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**Armenian Refugees and the Dispute over the „Armenian Question” in
Hungary between the Two World Wars**

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I. Introduction

This paper ventures to shed light on a blank page of the historiography of the Armenian Genocide, namely the relations of the sovereign Hungarian state to the genocide and its survivors. Since Hungary up till October 1918 had not been an independent state, it had no direct relations to the Ottoman Empire and to the tragic events of the genocide, which was a factor of the policies of the common Austro-Hungarian Foreign Ministry residing in Vienna. Therefore, the nexuses of Hungary to the Armenian Genocide could only be realized in three dimensions: 1) Hungary's participation in the international support and protection of the Armenian refugees fleeing to Europe; 2) the reception and support of the refugees arriving to its territory; 3) the interpretations of the genocide as a factor in the Hungarian policies.

First of all I will briefly introduce the dreadful history of the Armenian Genocide, the relations between the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy and the Ottoman Empire with special regard to the genocide itself, and the foreign policies of the newly founded Hungarian Kingdom after the First World War. For a closer historical context, in the third chapter I will show how the *Armenian Question*¹ became the cornerstone of the process of the development of the international refugee law between the two World Wars; how the attempt of the international protection of the Armenian Republic proclaimed by the Treaty of Sèvres as an independent country failed; and the progress of the issue of the Russian and Armenian refugees that in the framework of the different institutes of the League of Nations took place in the European countries in the 1920s. Afterwards I will demonstrate the development of the *Armenian Question* in the Hungarian political and public discourses concerning its different aspects, such as the legal situation of the Armenian Republic, the protection of the Armenian refugees and the observance of the Armenian Genocide in the Hungarian parliamentary activity. I will also outline the reports of the Hungarian emissaries and consuls that were

I would like to thank Dr. Bálint Kovács for guiding my studies and researches, and Mr. Zaven Simon for allowing the elaboration of his private collection of documents.

¹ It is necessary to clarify the sense of the notion, and its changes in time, so that thereafter its usage would be consistent. In the Hungarian public discourse the term “Armenian Question” appeared as a fragment of the “Eastern Question” in the last third of the 19th century. That time it referred to the legal status of the Armenian territories – concerning the provisions of the treaties of San Stefano and Berlin – and to the massacres organized by the administration of the Ottoman sultan, Abdul Hamid II. After the First World War, the phrase changed, and began to refer to the legal status of the newly founded Armenian Republic, the Armenian minority of Turkey, the Armenian Genocide and the issue of the Armenian Refugees fleeing to Europe. For a wider perspective see: MARTIN, Caro: *The Armenian question*. Toronto, 1983; TOUFAYAN, Mark: Empathy, humanity and the “Armenian Question” in the internationalist legal imagination. *Revue québécoise de droit international*, 24/1, 2011. 171–191.

addressed to the Hungarian Foreign Ministry about the Armenian Genocide, its refugees, and the Armenian minority in Turkey. I will also outline how the representatives of Hungary took part in the League of Nations' struggle to protect the Armenian refugees fleeing to Europe and its reception by the Hungarian parliament. In the last chapter I will present the communal, institutional and economic life and progress of the Armenian diaspora of Hungary between the two World Wars.

During my researches I processed the relevant sources of the archives of the Hungarian Foreign Affairs in the National Archives of Hungary, the Budapest City Archives, the Archives of the Armenian Catholic Chaplaincy in Budapest, the publications of the Armenian associations of Hungary, and the excessively slight Hungarian special literature of the subject, and also made interviews with the members of the Armenian Diaspora in Budapest.

II. The Armenian Genocide

The Armenian Genocide, as one of the first genocides of the 20th centuries took place in the dying days of the Ottoman Empire, during the First World War and the Kemalist “patriotic war” between 1915 and 1923. Its official start is dated 24 April 1915, when the arrestation and execution of the Armenian political elite commenced at the command of the Interior Ministry. The next catastrophe struck the Armenian men conscripted to the army, who were killed in 50 to 100-strong groups. The rest of the Armenian population was eradicated through deportations leading to such natural causes of death as starvation, drying out, and complete exhaustion. There is no agreement concerning the number of genocide victims, but the most widely accepted scientific works give estimates between 900,000 and 1.5 million people. The Turkish government has denied charges of genocide down to the present day; as “an insult to the Turkishness,” the Turkish Criminal Code sanctions any admittance of the genocide with detention and a fine. Turkish historiography has dubbed the deportation of the Armenians as “relocation” concomitant with the Great War; nay, a redeeming move on the part of the Young Turkish government that had allegedly served to remove the Armenians from the war zone.²

² Perhaps the most exhaustive sources concerning the Armenian Genocide are as follows: HOVANNISIAN, Richard G. (ed.): *The Armenian Genocide: History, Politics, Ethics*. London, 1992; KLOIAN, Richard D. (ed.): *The Armenian Genocide: New Accounts from the American Press (1915–1922)*. Richmond, 2000; MELSON,

Some scholars date back the outbreak of the Armenian Genocide to the last decade of the 19th century, when between 1894 and 1896, in three waves some 100,000 to 200,000 Armenians of Ottoman Turkey were massacred organized by the administration of Sultan Abdul Hamid II.³ One should see that the main reasons for the development of the confrontation between the Armenian minority of Turkey and the Ottoman administration and Turkish population were lying in the Russian-Ottoman conflicts and their Armenian reception, as well as the grudge that the majority of the Ottoman population felt towards the economically and politically strong Armenian community of the empire.⁴ With the Russian conqueror wars of the 19th century first in 1806-1812 and in 1828-1829, the Ottoman Empire was irreversibly forced into the orbit of territorial losses, defeats in wars and the inspection of the European powers. During the war of 1877-1878 most of the Ottoman Armenian territories were occupied by Russia and by the treaty of San Stefano in 1878 the Armenian population of the Ottoman Empire came under the protection of Russia. Although the Congress of Berlin withdrew most of the regulations of the treaty, from that point on the Armenians of Turkey reckoned Russia as a possible force to unite the Armenian territories.⁵

The first wave of the massacres took place in Sassoun, an Armenian city in the Ottoman Vilayet of Bitlis in August 12-24 to September 4-16, 1894. It started with the clash

Robert F.: *Revolution and Genocide: On the Origins of the Armenian Genocide and the Holocaust*. Chicago, 1992; LEPSIUS, Johannes: *Deutschland und Armenien, 1914–1918*. Potsdam, 1919; MILLER, Donald E. – MILLER, Lorna Touryan: *Survivors: An Oral History of the Armenian Genocide*. Berkeley, 1993; TERSON, Merrill: *Starving Armenians*. Charlottesville, 2004; TERON, Yves: *Les Arméniens, Histoire d'un génocide*. Paris, 1977. For the Turkish approach, cf. FEIGL, Erich: *A Myth of Terror*. Salzburg, 1986; GÜRÜN, Kamuran: *The Armenian file: the myth of innocence exposed*. New York, 1985; LEWY, Guenter: *The Armenian Massacres in Ottoman Turkey: A Disputed Genocide*. Salt Lake City, 2005; SERVER AYA, Sükrü: *The Genocide of Truth*. Istanbul, 2008.

³ Concerning the number of the victims of these massacres there is a disagreement in the special literature, most of the scholars put it between 100,000 and 300,000. The data that is adopted by this article is used on the strength of the articles in the following volume of essays: HOVANNISIAN, Richard G. (ed.): *The Armenian Genocide: History, Politics, Ethics*. London, 1992.

⁴ The Armenian population of Turkey could be described as a middleman minority, of which the nature, according to the designation of Edna Bonacich can be “characterized by a “status gap” or marked division between elites and masses”. The so-called status-gap reflects to the special economic position they occupy in the given state’s economy, filling a gap in it – such as agent, labor contractor, rent collector, money lender or broker – , and by the profits of this special occupation, the minority group gains welfare. For further information see: BONACICH, Edna: A theory of Middleman Minorities. *American Sociological Review*, 1973/38. 583-594.

⁵ BADDELEY, John F.: *The Russian conquest of the Caucasus*. New York, 1969; BOURNOUTIAN, George A.: *A concise history of the Armenian people*. Costa Mesa, 2002; HOVANNISIAN, Richard G.: *The Armenian people from ancient to modern times*. New York, 1997.

of arms of the Armenian and Kurdish people of the region after a Kurdish tribal attack on the city. The conflict was considered as an uprising of the Armenians, so the administration of Abdul Hamid II sent its special force, a Kurdish cavalry of 30,000 armed men called Hamidiye, to resolve the situation. About 10,000 Armenians fallen victim to the massacres of Sassoun, and as a result, the ethnic tension in the empire began to escalate.⁶

The second and the third waves of the massacres were committed in 1895 and 1896, as a reaction to the increscent political activities of the Armenian political parties of the empire. In September 30, 1895 the Armenian political party of Hnchakist on its assembly held in Istanbul proclaimed its remonstrance against the oppression of the Ottoman administration. In the next year, in August, 1896 another Armenian political party, the Dashnaktsutyun occupied the central building of the Imperial Ottoman Bank in Istanbul, as a symbolic act to call upon the Western powers to interfere in the massacres of Armenians in the Ottoman Empire. Both events resulted in the violent actions of the Hamidiye, and beginning with 1895, the massacres dispersed statewide, mostly in the Armenian Vilayets of Erzerum, Van, Btlis, Harpout, Sivas and Diarbekir.⁷

A fourth wave of the Armenian massacres occurred a year after the Young Turk Revolution of 1908, in the Armenian cities and villages of Cilicia. The Young Turk Revolution was the fulfilment of gaining ground for the initially liberal movement of the Young Turks, what was – as Ernest Edmondson Ramsaur put it into words – “the culmination of many decades of activity by a small group of liberals or pseudo-liberals who had gradually, under the influence of western ideas and concepts, come to the conclusion that the Ottoman Empire was doomed to extinction if drastic steps were not taken to check the decay which had set in.”⁸ Indeed, after the territorial losses of the empire during the Balkan Wars, drastic steps were taken in favor of the sustenance of the territorial integrity of the Ottoman state, of which one of the manifestations was the dreadful policy of the annihilation of the potentially separatist Armenian population. This was the Armenian Genocide, of which a preemptive strike was the massacres in Cilicia in 1909. According to Bedross Der Matossian, the “sources indicate that weapons were distributed freely by the government to local civilians who took

⁶ DADRIAN, Vahakn N.: The 1894 Sassoun Massacre: A Juncture in the Escalation of the Turko-Armenian Conflict. *Armenian Review*, 47/1-2 (2001). 5-39.

⁷ MELSON, Robert F. (1992), 45-46; BOURNAOUTIAN, George A. (2002), 259-275.

⁸ RAMSAUR, Ernest Edmondson: *The Young Turks. Prelude to the Revoluton of 1908*. New York, 1970. 3.

part in the massacres, looting, and carnage.”⁹ These massacres had around 30,000 Armenian victims and have been a cornerstone in the Armenian-Turkish confrontation, and in the development of the preparation of the genocide.¹⁰

Deportations, massacres, genocide

The Armenian Genocide, as I have stated it above was implemented by the methods of massacres, deportations, starvation and thirst, and had at least one million Armenian victims. It started by the annihilation of the Armenian political elite and pursued with the executions of the Armenian soldiers of the Ottoman army.¹¹ After the elimination of the Armenian political- and manpower, the elders, women and children were the next subjects of this destruction.¹² The process of this dreadful procedure was described genuinely and detailed by Lord Bryce in the House of Lords of the British Parliament on October 6, 1915 as follows:

“The whole Armenian population of each town or village was cleared out, by a house-to-house search. Every inmate was driven into the street. Some of the men were thrown into prison, where they were put to death, sometimes with torture; the rest of the men, with the women and children, were marched out of the town. When they had got some little distance they were separated, the men being taken to some place among the hills where the soldiers, or the Kurdish tribes who were called in to help in the work of slaughter, despatched them by shooting or bayonetting. The women and children and old men were sent off under convoy of the lowest kind of soldiers – many of the just drawn from goals – to their distant destination,

⁹ MATOSSIAN, Bedross Der: From Bloodless Revolution to Bloody Counterrevolution: The Adana Massacres of 1909. *Genocide Studies and Prevention*, 6/2 (2011). 163.

¹⁰ Raymond H. Kévorkian puts the number of the victims in the figure of 25,000; Rouben Paul Adalian in 30,000; but there are scholars defining the number of 40,000. Cf. KÉVORKIAN, Raymond H.: The Cilician Massacres, April 1909. In: HOVANNISIAN, G. Richard – PAYASLIAN, Simon (eds.): *Armenian Cilicia*. Costa Mesa, 2008. 340; ADALIAN, Rouben Paul: Adana massacre. In: CHARNY, Israel (ed.): *Encyclopedia of Genocide*. Vol. I. Oxford, 1999. 47.

¹¹ George E. White, the president of the Anatolia College in November, 1917 remembered this process as follows: “On the pretext of searching for deserting soldiers, concealed bombs, weapons, seditious literature or revolutionists, the Turkish officers arrested about 1,2000 Armenian men at Marsovan, accompanying their investigations by horrible brutalities. There was no revolutionary activity in our region whatever. The men were sent out in lots of one or two hundred in night ‘deportations’ to the mountains, where trenches had been prepared. Coarse peasants, who were employed to do what was done, said it was a ‘pity waste of bullets’, and they used axes.” Cf. Armenians Killed With Axes by Turks. *Current History*. November, 1917. In: KLOIAN, Richard D. (ed.): *The Armenian Genocide. News Accounts From The Armenian Press (1915-1922)*. Richmond, 2000. 219.

¹² MELSON, Robert F. 143-145.

which was sometimes one of the unhealthy districts in the centre of Asia Minor, but more frequently the large desert in the province of Der el Zor, which lies east of Aleppo, in the direction of the Euphrates.”¹³

It was in May 1915 that the massacres and deportations began in the Armenian provinces of Turkey. Bitlis Vilayet, what had a population of 210,000 people at the outbreak of the First World War, by the end of 1915 was almost completely depopulated. Although most of the citizens were deported, an immense number of people fall victim to massacres. According to eyewitnesses, close to the city of Bitlis about a thousand Armenian men, women and children were locked up in a wooden building, and set on fire.¹⁴ During the deportations, most of the deported died due to thirst, lack of food or exhaustion, for example the 18,000-strong convoy of Erzerum arrived to Aleppo with only 150 people left alive.¹⁵ An eyewitness of the convoy of Erzerum in a report of *The New York Times* in September, 1915 described the horrors of the deportation as follows:

“On the fifty-second day they arrived at another village, and here the Kurds took from them everything they had, even their shirts and drawers, so that for five days the whole convoy marched completely naked under the scorching sun. For several days they did not have a morsel of bread, nor even a drop of water. They were scorched to death by thirst. Hundreds upon hundreds fell dead on the way, their tongues turned to charcoal. . . . On the sixtieth day, when they reached Viran Shehr, only 300 exiles remained out of all the 18,000. On the sixty-fourth day the gendarmes gathered together all the men and the sick women and children and burned and killed them all. The remainder were ordered to continue on their way.”¹⁶

Although the ceasefire that was signed by the Ottoman administration on October 30, 1918 meant a release for the Armenians of Turkey, and about 74,500 Armenians could move back to their homeland,¹⁷ the massacres – thus the genocide too – were continued by the Kemalist revolutionary army as well, from 1920 to 1923. This last wave of massacres took place mainly in Cilicia with some 16,000 victims, and in Smyrna, where most of the Greek and Armenian

¹³ TOYNBEE, Arnold J.: *Armenian Atrocities – The Murder of a Nation*. Sydney, 1999. 8-9.

¹⁴ Burn 1,000 Armenians. *The New York Times*. August 20, 1915. In: KLOIAN, Richard D. 2000. 27.

¹⁵ HOVANNISZJÁN, Nikolaj: *The Armenian Genocide*. Budapest, 2009. 67. (in Hungarian).

¹⁶ Massacre by Decree. *The New Republic*. Jan. 27, 1917. In: Kloian, Richard D. 2000. 37.

¹⁷ SHEMMASSIAN, Vahram L.: The repatriation of Armenian refugees from the Arab middle east, 1918-1920 In: HOVANNISIAN, G. Richard – PAYASLIAN, Simon (eds.): *Armenian Cilicia*. Costa Mesa, 2008. 454-455.

population of the city was either massacred or deported.¹⁸ As a result of the genocide, the two million Armenian inhabitants of Western Armenia disappeared – either murdered or fled –, only around 60,000 Armenians remained in the country after 1923.¹⁹

The Armenian Genocide and the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy

From 1526 the Hungarian Kingdom was a vassal state of the Habsburg Monarchy without any major political autonomy up till the Austro-Hungarian Compromise of 1867, when the dual monarchy of the Austro-Hungarian state was established. Although the new constitutional environment meant an extensive autonomy in the interior policies of Hungary, it still impeded and restrained the establishment of a sovereign Hungarian foreign policy. Three aspects of the government were enunciated as “common,” the Ministry of War, Foreign Affairs and Finance.²⁰ Therefore, one cannot talk about an independent Hungarian foreign policy until the proclamation of independence in 1918, so the alliance of the Ottoman Empire and the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy was a factor of the foreign policies of the common Foreign Ministry residing in Vienna.²¹

In the last quarter of the 19th century the alliance that was initially the League of the Three Emperors (Germany, Russia, Austria-Hungary), due to the confrontations between Russia and Austria-Hungary in connection with the disputes over the Balkans and to the Russian-French approach around the turn of the century, shaped into the final form of the alliance system that dominated Europe at the time of the outbreak of the First World War. The emergence of the Entente and the Central Powers necessarily resulted in the Ottoman –

¹⁸ PETERSON, Merrill: *Starving Armenians*. Charlottesville, 2004. 90.

¹⁹ PEROOMIAN, Rubina: *And those who continued living in Turkey after 1915: the metamorphosis of the post-genocide Armenian identity as reflected in artistic literature*. Yerevan, 2008.

²⁰ CARTLEDGE, Bryan: *The will to survive. A History of Hungary*. London, 2006. 243–252; FRANK, Tibor: The Austro-Hungarian Compromise of 1867 and Its Contemporary Critics. *Hungarian Studies*, 15/2 (2000). 193–200. PÖLÖSKEI, Ferenc: Ferenc Deák at the time of the Compromise Negotiations. *Minorities research*. 2004/6.

²¹ The fact, that István Tisza, the Prime Minister of Hungary between 1913 and 1917 was one of the main political factors in the Monarchy that strongly opposed the declaration of war with Serbia – which led to the outbreak of the First World War – shows us how small influence the Hungarian government had on the foreign policies of the Monarchy. For more information: JESZENSZKY, Géza: Villain or Tragic Hero? Reassessments in Hungary – Verdict in the U.S. *Hungarian Studies Review*, 14/2 (1987). 45–57. As the executive director of the Hungarian Society for Foreign Affairs, an institute of the Foreign Ministry of Hungary, Olivér Ettevényi put it into words: “The Hungarian nation since the catastrophe of Mohács [the Turkish invasion in 1526] has been obstructed in the establishment of its Foreign policies [...] Ever since it couldn’t independently enforce its national interests abroad.” EÖTTEVÉNYI Olivér: The activity of the Hungarian Society for Foreign Affairs. *Külügyi Szemle*, 3–4/34 (1923–1924). 285–290. (in Hungarian)

Austro-Hungarian covenant against Russia during the First World War, so the two empires entered the war as allies.²²

The Ottoman – Austro-Hungarian diplomatic relations concerning the Armenian Genocide are a well-known and fully discussed theme of historiography.²³ In the edition of Artem Ohandjanian a twelve-volume diplomatic record series was published in 1995 titled *Österreich-Armenien 1872–1936: Faksimilesammlung diplomatischer Aktenstücke* of which, six volumes imparts relevant documentations of the genocide itself.²⁴ The memoir of Vice Marshal Joseph Pomiankowski – *Der Zusammenbruch des Ottomanischen Reiches* – is also an explicitly important source of the genocide.²⁵ He – as plenipotentiary military representative to the Ottoman Empire – was the head of the Austro-Hungarian military diplomacy to Istanbul, and had a clear view on the tragic fate of the Armenians in Western Armenia. The reports written by Austria-Hungary's Hungarian ambassador to the Ottoman Empire, János Pallavicini also have a great value as sources.²⁶

These memoirs, reports and other documentations indicate that the Austro-Hungarian state was well-informed about the Armenian Genocide, so the relative inaction of its diplomacy should also be recognized to some extent as responsible for the escalation of the tragic events of the genocide. There were only a few, but a few outstanding efforts of the Austro-Hungarian diplomacy in favor of the victims of the genocide. In fact, one of the first measures on behalf of the situation of the Armenian refugees was taken by Joseph Pomiankowski when he had a discussion with Enver Pasha on September 15, 1915

²² The topic ranges over an immense amount of specialist literature, for example: KISSINGER, Henry: *Diplomacy*. New York, 1994; WHITE, John Albert: *Transition to global rivalry: alliance diplomacy and the Quadruple Entente, 1895–1907*. Cambridge – New York, 1995; WILSON, Keith: *The policy of the Entente: essays of the determinants of the British foreign policy 1904–1914*. Cambridge – New York, 1985; etc.

²³ DADRIAN, Vahakn: *Documentation of the Armenian Genocide in the German and Austrian Sources*. New Brunswick, 1994; OHANDJANIAN, Artem: *1915 Irrefutable Evidence. The Austrian Documents on the Armenian Genocide*. Yerevan, 2004; etc.

²⁴ OHANDJANIAN, Artem: *Österreich-Armenien 1872–1936 : Faksimilesammlung diplomatischer Aktenstücke*. Vol. I-XII. Wien, 1995; OHANDJANIAN, Artem: *Österreich-Ungarn und Armenien 1912–1918. Sammlund diplomatischer Aktenstücke*. Jerewan, 2005.

²⁵ POMIANKOWSKI, Joseph: *Der Zusammenbruch des Ottomanischen Reiches; Erinnerungen an die Türkei aus der zeit des Weltkrieges*. Wien [etc.], 1928.

²⁶ Among others, the reports have been researched and cited by Vahakn Dadrian, in: DADRIAN, Vahakn N.: The Armenian Question and the wartime fate of the Armenians as documented by the officials of the Ottoman Empire's World War I allies: Germany and Austria-Hungary. *International Journal of Middle East Studies*. 34 (2002), 59–85.

concerning the repatriation of the Armenian citizens fled from the province of Van, urging the replacement of 80,000 Armenians “in the neutral zone including around 100 villages.”²⁷

In October 1918 the countries of the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy proclaimed their independence; the dissolution of the empire became irreversible. On October 25, 1918 the Hungarian, on October 30, 1918 the Austrian government, and their separate Foreign Ministries were formed. Although in the next couple of years in Hungary the uncertainty of its interior policy – facing civil war, interstate wars and numerous putsches – impeded the evolving of a manifold foreign policy, the starting point of the modern Hungarian diplomatic history was the year 1918.²⁸ From early 1920, as the consolidation of the Hungarian internal politics evolved, the activities of its foreign policies escalated, and on September 18, 1922, after numerous attempts, Hungary got admitted to the League of Nations. From this day on, the Hungarian diplomacy actively participated in the international support of the refugees arriving to Europe, among whom one of the most multitudinous communities was the community of the 400.000 Armenian refugees fleeing to Europe.

After the brief introduction of the historical context of our theme, namely that of the Armenian Genocide and its Austro-Hungarian relations, henceforth I will put forth a wider historical context, that is the development of the issue of the Armenian refugees in the international diplomatic discourse.

III. International support of the Armenian refugees

From the First World War up till the early 1980s about 70 million refugees throughout the world had to flee their homes in search for an asylum,²⁹ and ever since the dissolution of the Soviet Union this number is in a rapid growth, therefore the international protection and support of refugees became one of the most urgent humanitarian tasks of our time. The international special literature dates the birth of refugee law to 1951, when in the frameworks

²⁷ OHANDJANIAN, Artem; (2004). 185. More than 100,000 Armenian citizens of Van were forced out by the Turkish attack from the direction of Bitlis in June 1915, and about 30,000 perished on their way to the Caucasus. For more information: MINASSIAN, Anahide Ter: Van 1915. In: HOVANNISIAN, Richard (ed.): *Armenian Van/Vaspurakan*. California, 2000. p. 223–224.

²⁸ For further information: FRANK, Tibor: Between Red and White: The Mood and Mind of Hungary’s Radicals, 1919–1920. *Hungarian Studies*, 9/1–2 (1994), 105–126; SWANSON, John: *The remnants of the Habsburg monarchy: the shaping of modern Austria and Hungary, 1918–1922*. New York, 2001.

²⁹ ZOLBERG, Aristide R.: Contemporary Transnational Migrations in Historical Perspective: Patterns and Dilemmas. In: KRITZ, Mary M. (ed.): *U.S. Immigration and Refugee Policy. Global and Domestic Issues*. Lexington, Massachusetts – Toronto, 1983. 32.

of a conference organised by the United Nations, a multilateral treaty was signed defining the legal status of refugees, titled *Convention relating to the Status of Refugees*. Although it really was the first time that a general designation of refugees – not specifying a group or a nationality – was issued by the international community, the evolution of refugee rights began right after the First World War in connection with the Russian and Armenian refugees fleeing mainly to Europe.³⁰

The history of the Armenian Diasporas dates back to the fourth century A.D., and rendered the Armenian nation a nation of diaspora in the 11th century, with the migratory flow caused by the Seljuk Turks' invasion of Armenia. Already in the Early Modern Age, Armenian Diasporas could be found from Mexico through the Netherlands to India, but the tragic events of the Armenian Genocide shaped the whole structure of the diaspora, with the appearance of the refugees of the Armenian Genocide, constituting the so-called *spyurk*. The *spyurk* is a *victim diaspora* established by the refugees of the Armenian Genocide all around the world, mostly in the Middle East, Russia, America and Europe. Around 400,000 Armenian refugees arrived to Europe during and after the First World War, mostly – some 300,000 refugees – to France.³¹

According to James Hathaway, the period between the two World Wars coincided with the “emergence of the modern system of social organization” in Europe, when the governments of Europe commenced to the intensive “safeguard [of] critical entitlements for the benefit of their own citizens.”³² Thus the refugees, most of whom did not possess valid identity or travel documents have been struggling in the most difficult conditions, in a strange environment, without the legal support of any government, and without the possibility to move further to another country, or to move back home.

The measures taken in favour of the modification of such conditions of the refugees in the early years of the League of Nations' activity were strictly connected to the Russian and Armenian refugees. In fact, when the first attempt to the extension of the rights that these two

³⁰ Some scholars date the birth of refugee law back to the provisions of ancient Greek and Roman Law, but about *international* refugee law, one may only talk as a product of the 20th century. See: PHILIPSON, Coleman: *The international law and custom of ancient Greece and Rome*. London, 1911. For modern approaches see: CHIMNI, B.S. (ed.): *International Refugee Law*. New Delhi, Thousand Oaks – London, 2000; NICHOLSON, Frances – TWOMEY, Patrick (eds.): *Refugee Rights and Realities. Evolving International Concepts and Regimes*. Cambridge, 1999.

³¹ TOLOLYAN, Khachig: Armenian Diaspora. In: EMBER, Melvin – EMBER, Karol – SKOGGARD, Ian (eds.): *Encyclopedia of Diasporas*. New York, 2004. 43–45.

³² HATHAWAY, James C.: *The rights of refugees under international law*. Cambridge, 2005. 83.

groups attained appeared in 1927, the Council refused to frame a general definition of refugees and their rights, arguing that the “mere fact that certain classes of persons are without the protection of any national Government is not sufficient to make them refugees; for on that theory all classes of persons without nationality and persons of doubtful nationality would have to be included.” Considering the future attempts to define such designations the forty-sixth session of the Council on September 15, 1927 stated that the definition should “correspond to the definitions laid down in the arrangement of May 1926 [regarding the Russian and Armenian refugees].”³³ Therefore the declaration of James Hathaway stating that the Russian and Armenian refugees were the main factors of the emergence of the international refugee law is more than considerable:

“The early efforts of the international community to protect refugees stemmed from a series of exoduses in the early years following the end of the First World War: some 2 million Russians, Armenians, and others were forced to flee their countries between 1917 and 1926.”³⁴

Regarding the legal bases of these first measures, one should note that although the agreements in question defined refugees only in juridical terms – stating that someone could be a refugee if he/she was outside his/her country of origin, without the protection of the government of that state –, and didn’t specify the responsibility of the state of arrival other than issuing identity certificates, they still substantiated the whole process of evolving the international protection of refugees.³⁵

The humanitarian pursuit of the allied powers and later the League of Nations concerning the victims of the Armenian Genocide were antedated by the establishment of civil foundations and other charitable organizations, such as the Near East Relief was in America.³⁶ Later the Assembly of the League of Nations organized the Commission of

³³ This was the first attempt by the international community to support the refugees of Central Europe, particularly the Hungarian refugees, specifying the following groups: Assyrians, Assyro-Chaldeans, Ruthenians, Montenegrins, “Refugees in Central Europe without protection, especially former Hungarians who number: 10,000 in Austria, France and Roumania,” Jews and Turks. Cf. Extension to other categories of refugees of the measures taken to assist Russian and Armenian refugees. Extract from the minutes of the sixth meeting of the forty-sixth session of the council. Held on September 15, 1927. *National Archives of Hungary*, K78, 42/XII-1. Original reference number: C.L.159.1927.VIII.

³⁴ HATHAWAY, James C. (2005). 83.

³⁵ GOODWIN-GILL, Guy S.: The refugee in international law. In: CHIMNI, B.S. (ed.): *International Refugee Law*. New Delhi, Thousand Oaks – London, 2000; HATHAWAY, James C. (2005).

³⁶ BARTON, James L.: The Near East Relief. *International Review of Mission*, 18/4 (1929). 495–502.

Inquiry for the Protection of Women and Children in the Near East, constituting Emma Cushman, W. A. Kennedy and Karen Jeppe, which during its four years of organized work was able to support 8000 survivors of the Armenian Genocide in Syria and in Istanbul.³⁷ Afterwards, between the two World Wars numerous institutes were established to support the integration and repatriation of the refugees, such as the Nansen International Office for Refugees, the Office of the High Commissioner for Refugees coming from Germany, the Office of the High Commissioner of the League of Nations for Refugees, and the Intergovernmental Committee on Refugees.³⁸

Before presenting the humanitarian work of the League in connection with the Armenian refugees – organizing numerous committees, commissions and fundraisers, mediating several international agreements – with Fridtjof Nansen in forefront, it is necessary to briefly discuss one of the main fragments of the discourse about the whole *Armenian Question*: the protection of the Armenian Republic by the Allied powers and the League of Nations.

The Armenian Republic in the League of Nations

The illustration of the unsuccessful attempt to protect the Armenian Republic officially recognized by the Treaty of Sèvres is a fundamental aspect of the history of the international protection of the Armenian refugees, whereas together with the Armenian provinces of Russia it gave shelter to more than 200,000 refugees from Western Armenia³⁹ and as a sovereign national home, it would have meant to provide hundreds of thousands more refugees with asylum – which was also one of the main tendencies of the politics of the League of Nations concerning the Armenian refugees, struggling to manage the relocation of some 30,000 Armenians from Europe to the “Republic of Eriwan.”⁴⁰

³⁷ For further information see: SHEMMASSIAN, Vahram L.: The League of Nations and the Reclamation of the Armenian Genocide Survivors. In: HOVANNISIAN, Richard G.: *Looking Backward, Moving Forward. Confronting the Armenian Genocide*. New Brunswick – New Jersey, 2003. 81–113.

³⁸ JAEGER, Gilbert: On the history of the international protection of refugees. *IRRC papers* No. 843 (September 2001). 727–737.

³⁹ TOLOLYAN, Khachig (2004). 43.

⁴⁰ One of the main acts of the dispute over the process of the relocation – hall-marked by Fridtjof Nansen – took place on the Fourth Meeting of the 45th Session of the Council of the League of Nations. The minutes of the meeting can be found in: *National Archives of Hungary*, K78, 43/XIII-7. Original reference number: C.L.10.1927.IV. The tendency of “returning” to the “homeland” – as it was put into words by Khachig Tololyan

The claims of the Armenian Republic was presented at the Paris Peace Conference by the Armenian delegation headed by Avetis Aharonian in February 1919, demanding the recognition of the independent Armenian state, guarantee of the Allied Powers, financial assistance, and judicial proceedings concerning those who organized the massacres against Armenians. Although the Treaty of Sèvres stated that “the frontier line in question will be determined by the Principal Allied Powers, who will also provide for its being traced on the spot,”⁴¹ in the meantime the Turkish Kemalist army occupied most of the Armenian territories, the two sides signed a treaty in Batumi, and the forthcoming Soviet occupation put Armenia in the shade.⁴² A complex situation arose with a *de jure* independent Armenian Republic and a *de facto* divided, occupied and destructed country.

In reference to the Turkish occupation of Armenia, the Council of the League of Nations discussed the possibility of a mandate for Armenia in 1920. The appointment of a neutral state mandate holder and the guarantee of Allied states was suggested, so the Chairman of the Council, Paul Hymans called upon the president of the United States of America, Woodrow Wilson, to guarantee the territorial integrity of Armenia. However, in July the U.S. Senate refused to accept such a mandate for Armenia, and later in his letter of December 1, Woodrow Wilson stated that he was “without authorization to offer or employ military forces of the United States in any project for the relief of Armenia and any material contributions would require the authorization of the Congress, which is not now in session and whose action I could not forecast.”⁴³

Later, on the 45th Session of the Council of the League of Nations, Enrique Villegas, the representative of Chile, concerning the humanitarian assistance for the Armenian refugees summarized these unsuccessful attempts to protect the Armenian Republic as follows:

“Under the Treaty of Sèvres, the Armenian people had been given a large area of land which they might consider as their own country, and an unsuccessful effort had been made to find

– remained for a long time, between 1923 and 1962 at least 200,000 Armenians settled in Soviet Armenia. For more details see: TOLOLYAN, Khachig (2004). 44.

⁴¹ Treaty of Peace with Turkey Signed at Sèvres, August 10, 1920. *Treaty Series* No. 11 (1920). London, 1920. 26.

⁴² HOVANNISIAN, Richard G.: *Armenia on the Road to Independence*. Los Angeles, 1967. 157–163.

⁴³ League of Nations. Situation in Armenia. Telegrams Received and Despatched by the Council. Cf. http://www.armenews.com/IMG/4_SituationinArmenia.pdf [downloaded: 26.03.2014.] For further information see: GZOYAN, Edita: The League of Nations and the Question of a mandate for Armenia. *Central and Eastern European Review*. Vol. 3 (2009); GZOYAN, Edita: The Question of Admitting the Republic of Armenia to the League of Nations. *Central and Eastern European Review*. Vol. 4 (2010).

some State which would be willing to accept a mandate in order to protect them. The League of Nations had then been asked whether it would be willing to accept that responsibility, but had replied that, much as it would have liked to do so, it had no means at its disposal, and that [...] responsibility must be undertaken by some Powers possessing the means of protecting the Armenian people. [...] It would be very regrettable if, after having promised so much for the Armenians, and having already done so much, the League should now declare that it could do nothing further. This would create a very bad impression.”⁴⁴

At the time of the statement of Mr. Villegas, in 1927, Armenia had already been irreversibly incorporated into the Soviet Union, Western Armenia to the Republic of Turkey, and the debate of the international community regarding the legal status of the Armenian Republic had been concluded, but the discussion of the *Armenian Question* – relating now to the Armenian refugees – continued to exist.

Humanitarian assistance of the League of Nations

With the two million Armenian and Russian refugees fleeing to Europe and the emergence of the international refugee rights, the international community, for the first time, adopted joint measures on behalf of the facilitation of the transport and integration of refugees. The Assembly of the League of Nations in its resolution of 1924 declared “that, until an Armenian national home can be established, every possible facility should be given to the refugees to establish themselves in productive employment in other countries so as to maintain and safeguard their national existence.”⁴⁵

The first step towards this humanitarian movement was the legal regulation of the status of the refugees, in the framework of multilateral agreements to ensure the entrance of the refugees without valid travel documents and identity certificates to the member states, and their movement amidst these countries. The main promoter of the certificates ensuring rights and support for the refugees was Fridtjof Nansen, the Norwegian arctic explorer and diplomat.

⁴⁴ League of Nations. Settlement of Armenian Refugees. Extract from the Minutes of the Fourth Meeting of the 45th Session of the Council, held at Geneva on June 16 at 11 a.m. See *National Archives of Hungary*, K78, 43/XIII-7. Original reference number: C.L.10.1927.IV.

⁴⁵ Fifth Assembly of the League of Nations. Transfer of Armenian Refugees to the Caucasus and Creation of an Armenian National Home in that Region. Resolution adopted by the Assembly at its Meeting Held on Thursday, September 25, 1924 (Morning). See *National Archives of Hungary*, K78 43/XIII-7. Original reference number: A.112.1924.VII.

Born in 1861 in Oslo – at that time Christiania – he was a curator at the Bergen Museum, explorer of Greenland, a representative of Norway to London and in 1921, he became the first High Commissioner for Refugees of the League of Nations.⁴⁶ With heart and soul he played a huge role in the organization and preparation of the identity certificates provided for the refugees, of what the name quickly became “Nansen-passports.”

On July 5, 1922 the *Arrangement with Regard to the Issue of Certificates of Identity to Russian Refugees* was adopted on the inter-governmental conference organized by the League. Later, on May 31, 1924 by a multilateral arrangement – which was that time signed by 34 states and up till 1929 by five more states – the validity of these certificates was expanded to the Armenian refugees; thus it was first international treaty regarding the status of the refugees of the Armenian Genocide. On May 12, 1926 an additional arrangement was adopted in which the contracting states agreed to declared the necessity “1) Of regularizing the system of identity certificates for Russian and Armenian refugees; 2) Of determining in a more accurate and complete manner the number and situation of Russian and Armenian refugees in the various countries; [and] 3) Of creating a revolving fund to provide for the cost of the transportation and settlement of refugees.”⁴⁷ These agreements had not yet regularized the legal status of the Russian and Armenian refugees, which was first acknowledged by the *Arrangement Relating to the Legal Status of Russian and Armenian Refugees*. The arrangement attempted to regularize – or at least recommend to the contracting states the regularization of – the personal status of the refugees including divorce, dispensation from restrictive labor regulations, taxation, and so on.⁴⁸

Other than the international arrangements facilitating the transport and integration of the refugees, from many different directions, under the auspices of the League of Nations, humanitarian assistance appeared in favor of the Armenian refugees. In 1924 the Albanian government subscribed to a sum of 1000 Swiss Francs “to the relief work undertaken for the settlement of the Armenian Refugees,”⁴⁹ and even the Japanese government decided to

⁴⁶ For further information regarding his life and activity see: HUNTFORD, Roland: *Nansen – the explorer as hero*. London, 1997.

⁴⁷ *National Archives of Hungary*, K78 43/XIII-8. For additional information see: LEWIS, Corinne: *UNHCR and International Refugee Law*. New York, 2012. 5.

⁴⁸ The details of the arrangements and the Hungarian aspects of them are discussed more precisely below. For additional information see: JAEGER, Gilbert, 2001; LEWIS, Corinne, 2012.

⁴⁹ Scheme for the Permanent Settlement of 50,000 Armenian Refugees. Subscription from the Albanian Government. Note by the Secretary-General. Cf. *National Archives of Hungary*, K78 43/XIII-7. Original reference number: C.649.M.230.1924.XIII.

allocate an aid of 10,000 Yens for relief activities.⁵⁰ In 1927 during its seventh ordinary session the Assembly of the League of Nations decided “that a sum of 15,000 francs be allowed” on behalf the struggles of Nansen’s relief work. On its following session, on September 26, 1927 the Assembly approved “the provisions in the budget for the refugee Service in addition to the supplementary credit of 7.500 Swiss francs for the service for establishing Armenian refugees in Syria.”⁵¹

As we can see a lively humanitarian movement evolved supporting the refugees of the Armenian Genocide. However, the most large-scale and effective efforts, due to financial obstructions were not carried out. Such an attempt was the cultivation of a land in Armenia which could have been capable of absorbing 30,000 Armenian refugees, of which the accomplishment – according to a “Committee of Experts” – needed a loan of one million pounds sterling. As Enrique Villegas put it into words:

“Unfortunately, it had not been found possible to raise that loan. [...] It was of the greatest importance for the prestige of the League that the idea should not get abroad that the League had failed in this work.”⁵²

After the lack of success of the League in many different aspects of the refugee question – intimately in connection the *Armenian Question* – Fridtjof Nansen repeatedly decided to submit his resignation. According to Philip Noel-Baker, a British diplomat and athlete, who knew him personally, Nansen “had a deep respect and admiration for the Armenians; he felt a bitter shame that the many promises made to them by the Western nations had never been fulfilled.”⁵³ In fact, after the refusal of the member states to provide such a loan to the implementation of the “repatriation” of Armenian refugees, on September 26, 1927, on the twentieth meeting of the eighth ordinary session of the Assembly, Nansen held a speech concerning the Armenian refugees:

“When I speak of obligations, I do not mean merely the repeated resolutions of the Assembly urging the establishment of a National Home for the Armenian people; I mean, too, the

⁵⁰ *National Archives of Hungary*, K78 43/XIII-7.

⁵¹ Letter from the Secretary-General to the Hungarian Foreign Ministry. Geneva, November 6, 1927. Cf. *National Archives of Hungary*, K78 43/XIII-7. Original reference number: C.L.154.1927.VIII.

⁵² Cf. *National Archives of Hungary*, K78 43/XIII-7. Original reference number: C.L.10.1927.IV.

⁵³ NOEL-BAKER, Philip: *Nansen's Place in History*. Oslo, 1961. 15.

separate and solemn pledges which were given by the Governments of Western Europe to the Armenian nation during the course of the world war. Do they remember that in the war two hundred thousand Armenian volunteers were killed fighting for the Western Powers? Do they remember that the Armenian nation was almost destroyed? Do they remember that all the Armenian property was taken and confiscated and that the League has not been able to help them to get it back? If they had got it back, the problem of the refugees would not have existed.”⁵⁴

Although there were many difficulties and disagreements concerning the international protection and support of the refugees, without these efforts the situation of the refugees would have been much more hopeless, and they should be considered as the first steps of the development of the international humanitarian movement.

IV. The “Armenian Question” in Hungary, and the Hungarian participation in the international support of the refugees between the two World Wars

After summarizing the historical context of our theme, it is now feasible to demonstrate the Hungarian aspects of the aftermaths of the Armenian Genocide, namely the public and political interpretations of the *Armenian Question* and the Armenian Genocide, and the Hungarian participation in the international support of the Armenian refugees. In this paragraph I will present sources completely unknown in the Hungarian and international historical science concerning the Armenian Genocide and the situation of its survivors in Turkey and in the Diasporas.

The development of the Armenian Question in the Hungarian political and public discourses

As I have stated it above the term “Armenian Question” appeared in the Hungarian public discourse as a fragment of the *Eastern Question* in the last third of the 19th century and its usage intensified with the arrival of the news concerning the Armenian massacres in Ottoman

⁵⁴ League of Nations. Extract from the Minutes of the Twentieth Meeting of the Eighth Ordinary Session of the Assembly (September 26, 1927). Speech by Dr. Nansen. Cf. *National Archives of Hungary*, K78 43/XIII-7. Original reference number: C.L.150.1927.IV. Annex. For further information about Fridtjof Nansen’s activities connected to Armenian and the Armenian refugees see: SARGSYAN, Ararat: Fridtjof Nansen and Armenia. Yerevan, 2008. (in Armenian)

Turkey organized by the administration of Abdul Hamid II. Between 1894 and 1896 an immense number of publications dealt with the “riots in Turkey” and the “Armenian Question,” including the articles of the most widespread and well-sold newspapers and journals, for example the *News Sheets of Budapest* (Budapesti Hírlap), *News Sheets of Pest* (Pesti Hírlap), the *Sunday Journal* (Vasárnapi Újság) or the *Budapest Review* (Budapesti Szemle). On October 27, 1895 the writer of an article in the Sunday Journal titled “The Armenian riots” saw the causes of the massacres in the “non-Christian nations’ distaste for the Christian Armenians, the prosperous location and fertility of the Armenian lands, and its folk.”⁵⁵ Even the famous Hungarian playwright of the period, Ferenc Herczeg in his memoirs commemorated the massacres imparting his own experiences and memories of his visit to Istanbul in 1895, stating the following lines:

“In the morning I was told that last night several thousands of Armenians were massacred in the city. Armed Kurdish bands cruised [the city] with a prior plan, street by street they were carrying out their terrible and shameful acts. [...] [T]here was a storm in the city last night: the occult storm of death.”⁵⁶

The most detailed exposition of the matter was written by Ármin Vámbéry, the Jewish born Hungarian Turkologist who in the galleys of the Budapest Review with the title of *About the Armenian Question* published an elaborate study in 1895. In his article he argued that the “997,369, i.e. almost one million Armenians of the Turkish Empire” are one of the most determinative factors in the Ottoman economic and political life, and have also been an impelling force of the Ottoman literary and cultural development. He saw the origins of the Armenian “separatist movement” – thus the whole *Armenian Question* – in the Russian influence, declaring that “depending upon the conqueror Russian army approaching from the Caucasus, the Armenians expected their liberation and the establishment of an independent Armenia.”⁵⁷

Although the discussion of the *Armenian Question* continued after the Millennium, the outbreak of the First World War, the events of the Armenian Genocide and the refugee flow following it changed the whole sense of the notion. First of all, a significant publishing

⁵⁵ GOPCSA, László: The Armenian Riots. *Vasárnapi Újság*, 42/43 (1895). 709–710. (in Hungarian)

⁵⁶ HERCZEG, Ferenc: *The Gothic House*. Pomáz, 2005. (in Hungarian)

⁵⁷ VÁMBÉRY, Ármin: About the Armenian Question. *Budapesti Szemle*, 1895/222. 321–346. (in Hungarian)

activity concerning the status of the newly founded Armenian Republic evolved in Hungary on the basis of the parallel drawn between the fate of Armenia and Hungary. Regarding the unfolding Turkish-Hungarian relations and the anti-Semitic tendencies of the Hungarian policies the exemplar of the Armenian Genocide appeared as an ethical base of comparison concerning the necessary and morally proper ways of politics, and finally, the case of the Armenian refugees and their international protection appeared in the parliamentary discourse of Hungary as a feedback for the adequate activity of the Foreign Ministry.

First of all, the legal situation of the Armenian Republic and the tragic fate of the Armenians in the Hungarian political discourse arose as a feedback in connection with Hungary's and the Hungarian nation's place in the international diplomatic and legal structure. Several articles of the *Foreign Affairs Review* (*Külügyi Szemle*), the journal of the Hungarian Society for Foreign Affairs – an official institution of the Hungarian Foreign Ministry with the formal purpose of the strengthening of the “friendly intercourse and better understanding with foreign nations”⁵⁸ – took up the question of the legal situation of Armenia, which “has been established as the state of a finally emancipated nation that suffered so much,”⁵⁹ stating among others the following thoughts:

“Regarding the [Turkish] assault, Armenia trusted the League of Nations and expected its support, thus the head of the Armenian delegation, Avetis Aharonián already on the 13th of May and on the 15th of Sept. called for the reception of his country to the League, but [...] meanwhile the Turkish army crossed the border.”⁶⁰

The “betrayal” of Armenia by the League – paralleling with Hungary's plight – became an idiosyncrasy of the discourse about Armenia, arguing that “although the Treaty of Sèvres *de jure* established Armenia, the procrastination rendered feasible by the long dispute over the protectorate made it possible for the Turkish nationalist troops to rescind the resolutions of the Treaty of Sèvres instituting Armenia itself...”⁶¹ The most characteristic way of the phrasing of the conviction about the betrayal of Armenia was put into words by Zoltán Baranyai, the

⁵⁸ Hungarian Society for Foreign Affairs and for the League of Nations. *Külügyi Szemle*, 2/2 (1922). 279.

⁵⁹ HORVÁTH, Jenő: About the colonial mandates. *Külügyi Szemle*. 1/3–4 (1921). 163. (in Hungarian)

⁶⁰ HORVÁTH, Jenő (1921). 163.

⁶¹ LUTTER, János: Admission of particular countries to the League of Nations. *Külügyi Szemle*, 2/2 (1922). 27. (in Hungarian)

Hungarian representative to the League of Nations in connection with the agreement of May 1924, when in a letter to the Foreign Ministry of Hungary he stated the following lines:

“After the Entente entrapped the disastrous Armenian nation to join the anti-Turkish movement, cynically sacrificed it with the Treaty of Lausanne, and now wants to take the responsibility out on the member states.”⁶²

The parallel that was drawn between the Hungarian and the Armenian cases had numerous manifestations, likening the Hungarian population of the neighbouring countries to the “Christians hounded out from Turkey.”⁶³ The idea of this conformity even had an influence on the Prime Minister of Hungary, Pál Teleki, who in his book about the ethnic and territorial disputes in Central Europe drew a parallel between the Hungarian and the Armenian Questions.⁶⁴ János Bud, the Hungarian Minister of Finance in his letter to the Minister of Foreign Affairs of February 5, 1928 also drew a parallel between the two cases stating the followings:

“Probably no other nation but the Hungarian can understand the sufferings of the Armenian refugees banished from their country and deprived of all their properties. On account of the Treaty of Trianon and the violent actions of the neighboring countries hundreds of thousands of Hungarians had to face similar fate...”⁶⁵

In his report on the situation of the Armenian Catholics of Turkey, the Hungarian representative to Istanbul on July 13, 1927 expressed similar thoughts, stating among others the following lines:

⁶² Report of Zoltán Baranyai to the Hungarian Foreign Ministry. Reference number: 296/43. Cf. *National Archives of Hungary*. K107/43/2/a.

⁶³ LUDWIG, Ernő: The Protection of minorities of race, language and religion. *Külügyi Szemle*, 3–4/3–4 (1923–1924). 165. (in Hungarian)

⁶⁴ Regarding the situation of the Hungarians and their situation in the neighboring countries he also expressed his concern about most of the ethnic- and territorial disputes of Europe, stating that “Taking well-known national problems for example, such as Macedonia, Albania, Thrace, or Armenia, I must confess that I have not yet seen any truly scientific proposals advanced for their solution.” TELEKI, Paul: *The Evolution of Hungary and its Place in European History*. New York, 1923. 240.

⁶⁵ Letter from János Bud to Lajos Walko. Reference number: 147.863/1927. I. Cf. *National Archives of Hungary*. K107/43/2/a.

“The consistent pursuit of the Turkish government trying to expel the Christian population out of Asia Minor will soon eliminate the small Armenian Catholic population too. Although §§ 37–45 of the Treaty of Lausanne disposed of the minority rights in Turkey, us, Hungarians know best the value of the regulations of the League of Nations and the ways of their enforcement.”⁶⁶

In 1921 the question arose in the Hungarian foreign policies if Hungary should support the Armenian Republic by the establishment of an Armenian embassy in Budapest or not. Just like in many other aspects of the relations of the newly established Hungarian Foreign Ministry, in the first years of its activities it followed the policies of the Western European states, so in late 1921 an investigation began concerning the relations of France, Italy and Germany to Armenia. The ambassador to Germany reported on January 17, 1922 that “[t]he German government has no relations to the Bolshevik Armenian government. [...] However, the official German perception reckons with the changes concerning the Treaty of Sèvres which would affect the Armenian independence as well.”⁶⁷ The Hungarian representative to Italy stated that “[a]lthough the Italian government de jure recognized Armenia, so far has missed to recognize any Armenian diplomatic representative in Italy as official ambassador, and refused to accept their letters of commission.”⁶⁸ The official Hungarian opinion – that was established on the grounds of these reports – was similar, but yet a bit more nuanced. The Political Office of the Hungarian Foreign Ministry stated that “until the peace between Turkey and the Entente powers is being realized, we consider the recognition of an Armenian consul in Budapest premature,” but envisaged the future establishment of an Armenian embassy.⁶⁹

The fact and the remembrance of the Armenian Genocide appeared as an ethical base of comparison in the Hungarian political discourse first in connection with the progressive Turkish-Hungarian relations. In the early 1920s as the economic relations of the two countries developed, the Turkish economy appeared in the Hungarian public and political discourse as

⁶⁶ The situation of the Armenian Catholics in Turkey. Reference number: 28/pol.1927. Cf. *National Archives of Hungary*. K63/32. (in Hungarian). Gyula Ambróczy, an expert on international law in 1926 in the journal titled *Hungarian Foreign Policy* (Magyar Külpolitika) also emphasized the similarities between the two cases, applying the Anatolian case also as a feedback to the Central European conflicts, stating that “our peace treaty doesn’t even give the amount of rights that the people of the territories detached from Turkey received...” Cf. AMBRÓCZY, Gyula: The right of peoples to self-determination and the peace treaties. *Magyar Külpolitika*, 7/2 (1926). 1–2. (in Hungarian).

⁶⁷ 3236/1921. Cf. *National Archives of Hungary*. K62/12.

⁶⁸ 2/pol. Cf. *National Archives of Hungary*. K62/12.

⁶⁹ 4/pol. Cf. *National Archives of Hungary*. K62/12.

the posthumous economy of the Armenian and Greek population of Anatolia, which holds far-reaching possibilities for the Hungarian investments. As György Istvánffy put it into words in 1924, “Turkey will suffer on account of the expelling of the Greek and Armenian population of the land, since these entities had much higher cultures of industry and commerce, which was for the most parts in their hands.”⁷⁰ The question arose also in the Hungarian parliament on July 24, 1923, where former Prime Minister, that time a right wing oppositionist of the parliament, István Friedrich urged the development of economic relations between Turkey and Hungary arguing that “[i]n the past years about one and a half million Greeks and Armenians left Turkey who owned the whole industry and commerce [of the country]. These abandoned grounds are what we should fill.” In response, from the opposing side, members of the parliament shouted their objections: “Those were massacres of Armenians!”⁷¹

Later, as the Hungarian internal affairs on accounts of the German influence approached the anti-Semitic tendencies of the European policies, in 1938 the Hungarian parliament proclaimed the first “Jewish law,” which restricted the number of persons with Jewish origins in special fields of the economy.⁷² During the dispute over the act, a social democrat member of the parliament János Esztergályos stated in his speech of May 10, 1938 that these kinds of regulations would irreversibly lead to violent confrontations and deportations, as it had already happened to the Armenian nation:

“Another question may arise: are the Jews a national or religious minority? Although I have already set forth this question, at the same time I would strongly recommend to my fellow Catholics [to consider] the followings: do not forget regarding this dispute about the persecutions overtaking Catholic victims. [...] The pretense of the persecution always was the same as of the bill in question, namely that the Catholic Armenian grain was contrary to the Turkish. Let me attract the attention of the members of the parliament to the lawsuit of Thalât bey, during which the attorney said the followings: ‘At the beginning of the World War the Turks gathered together the Armenians like the dogcatcher gathers the dogs and without food or water they propelled them through the desert to unknown destinations. The instruction of the soldiers was to shoot those – women and children too – who could not stand the thirst and exhaustion.’ 40,000 Catholic Armenians were victims of this persecution. I’m talking now to

⁷⁰ ISTVÁNFFY, György: Impressions from Turkey. *Társadalomtudomány*, 4/1 (1924). 66. (in Hungarian)

⁷¹ Record of the National Assembly announced to the June 16, 1922. Vol. XV. Budapest, 1923. 11.

⁷² For a wide contexts see: VASVÁRI, Lousie Olga – ZEPETNEK, Steven de: *Comparative Central European Holocaust studies*. West Lafayette, 2008.

your consciences, this is what rancor can lead to, and it always has no other base than the meanest economic jealousy.”⁷³

In response to the speech of János Esztergályos, those in favor of the “Jewish law,” for example Lajos Schmidt shouted: “But it’s not what we want!” At that point it was impossible to see the horrors of the Holocaust that in the next years followed, and indeed it might not have been what they wanted, but history confirms the words of János Esztergályos: “this is what rancor can lead to.”

Hungarian sources on the Armenian Genocide

As I have mentioned above, one cannot talk about sovereign Hungarian foreign policies before October 1918, while until the establishment of the Hungarian Kingdom in 1920 it had limited potentials in participating in the wider international diplomacy. Hence from the five years between 1915 and 1920 – which was the period of the most intensive rampage of the Armenian Genocide – there are no Hungarian sources regarding the genocide. However, between 1920 and 1923 the consuls and ambassadors of Hungary repeatedly informed the Hungarian Foreign Ministry about the last waves of the massacres, and later, in connection with the Turkish ethnic minority policies, summarized the tragic events of the genocide and the ethnographic changes it resulted in.

The Hungarian consul of Trieste followed with attention the changes of the Turkish policies and military activities, and beginning with early 1922 in his reports to the Hungarian Foreign Ministry he regularly stated his impression on the matter. On March 11, 1922 with the title “Situation in Asia Minor” he stated that “most of the Armenians have been massacred during the war. Those who remain together with the Greek population are being hounded and eradicated by the Kemalists.”⁷⁴ About the siege of Smyrna on October 11, 1922 he reported that “[t]he most of the Armenian and Greek population [of the city] have been murdered by the irregular forces or perished in the conflagration, those who survived escaped, and those who stayed are being deported to central Anatolia...”⁷⁵ A month later he reported that the

⁷³ Record of the Parliament announced to April 27, 1935. Vol. XVIII. Budapest, 1938. 443 (in Hungarian).

⁷⁴ 23/pol./1922. Cf. *National Archives of Hungary*. K63/32.

⁷⁵ 78.pol/1922. Cf. *National Archives of Hungary*. K63/32.

“non-Mussulman Turkish citizens – the so-called ‘raya’ – population of Anatolia has completely disappeared.”⁷⁶

The Hungarian representative to Turkey on July 13, 1927 concerning the situation of the Armenian Catholic population of Turkey reported to Budapest that “during the war as a result of the Armenocide [örménymészárlás] committed by the Young Turks at least 1,000,000 Armenians were murdered.”⁷⁷ Later in March 1928 he reported that “as a result of the Armenocide [örménypusztítás] a reduced number of Armenians now have to live in a completely Muslim environment, amidst hostile people and hostile authorities; ridden by travel restrictions, their number rapidly decreases with the emigration.”⁷⁸

Other than these few reports one may find numerous other direct and indirect documentations of the Armenian Genocide in the Foreign Affairs Archives of the National Archives of Hungary, but according to the above mentioned sources, it is clear that between the two World Wars, Hungary had a perspicacious image drawn by its diplomats about the Armenian Genocide and its survivors, which made the moral base for the participation in the international support and protection of the Armenian Genocide. As Zoltán Baranyai, the Hungarian representative to the League of Nations typified it in one of his reports of July 10, 1924, the support of the Armenian refugees is a “precious and important” task.⁷⁹

The Hungarian participation in the international support of the Armenian refugees

Hungary was admitted to the League of Nations on September 18, 1922, at which point the arrangement considering the identity certificates for the Russian refugees was realized. By 1922 Hungary had already experienced the so-called *dictatorship of the proletariat* that in 1919 introduced the terrors of the Bolshevik regime to Hungary. After the rightist military forces expelled the Bolsheviks from Hungary, in early 1920, the coalition of the conservative and smallholders’ party won the elections, and the Hungarian Monarchy was restored with the election of Admiral Miklós Horthy as the Regent of the Kingdom.⁸⁰ This gave an ideological base for the so-called “white émigré” that after 1917 was forced out of Soviet Russia in virtue of their “social class.” Hungary provided asylum for around 5000 Russian refugees which

⁷⁶ 90. pol./1922. Cf. *National Archives of Hungary*. K63/32.

⁷⁷ 28/pol. 1927. Cf. *National Archives of Hungary*. K63/32.

⁷⁸ 11/pol.1928. Cf. *National Archives of Hungary*. K63/32.

⁷⁹ No. 644/43. Cf. *National Archives of Hungary*. K107, 52/43/2/a

⁸⁰ DEÁK, István: Admiral and regent Miklós Horthy. *The Hungarian Quarterly*, 37/143 (1996). 78–89.

gave the cause for Hungary to sign the arrangement of identity certificates in early 1923, so Hungary became one of the first countries to issue “Nansen-passports.”⁸¹

Regarding the extension of the identity certificates to the Armenian refugees in 1924, I have already presented the official Hungarian opinion, according to which the excruciating plight of the Armenian refugees is the allied powers’ fault, and the support of the refugees is a “precious and important” task of the members of the League. With the Hungarian representative to the League signing the agreement, the registration of the identity certificates for the Armenian refugees had begun in Hungary (Appendix I).⁸² However, parallel to the process of issuing the certificates an unusual legal situation emerged, where the Hungarian authorities adopted the passports of the *de facto* nonexistent Armenian Republic (Appendix II). The very existence of the stamp stating “Armenian” (“örmény”) on these passports issued in 1923 proves that the reception of the Armenian refugees was dealt with certain modesty. Although the agreement of 1924 did not dispose of any recommendations concerning travel discount for the refugees, according to the telegram of Lajos Walko, the Hungarian Minister of Foreign Affairs, the refugees in case of aggregate travel had 50% discounts on the trains.⁸³

The Hungarian diplomacy took part in the preparation of the *Arrangement Relating to the Issue of Identity Certificates to Russian and Armenian Refugees* of 1926 vividly. The principles of the Foreign Minister Lajos Walko phrased in his instructions to Zoltán Baranyai were ahead of their time, dealing with questions even in 1951, during the preconditions of the Refugee Convention were indeed divisive, such as the permission for the refugee to re-enter

⁸¹ For a wider context of the case of the Russian refugees in the Hungarian policies see: HALÁSZ, Iván (ed.): *The Russian “white emigré” in Hungary (1918–1945)*. Budapest – Esztergom, 2011 (in Hungarian); HASSEL, James E.: *Russian refugees in France and the United States between the world wars*. Philadelphia, 1991.

⁸² According to the articles of the agreement, the League “shall not infringe the laws and regulations in force in any State with regard to the control of foreigners. 2. It shall not in any way affect special regulations with regard to persons of Armenian origin. 3. The grant of the certificate does not in any way imply the right for the refugees to return to the State in which he has obtained it without the special authorization of that State. [...] 6. *Travel Visa*. The respective States shall grant travel visas. [...] 7. The text of the certificate shall be in at least two languages; the national language of the authority which issues the certificate and French language in accordance with the provisions made with regard to international passports at the Paris Conference of October 21, 1920.” The certificates had to specify numerous characteristics of the refugee, recording the surname, Christian names, date and place of birth, parents’ names, occupation, former residence, present residence, age, hair, eyes, face, nose and other special particularities of the refugee and a photograph. Cf. “Plan for the issue of a certificate of Identity to Armenian Refugees. Submitted for the Consideration of interested governments” by Dr. Nansen, High Commissioner for Russian Refugees in Execution of the Resolution of the Council of the League, Adopted on September 28, 1923. *National Archives of Hungary*. K78 XIII-7. Original reference number: C.L.173.1924.CXIII. ANNEX I.

⁸³ Telegram of Lajos Walko from Zurich, 10.05.1926. Cf. *National Archives of Hungary*, K107, 53/43/c

the state issuing the identity certificate, or the possible lowest fares for refugees to apply for the certificates. Among others his instructions consisted of the following lines:

“In respect of chapter III.9 it would be necessary for all the refugees, both Russian and Armenian, regardless of his/her arrival, to hold [these] passports. [...] I would consider reasonable an arrangement, which engages the states issuing the “Nansen kind of” passport to re-enter the refugees receiving the certificates to its territory anytime. The facilitation of the relocation of the refugees could only be carried out this way. [...] An unified type / shape, colour, text/ of the passports is not only desirable, but necessary also, for if there are several types, controlling them is undoubtedly harder. [...] Since the most of the refugees are fortuneless, a minimal figure for the fare of the passports should be assessed. It should not transcend the costs of the printed matter and the issuing process.”⁸⁴

Complying with the instructions, Zoltán Baranyai in his speech at the conference in Geneva emphasized the difficult financial conditions of the refugees, which made them unable to pay the suggested contribution of 5 Golden Franks; however, since most of the participants had a different point of view, he abstained from the vote.⁸⁵

According to the third main point of the agreement – creating a revolving fund to provide for the costs of the transportation and settlement of refugees – a fund was established, which in the following three years raised a capital of 300,000 English Pounds.⁸⁶ On the grounds of the second principle of the agreement, a questionnaire was circulated among the member states clarifying the precise situation and number of the Russian and Armenian refugees in Europe. On August 15, 1929 a report that summarized the results of these questionnaires was submitted to the tenth assembly of the League which is a primary source of the history of the European refugees between the two World Wars. On a chart titled “Present State of the Refugee Problems” one may learn of the conditions of 155.346 Armenian refugees living in sixteen European countries. Regarding the “number of refugees

⁸⁴ No. 118.672/1926. Cf. *National Archives of Hungary*, K107 53/43/2/c

⁸⁵ No. 59891/4. Cf. *National Archives of Hungary*, K107 53/43/2/c

⁸⁶ Russian, Armenian, Assyrian, Assyro-Chaldean, and Turkish Refugees. Report to the Tenth Assembly. Cf. *National Archives of Hungary*, K78 XIII-8. Original reference number: A.70.1929.VII.

whose legal and personal status has to be regularised” the smallest figure can be found in Hungary’s bearings, with the number of fifteen.⁸⁷

Following the agreement of 1926, the Hungarian authorities were in cooperation with several Armenian organizations and institutes, for example the Hungarian envoy to Geneva negotiated with Ohannes Essayan, a representative of the Armenians of Greece to the League of Nations in connection with the Armenian properties of Turkey,⁸⁸ and later, in 1929 the Hungarian authorities cooperated with Armenian institutions trying to track down the Armenian clients of the Hungarian insurance companies who had fallen victim to the Armenian Genocide.⁸⁹ In 1928 when the question of the financial contributions of the refugees again arose in connection with the Nansen stamps, the Hungarian Foreign Ministry once again stood up for the refugees declaring that “the Russian and Armenian refugees residing in Hungary are so fortuneless that most of them stand in need of aid...”⁹⁰

A formula that was filled out by the Hungarian Foreign Ministry in 1936 for the Nansen International Office for Refugees incorporates much important information about the long-term conditions of the Russian and Armenian refugees in Hungary. It stated that in Hungary “overall all of the refugees have regular occupations, although they might not be the same as their originals were.” The so-called “Nansen stamps” which had the purpose of the refugees’ contribution – opposed several occasions by the Hungarian diplomacy – were not issued in Hungary, arguing that “the costs that it means would debit the refugees, and due to their modest conditions they could not undertake this burden.”⁹¹

The participation in the international support of the Armenian and other refugees has been a major feedback for the Foreign Ministry in its relations to the government regarding its activities. In 1941, during the parley in the parliament in connection with its budget, a representative of the Foreign Ministry, acknowledging the struggles of the ministry and confirming its condign activities stated the followings:

“The process of integration – settling down, integrate into the labor market – of the foreigners was accomplished with the contribution of the Foreign Ministry. Later the Foreign Ministry

⁸⁷ Russian, Armenian, Assyrian, Assyro-Chaldean, and Turkish Refugees. Report to the Tenth Assembly. Cf. *National Archives of Hungary*, K78 XIII-8. Original reference number: A.70.1929.VII.

⁸⁸ No. 1388/1929. Cf. *National Archives of Hungary*, K107 53/43/2/c

⁸⁹ 53.850/1929.-XVIII. Cf. *National Archives of Hungary*, K107 53/43/2/c

⁹⁰ 20.5201–s.1928. Cf. *National Archives of Hungary*, K107 53/43/2/c

⁹¹ 44.264/10. 1936. Cf. *National Archives of Hungary*, K78 XIII-8.

contributed to the adjustment of the situation of the foreigners residing in Hungary, the Russian, Armenian, Turkish, Polish, etc. refugees.”⁹²

Henceforth I will present the development of the *spyurk* in Hungary, its institutionalization, cultural, economic and communal life.

V. Armenian refugees in Hungary between the Two World Wars

There is no precise data available to define the exact number of the Armenian refugees settling down in Hungary between the two World Wars. In the above mentioned survey of Russian and Armenian refugees the number of identity certificates issued for Armenians in Hungary was 31, but it also stated that only the heads of the families received it, “the wife and children under 18 years have been recorded in the certificates of the head of the family.” Moreover, as the passport of the Armenian Republic proves, not every Armenian refugee necessitated the certificates. Eghia Hovannesian, an Armenian refugee born in Istanbul and settled in Gödöllő, near Budapest – who himself was without a “Nansen-passport” – in his book titled *The People of Armenia* (*Arménia népe*) that was published in 1934 wrote that at that time there were about two thousand Armenians living in Budapest and about five thousand in the country in total. However, this figure is also deceptive, since there was also a great number of Armenians moving to Hungary from the detached territories of Transylvania after the First World War.⁹³ Anyhow, between the two World Wars in Hungary, there was a decisive number of Armenians in Hungary, with an evolving vivid economic and communal life (Appendix III.).

The development of economic strength

The Armenian refugees in Hungary took up their posts in the Hungarian labor market surprisingly easily as they found their jobs mostly in the carpet industry of Budapest. Some of them even decided to settle in Hungary because they heard about the flourishing Armenian carpet industry of Budapest and how profitable it was. Serkis Hrant Rshduni, who was a prominent member of the *spyurk* of Hungary, first heard of the Armenian carpet dealers of

⁹² Record of the Parliament announced to June 10, 1939. Vol. XI. Budapest, 1941. 503 (in Hungarian).

⁹³ HOVANNESIAN, Eghia: *The People of Armenia*. Gödöllő, 1934. (in Hungarian)

Budapest in Romania when he was escaping the pogroms of Istanbul in 1909. His daughter, Biri Rshduni remembered the story what her father told her as follows:

“One day the horrible pogrom started. The Turks sneaked in the Armenian district at night and painted a big cross on the door of the Christians. [...] They simply pushed the owner out of the window. They killed off and mutilated the women and they threw them out onto the streets. My father had to escape, if he wanted to stay alive. He left Turkey in 1909 and he started out for Transylvania because he heard that the Armenian refugees would be admitted. Under the way he met a man who was a carpet dealer and he advised rather to come to Budapest because they could find work here easier. So, they arrived to Hungary together.”⁹⁴

The means of integration to the labor market of the refugees that occurred in Hungary among the Armenian refugees, namely that an ethnic group occupies one specific gap in the host country's economy is a well-known and fully discussed occurrence of sociology. The *enclave hypothesis* in connection with the American Cuban immigrants was procreated by Franklin Wilson and Alejandro Portes in 1980.⁹⁵ According to the thesis, an „enclave” is the society of the immigrants of a specific nationality who operates coordinated undertakings, so that they can ensure their own livelihood under the difficult market circumstances. Later, the theory of *ethnic occupational niching* was formulated in the thoughts of the enclave-hypothesis. According to André Hofmeyr, the ethnic occupational niching is the concentration and specialization of a specific ethnic society in a specific occupation, in a given branch of the economy.⁹⁶ Franklin Wilson is also dealing with this group of questions in one of his essays, however, he does not only consider as possible the ethnic occupational niching in case of ethnic societies, he declares that cultural, historical and religious relations can also produce it.⁹⁷ The ethnic occupational niching can occur by the help of the *social network* of these groups that is able to ensure the necessary and reliable labour. The members of the given

⁹⁴ The interview was taken by Alex Avanesian, vice-chairman of the Armenian Minority Self-Governance of Hungary, and has not yet been published.

⁹⁵ PORTES, Alejandro – SHAFFER, Steven: *Revisiting the Enclave Hypothesis: Miami Twenty-Five Years Later*. New Jersey, 2006. 3–4.

⁹⁶ HOFMEYR, Andre: *Social Networks and Ethic Niches: Econometric Analysis of the Manufacturing Sector in South Africa*. Cape Town, 2008. 1.

⁹⁷ WILSON, Franklin: *Metropolitan Labor Markets and Ethnic Niches: Introduction to a Research Project*. *Center for Demography and Ecology Working Papers*, No. 99-29. Wisconsin, 2001. 3.

group have the special knowledge and experience they usually obtained in their original homeland and are necessary to the specific job.⁹⁸

In the case of the Armenian refugees of Hungary, this knowledge was the preparation and repair of carpets and the knowledge in connection with trading. The social- and ethnic network that is based on solidarity existed very intensively in the community of the Armenian refugees of Hungary between the two World Wars. In the carpet shops of the Armenian families, one could only find Armenian co-workers, who were mainly family members or friends, what clearly fits the designation of the theory of ethnic occupational niching or the enclave hypothesis. The daughter of Serkis Hrant Rsduni described this tie between the members of the Armenian carpet dealers of Budapest as follows:

„Many Armenians were living in the downtown and all of them were carpet dealers, but none of them was envious of the other at any time, but they supported each other.”⁹⁹

The view of that time Budapest was intensively coloured by the many Armenian carpet dealers of the downtown. One could often see Armenians with a carpet on their shoulder walking from their shops to their customers. They had their shops in the most expensive and busy places of the downtown, Rsduni had a shop on the Ferenciek Square, and later in the Kossuth Street, Avetis Tarpinian also had a shop on the Ferenciek Square, later in the Cukor Street. Other Armenian carpet dealers had their shops in the József Street, Régiposta Street, and on the Eskü Square. (Appendix IV.) The son of Avetis Tarpinian, Dikrán Tarpanian remembered these times as follows:

„The Armenian carpet preparation and repair is already history today [...] Those days the many Armenian carpet dealers were dominant dashes of colour of the downtown, each of them was famous of something, one could prepare wonderful carpets, the other could repair the carpet, so well that not even a mark remained, after the repair the carpet looked like a brand-new one.”¹⁰⁰

⁹⁸ HOFMEYR, Andre, 1-2.

⁹⁹ Quotation from the interview mentioned above taken by Alex Avanesian.

¹⁰⁰ The full text of the interview can be read: The story of Avetis Tarpinian. *Diaszpóra* 21. 1/2 (2003). 6-9. (in Hungarian)

These memoirs show us how the ethnic relationship network contributed to the integration of the Armenian refugees into the labour market. Not only did they support each other personally and informally, but already on December 31, 1921 they established a shareholding company, titled the Armenian-Hungarian Shareholding Company with a starting capital of two million Hungarian Crowns. In its regulation, the founders of the company stated the goals of it as “the preparation and support of the Hungarian- and Eastern Armenian youth for developing commercial ties” and the “furtherance of [our] commercial and industrial interests”.¹⁰¹ Researching the documentations of the general assemblies of the company, one may find signs of a rapidly developing enterprise. The starting capital of two million Crowns by 1925 had already grown to one hundred million Hungarian Crowns, in collaboration for example with the weaving mill of Jászberény, with a store on the Bécsi Street in Budapest (Appendix V). The last mention of the company is from 1947, when during the second World War, its management struggled with the reconstruction of the infrastructure of the enterprise that was ruined during the war.¹⁰²

To put it briefly, the integration of the refugees into the labour market was undoubtedly successful already in the first few years of their migration, not as in the case of some other much more numerous spyurk communities – for example of France, or of Canada.¹⁰³

The carpet industry was so profitable that already the second generation of the Hungarian spyurk has grown up as a part of the intellectual- and upper class of the Hungarian society, as most of them were able to go to university or to college. Moreover, in 1925 the Armenian Hungarian Shareholding Company even saved up a capital of ten million Hungarian Crowns for the education of the youth of the Armenians of Hungary in universities abroad.¹⁰⁴

The March 20, 1940 issue of the Hungarian newspaper *Great Budapest* (Nagy Budapest) published an article on the “List of Armenians,” enumerating the Armenian elite of

¹⁰¹ *Regulation of the Armenian-Hungarian Shareholding Company*. Budapest, 1922. (in Hungarian)

¹⁰² The relevant documentation may be found at: *Budapest City Archives*, HU_BFL_VII_2_e_0022702

¹⁰³ The Armenian refugees arriving to Marseilles for a while faced significant difficulties finding their ways in the labor market about which one can find more information in: MANDEL, Maud: *In the Aftermath of Genocide. Armenians and Jews in Twentieth-Century France*. Durham, 2003. About the Armenians of Canada and their integration to the labor market see: KAPRIELIAN – CHURCHILL, Isabel: *Like Our Mountains. A History of Armenians in Canada*. Montreal - Kingston, 2005.

¹⁰⁴ Cf. *Budapest City Archives*, HU_BFL_VII_2_e_0022702. As Eghia Hovannesian stated in his book of 1934, one of the main destination of these student was the Moorat-Rafalenian Collège of the Mechitarist Congregation in Venice.

Hungary. Not less than 142 of the 366 people, whose names were listed, together with their professions, possessed a doctorate. One may learn of forty lawyers, ninety-eight officers of the administration, twenty-eight physicians and pharmacists, fifteen bankers, eighteen teachers, fourteen artists (among them sculptors, musicians, handicraftsmen, authors, and actors), not to mention a number of engineers, military officers, landowners, and merchants.¹⁰⁵ This proves the successful integration strategy of the Armenians, many of whom had arrived in Budapest penniless, with only a little box of belongings.

Internal and intercontinental ties of the spyurk of Hungary

As I have stated it above, the Armenian refugees of Hungary evolved the possible strongest link to each other to maintain their community and indirectly their collective identities too. As in an alien environment they spoke the same language, belonged to the same church and cultural entity, the Armenians arriving to Budapest were not living as absolutely foreigners but as a part of a community. Moreover, not only they had the same national attributes, their reason of fleeing was the same too, namely their Calvary escaping from the genocide, of which the remembrance was so intense and so determinant, that it made them a community of fate that stood the test of time even up till today. This *collective memory*, the segments of memories that are considered as common - as it has been designated by Maurice Halbwachs - joins together every single human community all over the world, and if the memory is so staggering as the memory of the genocide it means a strong community-awareness for a long period of time.¹⁰⁶

As a community with so effective cohesive force, the Armenians could maintain the most dominant fragments of their national identities such as the language or religion and of course, their institutionalized communal life.¹⁰⁷ Although a significant body of Armenian-rite

¹⁰⁵ List of Armenians. *Nagy Budapest*, March 22, 1940. 10. (in Hungarian)

¹⁰⁶ The concept (*mémoire collective*) was procreated by Maurice Halbwachs French sociologist in the 1920's: HALBWACHS, Maurice: *Les cadres sociaux de la mémoire. Les Travaux de L'Année Sociologique*. Paris, 1925.

¹⁰⁷ The story of Alex Avenisian, the vice-chairman of the Armenian Self-Government of Hungary and of his father, Garabed Jambosian shows us a good example for the efforts that the Armenian refugees did in favor of nourishing their ethnic Armenian community in Hungary. Garabed Jambosian, at his six or seven age – not even himself knew exactly how old he was that time – has lost his parents. He probably lived in Baku with his family but after the death of his parents he got into an orphan's home. His uncle was a soldier in the First World War in Europe who admitted the child later and they moved to Budapest together. Just like most of the other Armenians, they also found work in the carpet industry. He grew up in the Armenian community of Budapest, he was speaking Armenian, he belonged to the Armenian congregation, and as an adult he decided to marry an

Catholics had been present in Transylvania, Hungary since 1690,¹⁰⁸ and they had always been registered as an established church on those grounds, the peace treaty of Trianon and the ensuing readjustment of the Hungarian borders annexed all Armenian Catholic Parishes to Romania. During the 1920's, the Armenian community of Hungary spared no time and energy from establishing their own parsonage (1922) and chapel (1924). In 1932, their efforts were rewarded by the Primate-Archbishop's authorization for the Armenian Catholic Parish of Budapest (Appendix VI.). At that time, 290 families applied for membership of the parish, whose secular President was Curial Judge Gyula Simay.¹⁰⁹

To be an institutionalized community of Hungary, on April 18, 1920 the most notable members of the community founded the Association of the Hungarian Armenians. In the regulation of the association, the members declared that the goals of the society would be “to revive and to bestow care upon the Armenian habits and the sense of belonging of the Armenians of Hungary – furthermore, the development and sustain of cultural and economic ties between the Armenians of Hungary, of the East and of the West.”¹¹⁰ In the words of Domokos Korbuly, an officer of the Hungarian Commercial Bank of Pest with Armenian progenitors the association “done valuable informative work by lectures and concerts.”¹¹¹ In reality, the activity of the association done much more extensive work with numerous publications, and cultural programs but the most important function of it was that the Armenian community had an institution that supported their accession in all kinds of ways. The national-, and special Hungarian-Armenian communal- and cultural movement of the refugees were not only played a big role in the internal social life of the community, but they also built up ties with the global Armenian Diasporas and with the fatherland – meaning both

Armenian girl too but not of any kind, he has chosen a girl from the spyurk of Transylvania. In 1942, on the celebration day of Saint Gregory the Illuminator he went to Szamosújvár/Hajakaghak/Armenopolis (Gherla, RO) one of the capitals of the Transylvanian Armenians to choose a suitable wife from the Armenian community there. He married Agavni Manuelian whose family also escaped from the Genocide to Transylvania. The spyurk identity can be characterized well by the fact that, however, many thousands of Armenian girls were living in the Armenian cities in Transylvania he married a spyurk girl anyway, who also was a refugee. They together raised Alex Avanesian who today not only speaks the Western Armenian language of his parents, but learnt Eastern Armenian as well. – The exploration of the story is based on the interviews I made with Alex Avanesian in 2012.

¹⁰⁸ For more detail about the immigration of the Armenians, their union with the Catholic Church, and their ecclesiastic reorganization, see: BERNÁD, Rita - KOVÁCS, Bálint: *The Armenian Catholic Collective Archive of Armenopolis*. Budapest – Leipzig, 2011.

¹⁰⁹ Find more information in: *Regulation of the Armenian Catholic Parish of Budapest*. Budapest, 1937. (in Hungarian)

¹¹⁰ *Regulation of the Association of the Hungarian Armenians*. Budapest, 1920. 3.

¹¹¹ KORBULY Domokos: *The Armenian question in the Hungarian public opinion*. Budapest, 1942. 139. (in Hungarian)

Turkey and Armenia – too, to sustain their community as part of the global Armenian nation. As it was written by Khachig Tololyan about the Armenian Diasporas, „these heterogeneous communities [...] share a commitment to maintain institutionalised, transnational connections and exchanges with other segments of the diaspora and with the homeland: money and political advice, books and newspapers, [...] paintings and films, information and propaganda, priests and party activists are circulating through the Armenian transnation”.¹¹² Although Tololyan stated his thoughts concerning the Armenian Diasporas of today, this was the case regarding the Armenian spyurk between the two World Wars in Hungary as well. The Association of Hungarian Armenians invited many influential and popular members of the global Armenian cultural and religious life, such as Torghom Kaouchaghian, the Armenian patriarch of Jerusalem, Aram Khachaturian composer, Sevak Paruyr poet, Armand Tokatyan opera singer, or William Saroyan writer.¹¹³

Tyler Biggs, Mayank Raturi and Pradeep Srivastava in their article on the ethnic networks wrote as follows: “there are few studies that have rigorously analyzed empirical data on this issue. This is because we rarely have data that allows exploring the significance of information flows and enforcement mechanisms within ethnic groups.”¹¹⁴ In the case of the Armenians of Hungary concerning the ties to “the Armenian transnation” we have such empirical data and it shows a very wide international network of the global Armenian Diasporas. In the archives of the Armenian Catholic Chaplaincy in Budapest one may find dozens of Armenian newspapers from all around the world from the 1920’s and 30’s that were read in Budapest by the members of the spyurk. On the basis of these newspapers, such as the Armenian Mirror-Spectator (USA), Arev (Egypt), Jagadamart (Turkey), Hai Mamul (Romania), Azdak (Lebanon), Armenia (France), Nor or (Greece), and fourteen more Armenian newspapers from all around the world, one can outline a network which connected three continents and twelve countries.¹¹⁵

¹¹² TOLOLYAN, Khachig: Elites and Institutions in the Armenian diaspora’s history. *Diaspora: a Journal of Transnational Studies*. 9/1 (2000). 109.

¹¹³ Find more in AVANESIAN, Alex: *The history of the Armenian Church*. Budapest, 2010. (in Hungarian), or HOVANNESIAN, 1934. 275.

¹¹⁴ BIGGS, Tyler – RATURI, Mayank – SRIVASTAVA, Pradeep: Ethnic networks and access to credit: evidence from the manufacturing sector in Kenya. *Journal of Economic Behavior & Organization*, 2002/49. 474.

¹¹⁵ KOVÁCS, Bálint – PÁL Emese (eds.): *Far Away From Mount Ararat. Armenian Culture in the Carpathian Basin*. Budapest – Leipzig, 2013. 178-179.

As we can see, the Armenians of Hungary between the two World Wars developed a comprehensive institutionalized community both interiorly and internationally, and gained a massive economic strength by which they could finance any ways of their increment.

The picture of the Armenians in the Hungarian press as an indicator of the Armenian-Hungarian relations

Besides the above stated details of the successful integration of the Armenians of Hungary in the 1920's and 30's, the ties that the Armenian refugees were able to develop to the majority of the Hungarian society was something outstandingly successful, and which could be made an example for many European countries of today, since the understanding and researching of minority and majority group relations became one of the most pressing tasks of our time.

The Association of Hungarian Armenians had a consistent policy on deepening the relations with the Hungarians, as it was even declared in its regulation: "Every political activity that opposes the conventional patriotism of the Hungarian Armenians is precluded of the operating range of the association."¹¹⁶ For several occasions they laid great emphasis on charity, for example in 1923 together with the Armenian Hungarian Shareholding Company, they spent 50,000 Crowns on donations¹¹⁷ and later, in 1925 they donated 100 Hungarian Crowns to the National Movement for the Alleviation of Penury.¹¹⁸ On one of their sessions which created a stir in the Hungarian press they declared their patriotic and loyal feelings to Hungary, which was reported in the daily papers of Budapest as follows: "The congress was an organizer assembly to become a stand-alone unit and to proclaim their solid patriotism"¹¹⁹

As I processed the Hungarian press of the 1920's and 1930's I have found several dozens of articles about the Armenians of Hungary, their history, culture and their period cultural and political life in Hungary. The most general picture that was drawn in almost all of the articles about the Armenians was the picture of a patriotic nationality, which is as loyal to Hungary and the Hungarians as no other minority in the country, which is "more Hungarian than the Hungarians" and could be taken examples from by the Hungarians.¹²⁰

¹¹⁶ *Regulation of the Association of Hungarian Armenians*. Budapest, 1920. 2. (in Hungarian).

¹¹⁷ Minutes of the general assembly of 30 April 1923. Df. *Budapest City Archives*, HU_BFL_VII_2_e_0022702

¹¹⁸ Announcement of the Hungarian Telegraphic News Agency (MTI) 12 September 1925.

¹¹⁹ *Pesti Hírlap*, 12 March 1935.

¹²⁰ The thought of the Armenians as „more Hungarian than the Hungarians” appeared in the Armenian folk songs of Transylvania and the Hungarian literature as well.

The articles often drew a parallel between the histories and the fate of the two nations, and they repeatedly laid emphasis on the fraternal coexistence of the two nations. An example for this is the way the Armenians were referred to at the time: the Hungarians of the East.¹²¹ This designation was first used by Professor Antal Hermann ethnologist in his book of 1921 writing the following lines:

“The Armenian nation is worthy of the respect of the Hungarians. The two nations show several interesting analogies. The Armenians might be called the Hungarians of the East, and the Hungarians the Armenians of the West. Both nations were struggling between alien people for centuries to achieve freedom and independency, to maintain their civilization and Christianity. Both of them in times of crisis were fragmented into three parts and languished under the tyranny of alien rulers. Through the World War both of them obtained their independency at the cost of so much blood loss (in Hungary a tragic shrinkage) that it almost resulted their final exhaustion.”¹²²

We shouldn't forget that it was written in a time when Hungary was just divided into five parts, lost the two-third of its territory and population and had a real adversary relationship with most of its neighbouring states and its minorities. In the 1920s and 30s the closer the Second World War have gotten the Hungarian press started to paint a more and more condemnatory picture about its minorities especially the Jewish people. It seems that one of the only exceptions was the Armenian community, since the press between the two World Wars wrote about them in a amicable tone of voice, just as we can see in the following quotation from the daily paper called *Illustrated Chronicle* (Képes Krónika) from September, 1931:

“The Hungarian-like emotions, spirit and nature of the Armenians haven't changed a bit. They steadfastly insist on their Hungarian identity. They are so intransigent Hungarians that the so called pure race Hungarians should take examples of them.”¹²³

¹²¹ Another example for this awareness of the common fate could be the postcard of the 1920's showing the historical territories of the two countries and the losses of territories throughout the centuries publicized by the Lepsius-association in 1920.

¹²² HERRMANN Antal: A forgotten folk. In: ÁVEDIK Félix – HERRMANN Antal – HOVANNESIAN Eghia: *The Armenians*. Budapest, 1921. 3. (in Hungarian)

¹²³ FELEY Bertalan: Szamosujvár, an Armenian “metropolis ” in its fade. *Képes Krónika*, 13 (1931) 37. 33. (in Hungarian)

Several papers and magazines signified the gratitude that the Hungarian society felt toward the Armenians of Hungary for the two and a half centuries long common work and struggle for the “reviving of Hungary.”¹²⁴ In this way the Armenians were called “the always immolator ethnicity”¹²⁵ that “shoulder to shoulder pegs away at the reviving of our home.”¹²⁶ In the Sunday special of the daily called *News-sheet of Pest* (Pesti Hírlap) on the 26th of July, 1936 Mária Salgó wrote the following about the common Hungarian-Armenian faith:

“Their faith became one - Hungarian faith, Transylvanian Hungarian faith. [...] They share the Hungarian heart and spirit as they live with us.”¹²⁷

We can even find an article about the Armenian ways of life in a magazine for the youth called *Youth and Life* (Ifjúság és Élet) where it is written that “this nation is industrious, excellent merchant and craftsman, ethical and god-fearing” About their external appearances it was stated as follows: “all of them has beautiful long lashes, big black eyes and rich black hair. The eyebrows of the men are bushy, and frequently coalesced, their skin is brown, the women’s is a bit pale but bright and smooth.”¹²⁸ Concerning the same topic in 1931 Bertalan Feley wrote as follows:

“Instead of wearing silk and velvet, the Armenian women are wearing clothes made out of simple fabrics, and there is no sign of jewelry. The Armenian-type can be well-seen in our photographs, such as thick black hair, wide nose, overgrown eyebrows, swollen lips and big ears. These last ones are undoubtedly the sings of wisdom.”¹²⁹

If one would ask the question “was there any political motivations behind these articles”, there could be only one response: if there was any political reasons for writing all these separated articles, that could only be that Hungary at that time had more than three million

¹²⁴ Görögkatholikus Tudósító, 01.14.1923; Képes Krónika, 13.09.1931; Pesti Hírlap, 12.03.1935; Pesti Napló, 12.03.1935; Magyarország, 12.03.1935; Pesti Hírlap Vasárnapja, 26.07.1936; Az Apostol, 23.02.1940; Városok Lapja, 01.02.1941; etc.

¹²⁵ PESTA Elemér: Szamosujvár. *Városok Lapja*, 1/3 (1943). 27. (in Hungarian)

¹²⁶ GLATZ Károlyné: The Armenians of Transylvania. *Ifjúság és Élet*, 25 May 1929. 364. (in Hungarian)

¹²⁷ SZÜCS SALGÓ Mária: In the wake of Armenians. *Pesti Hírlap Vasárnapja*. 26 July 1936. 32. (in Hungarian)

¹²⁸ GLATZ Károlyné, 1929. 364. (in Hungarian)

¹²⁹ FELEY Bertalan, 1931. 34. (in Hungarian)

Hungarians living in the bordering states as a consequence of the peace treaties after the First World War, and had a policy of territorial revisions. As thousands of Hungarian speaking Armenians were living in the detached territories of Transylvania, it could have been another reason, another legal ground from claiming these territories, this way it could have been a basis for an artificially made pleasant atmosphere – but all of this is only conspiracy, it has no sources to rely on and since these magazines, newspapers and journals were without any form of connection¹³⁰ and taking the contexts of these articles into account, it can be asserted that their statements were candid expressions of the authors.

Since the topic of this chapter is about the Hungarian-Armenian relations, it is necessary to show the Armenian side of this relationship as well, by a quotation of Félix Ávedik, who that time was the chairman of the Hungarian Criminal Court, president of the Association of the Hungarian Armenians and head of the Armenian-Hungarian Trading Shareholding Company:

“This completely newcomer ethnic group always kept a friendly, moreover a fraternal relationship with the Hungarians, without any signs of factious symptoms ever occurring! [...] It took part in the calamity of Hungarians as well as in fortunate times. It placed its life and wealth on the sacrificial shrine of the Hungarian home, in exchange for the love and friendly welcome that the Hungarian nation shared with their fathers afflicted by misfortune when they moved in [to Hungary], and for the cousinly identity that their mental sameness inducted: the love of freedom, patriotism, endeavour to maintain their independence and the constant, tenacious affection for their ancient traditions!”¹³¹

VI. Conclusions

This article has surveyed the dreadful history of the Armenian Genocide and of its survivors; and presented the relations between the sovereign Hungarian state, the genocide and its aftermath between the two World Wars. It presented sources completely unknown in historical science, incorporating documents, what should be considered as important fragments of the history of the Hungarian foreign policies between the two World Wars, the development of international refugee rights, and of the Armenian Genocide too.

¹³⁰ One may find a youth-magazine, a Greek-Catholic journal, different newspapers, and even a magazine dedicated to the histories of Hungarian cities, etc.

¹³¹ ÁVEDIK Félix: *The historical role of the Hungarian Armenians*. Budapest, 1920. 3. (in Hungarian)

The *Armenian Question* – the issue of the Armenian refugees and the historical consequences of the Armenian Genocide – manifested itself in Hungary by the reception of Armenian refugees, the participation in the international support of the refugees, and the interpretations of the genocide, which eventually appeared as a main factor in the Hungarian political discourses in connection with the Turkish-Hungarian relations and the “Jewish laws” preceding the Holocaust in Hungary.

As it was shown above, the Armenians settling down in Hungary not only found an asylum but could also establish a flourishing economic life, whose profits ensured the progress of their own communal lives. By the profits of the carpet industry of Budapest and the Armenian Hungarian Shareholding Company, the second generation of the *spyurk* could become a solid part of the upper class of the Hungarian society. The Hungarian participation in the international movement in favor of the refugees in the 1920s was certainly vivid, and through the activities of Zoltán Baranyai and the Foreign Ministry of Hungary, another stronghold for the support of the Armenian refugees appeared on the European diplomatic stage. The Hungarian diplomats shared a foretold, an indeed modern way of thinking concerning the refugee question, struggling for the assurance of the refugees the right to return to the states issuing their identity certificates, and for the possible lowest fares of the certificates. The interpretation of the Armenian Genocide in the Hungarian political discourse provides an example for the importance of the recognition of historical facts like the Armenian Genocide, since its example has provided, and could continue to provide in the future, a pillar for those who struggle against exclusionary policies.

Appendices

M. kir. Belügyminister.
Ministre roy. hong. de l'Intérieur.

A kiállító hatóság megnevezése:
Autorité, qui délivre le certificat

Szám: 25555/930
No: 11.

Személyazonossági igazolvány
Certificat d'identité
(Ütlevélpótló okmány)
(Document remplaçant le passeport)

Érvényes: 1931. szeptember 13.
Valable jusqu' 13. septembre 1931. -ig

Ez az igazolvány az az állampolgár területére való visszatérésre csak abban az esetben ad jogot, ha a visszatérésre szól engedélyt az okmányra kifejezetten rávezették. Érvényét veszti az igazolvány, ha tulajdonosa Országunk határát átlen: 1931. szeptember 13.

Le présent certificat n'est pas valable pour le retour dans le pays, qu'il a été délivré dans une mention spéciale inscrite sur le passeport, document qui cessera d'être valable si le porteur pénètre, à un moment quelconque, en Russie.

Szülői név: Sziródian
Nom de famille: Sziródian
Keresztnév: Fackan
Prénoms: Fackan
Születési év, hó és nap: 1936. 7. 2.
Date de naissance: 1936. 7. 2.
Születési hely: Fics
Lieu de naissance: Fics
Az atya családi neve: Sziródian
Nom de famille du père: Sziródian
Az anyja családi neve: Chorogian
Nom de famille de la mère: Chorogian
Dátum szarmazása, más állampolgárságot nem veszti
Date d'origine, n'étant acquies qu'une autre nationalité
Foglalkozás: szövőgyáros
Profession: tündérművész
Utolsó lakhelye Országunkban: Sziródian
Ancien domicile en Russie: Kismatani napely
Jelenlegi lakóhely: Budapest
Résidence actuelle: Budapest
A vele élő felelős és kiskorú családtagok nev
Nom de sa femme vivant avec lui ainsi que les nom
enfants mineurs.

Személyleírás:
Signalement

Életkor: 44.
Age: 44.
Haj: barna - bruno
Cheveux: barna - bruno
Szem: barna - bruno
Yeux: barna - bruno
Arc: keskeny - long
Visage: keskeny - long
Orr: széles - régulier
Né: széles - régulier
Különös ismertető jelek:
Signes particuliers

Megjegyzés:
Observations

A kiállító hatóság aláírása:
Signature de l'Autorité

A tudományos aláírás:
Signature de l'Expert

Aláírt igazolom, hogy a fénykép és aláírása a tulajdonos fényképe és aláírása.
Le soussigné certifie que la photographie et la signature ci-dessous sont bien celles du porteur du présent document.

A kiállító hatóság aláírása:
Signature de l'Autorité

Ez az igazolvány az 1922. évi július hó 3. - 5. -
Helyi és országos hatóságok képviselőinek részéről
Ce certificat est délivré conformément à la résolution du
Commissaire pour les Hongrois Russes, à Gdansk, le 3. - 5. - juillet 1922.

Dr. Nansen népszavazásról ítéltetett által Gdansk egy be-
vezetői hatóság megállapodásának megfelelően
soit autorisé à entrer en Russie conformément à la convention
conclue entre le Comité international pour l'Europe et la
Russie, le 3. - 5. - juillet 1922.

M. kir. Belügyminister.
Ministre roy. hong. de l'Intérieur.

Appendix I. A “Nansen-passport” issued in Budapest for an Armenian refugee, from the private collection of Zaven Simon.



Appendix III. Picture of Armenians in Budapest around 1919, from the private collection of Zaven Simon.



Appendix IV. The name plate of Serkis Hrant Rsduni, stating that “repairer of the antique carpets of the Hungarian National Museum”, from the private collection of Zaven Simon.



Appendix V. A stock of the Armenian Hungarian Shareholding Company, from the private collection of Zaven Simon.



Appendix VI. Picture of the building of the Armenian Catholic Parish of Budapest, in the Orlay Streets of Budapest, from the private collection of Zaven Simon.

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