> and Sepastatsi Murad.<sup>69</sup> In the city, it became clear that Naci decided everything on the advice of Cevdet Bey, the son of the former *vali* of Van, Tahir Pasha. Papazian and other local party leaders were invited to a banquet given by the *vali* in Naci's honor. The conversation turned to local problems, in particular that of replacing government officials who had enforced Abdülhamid's repressive policies. The Young Turk propagandist declared, in a jocular tone:

We Turks are lagging far behind European civilization, whereas you have made considerable progress. If it is true that it is indispensable to move forward together and live together as brothers, you will have to pause for a while and wait for us to catch up. If you don't, we shall have to latch on to your skirts to prevent you from advancing.<sup>70</sup>

Despite such scruples and second thoughts, the two movements cooperated. They needed each other: the CUP needed the ARF's help in putting down local roots, while the ARF needed the CUP in order to be able to play a political role in vilayet affairs. A few days after Ömer Naci's trip to Van, Cevdet Bey was named interim *vali* of Van and, of course, charged with founding a Young Turk club in the city.

It is probable that Naci's mission was not only to see to it that Young Turk clubs were set up in the area, but also to assess the ARF's real influence in the eastern provinces and rally local forces to the CUP. Thus, on 8 August 1908, Sarkis and Ghevont Meloyan, two local activists, as well as Murad and Marzbed, went to Erzerum to attend a regional ARF congress. They were accompanied by Naci Bey. There they met Colonel Vehib Bey (the future General Vehib Pasha), a CUP delegate who had been one of the small group of Young Turk officers at the head of the 1908 rebellion in Macedonia. Together, they tried to convince the local notables to collaborate with the new regime. At the congress, the Ittihadists and Dashnaks decided to rapidly organize in Bitlis a meeting of local Ittihad and ARF leaders as well as Kurdish *begs*.<sup>71</sup> The meeting was held in November 1908. Ishkhan,<sup>72</sup> Meloyan, Carmen,<sup>73</sup> Marzbed, Sarkis, and Pilos represented the ARF; Mehmed Sadik, a friend of the Armenians, was the Kurdish representative; the CUP sent Ömer Naci and Vehib Bey.<sup>74</sup> According to a 6 January 1909 letter from Simon Zavarian to ARF members in the Daron district, the purpose of the Bitlis meeting was to organize joint actions in the eastern provinces.<sup>75</sup> The reality of the matter, however, was a great deal more complex.

The meeting's aftermath offers a very different picture of the nature of the relations between the Young Turk military leadership and the leading Armenian *fedayis*. After the Bitlis meeting, Vehib Bey spent another ten days in Mush, then traveled through the surrounding area with Ruben, Ishkhan, and Aram – the chiefs of the ARF in the regions of Sasun-Mush, Lernabar, and Van, respectively. Relations between the Turks and the Armenians were characterized by a mixture of mutual admiration and mistrust. On the long horseback journey that took them from Mush to Van by way of the southern shore of Lake Van, Vehib Bey and his aide, Mustafa Kâmil,<sup>76</sup> had the time to make Ruben's and then Ishkhan's acquaintance. Ruben's detailed account of their conversations shows that one of his party's objectives was to

convince the two Ittihadist officers that the ARF was influential in the region and that the local Armenian population was well disposed toward it. When the little group rode through Armenian villages, of which there were a great many on its route, it was indeed greeted by enthusiastic crowds. The Armenians had erected triumphal arches made of greenery and vegetables and crowned them with banners in Armenian that showed where they stood: "Long live the ARF and the Ottoman Revolution!" But it was Vehib Bey who was offered salt and bread, in the traditional gesture of welcome. In fact, Ishkhan had carefully prepared the reception of the visitors, giving precise instructions everywhere. According to Ruben, Vehib was favorably impressed by the Armenian population's hospitality and political maturity and surprised that the inhabitants of the Kurdish villages seemed indifferent to events and apathetic. The Armenian *fedayis* reminded him that the Constitutional regime could only be detrimental to the interests of the Kurdish *begs*, whom the old regime had privileged and allowed to act as they saw fit. In Vostan/Aghtamar, the halfway station, Ishkhan welcomed the little group, reminding Vehib that a few years earlier Vehib had shelled the island of Aghtamar, where Ishkhan and his *fedayis* had taken refuge.<sup>77</sup> The reception that the Armenian *fedayis* gave the official delegate of the Young Turk Central Committee had one overriding objective – to show him that Ishkhan's *fedayis* were the real masters of the region. Ruben's account of these events confirms, moreover, that the ARF leadership bodies in Istanbul had instructed their local activists to take Vehib Bey in hand on his trip through the eastern provinces.<sup>78</sup> The aim was to justify the agreement to collaborate concluded by the CUP and the Armenian party.

The picture of Vehib Bey that Ruben paints in his memoirs shows how well informed the militants were about their guests' history, and also reveals the interest that each side took in the other. "He called himself a Turk," Ruben remarks. He was educated, intelligent, experienced, and a good speaker, he added. He had served as a *vali*, had fought in the Balkans and Yemen; he affirmed that he was in favor of the equality of all the empire's subjects, but was opposed to political or administrative autonomy for the "nations," to socialist ideas, to foreign intervention in any form, and to a policy of decentralization.<sup>79</sup> What Ruben does not explicitly say, although we can read it between the lines of his account, is that he was made uneasy by an individual such as Vehib, who had a personality quite similar, in certain respects, to that of the *fedayis*. Evoking his state of mind at the time, the Armenian fighter confessed that the disarming of the *fedayi* commandos imposed by the ARF leadership in Constantinople had seemed to him to be a mistake and even an act of treason, for it left the party at the mercy of every shift in the political winds.

The *fedayi* leaders found the first months after the restoration of the Constitution difficult: after years of combat and a rough-and-ready life in the mountains of the area, they felt that they had suddenly become useless. Ruben was among the first to draw the consequences and left for Europe to study engineering. The *fedayis* had lost their motivation. Their romanticism had turned into bitterness. They had seen themselves as the incarnation of the nation, as its "saviors"; now they were forced to accept the strategy of collaboration dictated by the intellectuals of the capital.

It was in this state of mind that Ruben, Ishkhan, Vehib Bey, and Mahmud Kâmil were greeted at the gates of Van by Aram and the *vali* and then conducted to the city in horse-drawn coaches as if they were high-ranking dignitaries. In front of the *konak*, soldiers standing at attention and a huge throng listened to the speech begun by Vehib Bey under the ironic gaze of the Armenian leaders, with a formula that had been heard a thousand times before: "This is an exceptional day."<sup>80</sup>

To round out this brief evocation of the atmosphere reigning in the eastern provinces, we should also say a word about the working meeting held in Van during the same period in November 1908. It was attended by several members of the ARF's Eastern Bureau<sup>81</sup> and the

three military chiefs of the southern zones – Ruben Ter Minasian, Ishkhan (Nikol Mikayelian), and Aram Manukian (these southern zones had heretofore been under the jurisdiction of the Eastern Bureau, but came under the de facto authority of the party's Istanbul leadership after the July 1908 revolution). The strategy of cooperating with the Young Turks adopted at the 1907 Fourth General Congress was confirmed at this meeting, which also ratified the more recent decisions to disarm the *fedayis* and engage in legal activities as well as to work toward improving the educational level of the population.

An interesting, revealing phenomenon appeared among the party's most emblematic personalities in this period: they returned to the homeland, setting an example for others by giving up their political functions in order to work amid the Armenian population. As one of them, Simon Zavarian, reports: "After twenty years of struggle, the militants were in sore need of the peace that now prevailed and the possibility of working under legal conditions; they threw themselves wholeheartedly into peaceful activities."<sup>82</sup> Thus, Zavarian himself volunteered to take a post as a school inspector in order to reorganize the Armenian school system in the Mush-Sasun area.<sup>83</sup> He introduced modern teaching methods, hired qualified teachers, and set up village commissions to manage local schools. Educated as an agricultural engineer, he devoted part of his energies to developing agriculture as well. His copious correspondence allows us to form an idea of the social and economic situation on the plain of Mush and the mountainous Sasun district, as well as the complex relations between the Armenians and the sedentary and nomadic Kurdish populations.<sup>84</sup> The other remarkable example is provided by Arshag Vramian, an ARF intellectual who moved to Van in 1909 and became its representative in the Ottoman parliament a few years later.<sup>85</sup>

Despite the official speeches and the friendly declarations by representatives of the CUP, Papazian notes that the Armenians' relations with the local authorities became less friendly after Naci's visit. He also remarks that the Kurds in the region hated the Ittihadists and that early in the fall the leaders of the Haydaran tribes – K r H seyin Pasha, Emin Pasha, Mehmed Sadık, and Murtula Bey (all of them close to the Armenians) – paid him an impromptu visit in Van to discuss the credibility of the new regime.<sup>86</sup> Exchanges of this sort sum up the explosive political situation reigning in the "tribal provinces." The Kurdish *begs*, conservatives who had, generally speaking, been shown all the honors under Abd lhamid, were suspicious of these Young Turk militants, who spoke French with the Armenian revolutionaries and had dared to attack the Ottoman sovereign and caliph.

With the beginning of the electoral campaign for the Ottoman parliament in September 1908, immediate interests took precedence over all others. Papazian, an official ARF candidate, later described with a wealth of detail how the joint CUP-ARF meetings were organized in Van and the surrounding region. The campaign gave rise to almost comic situations: candidates harangued meeting halls that were full to bursting, preaching "solidarity" and defending the constitution before Armenian notables who passionately hated the Dashnak revolutionaries and Muslim notables notorious for having been the previous regime's staunchest supporters.<sup>87</sup> The two candidates endorsed by the CUP and the ARF – Tefvik Bey, a big landowner, and Papazian – were elected to represent the vilayet in parliament.<sup>88</sup>

To understand why the CUP was able to dominate these elections, we need to examine the electoral law that made the *sancak* (that is, the prefecture, subdivided into *kazas*, or sub-prefectures, and *nahies*, or counties) the basic electoral district and gave the right to vote to all males 25 and over. The electoral rolls identifying these male voters were established by the imams, priests, *muhtars* (village headmen), and other notables. On the basis of these lists, the *mutesarif* (prefect) decided how many parliamentary deputies a *sancak* would have, "in accordance with the following rules: one deputy for an adult male population between 25,000 and 75,000, two deputies for an adult male population between 75,000 and 125,000, and so on."

Candidates had to be at least 35 years old to be eligible. A parliamentary deputy's term ran for four years. Civil servants and officers, if elected to parliament, had to give up their posts.<sup>89</sup>

What gave the system a special twist, however, was the fact that each group of 500 voters designated an elector of the first degree who chose, in turn, an elector of the second degree in accordance with quantitative criteria: one elector for 500 to 750 voters, two for 750 to 1,250, and so on. The second-degree electors then met in the administrative seat of the *sancak* in order to elect the members of parliament (a quorum of 80 per cent was required). As a French diplomat who described the system points out, "applying these rules led to major difficulties that aggravated still further the absolute non-existence of anything resembling an accurate census." The result was widespread dissatisfaction and distortions in the distribution of seats.<sup>90</sup>

The two Armenian deputies elected in the capital, Krikor Zohrab and Bedros Halajian,<sup>91</sup> were not ARF members. Halajian belonged to the CUP. Interestingly, the Ottoman Constitutional Club nominated both men on 18 September in an election by secret ballot held at the Club.<sup>92</sup>

In the provinces, the ARF's candidates were not successful everywhere, despite official support from the CUP. While the Dashnaks carried the day in Erzerum, where Vartkes (Hovhannes Seringiulian)<sup>93</sup> and Armen Garo (Karekin Pastermajian)<sup>94</sup> were elected, and in Mush, with the victory of Kegham Der Garabedian,<sup>95</sup> the party was defeated in other areas. Thus, Spartal (Stepan Spartalian)<sup>96</sup> and the "Young Turk" lawyer Hagop Babikian<sup>97</sup> were elected in Smyrna, the Hnchak Murad (Hampartsum Boyajian)<sup>98</sup> won in Sis/Kozan, and Cilicia and Dr. Nazaret Daghavarian<sup>99</sup> carried the day in Sivas.

Thanks to "judicious" utilization of the electoral system, the CUP won by a landslide, obtaining 160 seats, including those of Babikian and Halajian, both CUP members. Still more revealing are the figures that show that, of a total of 288 seats up for election, no fewer than one 140 went to Turks, 60 to Arabs, 27 to Albanians, 36 to Greeks, 14 to Armenians, 10 to Slavs and 4 to Jews. To put it differently, 220 Muslims and 46 Christians were elected to parliament. Thirty per cent of the deputies were clergymen, 30 per cent were big landowners, 20 per cent were civil servants, and 10 per cent belonged to one of the liberal professions.<sup>100</sup> The Ittihad's triumph was confirmed on 17 December 1908, when parliament opened its doors to the new deputies after 30 years of silence. It was inaugurated by a "speech from the throne," delivered by an Abdülhamid surprised by the ovation he received from the deputies. The Young Turks were not the slowest to take up his invitation to dine in Yıldız Palace on 31 December, following the example of the newly elected president of parliament, Ahmed Rıza.<sup>101</sup>

The European diplomats stationed in the provinces attentively followed these elections and sometimes made rather perceptive analyses of them. The French vice-consul in Erzerum began by noting that

throughout the vilayet, the Muslim elections were monitored and controlled by the Young Turks. They skillfully foiled the intrigues of the partisans of the old regime ... As for the Armenian elections, they were run throughout the *sancak* by emissaries of the Dashnak Committee. The Committee used all the means at its disposal to reach its goal: it succeeded in having two of its members elected thanks to persuasion, pressure and, sometimes, the threats that its agents proffered during the first-degree elections. To obtain the required majority of votes in the second-degree elections, however, it needed the support of the Young Turks, and it is clearly thanks to this support that the vilayet now has two Armenians among its representatives.

Here we have confirmation of the methods used by the Young Turks and their Dashnak allies.

The social and political profile of the deputies elected in Erzerum also reveals the careful balance concocted and imposed by the central CUP authorities. Thus, we find among them a lawyer and “advocate of the liberal regime,” Seyfulla Effendi; a *hoja*, Hacı Sevket, a native of Lazistan, educated in *medreses* in Erzerum and later Constantinople, but considered to be a moderate; a magistrate, Hacı Hafız Effendi, a native of Keghi/Kığı, a judicial inspector in the vilayet of Baghdad “reputed to be a liar”; and our two Armenian revolutionaries, who, according to the French vice-consul, had “very advanced socialistic ideas; in parliament, they will be, not representatives of this province, but spokesmen and tools of the revolutionary Committees.”<sup>102</sup>

The CUP was sometimes less generous vis-à-vis the minority candidates, or else unable to influence the political process in certain localities. Thus, in the vilayet of Angora, all 12 of the deputies elected in fall 1908 were Turks; the 125,000 Christians living in Angora did not obtain a single representative:

The Young Turk Committee, which controlled these elections, had initially designated four candidates, of whom one was a Christian. But as it was unable to alter the Muslims’ mentality, they did not fail to put a distinctly confessional stamp on these elections. Thus... they refused to vote for Christians, whereas Christians did not hesitate to cast their ballots for Muslims.<sup>103</sup>

The circumstances surrounding the election of 11 or 12 deputies from the vilayet of Salonika offer further proof that the region had become a CUP stronghold. Elected here were Rahmi Bey (Evrenos), “descended of a family of conquerors”; Midhat Şükrü, the former assistant director of the public school system in Salonika and a “mason in the local masonic lodge”; Dr. Nâzım, “a physician and a major in the army [who had] enjoy[ed] great prestige since the proclamation of the Constitution”; and Mehmed Cavid Bey, a teacher at the Feziye school, of which he was also the principal. All were leaders of the CUP.<sup>104</sup>

The by-elections, held in the vilayet of Aleppo one year later in order to replace deputies who had resigned, are indicative of the CUP’s strategy in “ethnic” provinces such as Syria. Of the two new deputies promoted by the CUP, one was a Turk and the other an Armenian: Bab Effendi Emirizâde, who worked in the vilayet’s accounting office and was “fanatic and xenophobic,” and Artin Effendi Boshgh[h]azarian,<sup>105</sup> a lawyer from Ayntab who had settled in Aleppo after the 1895 massacres and been named to the Criminal Court of Appeals in 1908.<sup>106</sup> Yet the region was populated by Arabs. This choice of candidates can therefore appear surprising, unless one bears in mind that the CUP thus had these candidates in its grip, since they had no real electoral base, and simultaneously deprived the Arab nationalist movement of any opportunity to express itself through deputies elected from its ranks.

### ***The Armenian National Institutions and the Integration of the Revolutionaries***

For the non-Turkish elements of the empire, the Imperial Ottoman model, based on *millet*s, or ethno-religious nations, had at least the advantage of allowing them a degree of autonomy. In the Armenians’ case, the Constantinople Patriarchate was central to their collective existence. Under Abdülhamid, however, this institution, the workings of which were democratized from 1863 on, was dealt blow after blow. In September 1891, the Armenian constitution was suspended by the sultan. The Armenian chamber,<sup>107</sup> which had its seat in Galata, was forced to break off its activities, which paralyzed the internal administration of the *millet*. The chamber was convened only four times in over 17 years, after the sovereign had personally authorized it to meet on 7 December 1894 to elect Patriarch Mattheos

Izmirlian; on 6 November and 20 November 1896 to elect Patriarch Malakia Ormanian; and on July 1906 to settle major administrative problems.<sup>108</sup>

Thus, it was essentially under the Patriarchate of Malakia Ormanian that the nation had to come to grips with the situation that had been forced upon it. The leadership with which the patriarch had to work in this period was a truncated political council consisting of a few high government officials delegated by the Sublime Porte, such as Artin/Harutiun Dadian, Dr. Stepan Aslanian, and Gabriel Noradunghian.<sup>109</sup> Despite that undeniable handicap, this team did a great deal on behalf of an Armenian population that had been battered by the 1895–6 Hamidian massacres: it created schools for the 60,000 children orphaned in those years and organized a system of financial aid for families whose property had been looted or put to the torch.<sup>110</sup>

Given the nature of the relations that the patriarch and his “counselors” had to maintain with the Ottoman sultan, one can readily imagine that the Armenian revolutionaries held them in low esteem, and even understand why they organized an assassination attempt against Patriarch Ormanian on 6 January 1903. Struck by two bullets from the revolver of a young student as he was leaving the Sunday church service, the prelate survived.<sup>111</sup> The Political Council was, after ten years in office, finally renewed with the sultan’s blessing: on 25 July 1891, the 61 deputies who were still alive – they had been elected 15 years earlier in 1891 – chose a new council, led by Gabriel Noradunghian and Diran Ashnan.<sup>112</sup>

It was thus to be expected that, after the July 1908 revolution, there would be changes not only at the head of the country, but in the Armenian *millet* as well. Patriarch Ormanian, who represented for militants of all stripes the Armenian face of Hamidian repression, was unjustly accused of collaborating with the tyrant and confiscating power to personal ends. A violent press campaign portrayed him as a declared partisan of the sultan’s. On 16 July, at a meeting of the mixed council held while Dashnak militants demonstrated outside its chambers, Noradunghian, with his usual political acumen, demanded and received the patriarch’s resignation.<sup>113</sup> This first blow, which the Armenian revolutionaries had of course helped prepare, heralded the Dashnak leaders’ integration into Armenian national institutions. In the following weeks, the parishes proceeded to renew the Armenian chamber, electing a fair number of Dashnak and Hnchak activists who had abandoned their underground activity or returned from exile. As goes without saying, the laurels with which the Istanbul press and the Ittihadists had deliberately crowned the Armenian Committees helped boost their popularity and smoothed the way for their election.

Thus, even as it cultivated relations with the CUP, the ARF also sought to assert itself within its own group. But Istanbul Armenian society was a complex entity with peculiar sensibilities, and it was not easily convinced. It had its own networks; the ARF had had great difficulty recruiting members in Istanbul in the past. Aknuni and his friends had to compose with these realities and work patiently to gain a legitimacy that was not spontaneously accorded to them. After the Hamidian interlude, the Constantinople Armenians were rediscovering their democratic reflexes.

The Armenian national chamber reopened its doors on 3 October 1908. It had 80 deputies. At the head of the new political council was a liberal, Stepan Karayan,<sup>114</sup> along with two members of the Dashnak and Hnchak leaderships, Harutiun Shahrikian<sup>115</sup> and Murad (Hampartsum Boyajian), and, finally, Krikor Zohrab. For the first time, the political parties were taking a direct hand in running the nation’s affairs, side by side with the still numerous conservatives. It was a period in which alarming reports of persistent insecurity continued to pour into the Patriarchate. During the session of 17 October, Zohrab, speaking on behalf of the political council, presented the chamber with a report on the general situation in Armenia and the means that would have to be mobilized to improve it. It thus became clear that, despite the proclamation of the constitution, nothing had really changed: the governors

continued to implement Hamidian policies and famine had driven several thousand refugees to the capital, where they lived on alms from the Patriarchate. Zohrab proposed a number of ways of bringing the situation back to normal. They included creating a mixed Turkish and Armenian commission of inquiry invested with executive powers; dismissing *valis* and officers of the *hamidiye* (regiments) who had committed atrocities; trying looters and murderers in a Constantinople court; restoring confiscated land to its rightful owners; according exiles who wished to return to their villages rights and exemptions similar to those granted to the *muhacir* (Muslim migrants); taking measures to prevent the *beys* and *ağas* from continuing to extort money from Armenian peasants; helping populations on the brink of famine get through the winter by giving them wheat and seed; and, finally, issuing orders to the military authorities to carry out the decisions taken in the field by the mixed commission.<sup>116</sup>

The chamber accordingly designated a delegation to negotiate these matters with the Sublime Porte. Led by Zohrab, Hrant Asatur,<sup>117</sup> and Dr. Vahram Torkomian,<sup>118</sup> the delegation was assured that all available means would be mobilized to restore the Armenians' rights.<sup>119</sup> We thus see that the chamber's concerns about the Armenian population in the provinces were quite similar to the revolutionaries'. It was, however, the eminent members of the Constantinople Armenian community who were sent to present the nation's grievances to the Ottoman government.

Simon Zavarian, one of the ARF's historic leaders, sent a long report to the patriarch in November 1908, shortly after assuming his post in Mush. In it, he portrayed the general condition of the region as catastrophic. "I am not among those," he wrote, "who think that all the different problems that have killed a whole generation can be resolved by means of individual reforms."<sup>120</sup> Zavarian consequently advocated radical changes at the highest levels of the state, especially among the caste of high-ranking government officials who blocked all the reformist impulses of progressive circles. After evoking the chaos reigning in the Armenian provinces, he observed that,

in Constantinople, it is possible to survive if one works. But what are the prospects for an inhabitant of Daron or Sghert [Siirt], where the barbaric system has filled the fields with nomads and their herds and brought all work and all production to a halt?

Indeed, after centuries of resistance, the Armenian peasants were giving ground to the Kurdish nomads. The Kurds, who had received favored treatment from Abdülhamid, had arrogated considerable rights to themselves and were not inclined to relinquish them, even after the changes that had come about in the country. Zavarian, for his part, asked the Patriarchate to make a priority of supporting the peasants who were trying to resettle in their villages in Armenia, while cutting back the aid it allocated to the many refugees who were present in Constantinople in 1908. The parliamentary deputies as well as the politicians knew only too well that the fate of these regions turned on developing the economy and re-establishing secure conditions.

### *The Armenian Deputies in the First Ottoman Parliament of the Young Turk Period*

The restoration of the constitution, a Young Turk battle horse for as long as the CUP was in the opposition, should have made it possible in theory to democratize the country's political life and allow the opposition to be heard. The heart of democratic life, in which the appropriate space for debate was supposed to be created, could only be the parliament, in which the people were represented. Like certain other groups, the Armenians, as we have said, hoped that they would have the means to promote the liberalization of the Ottoman system

there. They very quickly discovered, however, that this tribune was reserved for others; the CUP<sup>121</sup> had seen to it that it would dispose of a majority large enough to enable it to reduce the number of non-Turkish deputies to a minimum while according the opposition merely symbolic status (the sole opposition party was the Osmanlı Ahrar Fırkası, the Ottoman Freedom Party).<sup>122</sup>

The four Dashnak deputies, it must be added, did not have a mastery of the official language of parliamentary debate, Ottoman Turkish; as a rule, they had to express themselves through the Armenian deputy representing the capital, Zohrab. They also had to deal with the demands of the Armenian chamber, which regarded them as the parliamentary representatives and spokespersons of the *millet*. These handicaps seem not to have prevented them from making an active contribution to the Armenian parliamentary delegation. One of them, Dr. Vahan Papazian, notes in his memoirs that the Armenian deputies concerned themselves exclusively with matters of general interest during the first parliamentary session, never once bringing up questions specific to the Armenian world.<sup>123</sup> He points out, for example, that Zohrab played a pivotal role on the committee charged with drafting a bill on the reform of the court system; that Garo, an engineer by training, worked on the “Chester” plan for a railroad connecting Istanbul to the Iranian border; that he himself worked on reforming and “secularizing” the school system; and that Daghavarian, a physician and agronomist, wrote most of the provisions of the basic law for the promotion of agricultural development, and another aimed at reforming the health system and improving hygienic conditions.<sup>124</sup> All this indicates the spirit (“what is good for the country is good for us”) in which the deputies representing the Armenian *millet* worked, without ulterior motives, toward reforming the empire. The parliamentary activity of Krikor Zohrab, whose decisive role in the creation of the Ottoman Constitutional Club we have already pointed out,<sup>125</sup> is exemplary in this regard. Although certain conservative circles had no love for Zohrab, whom they criticized for “knowing only the literary aspect of Armenian life,”<sup>126</sup> he became the spokesman and guiding spirit of the group of Armenian deputies. Before attending the inaugural session of parliament, he had first to pay a visit to CUP headquarters on Nuri Osmaniye Street, no doubt in order to make it clear that he owed his election to the Ittihad; he left the headquarters sitting beside a Young Turk judge, Mustafa Asım, in a coach.<sup>127</sup> Also significant was the fact that he took his seat in parliament next to Hüseyin Cahit, the editor-in-chief of the Young Turk newspaper *Tanin*.<sup>128</sup> Both facts are indicative of the influence that the Ittihadist movement exercised over the Ottoman parliament. The Armenian lawyer’s first parliamentary speech, on 24 December, illustrates the “misunderstanding” between the Young Turk and Armenian deputies that would grow worse as time went by. Zohrab denounced the obviously improper election of a certain Serdatazâde Mustafa, who had a reputation as a bandit and murderer in his electoral district of Şabinkarahisar. However, Zohrab was rebuked by his colleagues, who did not seem to have been shocked by Serdatazâde Mustafa’s personal history.<sup>129</sup>

Istanbul circles were troubled by the fact that not a single deputy had spoken up in support of Zohrab’s position, although it was common knowledge that Serdatazâde Mustafa had been deeply implicated in the November 1895 massacres in his native region. This first incident provided an occasion for muted expression of a criticism that would recur regularly in the debates: the Muslim deputies from the eastern provinces who had been elected on CUP lists were often former partisans of the Hamidian regime who had been more or less complicit in the 1894–6 massacres. The apparently baseless rumors to the effect that Zohrab had received death threats illustrate, in any case, the first signs of tension.<sup>130</sup>

While Armenian institutions and the Armenian deputies did not openly express their bitterness over the government’s tolerant attitude toward those who had only recently been the Armenians’ executioners, they deplored the fact that the “Red Sultan” – whom they, and especially the revolutionaries among them, had hated with a passion ever since his decision

to decimate the Armenian people – was still being treated with kid gloves by their progressive Young Turk friends. The sultan, for his part, had probably been relieved to learn that the Armenian deputies, some of whom had organized an attempt on his life not long before, had coldly turned down the invitation to dine in Yıldız Palace with which he had honored all the newly elected deputies.<sup>131</sup>

There were, however, other contradictory signs that came as surprises, such as Zohrab's November 1908 appointment to a professorship of penal law at the Istanbul Law School and the success he enjoyed there. More than 700 students abandoned their classrooms to throng into the hall in which he delivered his inaugural lecture.<sup>132</sup> This was evidence of something like a thirst for knowledge, the polar opposite of the conservative reactions observable in the Ottoman parliament, something resembling a desire to sample knowledge coming from elsewhere.

An interview that Zohrab granted the correspondent of a Bulgarian newspaper late in December 1908 offers an even more precise illustration of the archaic side of Ottoman political life. Zohrab told his interviewer that he deplored the lack of organized political groups into which “the nationalities could melt” instead of working in the form of antagonistic national blocs. The Armenian deputies, he said, wanted “above all, to work toward the general welfare of the Empire. The particular interests of the Armenian nation come afterwards.”<sup>133</sup> Thus, he took the floor in parliament on 21 January 1909 to demand that a commission of inquiry be formed to investigate the conditions under which the Hejaz railroad was being built, for it seemed that management of the project had been marred by serious financial corruption.<sup>134</sup> In other contexts, he suggested that the government establish a draft budget and submit it to a parliamentary vote, that it elaborate a genuine tax policy, and so on. If he was virtually the only Armenian deputy to intervene in the debates, he more than made up for his colleagues' silence.

### *The Stakes of Power: The CUP and the Opposition*

The explanations given at the 13 February 1909 session of parliament, at which a vote of nonconfidence toppled Kâmil Pasha's cabinet (formed on 5 August 1908), led Zohrab to intervene in the debate. His remarks disconcerted his Young Turk colleagues. It was well known that with its continual meddling in government affairs, the CUP's Central Committee had often exasperated the grand vizier, leading to abiding tension between the two sources of power. When Kâmil Pasha had sought to ram through the appointment of new ministers of defense and the navy against the committee's advice, the Ittihad had ordered its deputies to vote in favor of a motion of censure, because it would under no circumstances relinquish its control of the army.<sup>135</sup> The pasha had tried to free himself of a form of supervision too restrictive for his tastes and had immediately had to pay the price for his presumption; he fell victim to the Ittihadists' first “coup d'état.”

Hüseyin Hilmi Pasha succeeded Kâmil on 14 February 1909. Although this officer was reputed to stand closer to the CUP, he was not treated any more gently by it. Hardly had he been appointed grand vizier than he learned, at a meeting at the Sublime Porte with the future Ottoman ambassador to Spain, Ali Haydar Bey (son of the famous Midhat Pasha), who had come to receive his letters of accreditation, that the diplomat had been ordered to wait for the arrival of Major Enver Bey, who would give him the instructions he needed about the line to take with the Spanish government. Faced with Ali Haydar's firm refusal to take his instructions from anyone other than the minister of foreign affairs, the new grand vizier had to confront, for the first time, the rage of the Young Turk Central Committee.<sup>136</sup> This episode, which is banal after all, offers only a glimpse of the chaotic functioning of the state in these first months, in which an administration still redolent

of the old regime shared power with a committee that still lacked experience in handling state affairs.

Another structure put in place by the Ittihad reveals the general nature of the regime that was now being put in place: the systematic utilization of secret paramilitary forces entrusted by the committee with special missions ranging from making threats to murdering opponents or journalists. This underground structure had made great strides since it was founded in 1907. Its cadres were almost without exception graduates of Istanbul's Military Academy. After the officers who, like Eyüb Sabri (Akgöl) and Ahmed Cemal, had rallied to the committee in summer 1908, other officers now joined this paramilitary organization: Hüseyin Rauf (Orbay),<sup>137</sup> Monastırlı Nuri (Conker),<sup>138</sup> Kuşçubaşızade Eşref (Sencer),<sup>139</sup> Yenibağçeli Şükrü (Oğuz),<sup>140</sup> Kara Vasıf<sup>141</sup> and Kâzım (Özalp)<sup>142</sup> or, again, Abdülkadir († 1926), Ali (Çetinkaya), Atif (Kamçıl), Sarı Efe Edip, Sapanlı Hakkı, Halil (Kut) (Enver's uncle), Filibeli Hilmi, Ismitli Mümtaz, Hüsrev Sâmî (Kızıldoğan), Süleyman Askeri, Yenibağçeli Nail (Şükrü's brother), Yakup Cemil († 1916), and Cevat Abbas (Gürer) (1887–1943).<sup>143</sup> We shall see the decisive role these men played in the eradication of the Armenian population during the First World War.

The Ittihadist Central Committee did not hesitate to use such extreme methods as murder to rid itself of its opponents. The oppositional journalist Hasan Fehmi was assassinated on 6 April 1909 and Ahmed Samin, a member of the opposition, was murdered shortly thereafter. These practices illustrate the conception of political struggle that held sway in the CUP. For the committee, the opposition was an assortment of "reactionaries, thieves, swindlers, drunks, gamblers, good-for-nothings and murderers."<sup>144</sup> One of the "saviors of the Empire," Enver, formulated the matter more precisely: "All the heads dreaming of sharing power must be crushed ... we have to be harsher than Nero as far as ensuring domestic peace is concerned."<sup>145</sup>

Some of the Unionists confirm in their memoirs what people suspected of the CUP when certain events occurred. The Ittihad's former secretary general, Midhat Şükrü, reports how one of his colleagues on the Central Committee, Kara Kemal, personally led a retaliatory action against the headquarters of the organization Fedakaran-ı Millet (Those Devoted to the Nation) at the head of a band that demolished its offices.<sup>146</sup>

According to one of the best connoisseurs of the political life of the day, "virtually all the opposition parties in the Unionist period advocated a liberal economy, were Westernizers, [championed] the unity of the [Empire's ethnic] groups and favored decentralization."<sup>147</sup> These parties initially came together in the Ahrar and, thereafter, under the banner of Hürriyet ve Ittilâf Fırkası (Liberal Alliance), which was the product of a fusion between İbrahim Temo's Democratic Party, Gümülcineli İsmail Bey's Party of the People (Ahali), the Mutedil Hürriyet-perveran Fırkası (Moderate Liberals' Party)<sup>148</sup> and the Independent Party.<sup>149</sup>

After the events of 31 March, which we shall be discussing later, General Şerif Pasha, a former "fellow traveler" of the Central Committee in Salonika, founded the İslahat-ı Osmaniye (Radical Party) together with other CUP dissidents such as Refik Nevzat, Albert Fua, and Mevlanzâde Rıfat. Exiled in Paris, they ferociously opposed the CUP, especially in their French language review, *Mécheroutiette*, which ceaselessly denounced the Ittihadists' political crimes and corruption. These "radicals" demanded, notably, that the army cease to meddle in politics, that the committee stop operating like a secret organization and designate deputies, and that the CUP abandon its project of Turk-ifying the country.<sup>150</sup> Indeed, these demands, cast in the form of accusations, were common to the entire opposition, including the Muslim circles that had come together in the Ittihad-ı Muhammedi (Mohammedan Association), founded on 5 April 1909. In its organ, *Volkan*, Ittihad-ı Muhammedi criticized the Young Turks' atheism and their rejection of Islamic values.<sup>151</sup>

In revolutionary Armenian circles, in particular among the Hnchaks, these movements sparked some hope that the Ottoman Empire would adopt a domestic policy more favorable to non-Turkish groups. The SDHP, which had been opposed to the Ittihad from the outset, clearly sought to combat the CUP so as not to leave it the leisure to apply its Turkish program.<sup>152</sup> Its rapprochement with Ahrar and then with the Ittilâf had no other purpose than to combat the nationalist Young Turk regime. Sapah-Giulian notes in this connection that the day the Ittilâf and the SDHP signed an agreement to cooperate, “the apprehensions were palpable in the Ittihadist milieu” and that by way of this cooperation, his party influenced the Ittilâf’s politics, moving them in a more progressive direction, while playing a major role in organizing it and forming its branches in the provinces.<sup>153</sup> “While it is true that the Ittihad,” says Sapah-Giulian,

could, by massacring Armenians in the provinces and ordering pillage and kidnappings there, fairly claim to have advanced one of its projects, it suffered significant setbacks elsewhere, among them the uprising of traditional Turkish circles in Konya, the Constantinople rebellion and the events in Albania and Rumelia.<sup>154</sup>

Its practice of governing from behind the scenes notwithstanding, after eight months in power the CUP had undeniably succeeded in displeasing everybody. Despite appearances, it did not yet wield much power: while its policy of forging a broad alliance of forces initially enabled it to rally once loyal partisans of the sultan to its side, notably by offering them seats in parliament, the CUP was disillusioned by the alacrity with which these circles turned their coats. It also discovered that the society on which it wished to impose its vision of the future was even more unsympathetic to its projects than it had thought. The CUP learned this bitter lesson with the first violent blow struck against it, on 13 April 1909.

## Chapter 2

# Young Turks and Armenians Facing the Test of “The 31 March Incident” and the Massacres in Cilicia

The two events that took place in April 1909 – the “reaction” to the establishment of the Young Turk regime in Constantinople and, concomitantly, the massacre of the Armenians in Cilicia, better known as the “Adana events” – allow us, in many respects, to evaluate the transformations that had taken place in the Ottoman Empire since the restoration of the constitution. Since they antedated the laws on the press and freedom of association that were passed in summer and fall 1909, and since they occurred in plain view of external observers and a free oppositional press, they offer an ideal standpoint from which to observe Ottoman realities. They bring us to the question of the significance of the “reaction” of April 1909, of the Young Turks’ responsibility in the organization of the Adana massacres and, consequently, of their national and international credibility. But it is the way in which the CUP handled these two matters that here has the most to tell us about its practices and its vision of the Armenian element of the empire. The Armenian institutions’ management of the crisis is equally instructive, for it provides us insight into the Armenians’ feelings about the Young Turk regime and their horizon of expectations. The question that obsessed the Armenians more than any other, as the declarations of their leaders in the Chamber of Deputies clearly indicate, was whether the massacres represented the last gasp of the old regime or were rather the inaugural act of a new policy of extermination.

### “The 31 March Incident”

Most historians consider the reaction against the Young Turks, better known by the euphemism The “31 March Incident” (13 April by the Gregorian calendar), to have been an operation directed by circles loyal to the old regime that were described as reactionary by the press of the day: it leagued soldiers from the garrisons of Constantinople and officers who had risen through the ranks with the religious opposition, the *ulema* and sheikhs of the orders of Dervishes who took their inspiration from the Ittihad-ı Muhammedi and the Ahrar party. Some detect in this reaction a maneuver designed by the British Foreign Office to destabilize the CUP after the fall of the cabinet headed by its “protégé,” Kâmil Pasha. Whichever hypothesis one adopts, the radicalization of the liberal and religious opposition in this period was undeniable, as was the growing antagonism between officers who had risen through the ranks (*alaylı*) and graduates of the military academy (*mektemli*) – the *alaylı* complained that the *mektemli* completely dominated the army.<sup>1</sup> The question remains how these diverse forces united in order to take to the streets, occupy the parliament building, and instigate a hunt for Ittihadists throughout the capital.

The reactionary aspect of the uprising was quite real (even if examination of the press of the day shows that it was probably retrospectively amplified by the CUP), inasmuch as the insurgents demanded a return to the sharia. First and foremost, however, what was involved was a hostile reaction to the Young Turks. Thus one of the principle architects of the movement, Vahdetti, issued a call to “Christian and Jewish Ottomans” in which he assured them that they need not fear for their property or their lives “thanks to our sharia” and recommended that they “not withdraw from the union with Islam ... or follow the enemies of civilization and traitors to the sharia.” The *İttihad-ı Muhammedi* also pointed out that the sharia protected the rights of Muslims and non-Muslims alike. These declarations prove that the leaders of the movement were well aware of the non-Muslims’ demands. Their political platform even called for “justice for the Christians as well,” predicting that “they will fraternize with us.”<sup>2</sup>

The example that historians most often adduce to illustrate the reactionary nature of the movement is that incarnated by the public activist and journalist Mizancı Murad Bey, editor of the newspaper *Mizan*, who, “more deeply estranged from his former companions than ever, threw oil on the fire by stirring up religious passions and denouncing equality [between Muslims and] non-Muslims.”<sup>3</sup> If the insurgents’ official declarations are to be believed, this former Young Turk leader, who was exiled as early as October 1908 and did not reappear on the scene until April 1909,<sup>4</sup> was the only “reactionary” hostile to non-Muslims. He was, nonetheless, counselor to the ephemeral liberal grand vizier who emerged from these events, Ahmed Tevfik Pasha. To pin the same label of “reactionary” on both Muslim and liberal strata comes down to endorsing the arguments used by the Young Turks to discredit the opposition and liquidate it the more effectively. The liberals, who tended to favor a policy of decentralization and integration of non-Muslims, seem to have been unjustifiably lumped together with the reactionaries.

Let us recall that the Young Turk Committee was, to say the least, in a difficult position on the eve of these events. It was entangled in somber affairs involving the murder of journalists and political opponents and was under pressure from the opposition. Did it capitalize on the situation to take control of the country militarily and eliminate oppositionists of all stripes? Several circumstances suggest that this was indeed the case. After the insurgents had taken over the parliament building, killed a few deputies, and sacked the editorial offices of the main Young Turk newspapers, the situation was taken back in hand by Tevfik Pasha, at which point the rebels of the First Army Corps, based in Constantinople, returned to their barracks. The Ottoman parliament then convened, deciding at its April 17 session to send a delegation to Çatalca to meet with Mahmud Şevket Pasha and his troops in Rumelia. The delegation was to inform him that the rebels had returned to their barracks and asked for pardon, so that it was no longer necessary to march on the capital; this could only lead to a pointless bloodbath. Şevket, after initially accepting the proposals of the deputies who had been sent to confer with him – Yusuf Kemal, Krikor Zohrab, and Vartkes Seringiulian – decided to occupy Constantinople after all.<sup>5</sup> This general, a product of the old school who was surrounded by a general staff of Young Turk officers, probably consulted with the *İttihadist* Central Committee before carrying out the repression that followed his arrival at the capital. Once the ephemeral Tevfik cabinet had fallen – named on 18 April, it resigned on 26 April – the declaration of a state of emergency and the creation of a court-martial made it possible to hang rebels, and especially members of the opposition, in droves. Among them were a number of journalists and liberal politicians who were first carefully tagged as anti-Constitutional “reactionaries,” a useful charge that justified reprisals. In the name of the constitution, the CUP rid itself with little effort of the whole opposition; it contented itself with exiling the best-known personalities, such as Prince Sabaheddin, in order to prevent its basic objective from becoming too obvious.

How did Armenian circles react to these events? The daily press of 14 and 15 April 1909 evinces perplexity mixed with apprehension in the face of this rebellion. Some feared that it was a coup mounted by their *bête noire*, Abdülhamid, because he wanted to abrogate the constitution again. The general impression given by all the declarations in the press is that the Armenians’ overriding concern was that the announced reforms should be carried through and lead to the creation of a state based on the rule of law and the restoration of civil peace. In an article entitled “The Current Crisis,”<sup>6</sup> the editor-in-chief of the Istanbul daily *Piuzantion*, Piuzant Kechian, reported that on the evening of 16 April the ARF organized in a room in the Hotel Splendide a meeting of 30 leaders of various Ottoman political currents – the CUP, the Ahrar, the ARF, the SDHP – with a view to bringing about a rapprochement based on “defense of the Constitution.” The same newspapers also wrote that Armenian volunteers from Tekirdağ had joined the troops of Rumelia “to defend the Constitution”; on 27 April, the Armenian community of Constantinople organized a massive funeral for the volunteers who had fallen in the fighting in the capital.<sup>7</sup> From Dashnak sources we learn, more precisely, that the ARF, with the approval of the Ittihad, organized militias to support the Action Army, including 550 men from Adabazar who helped quell the insurgents from the Selimiye barracks.<sup>8</sup> Moreover, one of the ARF’s military leaders, Ruben Ter Minasian, had been sent to Tekirdağ to recruit Armenian volunteers there; Şevket, however, had been unwilling to provide them with arms.<sup>9</sup> In Smyrna, finally, the *vali* and the local Ittihad club had asked the Dashnaks and Hnchaks to “form groups of volunteers in the next twelve hours”: the following afternoon, 230 young Armenians from the city and the surrounding villages, as well as Turks, Greeks, and Jews, had been armed and sent to the Smyrna-Kartal train station.<sup>10</sup>

All this clearly indicates that Armenian circles approved of the constitution and the ARF’s alliance with the CUP. But the clearest proof of their attachment to these positions was provided by the way the parliamentary deputy Bedros Halajian – who would later be named minister of public works – reacted when the insurgents invaded the Ottoman chamber, on the morning of 13 April 1909, to demand that the sharia be restored and that the president of the parliament, Ahmed Rıza, resign.<sup>11</sup> Although several deputies had just been killed in the city and most of those in the chamber lay down on the floor to protect themselves, Halajian stood up and, in a scene reminiscent of the French *Etats Généraux*, declared to the insurgents, who were quite impressed by his aplomb: “We have been elected by all the peoples of the Empire. A representative of the people does not have the right to let anyone tell him what to do [while threatening him] with bayonets...Look out the window! The rabble that is peppering our breasts with lead is over there...Go ahead, kill me, I’m on my feet.”<sup>12</sup> Another circumstance illustrates, were there any need for further illustration, the close bonds between the Armenian deputies and their Young Turk colleagues as well as the confidence reigning between them: in the five days of anarchy that followed the outbreak of the insurrection of 13 April, at a time when the Unionist militants were being actively pursued, the leader of the Dashnak party, Aknuni, hid Mehmed Talât in his home,<sup>13</sup> while Zohrab took in another CUP leader, Halil Bey (Menteşe),<sup>14</sup> and the ARF militant Azarig provided refuge to Dr. Nâzım.<sup>15</sup>

In the days leading up to these events, the Young Turk press, particularly the daily *Tanin*, had not passed up the occasion to attack certain Armenian deputies in its columns. One of these attacks was aimed at Zohrab, who then figured as the leader of the Armenian parliamentary group, and the editor-in-chief of *İkdam*, Ali Kemal (elected to succeed Rıza as president of parliament shortly afterwards). *Tanin* criticized the two men for taking advantage of their posts as professors at the law school to “manipulate their students and make use of them to defend their own political opinions.”<sup>16</sup> What motivated these attacks on Zohrab, which had been orchestrated by his neighbor on the benches of parliament, Hüseyin Cahit?

Had the growing importance that Ottoman public opinion accorded the lawyer alarmed the CUP? Did it find him somewhat too enterprising? The nature of the attack does not tell us much; to all appearances, the students of the law school played no role in the events of 31 March. Had Zohrab's and Kemal's courses, which put the accent on the role of law in the creation of a democratic society, irritated the Young Turks?

In sum, it may be observed that the events of 31 March simply confirmed, at least as far as the leaders of the ARF were concerned, the solidity of the alliance with the CUP and the hostility of all Armenian circles to the possibility of a restoration of the old regime.

### *Young Turks and Armenians Facing the Test of the April 1909 Massacres in Cilicia*

Understanding the origins of the explosion of violence that culminated in the massacre of 25,000 Armenians from Cilicia in April 1909 was an absolute priority for the Armenians. This massacre, all too reminiscent of the ways of the old regime, threatened to undermine their commitment to the Constitutional process, as well as the ARF's alliance with the CUP. To put it differently, it was the sincerity of the Young Turks' desire to collaborate with the Armenians – their real determination to improve the lot of the populations of the eastern provinces – that was thrown into question under the circumstances. The Armenian political institutions sought to make this issue a test of the Young Turks' intentions; they wanted to know to what extent the CUP was responsible for the Adana events. This indicates just how decisive an impact the crisis had on the way relations between the Armenians and the Young Turk government evolved.

A French diplomatic dispatch sent from Maraş, Cilicia on 4 January 1909 announced the threat of massacres and reported exactions against both the local Young Turk club and the Christians "who had been the most enthusiastic about the establishment of the new regime." No action was taken against those responsible for these excesses.<sup>17</sup> There were also reports on the anarchic situation prevailing in the vilayets of Dyarbekir and, a few weeks later, Mamuret ul-Aziz: there had been a settling of scores between Kurdish tribes, it was said, and hostile reactions to the Young Turks, accompanied by a rise in Muslim fundamentalism.<sup>18</sup>

In a 1 September 1908 dispatch, the consular agent responsible for the vice-consulate in Van, evoking the consequences of the July 1908 revolution in that city, remarked that "a Committee of Union and Progress" had been formed there. It had, he said, "twenty-one members: seven military personnel, seven Armenians and seven Turks." The Committee, he added, corresponded "with Salonika, from which it received its instructions."<sup>19</sup>

In Cilicia, the formation of local Young Turk Committees had made it possible, above all, to settle scores with the two main representatives of the state, whose policy of appeasing Christians was not particularly popular in this region, still steeped in tribal custom. Thus, the Young Turk Committee of Adana, made up of the principal Turkish notables of the region, had first arranged for the *ferik* (military commander) to be replaced and had then trained its sights on the *vali* of the vilayet, Bahri Pasha, demanding that he resign. Accused of "sympathizing with the Christians," Bahri had had to leave the city secretly, but was

arrested by villagers on the border of the vilayet at the request of his personal enemy, Bağdâdizâde,<sup>20</sup> and then released on orders from the Committee in Adana... He [was] said to have resisted, for five hours running, pressure from the Committee in Adana that was demanding his resignation; he claimed that thirty thousand Armenians would rise up in his defense. The Committee is supposed to have retorted: "See if they will: you won't even find thirty."<sup>21</sup>

These few remarks are indicative of the mood reigning in Adana shortly after the revolution: they reveal the local Turkish notables’ real assessment of the ability of Cilicia’s Armenian population to stage a revolt, of which they were to make so much over the following months.

Later, on 15 October, Bahri Pasha’s successor, Cevad Bey, arrived in Adana:

In anticipation of all eventualities, [Cevad] has asked Damascus to send him reinforcements... The pessimists were even speaking of a massacre of Armenians by that date [the end of Ramadan], but this eventuality seems rather unlikely, unless the Armenians maintain their outrageous attitude, which is as imprudent as can be... This attitude of the Armenians is just what is required to alienate the Young Turks. Young and Old Turks now seem to be putting their differences behind them on the basis of patriotism and Islamicism. Already, in the mosques, the mullahs are summoning the faithful to defend “their rights” with vigor... It is Bağdâdizâde who is urging the Turks on, the same Bağdâdizâde who, they say, arrested Bahri Pasha during his flight.<sup>22</sup>

All the elements of the problem come together in the passage just quoted – the first rumors of massacre and the first allusion to the “provocations” of certain Armenian militants. In other words, the official dialectic of “provocations, revolt, and massacre” is here put in place and echoed without second thought by the French vice-consul, whose inconsistency and cowardice during the April 1909 events would come in for comment from officers and missionaries among his compatriots.

The ambiance in Cilicia was indeed oppressive during the Ramadan celebrations of October 1908. The Muslims found the changes brought about by the Constitutional revolution hard to swallow, especially the fact that the Christians, beginning with the Armenians, had taken a rather high profile – that is, that they had vigorously defended the constitution. An unverifiable rumor was even making the rounds in Adana’s Turkish neighborhoods: the Christians were getting ready to attack the barracks and bring it under their control before launching an assault on the Turkish population.<sup>23</sup>

This said, we need to examine the justification for the charges of provocation and revolt that certain Turks and also some foreign observers regularly repeated in Cilicia and elsewhere in the Armenian provinces, in order to understand the origins and content of those charges. In this connection, the dispatches that the French consular agents in the provinces sent to the French minister of foreign affairs and the ambassador in Constantinople are a by no means negligible source when it comes to gauging the tensions that persisted here and there, despite the proclamation of the constitution.

From Van, Captain Dickson, who presided over the French vice-consulate, reported to the minister on his conversations with the Armenian leaders. “To try to improve the very tense situation,” he wrote,

I met with the Tashnak [sic] leaders, Aram [Manukian] and the Doctor [Vahan Papazian], and I gave them some advice. I advised them to conduct themselves with prudence and moderation, to drop, for the moment, their exaggerated ideas, to treat the compromised figures of the old regime gently, rather than with an eye to taking revenge, and not to call for excessive punishment. Fortunately, they lent an ear to my counsel.<sup>24</sup>

This first, revealing report reminds us that, under the old regime, Abdülhamid’s policy of arming the Kurdish *hamidiye* regiments and setting them loose on the populations of the eastern provinces gave local Kurdish tribes a sense of impunity and omnipotence; they profited from the situation to seize a great deal of land and other real estate from the Armenians. With the

restoration of the constitution, local Armenian leaders, as well as their colleagues in parliament in Constantinople, emboldened by their new-found legitimacy and the Ittihad's apparent support, demanded that these abuses be punished or, at the very least, redressed – that is, the property be restored to its rightful owners. This implied that thousands of suits had to be settled, threatening positions acquired by tribal chieftains who still had considerable power in their native regions and who were also in some cases members of the provincial Young Turk clubs or even members of the Ottoman parliament. Yet, as the French chargé d'affaires in Constantinople, Boppe, remarked:

The Kurds were ill-prepared for the reforms that the constitution brought to the empire... The Kurds find it hard to forget the privileges that they enjoyed during Abdülhamid's reign. They miss the distinctions and gratifications that were sent to them from Yıldız as recompense for the crimes and depredations that they perpetrated against the Armenian population.<sup>25</sup>

Confronting local dignitaries by challenging the positions they had acquired was part of the tradition for the Armenian revolutionaries, who, as we know, did not hesitate to “punish” the Kurdish chieftains who had committed the most abominable crimes. It was also quite reasonable from the standpoint of these militants, who spoke in terms of social progress and were steeped in progressive ideas, to demand that they be given a role in running the affairs of their region. Obviously, former “terrorists,” who had been received with honors on their return from exile or emergence from the underground and were once again in good odor, could only arouse distrust among high-ranking officials who had spent the previous 30 years persecuting and mistreating the Armenian population with the Sublime Porte's blessing. It must indeed have been difficult for such people, set in their ways, to grasp in a short span of time the transformations that Ottoman society was now supposed to undergo. It is equally probable that the integration of these former clients of Abdülhamid's into the new democratic institutions shocked the Armenians, who vehemently denounced the inclusion of these locally powerful men in the new arrangements. What was perceived as a “provocation” at the time was no doubt this demand for justice, unquestionably somewhat idealistic, especially in a society that still held that there could be no question of equality for all the empire's subjects. To come forward with demands was itself a “provocation.”

The very fact that Hnchak or Dashnak militants returned to Cilicia and often joined local Young Turk clubs irritated certain consuls accustomed to reasoning along lines laid down by the state, whatever the nature of the state in question was. The French vice-consul in Mersin and Adana remarked, for example, that the Armenians' “ringleader is a certain [Garabed] Geukderelian, long imprisoned because of the part he played in the affairs of Armenia.”<sup>26</sup> This is a curious way of judging a militant who had been persecuted for years, a renowned lawyer who, just after the revolution, was assigned the mission of founding a Young Turk club in Hacı together with Captain Abdüllah in order to promote a climate favorable to good relations between the various elements of the town's population. Let us note, however, that this same Captain Abdüllah, after being received by the local notables and drinking a cup or two, had betrayed how he really saw matters to the Armenian bishop: “*Si, sous la Constitution, les Arméniens continuent de cultiver des idées séparatistes, nous les tuons tous jusqu'au dernier.*”<sup>27</sup> As a former Hnchak activist, Geukderelian in fact remained suspect in some people's eyes. Above all, he annoyed – or aroused the jealousy of – the local notables, who were rather hard put to accept his newfound influence, which threatened their own prerogatives.

Beyond such general accusations, an exceptional bundle of charges was leveled against the Turkish authorities' main *bête noire*, the bishop of Adana, Mushegh Seropian, who was

universally accused of having done more than anyone else to provoke the Turks and thus bring on the massacres in Cilicia.<sup>28</sup> Seropian’s case is even more revealing of the differences in “mentality” or the “misunderstandings” that emerged in the period. An educated man, the bishop represented a new generation of Armenian prelates. He did a great deal to develop the educational structures of the Armenian community and improve its general level of education, and missed no chance to promote the growth of democracy in the region. This “intelligent, energetic man of around thirty-five” was nevertheless supposed to be, according to the French Rear-Admiral Pivet – echoing, no doubt, what he had heard from the high-ranking Turkish officials in Adana whom he held in great esteem and from missionaries who were not a little embittered – “frenetically ambitious and, seemingly, a religious sectarian, although he has, in reality, no religion at all.”<sup>29</sup>

An event reported in the liberal newspaper *Serbesti* and the daily *Piuzantion* provides some sense of Seropian’s character. To protest against the press law, which restricted freedom of the press and imposed censorship, Turkish and Armenian liberals in Adana had organized, against the prefect’s advice, a 14 February 1909 rally in the municipal park that drew nearly 10,000 people. A mixed committee had been founded for the occasion. It included Ihsan Fikri, the president of Adana’s Young Turk Club and editor-in-chief of the CUP’s official organ in the region, *İttihal*; Tevfik, an imam; and, from Sis, Hacı Süleyman. Representing the Armenians on the committee were two notables, the lawyer Garabed Chalian and Krikor Kljian, and also Bishop Mushegh. At the rally, the prelate said:

The many crimes that have blackened Turkey’s and the Ottoman fatherland’s name have been its ruin. They were the consequence of the enslavement of the population. Slavery in whatever form is unbearable, but the slavery of the spoken and written word is the worst of all forms of servility. If, down to the present day, so many crimes and injustices have been committed, if the empire has, until today, slid steadily toward its ruin, the main reason is that we were deprived of the right to speak out, of the right to protest, of our capacity to defend the legitimate rights of our sacred fatherland. The tongues of those who demanded justice were cut off; the pens of those who inveighed against injustice were smashed.<sup>30</sup>

It was the same prelate and author of “provocations” who, on 10 January 1909, sent *vali* Cevad a famous report that listed the various provocations and exactions aimed at Armenians in the previous weeks, so that measures might be taken to bring them to an end. Mushegh’s report denounced above all the machinations of the *mutesarif* of Cebelbereket, Asaf Bey, who had been inciting the Muslim population with declarations to the effect that it was unacceptable that Armenians should enjoy the same rights as Muslims did, and that Armenians were arming themselves in order to attack Muslims. This official intervention by the prelate seemed inadmissible to the *vali*, who sent several reports to the interior minister (notably on 16 January) demanding that the bishop be replaced because he was “inciting the Armenians against the government and laws and gradually poisoning the minds of his fellow citizens.”<sup>31</sup> The commander of the French fleet in the eastern Mediterranean, Rear-Admiral Pivet, corroborated these accusations in his fashion. The Armenians, he said,

although they were perfectly well aware that the Turks of Adana were, as a rule, attached to the old regime – or, rather, precisely because they were aware of this – have not tired, since the promulgation of the new constitution on 11 July 1908, of provoking and threatening them. At the instigation of their bishop, a man named Mushegh, they have created insurrectional Committees and circulated proclamations identifying the ministers and principal leaders of a future Armenian kingdom. What is more, they

have armed themselves with up-to-date weapons and enjoy showing them off to the Turks.<sup>32</sup>

In the report that *vali* Cevad sent to Constantinople on 16 January 1909, it is also said that Mushegh had donned the costume of a Cilician king and had himself photographed in it, that he had organized theatrical performances in which “mythical” kings of Armenia appeared on stage, and that he had encouraged the Christian population not to pay military and local taxes.

The charges leveled at Mushegh were serious, all the more so since the main blame for the massacres would also be laid at his door. Why was the Armenian prelate in particular the butt of these accusations? Were the accusations justified or did they stem from a mistaken interpretation of his acts? These are the questions to which we now turn.

Let us begin by noting that the bishop was a man with a strong personality. He was upright and perhaps stubborn, and, as his speech at the rally of 1 February 1909 clearly shows, he had a marked aversion to the old regime and those who had served it. He was plainly one in the group of young men who had inscribed the values of the Constitutional revolution on their banners and considered themselves the agents of a social mission. He had even been a member of the SDHP. As such, he had very probably clashed with the reactionary circles of Adana that, according to all witnesses, were still influential. *Vali* Cevad, for his part, was of another generation and, as the indictment of the court martial shows, a pure product of Abdülhamid’s Yıldız. Thus, it would seem that everything set these men in opposition. Moreover, when the young prelate drew up his famous report of 10 January 1909, which noted all the excesses that had occurred in the vilayet, he offended the sensibilities of the old government official on two scores. First, the bishop put his finger on practices that were, for Cevad, perfectly legitimate as long as they affected only Armenians. Second, Cevad found it intolerable that a Christian cleric could meddle in affairs that he regarded as his own preserve. When the 16 January report in which the *vali* demanded that Mushegh Seropian be transferred to another post is read against the background of these tensions, it becomes easier to understand why Cevad, with considerable bad faith, leveled such exorbitant charges at the bishop’s door – to say nothing of the pressure that certain Turkish circles in Adana must have been putting on the *vali*.

Thus the fable that Mushegh had donned the costume of an Armenian king is a far-fetched interpretation of the ceremonial dress that an Armenian prelate wears when celebrating religious festivals. As for the photograph of Mushegh that the *vali* denounced, taken under the portico of a church the bishop was leaving after celebrating mass, it was simply a picture taken to immortalize a religious holiday. The theatrical performance that was apparently a serious cause for alarm in the eyes of the Ottoman authorities and the local Muslim population was a dramatization of the holiday known as Vartanants, which memorializes those who fell at Avarayr, a battle that was fought against the Persian Zoroastrians in 451 and is celebrated every year by the Armenian Church. As for Mushegh’s supposed exhortations against paying military and local taxes, they come down to the fact that he had demanded that the excesses committed when these taxes had been collected in the *sancak* of Cebelbereket be redressed.

In the end, it is Rear-Admiral Pivet’s veritable denunciation of the bishop that seems to weigh the most heavily against both him and his flock. We have not taken the time to study the personality of this senior French officer, but one gains a clear sense of the man upon reading the reports he dispatched to his ministry. Let us point out only that central authorities’ declarations, which, to be sure, were made late in the day, quashed these accusations that had been nothing more than the fruit of rumor. A high-ranking soldier who had made a career in a colonial France marked by massive prejudices, a conventionality and an

arrogance that we can today measure, Rear-Admiral Pivet had taken the comments of his Turkish colleagues for good coin. The outrageousness of these comments about the “shadow cabinet” of “a future Armenian kingdom” can only bring a smile to the face of anyone with the slightest knowledge of the domestic situation of the Ottoman Empire. One of the most perceptive observers of the day, Major Doughty-Wylie, the British consul in Adana, universally praised for his intelligence and devotion, wrote in a report:

I do not at all believe in the existence of an Armenian revolutionary movement bent on creating an independent kingdom with the help of foreign intervention. If the Armenians had been pursuing a goal of that sort, they would have withdrawn into the mountainous regions, where they would have been better able to defend themselves. They would never have left thousands upon thousands of scattered, unarmed peasants... in the countryside to bring in the harvest. What is more, it is ridiculous to suppose that even the Armenians who had arms – at best, revolvers and hunting rifles – could have believed that they were capable of confronting the Ottoman Army. As for foreign intervention, the least familiarity with the political situation would have convinced them of the absurdity of such a notion.<sup>33</sup>

It is, however, the well-meaning circular that the grand vizier sent to all the *valis* on 11 August 1909 that best describes (a few choice euphemisms notwithstanding) the problem of “a lack of understanding” that “engendered” the massacre of the Armenians:

Under the old regime, in which the abuses of despotism were common practice, certain classes of the Armenian community were undoubtedly working toward political ends. Whatever the forms their activity took, however, it had but one aim: to put an end to the intolerable misdeeds and harassment of a despotic government. On the other hand, it has been observed that, in the recent past, the Armenians have done a great deal to help this nation obtain the Constitution, thereby demonstrating their sincere attachment to the Ottoman fatherland. Convinced, above all, after the restoration of the Constitution, that their nation could find neither salvation nor happiness outside the context of allegiance to the Ottoman Constitution, they concentrated their efforts on working on a common accord for the nation’s welfare. Hence there is no grounds for the false opinion that leads those ignorant of the truth to suspect the Armenian community of nursing blameworthy political aspirations.

As for the origin of the deplorable Adana events, the conclusions reached by the special commissions investigating them and the circumstances under which these regrettable events came about have shown that the elation and feelings of joy displayed by the Armenians were misinterpreted by naive individuals. These events were the last, deplorable vestiges of the days of an absolutism that wished to stamp out all feelings of patriotic fraternity. The populace that, until then, had been unaware of the name and program of the Committees “Tashnak-Zutiun” and “Hinchak” fell victim to an illusion when it saw the members of these Committees spontaneously emerging in broad daylight: it indulged in unfounded assumptions and mistaken interpretations.<sup>34</sup>

In addition to the charge of “provocations,” whose limits and unlikelihood we have already pointed out, it is worth pausing over the accusations revolving around a nascent “Armenian kingdom” – the grand vizier’s circular makes a veiled allusion to it – and the rumors about a planned insurrection that was supposed to give rise to an independent Armenian state going beyond the borders of Cilicia. This point is all the more important in that it is the core of the dialectic elaborated by the Cilician authorities and central government to substantiate the

thesis that the Turks had been defending themselves against Armenians who had organized an attack on them.

One of the first rumors to this effect was reported by the French vice-consul in Sivas, H. Rouland. "It is being whispered," he wrote to Pichon on 29 January, "that the Armenians intend, as soon as they are armed, to rise up against the Ottoman government, proclaim their independence and restore the ancient kingdom of Armenia. They are supposedly only waiting for a favorable opportunity."<sup>35</sup>

Suspicion of the Armenians was not, however, only the stuff of rumor. High-ranking officials in Cilicia apparently took seriously the idea that the Armenians represented a potential threat and elaborated policies designed to fend it off. The 16/29 March 1325/1909 telegram (no. 23)<sup>36</sup> that the *vali* of Adana sent to the interior minister is one of the most revealing in this connection:

Response to Your Excellency's encrypted telegram of 13/26 March. Recently, at a meeting of the provincial general council, the Armenian representative of the kaza of Kozan proposed – citing the fact that Hacın is surrounded by rugged terrain and that arable land is in short supply there, a circumstance that deprives the poor population of the possibility of tilling the soil – that five hundred of these poor households be settled in either Kozan, another part of the *çiftlik* of Çukorova or some other place to be chosen by the local authorities... All the Christian members [of the council] endorsed this proposal. However, given that there are nomadic tribes to be settled in the province and also that, if we accept this proposal in one area, populations from other areas that are also complaining about the lack of arable land will in their turn publicly demand that they be allotted uncultivated land, many different problems will arise, countless requests will be made and cases of villages moving from one place to another will multiply... We [therefore] suggested that the poor people of Hacın improve their living conditions as best they can by engaging in trade and the crafts.

This apparently anodyne note betrays the prefect's desire to limit as sharply as possible the number of Armenians on the Cilician plain or confine them to their "mountain refuges" so as to favor the sedentarization of the nomad tribes that the government planned to settle on the plain. It illustrates the central government's "demographic" preoccupations and the reigning suspicion of the Armenians.

These arguments are more explicitly developed in the justifications elaborated by the court-martial charged with handling the Cilician question. The report it sent to Constantinople constitutes a sort of distillation of the various rumors that had been making the rounds in the months preceding the Adana events. The Armenians, the report affirmed, had been seeking to provoke incidents in the coastal regions through which the Baghdad Railway passed, regions in which "foreigners had relatively greater interests than elsewhere":

They chose to focus the planned provocations and disorders on Adana... Our investigation allows us to affirm that, thereafter, a large number of Armenians from regions near and far arrived and settled there, in order to reinforce the area's Armenian population... However, the fact that they made such audacious use of the freedom and equality that they had just obtained was not at all appreciated by the Muslims, whose suspicions and hostility increased when the Hnchak, Droshak and Dashnak Committees, hated by the public in the past, opened clubs everywhere, [and] when Armenians began settling in large numbers in the same place... Hardly had the constitution been restored... than they began fomenting coups to obtain their independence,

diffusing imaginary Armenian coats of arms and illustrations representing imaginary kings and [national] heroes; they stirred up the Armenians’ emotions.<sup>37</sup>

This discourse, although it was written after the fact to justify the violence unleashed upon the Cilician Armenians, reflects the mood dominating Muslim public opinion. It cannot be exclusively ascribed to provocations orchestrated by conservative circles. The Muslims were steeped in the Hamidian propaganda that had for decades cast the Armenians in the role of traitors and rebels, and their reactions continued to be informed by the old criteria of judgment. Thus, they could not understand how political parties that had only recently been described as terrorist could be suddenly legalized and allowed to create local clubs. We can sum up the problem by saying that the Ottoman society of the day was hard put to create even the semblance of a democratic society, and that this proved no easier in Cilicia than in the other Ottoman provinces. What is more, the leading members of the court-martial were asked to resign after the release of this report, to which the grand vizier’s public circular, cited above, responded virtually point by point. This plainly shows that certain Ottoman circles were perfectly aware of the state of public opinion in the country and sometimes felt the need to make adjustments in order to calm people down or protect those in the line of fire.

That said, economic development had indeed attracted some Armenian migrants from the provinces of eastern Anatolia to Cilicia, while others struck out for Constantinople, Egypt, or even the Caucasus, fleeing chronic poverty and permanent insecurity. Is it, however, possible to speak of a concerted plan to increase the population of Cilicia? It is unlikely that there ever was such a plan. For one thing, these migratory movements were primarily seasonal – people came to Cilicia to work on the big farms on the Cilician plain from spring to fall – and were thus provisionally and economically motivated. Also, one finds no trace of a concerted plan in this region far from the Armenian provinces, and it is hard to see how such a plan could have been put into practice. Finally, from the moment the constitution was restored, the Armenians had shown, without the least ambiguity, that they wished to participate in the edification of a modern state in which they could assume their rightful place. On the other hand, thousands of Muslim families from Rumelia and the Balkans settled in Cilicia in 1908 and 1909.<sup>38</sup>

### *Provocations on the Eve of the April 1909 Massacres in Cilicia*

The governmental commission of inquiry into the Adana massacres was made up of two judges, one Turkish – Fayk Bey, a member of the Council of State – and the other Armenian – Artin/Harutiun Mosdichian, a court inspector in the province of Salonika. Its report was published on 10 July 1909 – that is, three days after publication of the court-martial’s. It provided an obviously more objective assessment of the situation in Cilicia on the eve of the massacres.<sup>39</sup>

After conducting investigations in Adana, Dört Yol, Osmaniye, Bağçe, Hamidiye, Tarsus, Hasanbeyli, and Harni, the two judges observed that since fall 1908 there had been strong antagonism between the Young Turk and liberal parties in Adana, led respectively by Ishan Fikri Bey – who was hostile to the *vali*, Cevad Bey – and Ali Gergerli, backed up by the Hnchak lawyer Garabed Geukderelian, both of whom supported the *vali*. The judges also noted the rather minor role played by the conservative current of Islamicist inspiration, made up of people who longed to restore the old regime, although this current did help spread rumors of massacre that poisoned the atmosphere. This conservative group was led by a powerful local notable, Abdülkadir Bağdadizâde,<sup>40</sup> the founder of Adana’s Ziraat club and its weekly organ, *Rehber-i İttidal*. This circle made no secret of its opposition to the constitution and to the equality before the law officially granted to Christians.

According to Armenian sources partially confirmed by the Constantinople press, it was in the context of this internal struggle that a number of events presaging what was to come occurred in Cilicia. The threats of massacre in October 1908 during the Bayram, mentioned above, triggered a chain of events – some of them apparently the result of deliberate provocations, others exploited by one or another party – that contributed to increasing the tension in Adana. Early in February 1909, Kōr Ahmed, the son of the *mufti* of Hacın, wired the *vali* to tell him that the Armenians of Hacın were preparing a revolt.<sup>41</sup> The related rumor that these Armenians were going to march on Adana made the local Muslims jittery. Early in March, another provocation took place in the Grand Mosque, Ulu Cami: the door of the mosque was smeared with excrement at night, angering the population and leading to accusations that Christians had desecrated the mosque. The following night, a handful of guards surprised the two culprits as they were about to repeat their act, but since they were clergymen the authorities decided not to prosecute them. Almost immediately thereafter, a rumor began making the rounds in Adana's Turkish neighborhoods: the Armenians were supposedly getting ready to attack the city's arsenal the following night, using a secret underground passage. Many Turks thus concluded that they had to make preparations to defend themselves. In the early hours of the morning, the Armenians of Adana who read the local Young Turk organ, *İttidal*, were stupefied to learn what had transpired that night. The Armenian bishop protested against these rumors, demanding in vain that an investigation be conducted to find out who was responsible for spreading them. It should be added that, in winter 1908–9, several Armenians had been murdered on the province's roads, creating an unhealthy atmosphere of insecurity. When the culprits behind the murder of three mule-drivers in the vicinity of Sis were apprehended, they contended that they had been acting "on the orders of a secret organization for massacring Christians," who deserved punishment because, by way of support for the constitution, they intended to abolish the sharia.<sup>42</sup> By the beginning of spring, serious incidents had been occurring almost daily in the immediate vicinity of Adana: several Armenian women and girls were abducted, and men were attacked and beaten.

All sources confirm, however, that the "April 1909 events" were touched off by the murder of two Turks by a young Armenian carpenter, Hovhannes, on the outskirts of Adana on 9 April, Easter Monday. On 4 April, as Hovhannes was on his way home, he encountered a group of bandits led by one Isfendiar, who surrounded him and demanded that he fulfill their pleasures. When he refused, he was bastinadoed and then abandoned. The following morning, the young man went first to the prefecture and then to the courthouse to swear out a complaint against the criminals, but he was unceremoniously shown the door. He decided to buy a pistol with which to defend himself. On the evening of Easter Monday, the group of bandits ambushed Hovhannes on the way home and stabbed him several times. The young man defended himself, killing the leader of the band and wounding two of the others. Hardly had the news become known than Isfendiar's body was recovered and exhibited in Adana's Turkish neighborhoods before being buried in a particularly oppressive atmosphere. After the burial, a large crowd set out in search of the homicide, who had fled. They looted his house and brutalized his family. *Vali* Cevad, who was informed of the situation, did not intervene. Four days later, one of the two wounded bandits also died. The burial led this time to a veritable riot. The mob made its way to the suburb of Tosbaglı Kalesi, where Hovhannes was living, and demanded that he be handed over to them. They threatened, if he was not, to put the whole quarter to fire and the sword.<sup>43</sup>

That very evening, the Young Turks of Adana held a meeting under the leadership of Ihasan Fikri, who made a fiery speech hostile to the *gâvurs*. On the night of 12 April, a handful of people, led by one Karakösehoğlu Mahmud, fired their guns in the air and then went to the police station to declare that two Turks had been killed by "the" Armenians.

It quickly appeared that this was false information. The American missionary Chambers, the minister Hampartsum Ashjian, and Dr. Hampartsumian went to see the *vali* in order to draw the tense situation in the city to his attention. On 13 April, market day, peasants from the surrounding villages poured into Adana as they did every Tuesday, but did not go back home when evening fell. A rumor had been making the rounds that day: four Muslims, two men and two women, had supposedly been murdered by the Armenians. An investigation showed that this information was wrong. The rumor naturally alarmed the Christian communities, whose representatives went to see the *vali* the same day in order to make the gravity of the situation clear to him. He answered only that he had “issued all the necessary orders.”

On this Tuesday, observers noticed that certain Turks had put on white turbans so as to pass for *softas*. They killed an Armenian and then sounded the alarm, saying everywhere that another Muslim had been killed. The city’s expert in forensic medicine, who was alerted and asked to confirm the causes of the victim’s death, saw that it was one of his Armenian patients, who, moreover, had a tattoo in the form of a cross. Around nine o’clock that evening, a mob led by *hojas* went to the prefecture and demanded that the *vali* give them permission to go punish the Armenians, but Cevad sent them away. A first meeting was then organized in front of the offices of İhsan Fikri’s newspaper, *İttidal*, located in the *medrese* of Demircilar and the adjacent streets. That night, a rally was held in front of the prefecture. It was presided over by Cevad Bey. Also present were the *ferik* (major general, military governor) and judge, Mustafa Remzi Pasha, Adana’s *mufti*, two of the most eminent men of the region, Abdülkadir Bağdadizâde and Gergerlizâde Ali, and the police chief Kadri Bey, among others. A spirited discussion began. Over the objections of a judge and the director of the post office, who were also on hand, the people at this assembly decided that the time had come to teach the Armenians a lesson. The *mufti* assured them that the massacre of Christians was in conformity with Islamic law and issued a fatwa confirming what he had said.<sup>44</sup>

However, in spite of the provocations and the rising tension, no Turk in Adana actually engaged in violence on 13 April. In the course of the day, *vali* Cevad sent four wires to the minister of the interior, informing him in very general terms of the chaos reigning in the city, in particular of the fact that he had had “to mobilize reserves throughout the vilayet to maintain order.” The only answer he received was a 1/14 April telegram from the undersecretary of state in the Interior Ministry, Hacı Adil Bey (Arda),<sup>45</sup> instructing him “to take great care that foreign subjects, their religious establishments and their consulates suffered no damage.”<sup>46</sup> Although these recommendations did not have the expected effect – most of the buildings belonging to foreigners, whether religious or not, were later burned down and two American missionaries were killed – they indicate the way in which this affair was handled at the Interior Ministry by a leading member of the CUP.

### ***The First Phase of the Massacres of Cilicia: 14–16 April 1909***

The outpouring of violence that engulfed all of Cilicia on 14 April cannot be characterized as spontaneous for the above reasons. Moreover, these events were not unlike the massacres that had been organized in 1895–6 in the Armenian provinces and elsewhere, both in the way they unfolded and by virtue of the methods employed: in both cases, false rumors were spread; the rural population of the surrounding area took part in the violence; the Muslim clergy spurred the mob on; and notables, the gendarmerie, and, of course, high-ranking officials – beginning with the *vali* and the sub-prefects – assumed the role of organizers and ringleaders.

The report of the father superior of the Catholic missions, Rigal, confirms this impression:

On Easter Wednesday, 14 April, around eleven o'clock in the morning, rifles and revolvers were fired throughout the city. People were firing from roofs, windows and minarets: the bullets fell thick as hail on roofs, streets and houses. It was a cross-fire that began all at once, as if a flash of electricity had armed all the inhabitants of Adana at the same time. For several days, people had been saying that there would probably be massacres: the Turks were threatening and the Christians were afraid. The alarm had already been given once or twice. In the morning, at market, people had noticed men with the faces of bandits wielding huge, iron-tipped clubs, of the sort with which so many Armenians had been beaten to death during the 1895 massacres. Leaving the mosque, Muslims who usually did not wear turbans were seen wearing mullahs' head-gear, so that they would not be mistaken for Christians. Finally, there was something like the smell of blood in the air and the shops in the market were closed.

At the sound of the fusillade, people's first impulse was to save their lives. They came pouring through all the doorways, while the surrounding rooftops sent waves of people flooding into the mission. The same thing happened at the American mission, in the churches and wherever else people thought they would be safer.<sup>47</sup>

Plainly, the order to attack the Armenian neighborhoods had just been given, although it was still not known who had given it. To get out of harm's way, the Armenian craftsmen and merchants wanted to close their stands and go home. The leading Christian notables, however, Ottoman subjects and foreigners alike, immediately convened a meeting at the Armenian bishopric and then sent a delegation to see the *vali* and ask him to organize protection for their neighborhoods and institutions. David Urfalian, the president of Adana's Armenian National Council and a magistrate at the audit office, represented his community. The *vali* told the delegation that he had the situation under control, that it was nothing very serious and that "it was very important to keep calm"; he ordered the delegation to go to the market around 3 p.m. to calm people down and invite them to resume their usual activities. At the market, Urfalian insisted that the pharmacy and shops in particular reopen for business. He was shot to death shortly thereafter, becoming the first victim of the events and, as such, a symbol. Meanwhile, the market was overrun by a quickly growing crowd and the Christians decided to lower the iron shutters before their shops. At this point, the handful of policemen and mounted troops at the market suddenly disappeared. The crowd, comprising men and women alike, began systematically plundering the shops.

In the interim, the dragomans from the British, French, German, and Russian consulates had in their turn formed a delegation and gone to see the *vali*. They told him how wrought up the populace was, adding that a *hoja* had been preaching from atop the minaret of the mosque of Tosbađi that it was time to liquidate the *gâvurs*. They accordingly asked him to authorize them to use firearms if necessary. After this meeting, the *vali* went to the *konak*. There, in his presence, Artin Shadakian, an Armenian member of the municipal council who had come to ask that the police and gendarmes be ordered to intervene, was shot to death by an official. Massacres had already begun in the city's outlying neighborhoods, where Armenian minorities lived among the Muslim population.

In fact, the first day of the violence, 14 April, was mainly devoted to destroying Armenian shops at the market – signs had been carefully nailed up on those belonging to Muslims – and to massacring the Armenians who lived dispersed throughout the quarters on the outskirts of the city or in inns such as Acem Han, Düz Han, Haydarođlu Han, Deli Mehmed Han, Yeni Han, Pamuk Bazar Kùpeli, and Vezir Han, which were visited one by one by the mob.

Around 300 people were killed in these Hains, mostly seasonal workers or mule-drivers from Hain, Kayseri, Dyarbekir, and other places, who had been on their way through the city.

According to the rare witnesses, the mob consisted, at this time, of between 20,000 and 30,000 people made up of some five to ten groups of assailants: Turks, Kurds, *Fellahs*, Çerkez, Avshars, nomads, and Muslims from Crete. They were led by local notables such as Abdülkadir Bağdadizâde and Boşnak Salih. These groups finally attacked the Armenian quarter of Şabanieh. After a moment of panic, the Armenians organized their defense: they set up barricades and, after arming themselves, fought off the assaults of their Muslim fellow citizens. The commander of the gendarmerie, Kadri Bey, who witnessed these disorders, resigned and was immediately replaced by Zor Ali, the former police chief of Adana who had been dismissed for earlier abuses and had returned from Istanbul on 10 March, at just the right moment.<sup>48</sup>

After retreating before the resistance put up by the Armenian quarter, this mob, led by men of second rank – Katib Effendi, Muzteba Effendi, and Dabbağzâde Ali – demanded that the authorities distribute weapons to them. The ammunitions dump was put at the assailants' disposal. They then made their way to the Sultane-Valide mosque near the Karalar neighborhood. Here the *hojas* preached the jihad and made all those present promise not to leave a single Armenian alive.<sup>49</sup>

Under the lead of Zor Ali, the mob now attacked the Şabanieh neighborhood. It was supported by soldiers under the command of Resim Selim Bey. The mob, however, was unable to make its way into the heart of the Armenian neighborhood, which was defended, according to internal Armenian sources, by 73 young Armenian men – those who had managed to arm themselves properly – posted at various points of access to the neighborhood. They had the backing of the entire population.<sup>50</sup> In the face of this vigorous resistance, the attackers decided to set fires all around the Armenian quarter and then launched a new assault. On 15 April, at around two o'clock in the morning, the exchange of gunfire became much more intense: the Armenian defenders were saluting the arrival of Major Doughty-Wylie, the British consul in Mersin and Adana. He had arrived in Adana shortly before in a special train that had been chartered in Mersin and immediately gone to see the *vali* to ask him to take the measures required to bring the disorder to an end. He then left on horseback, protected by a mounted escort, to make a tour of the Armenian quarter, where his arrival was taken as a hopeful sign.

In the morning, the *vali* told Doughty-Wylie that he no longer controlled the situation and was incapable of halting the violence, going so far as to propose that the consul himself step in and offering to put officers and soldiers at his disposal. The consul's voyage to Adana, however, only briefly interrupted the assault in places. In the course of the day, he abandoned the idea of intervening personally – he had been wounded by a stray Armenian bullet – and took the train back to Mersin. Meanwhile, a number of Armenians sought refuge in the churches of the Holy Virgin and St. Stepanos as well as in foreign institutions, especially the buildings of the French Jesuits and the nuns of St. Joseph, where some 8,000 people had been given refuge. The American mission, directed by Reverend Chambers, also granted haven to the refugees.<sup>51</sup> The middle school for girls that abutted the American mission was attacked that evening, though the girls who lived there managed to flee through a hole they had made in the party wall. However, Reverend Hovagim Kayayan and two missionaries, Roger and Maurer, were shot to death while trying to put out the fire that was destroying the school.

On the night of 15–16 April, most of the men had withdrawn to the courtyard of the cathedral and the immediate perimeter of the new Armenian middle school, which had been partly destroyed by a fire that the young men had managed to extinguish. A battle without mercy now began in the neighborhood. The defenders were hard put to recognize

one another in the dark and used a password. In the first hours of the morning, the whistle of a train coming from Mersin nourished hopes that outsiders would step in and put an end to the violence. It was, however, only the British consul returning to Adana. The besieged Armenians thought that they had seen young “Greeks” coming to save them, but it quite soon appeared that these were Muslim attackers in disguise, and they opened fire on the young men who came out to greet them.

On the morning of 16 April, a good part of the Armenian quarter had come under the control of the attackers, but one last block was still resisting, although it was running low on ammunition. One of the rare Turkish notables who lived in the quarter, a certain Osman Bey Tekelizâde, decided to visit the *vali* and ask that he intervene. He found him at a meeting with the mob’s main ringleaders, who accepted the principle of a cease-fire on condition that the Armenian notables sign a declaration in which they acknowledged that they were to blame for the outbreak of violence. After returning to the Armenian quarter, Osman Bey convinced the Armenians to send a delegation to negotiate an end to the hostilities with the *vali*. Agreement was rapidly reached, with one crucial additional proviso: the Armenians had to surrender their arms.

The approximately 200 regular soldiers and reserve troops, who had remained passive to this point now swung into action to bring the fighting to an end, accompanied by Turkish and Armenian notables. Around 10 p.m., in less than half an hour, calm was restored as the troops took up positions in front of the Jesuit middle school and the Armenian churches where the immense majority of the city’s Armenians had taken refuge. The mob launched one last assault toward midnight, apparently without much conviction. By the morning of 17 April, Adana was once again calm. The witnesses who now emerged from their hideouts discovered an apocalyptic scene: houses had been burned down and the streets were strewn with countless corpses. More than 10,000 people were famished and without shelter.

The Armenian population of Adana had suffered relatively limited loss of life in these three days of deadly, uncontrolled violence. The Armenian villagers of the environs, however, as well as those living on the farms of the plain, had for the most part been killed in their fields, victims of a veritable manhunt. On 18 April, the authorities demanded that the Armenians hand in their weapons as agreed. With the encouragement of the British consul, who guaranteed their security in the name of his government, as well as that of the Armenian Patriarchate in Constantinople, the Armenians ultimately gave up their arms.<sup>52</sup>

### ***The 17–24 April Interlude in Adana and the First Official Reactions in Istanbul***

On 18 April, the first French battleships put down anchor in the harbor of Mersin. They were followed by British, Russian, German, American, and Italian ships. Aware of the irritation that their presence was causing not only to the local Muslim population but also to the authorities, the foreigners prudently limited their intervention to landing groups of observers, paying courtesy visits to high-ranking local officials and providing the victims with ad hoc relief funneled through the religious institutions. According to certain witnesses, the local authorities took the Westerners’ relative reserve as encouragement to carry out a second massacre in Adana.

In the city, people were busy clearing the streets of corpses, which were thrown into the Sihun River – sailors reported seeing hundreds of corpses floating in the Bay of Mersina. Furthermore, the *vali* had just declared a state of emergency. Gradually, the Armenians returned to their homes, if they had not been burned down, while improvised hospitals were set up for the ill and wounded in the compounds of the missionaries or diplomatic missions,

as well as in the Armenian schools that had been left standing, such as the St. Stepanos middle school for girls.

Despite the material and human losses that the first massacres had caused throughout Cilicia, local Turkish circles, far from being preoccupied by the consequences of their acts, rather seemed frustrated by the fact that it had proved impossible to kill many Armenians from Adana. This spirit made itself felt particularly in the incendiary articles published in the famous 20 April issue (no. 33) of the daily *İttidal*, the Young Turk organ in the city.<sup>53</sup> Distributed free of charge both to the local Muslim population and throughout the empire, this "special" issue was a sort of compendium of all the criticisms that had been directed at the Armenian population, as well as an extraordinary barometer of the psychology of the local Turkish elite and its working methods. It is therefore worth our while to reproduce extracts from it here and comment on them.

It is easy to imagine the stupefying effect that the tone of the articles by İhsan Fikri and İsmail Safâ had on Armenians. Fikri was the director of the newspaper and president of Adana's Young Turk club; Safâ was the paper's editor-in-chief. As yet unaware of the part that Fikri had played in organizing the first massacres, the Armenians no doubt imagined that this "democrat" and partisan of the constitution would expose the role of certain "conservative or reactionary" circles in the region and demand that the guilty be tried and punished. They were instead surprised to find an indictment of the Armenians – the cynicism, incoherence, and implausibility of which revolted more than one observer. Indeed, the objective of this issue can be summed up as trying to "prove" that the Armenians alone were responsible for what had happened and to refute in advance accusations against the civilian and military authorities in the area, as well as the leading Turkish notables, by reversing the roles of victim and victimizer.

In an article entitled "A Terrible Insurrection," Safâ wrote:

How sad that the upsurge of anger and the [desire] for independence that had stirred and then put down roots in the depths of the Armenians' hearts should have led to the ruin of the region ...! Let us have a look at this insurrection that has condemned the inhabitants of Adana to dire poverty. Like the Turks, the Armenians were, during the thirty-three years of a tyrannical rule, crushed under tyranny's hellish burden; they raised their voices in protest. When the Ottomans entered a magnificent period of happiness and peace, the Armenians ceased to protest [literally: they shut their mouths] and cry out for revenge and, as equals with us, applauded our sacred revolution. But that was soon over, and they began preparing their own project. Sometimes, they created tensions by putting on dissatisfied expressions and making it understood that they could not possibly live alongside Muslims ... Our demand for unity and mutual understanding was not enough to stem their dangerous inclinations and this led to a difference in the Turks' and the Armenians' ways of looking at things ... The Armenians worked virtually without pause to acquire what they lacked, and devoted a great deal of effort to arming themselves. At market or in the public squares, the Armenians even outdid each other in purchasing Martinis, Mausers and other weapons of battle. After they had stockpiled such weapons, they lost their traditional restraint ... They brazenly made threats of this sort: "one of these days, we shall massacre the Turks; we are no longer afraid; the old wounds are still bleeding." Thus they provoked the Turks as a way of casting off their own responsibility. The Turks, however, accepting and obeying the advice of their great men, who preached appeasement, sought to avoid incidents of all kinds. The Armenians, observing the unbearable silence and patience displayed by the Muslims, planned to commit various crimes in defiance of the law ... The fact that the state was not sufficiently powerful

engendered fear and alarm among the Turks; among the Armenians, it was a source of strength and courage.<sup>54</sup>

One rarely finds articles in the press in which a Young Turk politician expresses himself as clearly as this. In the present case, to be sure, we can see a minor provincial leader straining, above all, to justify the acts committed by his group. In the process, he exposes the main springs of his logic and echoes the Adana Muslims' interpretation of what the Armenians said and wrote in the new context of freedom created by the July 1908 Constitutional revolution. He calls our attention to a key point that is occasionally emphasized by well-informed observers – namely, that every attempt to demand equality and justice was interpreted as “insurrection.” In June 1909, the reporter dispatched to Adana by the French daily *Le Temps*, Edouard Barfoglio, wrote, after declaring that it would be a mistake to see “Yıldız's hand” behind the Adana events:

The Turks, who have always been the dominant group, have the feeling that they are the losers in the newly established order. As a result of the Constitution, they have, in some way, ceded the predominance that was once theirs, and they feel that, in these conditions, the future can only visit destruction on them; in this context, they have risen up to defend their privileges by means of bloodshed and pillage. The Turks sensed this in the changes in the Armenians' behavior at the level of their daily relations.<sup>55</sup>

Seen from this standpoint, the underlying reasons for the killing in Adana and the comments in *Ittidal* become almost comprehensible. We understand better why the local population, generally speaking, heeded the watchwords of its local ringleaders, convinced that ultimately its predominance was in jeopardy. On the other hand, the retrospective accusation that the Armenians were preparing for war and wished to restore “an Armenian kingdom of Cilicia” could hardly have been taken seriously in Turkish political circles, which were perfectly familiar with the positions of the Armenian parties and well aware of the absurdity of such aspirations in a region where the Armenians were in a minority and had begun to benefit, or so they thought, from the advantages of freedom.

The rest of Safâ's article is cast in a more classic vein. It reviews the story of the killing of a bandit by a young Armenian attacked by a gang, identifying it as the point of departure for the “events,” and making sure to note that “the Armenians firmly avowed that they would never turn in the murderer.” We are also told that “until Wednesday, the police and the Muslims went about their business amid fear and trembling, on their guard lest they fire the first shot.”<sup>56</sup> By Safâ's logic, insurgents barricaded themselves in fortified buildings in their neighborhood in order to launch a general assault. The fact that the Armenian shops were closed, the consequence of a justifiable fear rooted in Ottoman tradition (in the Ottoman Empire, massacres always began in the market, since the attackers were tempted by the goods that they could loot there), is cast in his article as an act of aggression presaging an insurrection. In other words, to continue to follow Safâ's logic, the Armenian shopkeepers, in anticipation of an Armenian offensive, closed their shops, leaving them at the mercy of the looters. Safâ's article also affirms that Turks and Armenians were engaged in unequal combat. As he tells it, “the Armenians, entrenched in their houses, fired without let-up through gun-holes and from the roofs, whereas we poor Turks were in the streets, armed only with sticks.” Decoded, this means that civilian insurgents who had been surrounded in their neighborhoods and were armed to the teeth opened fire on unarmed Turks who happened to be walking through the streets of the Armenian quarter. Concluding this plea for peace, the Young Turk “journalist” affirms that, “besides all this, the fires set almost everywhere by the

Armenians have destroyed the whole city and left it in ruins.”<sup>57</sup> This interpretation does not deviate from the official position of the local authorities. Father Rigal, who went to see the *vali* several times, remarks with considerable lucidity that “he never heard any other refrain from [the Muslims’] mouths” than:

It is the Armenians who massacre the Muslims, the Armenians who fire on our soldiers, the Armenians who loot and burn and, finally, the Armenians who have ruined this country and are the source of all our woes. This means, in French: the Armenians are murderers because they do not go quietly to slaughter, but have the gall to defend themselves. It means, again: the Armenians loot their homes and stores and set fire to their buildings, for, after all, one has only to open one’s eyes to see that hardly anything besides the Christian stores, homes, churches and schools have been destroyed by the flames; that the Muslim mosques have been spared and rise up proudly amid the ruins of the Christian quarter.<sup>58</sup>

Fikri’s article appeared in the same issue of *İttidal*, entitled “Signs of Anarchy.” Written in a more political vein, it elaborated on the thesis of a plot against the unity of the Constitutional state and the gradual colonization of Cilicia by Armenian settlers. Above all, it threatened the survivors. In short, the accusations proffered in the Adana Young Turks’ official organ by İsmail Safâ and İhsan Fikri and the interpretation of the events they put forward there raised a chorus of protests from Armenian circles in both Adana and Istanbul. For the Armenians, these methods of disinformation were only too reminiscent of the techniques of the old regime. This was all the harder to bear in that until then they had had the feeling that the period of tyranny was now behind them.

Two days before these articles appeared, on 18 April, the undersecretary of state in the Interior Ministry, Adil Bey, who was serving as interim minister during the vacuum of power due to the “reaction,” presented a report on the Adana affair to the grand vizier, Tevfik Pasha, who had been appointed the same day. The content of the report was interpreted in different ways. The Constantinople press declared the following day that Adil had affirmed that the Armenians were the aggressors. “They are armed,” he wrote,

and are massacring defenseless Turks; they have surrounded the prefecture. Armenians from distant villages are attacking Turkish settlements – they are armed, whereas the Turks have only sticks... Armed Armenians have gone so far as to besiege the sub-prefecture of the sancak of Jebelbereket, whose terrified *mutesarif* has made repeated requests for assistance.<sup>59</sup>

This declaration, apparently inspired by telegrams sent by the *vali* and the local *mutesarifs*, does not seem to have convinced everyone, because *vali* Cevad was dismissed from his post on 18 April – although he continued to exercise his function for another two weeks. In these conditions, the 19 April session of the Ottoman parliament was supposed to clarify the situation, despite the anarchy that had reigned in the capital for the previous few days. The Armenian members of parliament, supported by the Turkish deputies Ali Münîf and Ali Hikmet, submitted a motion demanding that an immediate end be put to the massacres. At the same session, the deputy Vartkes Seringulian exclaimed to his colleagues, “if we do not punish the people responsible for such acts, which breed hatred among the different Ottoman groups, regrettable events of this sort are likely to occur elsewhere as well.”<sup>60</sup> Under threat from the troops from Macedonia who had pitched camp nearby in Çatalca, Tevfik Pasha’s government was living on borrowed time. The day before, a parliamentary delegation had gone to see Mahmud Şevket Pasha in Çatalca. It was probably during their 18 April

discussions, in which Zohrab and Vartkes took part,<sup>61</sup> that the decision was reached to send 850 from the second and third army regiments to Cilicia. According to the *Times* of 25 April, Mahmud Şevket decided to personally dispatch this battalion, stationed in Dede Ağac on the shores of the sea of Marmara, to Mersin, with instructions to restore order there.<sup>62</sup> These troops, part of the “Action Army,” were commanded by Young Turk officers.

This battalion, after resolving problems connected with finding a transport ship, arrived in Adana around noon on 25 April. It was an official representative of Constitutional legality and, as such, its arrival was a source of great relief to the Armenian population. While it is true that a fragile calm reigned in Adana from 17 to 24 April, many areas in Cilicia were still in the hands of the *başibuzuk* and certain towns were still under siege – the siege of Hacı came to an end only on 28 April. In many different localities, tens of thousands of survivors were living out in the open in sanitary conditions that were little short of catastrophic. In Adana, the *vali* who, although he had already resigned, was still in office (his successor did not arrive until the end of the month) reacted pro forma to the provocations of *İttidal*'s editors, shutting the paper down for three days. However, as soon as the Young Turk daily was able to reappear, it resumed its campaign of denigration, encouraging Adana's Muslim population to carry through its “mission.” The French foreign minister, Pichon, in a note addressed to his Ottoman counterpart, complained that

the director of the newspaper *İttidal*, who took an active personal part in the massacre and, since then, has been publishing dangerously libelous articles against the Armenians, has not been deranged in any way and is pursuing his campaign. On the other hand, two Armenian newspapers in Constantinople, *Piuzantion* and *Manzume [Efkiar]*, have just been suspended. The director of *Piuzantion*, Mr. Piuzant Kechian, was recently arrested and is being held in the Ministry of War.<sup>63</sup>

In the afternoon of 25 April, as the “soldiers of freedom” were pitching their tents on the leveled field known as Kışla Meydan, located on the banks of the Seyhan, they were fired on. No one was wounded, but it set the already nervous troops on edge. Somewhat further off, on the square near the clock tower, a crowd of considerable size was attending a rally. An Armenian who had heard the gunfire immediately went to the bishopric to inform the notables of what was afoot. They remained skeptical, convinced that the butchery could not begin again now that soldiers had arrived to ensure order. It was, however, already being rumored that the Armenians had fired on the soldiers. (Several weeks later, the report of the parliamentary commission of inquiry would show that this was a physical impossibility, given the location of the military camp and the fact that, for good reason, there had not been a single Armenian in this spot since the first massacres.) Another, even more far-fetched rumor had it that 15,000 Armenians, under the command of the lawyer Garabed Geukderelian, were marching on the city from the river – a rumor that was shown to be false by the crowd itself, which found nothing where the attack was supposedly taking place. Conditions were, nevertheless, ripe for a second massacre. A handful of provocateurs had only to go to the soldiers' encampment and declare that the Armenians were attacking the Turkish quarters to convince these soldiers to interrupt their meal and “go to the rescue of” their fellow Muslims.

### *The Second Adana Massacres (25–27 April) and the “Action Army”*

On Sunday, 25 April, at six o'clock in the evening, although nothing had occurred to provoke new atrocities, the fusillade began again, as violent as it had been on the first

day, with the difference that, this time, the Christians did not defend themselves and that, this time, the regular army was at the sides of the *bashi-buzuk*. Since the city was in a state of siege, people could not, on pain of being shot, leave it after sunset. All the streets were under guard; those who were in their homes could, therefore, escape only by fleeing from rooftop to adjacent rooftop, although the rooftops, too, were under surveillance. At the same time as the shots rang out, fires broke out again.<sup>64</sup>

This is how Father Rigal describes the onset of the second Adana massacres. The Armenians, who were now disarmed, were no longer in a position to defend themselves and sought refuge in the public buildings, schools, Armenian churches and, above all, the mission. The same French clergyman reports:

One of the first buildings to go up in flames was the Armenian school building, where a large number of refugees had found shelter. Fleeing the flames, these unfortunates ran toward our compound. When groups of them made their way into the street, the soldiers fired at them point-blank. I shouted at them to give the refugees free passage.

The next day, Father Rigal interceded with the *vali*. His commentary on their conversation plainly shows that there was a certain consistency to the behavior of this high-ranking official:

The next day, when the *vali* sang me his usual refrain – “it is the Armenians who are firing on our soldiers, looting houses and stores and setting fires” – I took the liberty of saying, not without a touch of humor: “Your Excellency, it is not the Armenians who are shooting at me in my own house, but the same soldiers who are shedding the Armenians’ blood.”

Threatened by the fire, the St. Paul middle school was likely to go up in flames at any moment. The monk again went to see the *vali*. “On the way,” he writes, “I met municipal firemen who were laboriously dragging a pump in our direction.” Later, both Father Rigal and the commission of inquiry reported that this pump was used, not to put out fires, but to feed the flames devouring the buildings in the neighborhood with paraffin. This time, the middle school – where 6,000 refugees had found shelter – the Marists’ establishment, and the school of the Sisters of Saint Joseph were set on fire. Thanks to the British consul’s intervention, their occupants were transferred to the gardens of the prefecture.

“Sunday night,” Father Rigal goes on,

the next day and the following night as well, the fire continued to rage. It devoured a church and two immense Armenian schools, the boys’ and the girls’ school, the little chapel, the Catholic Syrians’ residence, the Protestant church, all our buildings, the free dormitory, middle and elementary schools, the Armenian Catholic church, the bishop’s residence, the big Terzian middle school and the girls’ school – in sum, seventy-five percent of the big Armenian quarter. I had almost forgotten the Orthodox Syrians’ buildings, which had only just been constructed: the dormitory, church and school... Tuesday, 27 April might be called the last day in this horrible series, the likes of which has, perhaps, not been seen in modern history.

Rigal concludes:

No one who has not lived through these days can imagine what they were like. The crackling of gunfire mixed with the crackling of the fire, incessantly, for days and

nights on end, and the hell of a city in flames; the thunder of the crumbling walls, heaving clouds of fire heavenward; the piercing cries of the unfortunates felled by the bullets and, still louder, the savage cries of the men busy slitting people's throats; the wrenching appeals of a throng of people in a circle of flames, as their tormentors prepare to burn them alive; this frenzied, despairing population that stretches its arms out toward you and begs to be saved; the emotion that chokes you the more powerfully the closer the fire comes and the more helpless you feel, delivered up to a pack of arsonists and throat-cutters; the sinister gangs running past, laden down with booty; the arsonists who slip under doors, clamber over walls, break down everything that stands in their way and, sneering, contemplate the malignant flames; and these hordes of butchers who trample corpses underfoot, stab them full of holes, smash in skulls with their gun butts and then, the supreme insult, spit on their victims; the gaping wounds and quivering limbs; the head of a woman perforated by seven blows of a butcher's knife; a skull split in two; six men strung together like beads by a grave mullah doing an experiment to see how many bodies one bullet can pierce; the unfortunates daubed with oil and transformed into living torches; a mother whose belly has been cut open and made over into a cradle for her new-born baby; all these atrocities, all these horrors, all these ruins, and the disgust and emotions that they call forth; the pen is powerless to translate all that into words.

The report of the commission of inquiry called into being by the Ottoman parliament provides a rather similar description of the facts:

There are no words strong enough to describe the horror and ferocity of the second massacre, which went on for two days. It was in the course of this carnage that the sick and wounded who had arrived from the surrounding villages and found refuge in the school building were burned alive. Cevad Bey has deemed it superfluous to speak, in his report, of the terrible death that these wretched people met in the flames; he says not a word about the pregnant women whose bellies were cut open, the little children whose throats were slit and a hundred other unspeakable atrocities. He does, however, take pains to note that a large quantity of bombs and dynamite exploded as the Armenian quarter was consumed by the flames. The best refutation of this slander is the fact that the Armenians never made use of bombs or dynamite in their attempt to defend themselves. Since they used ordinary weapons in their self-defense, it is plain that, had they had arms of this sort at their disposal, they would have used them as well, with very easily recognizable effects. Since we do not have the least indication that they used such explosives, it is only natural to suppose that this is sheer slander, designed to pin the blame for what happened on the Armenians.<sup>65</sup>

The same report concludes:

All these details clearly show one thing: in Adana, the government officials and country squires took pains to create in advance conditions likely, as they saw it, to minimize their responsibility for massacres that they had premeditated and then decided to commit and to throw that responsibility – at least officially – on the Armenians. To attain that goal and somehow legitimize the Muslims' savage fury, all sorts of lies were put into circulation and someone hit upon the odious trick of firing on the soldiers' encampment.

This time, the direct participation of the president of Adana's Young Turk club, İhsan Fikri, was attested to by the official investigations. Like the others, Fikri had worn the white

turban that was the mark of the aggressors. The final act was played out in the yard of the prefecture, before the *vali's* residence, where several thousand refugees from the Jesuit mission and Armenian church of St. Stepanos had been gathered together (those in the church owed their lives to the courage of Brother Antoine, a French Jesuit who had plunged into the fire to save them). After several hours of doubt – some contend that the *vali* was waiting for an order from Constantinople or somewhere else that would settle the fate of this population – the throng was sent away. Since there were no buildings left in the city capable of sheltering them – the Armenian quarter had been largely demolished and what was left of it was in flames – they were led out of Adana toward the railway station by the British consul, who invited them to take up temporary quarters in the Tripani factory and on the premises of a German establishment nearby. It was there that these survivors learned that Sultan Abdülhamid had just given up his throne and been succeeded by Mehmed Reşad. It was also from there that they watched for several days as their neighborhood burned to the ground.

The *Official Gazette* published, in its 18 May 1909 issue, a telegram that was devastating to the Ottoman authorities. Addressed to Denys Cochin (a French catholic leader), it read:

All the information we have, which converges with that published by the European press, confirms the complicity of the troops in the appalling massacres that took place in Adana and the rest of the province. The second, 25 April massacre was carried out by the very troops sent from Dede Aghach to put an end to the disorders. There occurred scenes at which indescribable atrocities were committed. All Cilicia is in ruins, prey to famine and poverty.

### *Human and Material Losses*

As will be readily imagined, the attempt to assess the human losses due to the "troubles" in Cilicia led, in this context, to an interminable battle of figures, with variations that were as much as 20 times higher in some cases than others, depending on the sources. The first statistics published by the local authorities – that is, under the supervision of Cevad Bey – in the daily *La Turquie*, indicated that a total of 1,000 people had been killed, 250 of them Muslims. In a cable to the minister of the interior, Cevad's successor, Mustafa Zihni Babanzâde, put the number of Muslim casualties at 1,980 dead and 553 wounded, and estimated the number of Armenian dead and wounded at 1,455 and 383, respectively.<sup>66</sup> At the 2 May session of parliament, the figures presented by the Armenian deputies on the basis of the information they had received indicated that 20,000 to 30,000 had died.<sup>67</sup>

The regime's new strongman, General Mahmud Şevket Pasha, also accepted the official statistics. In an interview with the newspaper *La Tribune* on 13 May, he declared:

Things have been exaggerated. The official statistics on the number of victims show that not more than three thousand Armenians and Muslims were killed. Thus it is clear that remarks to the effect that thirty thousand people were killed are way off the mark.<sup>68</sup>

Obvious underestimations, these statistics, which deflate the number of Armenian and inflate the number of Muslim casualties, were plainly designed to substantiate the thesis that Muslims were victims of an Armenian attack. Mushrooming accounts in the independent Istanbul press and European newspapers, however, provided a very different picture of the situation that the authorities had to take into account in order to maintain a semblance of credibility. Thus, they felt obliged to take their distance from the conclusions of high-ranking Cilician officials and give a higher estimate of both the total number of casualties

and the proportion of Armenian victims. By now, it had become grotesque to contend that there had been more Muslim casualties than Armenian ones.

The author of the report of the parliamentary commission of inquiry, Hagop Babikian, said the following on this subject:

I have observed an enormous disparity between the official figures and common assessments of the number of victims. The Armenians and foreign newspaper correspondents concur on a figure that varies between twenty-five thousand and thirty thousand. As for the government, after initially hewing to the official figure of one thousand five hundred non-Muslims and one thousand nine hundred Muslims, it now admits, on the basis of new investigations, to a total of six thousand casualties. The government's statistics are based on information from the local registry office and lists provided by the *muhtars* and priests of certain localities. It goes without saying that local registries of births and deaths do not constitute reliable documents and it is only too clear that the authorities of Adana have made use of all sorts of methods to hide the real number of Christian victims.<sup>69</sup>

The government's commission of inquiry, which comprised two senior magistrates – Fayk Bey and Mosdichian Effendi – who were assisted by the *mutesarif* of Mersin, Esad Rauf Bey, affirms in its 10 July 1909 report to the interior minister:

The total number of people killed during the regrettable events in the vilayet of Adana is, according to the registries of births and deaths, 5,623, including gendarmes and soldiers: 1,487 Muslims and 4,196 non-Muslims. However, as it is probable that many people who were only temporarily in the area and were therefore not listed in the registries were also killed, and as it is not possible at present to establish how many such individuals there were, we believe that the total number of those killed – Muslims and non-Muslims – is around fifteen thousand.<sup>70</sup>

Their official character notwithstanding, these figures were not publicly recognized by the government. Early in August, however, the government made yet another estimate of the number of those killed in Cilicia, raising it this time to 6,429 for the vilayet of Adana and 484 for the vilayet of Aleppo.<sup>71</sup> In the wake of publication of the two magistrates' report, the new *vali*, Mustafa Zihni Pasha Babanzâde, was forced to prolong local inquiries, which ultimately arrived at a figure, for the vilayet of Adana alone, of 20,200 (19,400 Christians, including 418 Orthodox Syriacs, 163 Catholic Syriacs, 99 Greeks, 210 Catholic Armenians, 655 Protestant Armenians and 620 Muslims). This is closer to the truth.<sup>72</sup>

According to the English journalist Ferriman, the most precise account of the casualties was produced by the commission of inquiry set up by the Armenian Patriarchate of Constantinople. It arrived at results quite similar to the *vali*'s. Of course, it did not dare to evaluate Muslim losses. It found that the total number of Christians killed in the vilayet of Adana was 21,361, including 18,839 Armenians, 1,250 Greeks, 850 Orthodox Syriacs, and 422 Catholic Syriacs.<sup>73</sup> It emphasized that it had been unable to make a proper estimate of the number of casualties among seasonal workers, but noted that 2,500 people were missing from the Hacin area alone, which accounted for a by no means negligible proportion of the seasonal workers of the Cilician plain, so that a total figure of 25,000 victims seemed to be closer to the truth. Let us add that in the following months, a few thousand more victims of the massacres succumbed to their wounds or to epidemics. Thus, 2,000 children died of dysentery in summer 1909.<sup>74</sup>

## **Material Losses and Social Consequences**

Like the human losses, the material losses too gave rise to a frenzied give and take between the authorities and the victims. To accept the government's initial estimates would have been to admit that the Muslim populations sustained, in addition to their many human casualties, considerable material losses. But the reality on the ground left little room for doubt about the facts of the matter. Hilmi Pasha's government charged Cevad Bey's successor, Zihni Pasha, specifically with estimating the damages caused by the "disorders." For the city of Adana, he arrived at a figure of 96,000 Turkish pounds, rounded up to 100,000 in the semi-official government organ, *Tasviri Efkiar*.

As in the case of the number of victims, here too the government's official commission of inquiry proved more reliable than the local investigators. It concluded that, in the vilayet of Adana alone, a total of 4,823 houses, farms, agricultural complexes, schools, churches, factories, caravansarais, mills, shops, or stands had been wholly destroyed, including 386 that belonged to Muslims.<sup>75</sup> Measured against information collected for each of the localities involved, this figure probably still falls short of the truth, but has the merit of providing some sense of the magnitude of the economic catastrophe precipitated by the massacres and the series of fires and acts of plunder that accompanied them. The same sources evaluate the material losses at 5,600,000 Turkish pounds.

An international commission was created to aid the survivors. Considerable sums were allocated for the purpose but, given the extent of the damage, the money sufficed at best to ensure the bare subsistence of tens of thousands – approximately 90,000<sup>76</sup> – homeless people. The big problem was that because these people's work tools had been destroyed, they were not yet in a position to assure their own needs.

Another problem – that of the thousands of orphans created by the massacres – led to interminable debates among Armenians. To grasp the importance of this issue, we have to review the precedents, the 1895–6 massacres, which left around 60,000 children orphans, as well as the scandal caused by the admission of a certain number of these orphans to institutions founded by American, German, Swiss, French, and other missionaries. The Armenian nation, which had sustained considerable human losses (in addition to the massacres, many women and children had been abducted and forcibly converted to Islam), was dealt a blow that jeopardized its very survival. As a result, it withdrew into itself, in order, as it were, to reconstitute itself. Under these conditions, every child educated in a foreign culture by a non-Armenian institution appeared as one more member of the group destined to swell the ranks of other peoples and undermine the historical Armenian collectivity a bit further. Far from constituting a rejection of all things foreign, this reaction was rather the fruit of a new national impulse, a collective will to survive as a group. When the Cilician massacres happened, these painful memories were still very active, and were all the more easily revived in that they recalled all too well the tragedies that the Armenians had experienced under the Hamidian regime.

Another element to be taken into account is the Armenians' feeling of humiliation over the fact that they were not themselves in a position to educate "their" orphans. Again, although the Armenians were culturally fairly similar to Europeans, they found the colonialist mindset of most of the foreigners who intervened on their behalf – whether they were missionaries, merchants, or diplomats – very hard to bear, despite the undeniably positive aspects of their presence. This held especially for the best educated Armenians, who found it intolerable to be treated as natives and did not understand why their religious convictions earned them the label of sectarians. The religious aspect of this problem should not be underestimated. The Armenian Church, its numbers already reduced by the Catholic and