

ARMENIAN POLITICAL THINKING
IN THE SECOND CONSTITUTIONAL PERIOD:
THE CASE OF KRIKOR ZOHRAB

by

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Title: Armenian Political Thinking in the Second Constitutional Period:
The Case of Krikor Zohrab

This thesis aims to examine the attitude of the Ottoman Armenian society and its political elites towards the idea of Ottomanism and Constitutional Regime in the Second Constitutional Period, in which an atmosphere of political pluralism was experienced first time in the Ottoman Empire. While studying the late Ottoman period, the dominant nationalist historiography in Turkey puts forward the Ottoman Armenians as a monolithic entity organized around a certain political engagement; namely, as the absolute supporters of Armenian independence and separation from the Ottoman State. In this thesis, accepting beforehand that there were groups, individuals, in a nutshell voices among the Ottoman Armenians supporting different world views, it is intended to avoid essentialist generalisations while re-constructing the mentioned period, and to examine how were these voices depicted. In this respect, programs and declarations of different political parties representing the Armenian community, such as Tashnak and Hnchag parties, is examined, and it is observed that these groups expressed several occasions their devotion to the Ottoman State and the Constitutional Regime on condition that some certain socio-political priorities were guarded by the constitutional governments. The policy of Ottomanism was approved as a protective umbrella by the political movements and political elites, such as Krikor Zohrab expressing such a devotion. Zohrab (1861-1915), the author and the lawyer, who was elected as the deputy of İstanbul three times, worked for an Ottomanism more liberal, pluralist, and peaceful on the basis of a symbiosis of different ethnic groups. He became one of the most active deputies in the Ottoman Parliament with his efforts and rhetorical talent, and spent his political energy to lead the Tashnak Party –which he was politically very close– to a political cooperation with the Committee of Union and Progress, leading political power of the period. It is undoubtedly very clear that there were some Armenian people or groups which were not sharing the attitude explained above. But, the aim of this thesis is to open a passageway to a historiography far from essentialism, hasty and nasty generalisations, and reductionism, by revealing that there were Ottoman Armenians who imagine their future as citizens of a more prosperous, peaceful, libertarian Ottoman State.

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Başlık: İkinci Meşrutiyet Döneminde Ermeni Siyasi Düşüncesi:
Krikor Zohrab Örneği

Bu tez, Osmanlı İmparatorluğu'nda siyasi çoğulculuk ortamının ilk kez tecrübe edildiği İkinci Meşrutiyet Dönemi'nde, Osmanlı Ermeni toplumunun ve onun siyasi seçkinlerinin Osmanlılık fikrine ve Meşrutiyet'e karşı olan tavrını incelemek amacıyla, Türkiye'deki hâkim milliyetçi tarihyazını geç Osmanlı dönemini incelerken Osmanlı Ermenilerini tek bir siyasi amaç çevresinde yekvücut olmuş, mutlak bir şekilde bağımsızlık ve Osmanlı Devleti'nden ayrılma yanlısı bir siyasi bütün olarak sunar. Bu tezde, Osmanlı Ermenileri içerisinde farklı görüşte grupların, bireylerin, kısacası farklı seslerin var olduğu ön-kabulünden yola çıkılarak, anılan dönemi yeniden kurgularken özcü bir bakış açısından, genellemelerden kaçınılmış, bu farklı seslerin hangi şekillerde dile getirildiğinin izi sürülmeye çalışılmıştır. Bu amaçla, Osmanlı Ermenilerini temsil eden çeşitli görüşlerden siyasi partilerin, sözgelimi Taşnak ve Hınçak partilerinin siyasi program ve bildirimleri incelenmiş, bu grupların bellibaşlı bazı toplumsal-siyasi önceliklerin hükümetler tarafından gözetilmesi koşuluyla Osmanlı Devleti'ne ve meşruti rejime bağlılıklarını çeşitli defalar dile getirdikleri ve bu uğurda çalışmaları yürüttükleri gözlenmiştir. Osmanlılık siyaseti, bu türden bir bağlılığı dillendiren siyasi hareketler ve Krikor Zohrab gibi seçkinler için koruyucu bir şemsiye olarak kabul görür. Meşrutiyet döneminde üç kez İstanbul mebusu seçilen yazar ve hukukçu Zohrab (1861-1915) 1915 Tehciri gerçekleştirilene dek liberal, çok sesli, farklı etnik unsurların bir arada yaşamaları temeli üzerinde yükselen bir Osmanlıcılığın savunuculuğunu yapmış, çeşitli konularda yürüttüğü çalışmalar ve belagatli hitabetiyle Meclis-i Mebusan'ın en faal mebuslarından biri olmuş, enerjisini siyaseten yakın durduğu Taşnak Partisi'nin dönemin güçlü teşkilatı İttihat ve Terakki Cemiyeti'yle ortak siyasetler geliştirmesi için kullanmıştır. Osmanlılık siyaseti temelinde bu tavrı paylaşmayan Ermeni kişi ve grupların da var olduğu tartışılmaz bir gerçektir. Ancak bu tezde amaçlanan, gelecek tahayyüllerini daha müreffeh, barışçı, özgürlükçü bir Osmanlı Devleti'nin vatandaşları olmak temelinde şekillendiren Osmanlı Ermenilerinin de varlığını göstererek özcülükten, aceleci ve kaba genellemelerden ve indirgemecilikten uzak bir tarihyazımının kapısını aralamaktır.

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Introduction

Today, the “Armenian Question” is an over-loaded historical/political issue. As a result of struggling nationalisms, the “sides” of the debate often tend to present a “selective history”¹ which either ignores or distorts the historical facts, and which often fall in anachronisms in order to strengthen their views. In fact, these sides are obsessed with proving the justification of an established Armenian or Turkish attitude. Consequently, the field of examination is full of reductionist studies either describing Turks as murderers or Armenians as traitors. Lacking the necessary feeling of empathy and ignoring the pains or the priorities of the other side, these attitudes convert the discussion into a dialogue of the deaf. Further research and analysis of the historical events of the different periods in Armenian-Turkish relations may provide us with important evidence to see that the picture is not solely black and white as those historical reductionist, essentialist, nationalist perspectives have painted. On the contrary, there are various colors, contrasts, or shades which offer us deeper images.

Traditional Turkish historiography usually regards the Armenian political activities during the Hamidian era as a direct consequence of imperialist interference in the Ottoman territory aiming to weaken the centralist state by creating unrest. According to these accounts, the imperial powers of the time masterfully utilized the Armenians, who had been living in peace and harmony in the Ottoman lands in the arms of their neighbor people, and who had been known as the “faithful nation” (*millet-i sadıka*) because of their loyalty to the Ottoman state. In order to challenge

¹ Stefanos Yerasimos, *Birinci Dünya Savaşı ve Ermeni Sorunu*, (Ankara: Türkiye Bilimler Akademisi Forumu, 2002), p. 6.

the territorial integrity and the survival of the Ottoman state and with the aim of creating an independent Armenia in the eastern *vilayets* (provinces), the imperial powers pushed these Armenians to establish secret organizations, which armed the Armenian people in line with the terror tactics they had adopted.

Though the assumptions of these formulations are true to some extent on the basis of the imperialist projects, they insistently ignore the real problems of the Ottoman Armenians, especially the rural Armenian communities. As Vincent Lima points out, the Armenian revolutionaries “generally hoped that a certain amount of self-reliance combined with European support would lead to fundamental improvements in the lot of Armenians, just as this combination had worked for the Christian peoples in the west of the Empire.”² However, although some Armenian revolutionaries fought for an independent Armenia in the eastern *vilayets*, most of them struggled against Hamidian despotism, which created unbearable conditions for the most of the Armenian population. Additionally, as is known, especially after the 1890s, some Armenian organizations cooperated with other revolutionary organizations, such as the Young Turks, in order to overthrow the Sultan and create a constitutional rule. These cooperations forced them to transform their main principles, and even those who had aimed the formation of an independent Armenia declared their respect for the territorial integrity of the Ottoman state after the Young Turk Revolution of 1908.

² Vincent Lima, “The Evolving Goals and Strategies of the Armenian Revolutionary Federation, 1890-1925,” *Armenian Review*, 1991, vol. 44, no 2/174, p. vii; See for instance, *Kaghvadzknner Hay. Hegh. Tashnaktsutian Yerrort Enthanur Joghovi Adrenakrutunneren* (Collection of Third General Congress of Armenian Rev. Federation), (Geneva: Tashnaktsutian, 1905), pp. 8-9, 13-18. Especially under the heading of “Propaganda in Europe” the Party discussed to publish English and German journals in Britain, Germany, and Austria.

For instance, as far as the transformation of the Armenian Revolutionary Federation (*Tashnaktsutiun*) is concerned, in the second part of the 1890s the party became increasingly uneasy about the imperialist western projects on Eastern Anatolia³ and sought for a more reliable relationship with the western leftist movements. The publication of the well-known periodical *Pro-Armenia* under the leadership of Jean Jaures with the help of some important leftist European intellectuals in Paris is a direct consequence of this relationship.⁴ Thus, starting with the second half of the 1890s Tashnaktsutiun searched for a common base for co-operation with other Ottoman revolutionary groups, and especially with the Young Turks, but these contacts remained fruitless. The main reasons for this bottleneck were Tashnaktsutiun's insistence on European intervention and revolutionary methods, which were unacceptable for the Young Turks under the leadership of Ahmet Rıza.⁵ It was the decisions of Tashnaktsutiun's 1907 Congress that opened the way of this co-operation. In the congress, Tashnaktsutiun made a radical turn and re-designed its aims on Ottoman Armenia: "Political and social freedom, based on a local autonomy and federative ties, *within the boundaries of a democratic Ottoman*

³ Hratch Dasnabedian, "The A.R.F. Record: The Balance Sheet of Ninety Years" *Armenian Review*, vol. 34, June 1981, p. 117.

⁴ Madeleine Reberieux, "Jean Jaures and the Armenians," *Armenian Review*, 1991, vol. 44, pp. 1-11. In its Third Congress Tashnaktsutiun expressed its gratitude to the editorship of *Pro-Armenia*; see, *Kaghvadzknner Hay. Hegh. Tashnaktsutian Yerrorrt Enthanur Joghovi Adrenakrutiunneren* (Collection of Third General Congress of Armenian Rev. Federation), pp. 5-6.

⁵ *Rapport présenté au Congrès Socialiste International de Copenhage par le parti Arménien Daschnaktzoutioun, Turquie-Caucase-Perse*, (Geneve, 1910), p. 12; M. Şükrü Hanioglu, *Preparation for a Revolution: The Young Turks, 1902-1908* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2001), pp. 191-197; Lima, p. viii; Dikran Mesrob Kaligian, *The Armenian Revolutionary Federation Under Ottoman Constitutional Rule, 1908-1914*, (unpublished PhD dissertation presented to Boston College the Graduate School of Arts and Sciences Department of History, 2003), p. 2; Arsen Avagyan, "İttihat ve Terakki Cemiyeti ile Ermeni Siyasi Partileri Arasındaki İlişkiler," in *Ermeniler ve İttihat ve Terakki*, (İstanbul: Aras, 2005), p. 15.

state, in which all elections take place on the basis of a general, equal, direct, secret, and proportional suffrage, without discrimination by race, religion, or gender.”⁶

The cooperative approach of the Armenian political organizations towards other opposing groups in their struggle against despotism and the extent to which they transformed their principles are generally ignored by the mainstream Turkish historiography. Especially after the Young Turk Revolution all of the Armenian political organizations in the Empire declared their devotion to the new regime, and ceased to pursue an armed struggle. In that sense, they were transformed into legal political parties.

For instance, one of the most important Turkish historians of Armenian-Turkish history with his proficiency in Armenian, Esat Uras writes that:

After the proclamation of constitutional rule on 23 July 1908, there was *an artificial silence* in the [Armenian] committee activities. The leaders of the committees declared in their written statements and speeches that they would only work for the defense of the constitutional rule by transforming their activities into a legal and legitimate form. ...The committees which were showing such a sincere façade to the government, while the excitement of the first days were fading, *slowly initiated their previous activities*, benefiting both from the weakness of the government and the *permissiveness of the circumstances*.⁷

Another scholar in the area, Kâmuran Gürün who has written a detailed history of the Armenian Question never mentions the legalization process of the Armenian

⁶ *Haidakir 1907* (Program 1907), (Geneva: Publication of Troshag, 1907), p. 17; (The emphases are mine).

⁷ Esat Uras, *Tarihte Ermeniler ve Ermeni Meselesi*, (Ankara: Türkiye Matbaacılık, 1950), pp. 581-582; “23 Temmuz 1908 meşrutiyetinin ilânından sonra [Ermeni] komite faaliyetlerinde bir müddet *zahiri bir sükûn* görüldü. Komite rüesası, beyannameler, nutuklarla faaliyetlerini sırf kanunî ve meşru bir şekle çevirerek meşrutiyetin müdafaasına çalışacaklarını ilân ettiler. (...) Hükümete böyle samimi bir cephe gösteren komiteler, ilk günlerin heyecanı geçerken bir taraftan da hükümetin zâfindan, *vaziyetin müsadelerinden istifade ederek yavaş yavaş eski faaliyetlerine geçtiler*.” (The emphases are mine).

parties and presents them only as terrorist organizations that aimed to create an independent Armenia. While examining the constitutional period – which is very important to understand the evolution of the revolutionary Armenian organizations into legal political parties – he ignores such transformations and relationships between Armenian and other Ottoman political parties and only examines the Adana event of April 1909 and the negotiation process of the 1914 Reform Agreement for the Eastern *vilayets* from a perspective as if these were the steps to create an independent Armenian state. It is clear that, by doing this he tries to convince the reader that in the second constitutional period Armenian political organizations aiming only preparations of their independent national state through terror tactics – i.e. Adana event – and international diplomacy – i.e. 1914 Reform Agreement. Such a narrative, neglecting the general Armenian affection to the constitutional rule, and searches of a peaceful solution to the ethnic conflicts between Armenian and Muslim communities arousing mostly from land and public security questions in the east, serves only for a would-be justification of the massacres of 1915.⁸

Yılmaz Öztuna, who published an article examining the political environment that the Armenian Question in a collection under the name of *Osmanlı'nın Son Döneminde Ermeniler* (The Armenians in the Last Period of the Ottoman [State]) takes up the question with the Ottoman-Russian War of 1877-1878 and never refers to any sort of unrest before that date. The idea, which Öztuna shares, that the Armenians were living in peace before the imperialist intervention is very typical of

⁸ Kâmuran Gürün, *Ermeni Dosyası*, (Ankara: Türk Tarih Kurumu, 1983), pp. 176-192.

the defensive position and also very influential. Regarding the 61st article of the Berlin Agreement,⁹ Öztuna writes that:

Such a vast geography, in which the population was settled sparsely, living in tribal communities in the villages, in which important cities were rare, it was impossible to initiate a reform in favor of the minority even if the Ottomans wanted it. It would end up making the Armenians and Muslims adversaries. In fact, it happened as a result. Although the Armenians, like all other non-Muslim minorities, had good relations with the Muslim majority until that time, grudges and hatred would appear between them. Then, what did the Western states, which were pushing for such a reform, want?¹⁰

The only reference to the political developments in the constitutional period in Öztuna's article regards the constitutional rule as a "euphoria of democracy" (*demokrasi furyası*): "It was like all the bans were removed, such that, the Tashnaktsutun and the Hnchagian societies, which were Armenian *terrorist organizations*, opened new branches in many cities of the empire with legal signboards. They turned their buildings into stores of guns and ammunition."¹¹

⁹ The 61st article of Treaty of Berlin was coercing the Ottoman empire to make reforms in the "Armenian *vilayets*"; this article later become the base for internationalisation of the reform issue: "Article 61: The Sublime Porte undertakes to carry out, without further delay, the improvements and reforms demanded by local requirements in the provinces inhabited by the Armenians, and to guarantee their security against the Circassians and Kurds. It will periodically make known the steps taken to this effect to the powers, who will superintend their application." (61. madde: ...Babiâli, ahâlisi Ermeni bulunan eyalâtta ihtiyacât-ı mahalliyenin icab ettiği islâhâtı bilâ-tehîr icra ve Ermenilerin Çerkes ve Kürtlere karşı huzur ve emniyetlerini temin etmeye taahhüt eder ve ara sıra bu babda ittihaz olacak tedâbiri devletlere tebliğ edeceğinden, düvel-i müşarünileyhin, tedâbir-i mezkûrenin icrasına nezâret eyleyeceklerdir." *Berlin Kongresi*, İstanbul, 1298 [1882], p. 282; cited in Ali Karaca, *Anadolu Islahâtı ve Ahmet Şâkir Paşa (1839-1899)*, (İstanbul: Eren, 1993), p. 37.)

¹⁰ Yılmaz Öztuna, "Ermeni Sorununun Oluştığı Siyasal Ortam," in Türkaya Ataöv (ed.), *Osmanlı'nın Son Döneminde Ermeniler*, (Ankara: TBMM Kültür, Sanat ve Yayın Kurulu Başkanlığı, 2002), pp. 47-48; "Böylesine geniş, seyrek nüfusla iskân edilmiş, halkın aşiret halinde ve köylerde yaşadığı, önemli şehirlerin az bulunduğu bir coğrafyada, bir azınlık lehine reforma kalkışmak, Osmanlı istese bile mümkün değildi. Ermeniler'le Müslümanları karşı karşıya getirmekle sonuçlanırdı, nitekim öyle oldu. *O zamana kadar diğer gayri-Müslim azınlıklar gibi Ermeniler de, mutlaka, çoğunluktaki Müslümanlar'la iyi ilişkiler halinde yaşadıkları halde*, aralarına kin ve münaferet girecekti. O halde, böylesine bir reform için direnen Batı devletleri ne istiyorlardı?"

¹¹ Öztuna, p. 57; "Bütün yasaklar kalkmış gibiydi. Öyle ki, Ermeni *terör örgütleri* olan Hınçak ve Taşnak cemiyetleri, imparatorluğun pek çok şehrinde resmen tabelaları ile şubeler açtılar. Binalarını silah ve cephane deposu haline getirdiler." (The emphases are mine).

Contrary to the view which Öztuna shares, contemporary international literature on the issue clearly displays that the emergence of the “Armenian Question” was considerably earlier than its appearance in the international diplomacy in the last quarter of the nineteenth century after the interventions of European powerful states. The emergence of the question can be formulized roughly under different phases: First, in the 1830s the Ottoman central state “re-conquered” its eastern *vilayets* in order to dismantle the Kurdish emirates experiencing a strong autonomy, and settle down the nomadic Kurds; second, the Tanzimat reforms after 1839 which aimed at reaching a top point in the modernization process started earlier usually created a strong fiscal pressure especially for the non-Muslims of the eastern *vilayets* because of the double taxation, coming from centralist state and the Kurdish tribes; third, the migration of hundreds of thousands of Muslims into Anatolia escaping from Russian oppression, started with the Crimean War in 1854-56 and continued for decades. This exacerbated the land problems between Muslim and non-Muslim communities.¹²

The emergence of the Armenian political parties and their transformation into legal parties after the Young Turk Revolution of 1908 was one of the most important phases of the Armenian Question and the Armenian-Turkish relationship. Today, as seen in the instances above, most of the scholars in Turkey –focusing mainly on the justification of the massacres and deportations of 1915– look at the historical events and knowledge at hand from a perspective, mostly influenced or “damaged” by the 1915 events, and they ignore the incredible changes that the Armenian political

¹² Hans-Lukas Kieser, *İskalanmış Barış, Doğu Vilayetlerinde Misyonerlik, Etnik Kimlik ve Devlet 1839-1938*, (İstanbul: İletişim, 2005), pp. 25-40.

movements underwent after the 1908 Revolution. Studying the period without underlining the cooperations or common political agendas before and after the Young Turk Revolution distorts the facts in such a way that Armenian political activities are presented only as terrorist attacks targeting the Sultan and the territorial integrity of the state. The thesis following this formulation cannot explain the facts such as the poem of Tevfik Fikret, written after the unsuccessful attempt to assassinate Sultan Abdülhamid by the Armenian revolutionaries in July 1905. On the other hand, these help us to see that the Armenian-Turkish relationships were very complex and deserve much closer examination:

O sacred explosion, O revengeful smoke,
Who are you, what are you? ...Who directed you to this attack, for what?
There are thousands watching over you, but you aren't there;
You look like an invisible but a savior hand.
...O glorious hunter, you didn't lay your trap in vain;
You fired, but unfortunately couldn't hit!
...The ignoble having fun by crushing a nation,
Owes his joy gratefully to a moment of delay.¹³

*

The present thesis, examines the transformation conceptualized above. In order to understand the most influential line of activity among the Armenians in the second constitutional period until 1915, of which Tashnaktsutium as a political party and

¹³ Tevfik Fikret, *Rübab-i Şikeste*, (İstanbul: Tanin Matbaası, 1327/1911), pp. 433-435. "Ey darbe-i mübeccele, ey dud-ı müntekim / Kimsin, nesin? Bu savlete saik, sebep ne, kim? / Arkanda bin niğâh-ı teccüs, ve sen nihan / Bir dest-i gaybı andırıyorsun, rehafeshah! // ... Ey şanlı avcı, dâmnı beyhude kurmadın! / Attın fakat yazık ki, yazıklar ki vurmadın. // ...Bir kavmi çığnemekle bugün eğlenen denî / Bir lahza-i tehhüre medyun bu keyfini."

Troshag, the official organ of Tashnaktsutium which was publishing in Geneva expressed very close emotions to Fikret after the event: "The hatred which accumulated inside us came out with a great explosion and shook the Yıldız and its environs! One minute later, a few steps nearer... The owner of the crown would be fall without breath with his all camarilla." "Sbanutian Portz Sultani Tem" (Attempt of Assassination Against Sultan), *Troshag*, August 1905 (8), p. 1.

Dramatically, as opposed to point of views of Fikret's and *Troshag*, *Arevelian Mamul* (Eastern Press), an Armenian journal of İzmir exalts Sultan's salvation from the bomb through prayers: "Asdvadz Bahe Mer Veh. Sultane: Hulis Ute Orvan Vad Ararke" (God Save Our Grand Sultan: Shameful Event of Eight July), *Arevelian Mamul*, 20 July 1905, no 30, pp. 773-775.

Krikor Zohrab as an ideologist and an independent Ottoman-Armenian intellectual were the most influential representatives, and which this thesis aims to reveal, the study of this transformation helps us to place the things in their proper place. A precise evaluation of the emergence of the Armenian Question and of the legal political organizations, without ignoring the priorities of the Ottoman state while struggling against them, is thus necessary to understand this transformation and more generally the political conditions in which these activities took place.

In the first chapter of the thesis I aim to present a picture of the Armenian community in the nineteenth century, which experienced a very important transformation in its administrative and representative scheme through, first, the Constitution that the Ottoman state approved in 1863, and, second, the emergence of revolutionary activities in the last decades of the century. I focus mainly on the changes in the Ottoman Armenian society dispersed in different regions of Anatolia from east to west, but at the same time consider the Caucasian Armenians, who later played important roles in forming various revolutionary organizations. As will be seen, the geographical separation between the western and Caucasian Armenians played a crucial role in the unfolding of the Armenian Question, which is mostly related to the sufferings of the Armenians living in the eastern *vilayets* of the Ottoman Empire. The inability of the reformist movement that flourished in İstanbul to express the demands of the rural Armenian communities opened the way to the Caucasian revolutionary organizations – which were also suffering Russification of Caucasus gradually after 1880s– to defend passionately the Armenian case in Anatolia.

The second chapter examines the activities of the Armenian political organizations after Young Turk Revolution. The articulation of these organizations in the Ottoman system of political parties was very important because it opened the gates of legal political activity first time in their history. Although mostly ignored by the historians, their transformation into parties created an environment of mutual existence of the Armenian and Muslim masses in the political arena. The most important indicator of participation of Armenians to the political arena was the Ottoman Parliament itself. Among the eleven Armenian deputies coming from different political engagements in the first parliament after the Young Turk Revolution at least five were former *fedai* leaders. Moreover, in the constitutional period, after the inauguration of the Armenians National Assembly which was closed down by Sultan Abdülhamid in 1891, the Armenian community became politicized very fast, and the Armenians took their place in various public demonstrations, political meetings etc. Such signs will help us to find out the essence of the real Armenian political existence in the Ottoman political system which we will examine thoroughly in the second chapter.

In the third chapter, the political writings, speeches and activities of Krikor Zohrab (1861-1915) will be examined. As will be seen, Krikor Zohrab was elected as the deputy of İstanbul three times –in 1908, 1912, and 1914. He was the one of the most actives figures in Armenian political circles. Standing at the meeting points of three parties, *Ahrar* (Liberal) Party, Tashnaktsutium, and the CUP, and as a famous Armenian intellectual, writer, and lawyer, he defended the idea that the constitutional regime must be powerful, and the Armenians must play an important role in its development. Thus, he advocated cooperation between Armenian and other Ottoman

political parties, and supported the CUP –from a strict critical distance– as the most libertarian, progressive, and powerful party in the Ottoman country. His ideas about the Hamidian despotic rule, and the constitutional one, his perceptions about a reformist Ottomanism, his attitudes as an Ottoman-Armenian, and his love of his motherland must provide some crucial information about the dominant characteristics of Armenians living as loyal citizens of the Ottoman state, who I believe and know that were a vast majority in the Armenian community. Unfortunately, all the peculiarities that made Zohrab a good Ottoman-Armenian remained in vain in the catastrophic days of 1915, when a *çete* working as a unit of *Teşkilat-ı Mahsusa* killed him and his colleague, Vartkes Serengulian, deputy of Erzurum from Tashnaktsutun.¹⁴ I hope that the story and the ideas of Krikor Zohrab analyzed in this thesis can help to reconstruct a history of the Ottoman people, and especially Ottoman Armenians avoiding generalizations, reductionism, and essentialism.

¹⁴ For the story of these murders see Ahmed Refik (Altınay), *İki Komite İki Kutâl*, (Ankara: Kebikeç, 1994 [1919]), pp. 39-42; Falih Rıfkı Atay, *Zeytinadağı*, (İstanbul: Varlık, 1964 [1932]), pp. 88-90; Hüseyin Cahit Yalçın, *Tanıdıklarım*, (İstanbul: Yapı Kredi, 2001 [first publication in *Yedigün* in 1936]), p. 47. “The Case of Deputy Krikor Zohrab: His Letters from Exile, His Odissey, and Circumstances of His Death”, *The Armenian Review*, vol. 35 (1-137), Spring 1982, pp. 3-29.

CHAPTER I

Armenian Community, Armenian Revolutionary Activities and the Ottoman State in the Nineteenth Century

The Armenian community in the Ottoman Empire constituted a multi-layered and heterogeneous entity, both horizontally and vertically. Its problems varied in various aspects depending on certain characteristics of regional or social differentiations. In order to understand the “Armenian Question” and the separate dimensions of the Armenian-Ottoman life in the nineteenth century it is important to take into account the huge social, cultural and economic peculiarities of big cities such as İstanbul or İzmir, or in *vilayets* populated by Armenians such as Garin (Erzurum), Paghesh (Bitlis), Daron (Muş), and Vaspourakan (Van), or the villages of different sizes in the peripheries of these cities.

In this chapter, I will focus on a general picture of the Ottoman Armenian society, and its differences with the Caucasian Armenian communities. These differentiations played crucial roles, especially on the basis of the methods to find a solution to the sufferings of the Armenian population living in the eastern Ottoman *vilayets*. Briefly, in the 1850s the reformism of the Armenian intellectuals in western Anatolia and İstanbul, and then in the 1880s and 1890s, the nationalism of the Armenian revolutionary movements became the standard bearers of the Armenian people. After the failure of the reformist movement to represent the voices of rural Armenian communities, the “revolutionism” of the Caucasian movements found a considerable basis in the eastern Armenian communities. These movements experienced an extensive transformation, which prepared their Ottoman branches for

cooperation with other opposition groups. These attempts at alliance and cooperation, which will be examined in this chapter, mentally prepared the revolutionary movements to a constitutional rule, and thus they entered into the legal political arena with the founding of a constitutional rule. As was mentioned in the Introduction, all in all it will be displayed that, ignoring such mental and ideological transformations while studying the history of the Armenian Question might lead to a partial, and subjective history writing.

Geographical and Social Differentiation

The Armenian community, or to use the correct term, the Armenian *millet*¹ which was organized under the leadership of the Armenian Patriarchate of Constantinople in 1461 by a *ferman* (imperial decree) of Sultan Mehmed II, had great differentiations in its body not only on the basis of geography, but also in economic and social terms: the peasant masses in the countryside, the *esnaf* or the people of traditional crafts in small towns, the owners and the workers in the small factories or workshops, the population in the big cities dealing with crafts or trade, and merchants traveling throughout the empire and so on.

Anaide Ter Minassian from a class perspective describes the common basis of the Armenian communities living in Ottoman and Russian empires in the nineteenth century. According to her formulation, the Armenian people had a common social structure based on a “broad peasant base, a relatively developed middle class, a national clergy, and no nobility,” and the Armenian middle class was made up of

¹ The system of *millet* has strong resemblances with the system of *polizhenie* of Tsarist Russia which based on the separation between Orthodox-Russian population from non-Orthodox/non-Russian one.

traditional artisans, traders of villages and small towns, the caste of artisans and bazaar merchants in the cities, intellectuals and well-to-do members of liberal professions.²

According to Ronald Grigor Suny, in the nineteenth century, the Armenians were a nation divided in two major ways: geographically and by social class. Geographically, the Armenians of Armenia were divided by the frontier among the Persian, Ottoman and Russian Empires. “But more than a geographical separation,”³ this division had important social, cultural, and economic effects. In the late nineteenth century the Ottoman Armenians were more “backward,” “poorer,” “less well-educated,” “less urbanized,” than their brethren in Russian Armenia. The rural population of the eastern *vilayets* had little contact with the urban, commercial Armenian elite,⁴ and was frequently threatened by its Kurdish, or newcomer Muslim immigrant neighbors.⁵ Suny concludes that: “Both Turkish and Russian Armenians lived in stratified societies, the elites of which were urban, cosmopolitan, educated, while the majority lived in a culture of poverty bounded by the limits of village life.”⁶

² Anaide Ter Minassian, “Nationalism and Socialism in the Armenian Revolutionary Movement (1887-1912),” in *Transcaucasia, Nationalism, and Social Change: Essays in the History of Armenia, Azerbaijan, and Georgia*, Ronald Grigor Suny (ed.), (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1996), pp. 143-144; in Turkish, Anaide Ter Minassian, *Ermeni Devrimci Hareketi'nde Milliyetçilik ve Sosyalizm 1887-1912*, translated by Mete Tunçay, (İstanbul: İletişim, 1992), pp. 11-12.

³ Ronald Grigor Suny, *Looking Toward Ararat: Armenia in Modern History*, (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1993), p. 18.

⁴ *ibid.*, p. 18.

⁵ *Dzrakir Hai Heghapokhagan Tashnaksutian Gazmvadz 1892i Enthanur Joghovin* (The Program of Armenian Revolutionary Federation Formed in the General Congress of 1892), (Geneva: Publication of Tashnaksutian, 1906) 4th edition, p. 5; In the Program, there are complaints about the offences of “semi-savage, nomadic Kurds”.

⁶ Suny, p. 19.

In a nutshell, the Armenian communities of the Ottoman and Russian Empires, although come into existence through corresponding social classifications, were living in dissimilar conditions on the basis of economic development of their countries. On the other hand, the life styles, expectations, aims, world views, and most importantly interests of different Armenian social classes were varied. Consequently, it is impossible to imagine a homogeneous Armenian society in the nineteenth century. The homogenizing propositions suggesting that the “Armenians were aiming at this” or “Armenians were doing that,” are historically groundless and more importantly, essentialist. It is very interesting that, although the geographic divisions among the Armenian people played an important role in determining their political attitudes, it was the Russian or Caucasian Armenians who paid attention to the problems of their brethren living the eastern *vilayets* of the Ottoman Empire, not the Armenians of İstanbul or İzmir who shared the same language and the same country. We will examine the reasons for this later.

The Armenian Patriarchate of Constantinople

Although the Armenian population of the Empire was dispersed on different scales and in different regions, from East (i.e Kars, Van) to West (i.e. Kütahya, İzmit), from North (i.e. Trabzon, Kastamonu), to South (i. e.. Adana, Aleppo) in the beginning of the nineteenth century, the Armenian Patriarchate of Constantinople was the most important center for the inner organization and the administration of the Armenian community in the Empire. The traditional system of *zimmi*⁷ which

⁷ The roots of the concept *zimmi* go as far as the first centuries of Islamic Law. It can be considered as a status given to non-muslim people (but only the ones who are “people of the Scripts,” in other

was based mainly on a rough separation of the non-Muslim people from Muslims on the basis of judicial rules, gave a wide authority to the Patriarchate, which usually tended to go beyond its religious power and extended it on the social life of the Armenian people.

The Patriarchate was the center that gave the permission for many civil rights such as divorce, and inheritance. The Patriarchate was also the only authority to permit the printing of various kinds of books in Armenian; and it functioned as a “bureau of censorship.”⁸ There was an *azkayeen durk* (national tax) which was collected by the Patriarchate from the Armenian subjects of the Empire. A quotation from Garabed Utudjian (1823-1904), an influential journalist and the founder of the most effective Armenian magazine of the period published in İstanbul, *Masis* (1852-1908) might show the merciless authority that the Patriarchate exercised over the people.

Those days, the name of the Patriarchate was horrible. When a porter would come to a man and say “Come here, the *vekil hayrsourp* (holy father) wants you!” the spit in the man’s mouth would get dry, and he would start to shiver because of his fear. It was impossible to oppose. The porter was carrying a hooked chain under his coat; if anybody resisted, he would fasten the chain on his neck by force; then pulling him like a dog; nobody could save that miserable man from the porters’ hands. (When they go to the Patriarchate) it was out of question to utter any word to the *vekil hayrsourp*. Without any long prologue, he was forcing the *baron* or *agha* that had a grand *kalpak* or a nice coat, and ‘honoring’ him with 25-30 beating of a cane.⁹

words “*ehl-i kitap*”) who accepted to live under Islamic rule, “*Şeriat*,” and to pay the capitation tax, “*haraç*” (or “*cizye*”). In the traditional Ottoman system *zimmis* were exempted from military missions, were banned to carry guns etc.

⁸ Vartan Artinian, *A Study of the Historical Development of the Constitutional System in the Ottoman Empire 1839-1863*, (Brandeis University: unpublished PhD Dissertation, 1970), p. 22; in Turkish, *Osmanlı Devleti’nde Ermeni Anayasasının Doğuşu 1839-1863*, trans. Zülal Kılıç, (İstanbul: Aras, 2004), p. 27.

⁹ Garabed Utudjian, “Mangutian Hishadagner” (The Memoirs of Childhood), *Masis*, 20 March 1893, p. 163.

It is very clear that the political environment of the *Tanzimat* period, in which the new bureaucracy made serious reforms to modernize the state apparatus and daily life, provided a convenient milieu for the realization of innovative ideas in the Armenian community. The power that the Armenian Patriarchate wielded over Armenian society was harsh, and it created great distress and uneasiness, especially among the middle classes of the big cities, and the new Armenian intelligentsia. This civil and “secular” opposition movement against both the clergy and the wealthier class, who controlled the Patriarchate or at least co-operated with the clergy, made the transformation of the balance of power possible. It was the intellectual structure of this opposition movement that generated attention to the problems of Armenians of Anatolia. However, as will be seen soon, this movement –although aware of the sufferings of rural Armenian population– avoided developing a strategy to solve their problems.

Amiras, Esnafs, and the “Young Armenians”

From the seventeenth century until the second half of the nineteenth century, the master of the Patriarchate was not a Patriarch or the higher echelons of the religious hierarchy. The wealthy Armenians, who were called *Amira*¹⁰ in Armenian, thanks to their economic conditions, were in a powerful position to control and dominate the administrative affairs of the Patriarchate. The *Amiras* had strong ties with the Ottoman state and mostly occupied high official positions in the state bureaucracy. The *sarrafs*, who supplied an important amount of money for tax

¹⁰ A word derived from Arabic “*emir*” meaning “prince” or “commander”; see Hagop Adjarian, *Hayots Antznanunneri Pararan* (The Dictionary of Armenian Proper Names), vol. I, (Beirut: 1972), p. 120.

collectors and the state, the directors of the imperial mint (*darphane emini*), the chief masters of architecture (*hassa mimari*), the chiefs of the imperial gunpowder factories (*barutcubaşı*), the chiefs of imperial bakery (*ekmekçibaşı*), and the chiefs of the imperial jewelry (*kuyumcubaşı*) and so were all members of Armenian *Amira* families. Because of the usual debt crisis of the Patriarchate, the *Amiras* were supplying money to the Patriarchate. The *Amira* class played a role similar to charitable and benevolent associations, or philanthropic societies. They founded schools, orphanages, hospitals, and even churches in the capital, and thanks to these activities presented themselves as the leaders of the nation, chose patriarchs among the archbishops who would defend their economic and political interests, and subverted the ones who acted against their interests.¹¹

From the end of the eighteenth century, the Armenian *esnafs*, who could be considered as the “middle class” of the Armenian population in the capital, gained a foothold in the administrative schema, especially in the local neighborhood assemblies (*taghagan khorhurts*), which were traditionally organized around churches. This was the result of their rising economic power and traditional behavior of acting together.

The history of Armenian Constantinople in the nineteenth century is usually written as a history of class struggles between two classes even by religious and classic Armenian historians.¹² The struggle between the *Amiras* and *esnafs* is described as the motor power of change and progress. That is true especially when

¹¹ For details, see Hagop Barsoumian, “Economic Role of the Armenian Amira Class in the Ottoman Empire,” *Armenian Review* (1979, 3), pp. 310-316.

¹² For instance see (Archbishop and Patriarch) Maghakia Ormanian’s *Azkabadoum* (National History), (İstanbul-Jerusalem: 3 vol., 1913-1927), or Hagop Djololian Siruni’s *Bolis yev Eer Tere* (Istanbul and its Role) (Beirut: 3 vol., 1955).

the process in which the *esnafs* became increasingly involved in the national problems, is taken into consideration. When the *esnaf* class raised their voices to participate in the administration of the Patriarchate, and consequently in the affairs of the whole *millet*, the *Amira* class, with the fear of losing ground, violently opposed them. The struggle lasted for decades until the 1850s, and ended when a small but effective group, the young generation of European-style educated intellectuals, entered as a third class into the arena against the *Amira* class.

Unlike the *esnafs* or *amiras*, the world view of these “Young Armenians”¹³ was not limited to their class interests or their participation in the decision making mechanisms of the Patriarchate or the Armenian community. They were aware of the problems of the modernization process carried out by the Tanzimat era in the Ottoman state, and the conditions of the Armenian people in the Anatolian rural areas. According to their interpretation the only way to “rescue” both the state and the *millet* was “re-organization.” In both fields they stressed the need for “modern” apparatuses such as constitution, elections, and parliament. They found education crucial in order to transform society, and they founded an association named “*Araratian Engerutiun*” (Ararat Society) in Paris, in 1849, aiming at the development of the Armenian educational system in the Ottoman Empire. The charter of the association declared their widening gaze from the capital to Anatolia. The “elitist” perspective of the charter must also be noted in order to distinguish the motives of the movement from the Caucasian Armenian’s class-based perspective, which will be analyzed later.

¹³ It was Vartan Artinian who used this term first in order to emphasize their resemblances with Young Ottomans on the basis of “purposes” and “methods.” Artinian, *Osmanlı*, p. 73.

Only the elite of a nation can comprehend the true significance of the word “nation”... It is because of ignorance that *our nation has reached this miserable condition*... the happiness of a nation can only come through education... The aim of the *Araratian Engerutiun* is to bring progress to the Armenian nation and to provide for all its needs...¹⁴

As can be seen, the publishers of the charter, who were Armenian university youth from the universities of different European cities, and mostly the sons of the Armenian higher and middle classes from İstanbul and İzmir, labeled the conditions of the Armenian population as “miserable” as early as 1849. It is clear that this word mostly refers to the rural Armenian population. Etmekjian writes that: “Those who went France were fully acquainted with the Armenian problems at home, namely; a stiflingly authoritarian administration and a state of semi-servitude characterized among other things, by exploitation, insecurity, unequal justice, heavy taxation, and illiteracy. The social, political, literary, and intellectual ferment they saw in France contrasted sharply with realities at home.”¹⁵ But one must not forget that the general economic and social conditions of the people of different ethnic origins in the regions that Armenians lived were not very different. Though, such considerations may provide us at least a notion of awareness that the Armenian intelligentsia had regarding the questions of the Armenian people before the internationalization of the “Armenian Question” through Treaty of Berlin in 1878.

When the pages of Armenian weekly, *Jamanak Hantes Hairenanver* (Time Journal Devoted to Motherland) – which was established by Young Armenians in

¹⁴ Alboyadjian, “Azkayen Sahmanatrutiun: Eer Dzakume yev Girarutiune” (The National Constitution: Its Emergence and Application), *Intartzag Oratsuyts Surp Prgich Hivantanotsi Hayots* (The Yearbook of Surp Prgich Armenian Hospital), İstanbul, 1910, pp. 244-246; English translation, Artinian, *Study*, pp. 63-64; Turkish translation, Artinian, *Osmanlı*. 77-78. (The emphases are mine)

¹⁵ James Etmekjian, “The Utilitarian Nature of the Western Armenian Renaissance,” *Armenian Review*, 1979, vol. 31, p. 304.

İstanbul in 1863, clearly in order to spread their liberal and constitutionalist ideas – examined one can come across several news announcing the unrests that Armenian rural population experienced in Muş, Bitlis or Van. For instance, *Jamanak Hantes Hairenanver* publishes a petition in its first issue – written by a group of Muş emigrants staying İstanbul in order to gain some money – to the Patriarch and the Mixed Council of the Patriarchate which describes the conditions in the rural areas:

Although the appointment of patriot Mıgırđıç Khirimyan *Vartabed* to Muş as the religious leader is a great happiness, the sufferings of the people of Muş in the hands of unlawful and bandit Kurds becomes unbearable and this leads us to desperation. Until this day, with the efforts of esteemed *kaymakam paşa*, it was possible, though to a certain extent, to find a cure to Kurdish attacks. However, the fact that *kaymakamlık* has been moved to Bitlis from Muş led to our utmost desperation. Now we apply to you, our exalted Patriarch and our respected council members, please take a look at this miserable condition of your brethren. We, people of Muş, are all peasants, sow the land with great effort and try to earn the daily bread of our children. All through the year we stand up against snow, rain and sun and work hard; yet, unlawful Kurds come and seize our crops (while our hands are tied, who can resist them?). During these confiscations, do you think abduction of girls decrease? The tithe given to state has gone out of control, and became a twenty, thirty tax. According to the law, it is necessary to pay one tenth of the total harvest. Now, they ask for money from us. Money! And we do not know where to find this money from. The first signs of this poverty started to be seen. This time five six hundred people from Muş left their homes for İstanbul. And to become what? A porter, if he can manage to! Each day more and more people disband their family to other households and go to İstanbul. There is even immigration to Russia.¹⁶ If this continues like this, one day you will find no Armenians in Muş...

¹⁶ Interestingly, Anatolian peasants who migrated Russia because of economic and security reasons after 1860s became the first bearers of the nationalist and revolutionary ideology of Caucasian political groups in Anatolia: “In the mid-1880s a group of Armenian students in Tiflis made contact with poorest stratum of Armenian workers, porters who had emigrated from Mush in Turkey... in order to create educated cadres which would then be sent back into Turkey to agitate among the Armenian peasants.” Ronald Grigor Suny, “Populism, Nationalism and Marxism: The Origins of Revolutionary Parties Among the Armenians of the Caucasus,” *Armenian Review*, June 1979, vol. 32, no 2-126, p. 139; even the Fifth Congress of Tashnaksutium convened in 1909 was underlining the importance of emigrants in order to prepare its supporters to political activity, see *Haidararakir yev Voroshumner HH Tashnaksutian Hinkerort Enthanur Joghovi-1909* (The Declaration and Decisions of the Fifth General Congress of AR Federation-1909), (Geneva: Publication of Tashnaksutium, 1910), pp. 24-25,

14 November 1862, İstanbul Suffering emigrant people of Muş¹⁷

In another occasion *Jamanak Hantes Hairenanver* gives a list of illegal acts that Armenians came face to face in Muş:

21 April: Karaçoban village. The son of Shedo is shot in the field while talking to Kurds. / 23 April: Haramik village. The son of Sarkis, while putting sheep out to pasture, was wounded by the Kurds, and his clothes were also taken. / 27 April: Kaghnik village. The son of Minas is stabbed by the Kurds of his own village. The guilty were arrested by the police but then released in two-three days. / 1 May: Burnaz village. The son of *Reis* Bade is wounded by the Kurds as he was ploughing the land. / 6 May: Yeniköy village. The son of *Reis* Amrga was shot with a rifle as he was with his sheep, near to their village. / 8 May: Duman village. They shot the son of *Reis* Simon wounded in the mill and they stole four bushels [*kile*] of flour and ran away. / 22 May: At three o'clock on Monday night, at the eastern side of Surp Garabed Monastery, out of the city walls, two gun shots were heard. Fortunately, bullets passed over the roof and could not hurt anybody. The same event was repeated at Sunday night around half past four. All the people panicked and we called the police.¹⁸

Such instances clearly show that rural Armenian population looked for a contribution of their brethren living in western cities in the solution of their problems. But, as Hratch Dasnabedian – one of the most important historians about the history of the Armenian revolutionary movements – points out the *Amiras* of İstanbul and conservative higher stratum of Armenians were, “voluntarily or involuntarily, without the power to improve the unbearable conditions prevailing among the Armenians of eastern provinces of Turkey.”¹⁹

¹⁷ ‘Muş yev Khrimian Mgrdich Vartabed’ (Muş and Bishop Mgrdich Khrimian), *Jamanak Hantes Hairenanver* (Time Journal Devoted to Motherland), 2 January 1863, no 1, p. 5.

¹⁸ “Muşen Tzavali Lurer” (Pitiful News from Muş), *Jamanak Hantes Hairenanver* (Time Journal Devoted to Motherland), 22 June 1863, no 13, p. 104.

¹⁹ Hratch Dasnabedian, “The A.R.F. Record: The Balance Sheet of Ninety Years” *Armenian Review*, vol. 34, June 1981, pp. 116-117.

Moreover, the populist idealism imported from European political developments by the nationalist-reformist ideology of liberal elements which had a conscious directed to finding a solution to the sufferings of rural Armenian population confronted with conservative elements mostly related to state affairs. Not only this struggle but also the political weaknesses of the liberals prevented their active interference to the problems occurred in the East; they were very inexperienced, and failed in removing the invisible barriers between capital and rural areas.

In fact, the Young Armenians, suffering from the opposition of the *Amiras* in political cases, found an appropriate area of activity only in the educational system of the community. They first entered one of the executive committees of the Patriarchate when in 1853 they took all the memberships of *Usumnagan Khorhurt* (Educational Committee), which had been established after the model of the *Academie Française*. They were more seriously challenged by the *Amiras* when they took the initiative to modernize the classical Armenian language, the *krapar*, which was heavily alienated from the Armenian spoken in the streets. In 1853, when Krikor Odian, who later became a consultant of Mithat Paşa, published a grammar book named *Ughghakhosutium Arti Hay Lezouin* (The Orthology of Contemporary Armenian) with the consent of the Educational Committee, the Young Armenians were harshly criticized by the *Amira* class and the intellectuals who supported them. The book was seized and banned through a decision of the Patriarchate. The central administration of the Patriarchate –whose members were mostly *Amiras*– judged the writer and declared him guilty; Odian barely escaped from excommunication, with

the personal help of the Patriarch Hagopos Seropian.²⁰ The struggle between conservatives and liberals on education and language issues implied a differentiation on political imagination for the futures of both Armenian and Ottoman state. The words of Krikor Odian on Nahabed Rusinian, one of the prominent liberals of the time, must be understood from such a perspective: “In those days, the Nation had something like an administration, something like a language, and something like schools. They [Rusinian and Krikor Balian] undertook to give form to these three things, which are the three things essential to national progress. From these undertakings were born the Constitution, *Orthology*, and the Educational Council.”²¹

The Armenian National Constitution and the Rural Armenian Population

In 1860, after long negotiations and study, the first *Azkayeen Sahmanatroutiun Hayots*²² (Armenian National Constitution, *Nizamname-i Millet-i Ermeniyan*) was approved by the *Azkayeen Joghov* (National Council) of the Patriarchate. The Constitution was the victory of the Young Armenians, who called themselves “*lusavorial*” (enlightened) and their rivals as “*khavarial*” (reactionary); these were the most popular terms in the Armenian papers of the time— against the *Amira* class. However, the Ottoman state did not ratify the text approved by the National Council of the Patriarchate, despite the fact that it was the Sublime Porte at the first instance who had encouraged the non-Muslim *millet*s to prepare *nizamnames* (constitutions)

²⁰ Ormanian, column 2634, 2640; see also Artinian, *Osmanlı*, pp. 79-86.

²¹ Krikor Odian, “Rusinian,” in *Tasakirk Pilisopayutian* (Textbook of Philosophy), pp. VIII-IX; in English, Etmekjian, p. 304.

²² In Turkish, *Nizamname-i Millet-i Ermeniyan* (The “Charter” or “Regulations” of the Armenian *Millet*)

after the Reform Edict (*Islahat Fermanı*) of 1856. It is usually believed that the Sublime Porte's attitude towards the Constitution of 1860 was a consequence of requests of *Amira* class effective in state affairs. As a result, in 1863, a "revised" edition of the Constitution was ratified by the Sublime Porte. But, as we know from Arshag Alboyadjian's detailed comparative analysis of the two texts published in 1910, the latter constitution was quite insufficient to respond the demands and needs of the Armenian community:

All the amendments, that had a purpose, were forced by the nature of the Sublime Porte, which cannot be reconciled with the constitutional regulations due to its monarchical foundations. Therefore, the 1860 Constitution, a pure document of law in language, organization and legal perfection, when rewritten as the 1863 Constitution, had lost much from its initial perfection. In general, the 1860 National Constitution was an example of a constitution based on democratic principles. On these grounds, the basic principles, national executive structure, sphere of jurisdiction of each institution, and mutual relations were built up. However, in the 1863 Constitution, these were no longer the main sections of the text; instead of a clear description, they were only voiced in a quite latent way.

(...) [1863 Constitution as a] document of law, which can only latently express its spirit, will eventually carry the signs of this forced effort, and will be a victim of these shortcomings.²³

When we analyze the text of the 1863 Constitution it can be seen easily that the participation of the rural Armenian community was very limited. The number of the members of the Armenian National Council was 140; but only 40 representatives, two-sevenths of the total, would be elected from the Anatolian *vilayets*. Another 80 would come from various suburbs of the capital city, and the last 20 would be elected from among the higher echelons of the clerical hierarchy. According to

²³ Alboyadjian, pp. 411-412.

Article 66 the men who were older than 25 years old,²⁴ and according to Article 66 who paid at least 75 kuruş per year as “national tax” was eligible to vote.²⁵ Moreover, according to Article 70 of the Constitution, the people who were elected to represent the cities of the *kavar* (provinces) did not have to live in those cities. Consequently, the great portion of the representatives was elected from among the Armenian notables of İstanbul.²⁶

The great masses of the Armenian population living in the villages or small towns of Anatolia could not raise their voices in the Council held in İstanbul by bringing their problems onto the agenda of the Armenian National Council of the Patriarchate. This brought a lot of problems, especially in a time when the Armenians in Anatolia suffered from lack of security therein, and resulted in a “dialog of the deaf” between İstanbul and the Anatolian Armenians. It is significant that, even as late as 1908, the party formed under the name of *Ermeni Meşrutiyet ve Hukuk-ı Avam Taraftararı* (The Armenian Party of Supporters of Constitutional Rule and Rights of the Commons) expressed the need, in the second article of the “National Purpose” section of its program, to “modify the Armenian National Constitution –which carries the ratification of the state– into contemporary needs”²⁷ in order to solve the problems in the representation scheme. Such an example is the

²⁴ *Azkayeen Sahmanatrutiun Hayots / Nizamname-i Millet-i Ermeniyen* (Armenian National Constitution), (İstanbul: H. Muhendisian, 1863), p. 42; “Lâ-akall yirmi yaşını tekml edenler hakk-ı intihaba nail olup, ancak tebaa-ı Devlet-i Aliyye’den olmak şartdır.”

²⁵ *ibid.*, p. 42; “İane-i milliye, hakk-ı intihaba mucip olmak için iane-i umumiye olarak lâ-akall senevî yetmiş beş kuruş iane verilmelidir.”

²⁶ *ibid.*, pp. 44-45; “Yetmişinci madde: Gerek Dersaadet’te ve gerek taşralarda intihabı matlub olan vekillerin kendilerini intihap eden kilise cemaatinden ve marhasalık dairesinden olup olmamalarında bir beis olmayıp, şu kadar ki Dersaadette bulunmaları ve mezkûr cemaatlerin milletçe mesâlihine vâkıf ve intihap edenler indinde hubb-i millet ve refet ve istikametleri cihetiyle meri ve muteber bulunmaları lazımedendir.”

²⁷ “Meşrutiyet ve Hukuk-u Avam Taraftararı Ermeni Fırkasının Beyanname ve Programıdır,” (transliterated by Mete Tunçay) in Ter Minassian, p. 95.

decisions of Seventh Congress of Tashnaksutiun held in August 1913: “Because of the deficiencies of Armenian National Constitution different strata of Armenian community were not represented in the National Central Council in line with their real conscious and power. The voices of İstanbul Armenians surpasses the millions of Armenians in provinces, which deprives of a big mass of social classes.”²⁸

The Young Armenians gained a significant success against their rivals, the *Amira* class of the Armenian community, with the help of their alliance with the *esnafs*. As a result, they were unable to put an end to the dominance of the Armenian notables in the affairs of the *millet*. Even more important, the Young Armenians were able to attract the attention towards the hardships their compatriots suffered in Anatolia. However, in the final analysis, they lost the opportunity to guarantee the representation of the Armenian masses in the Armenian national institutions, which became active after the ratification of the Constitution. Their reformism as a method to change society and their elitism, which was mentioned above as the one of the most important elements of their world view, prevented them from creating more extensive and radical programs in the name of solving the “national question.” Their failure in responding to the problems of the Armenian rural population in the provinces became increasingly obvious in a time when the problems of the Armenian people were worsening in the second half of the nineteenth century. Although the liberals in the capital or other big cities were aiming nation progress through education, in most cases, the problems rural communities were going beyond the capacities of such a perspective. In 1886, a writer from Muş Kegham D. G.

²⁸ “HH Tashnaksutiuan Yoterort Enthanur Joghovi Voroshumnere” (The Decision of Seventh General Congress of Tashnaksutiun), *Troshag*, Sebtember-October 1913 (9-10), p. 148.

Daronian,²⁹ criticized this perspective in an article published in *Masis*: “Bread first and education second! ...The village schools today ...are a real danger to agriculture, depleting its forces by producing more and more vagrants and unemployed every year.”³⁰

In fact, one of the most important developments by the liberal movement was “cultural revival”. After 1850s, impressive numbers of cultural and educational hearths, printing and publication houses, were created. Moreover, the growth of the Armenian press was astonishing. The journals were publishing news and articles about Armenian communities, especially about the ones in Eastern Anatolia, in order to establish a bond with them.³¹ A large number of educational, cultural, patriotic and national-social organizations flourished, along with student, graduate and educational unions. Together with the nationalist literary works of authors such as Khachatur Abovian, Mgrdich Khrimian, Raphael Patkanian, Leon Alishan and Raffi (Hagop Der Hagopian), which influenced successive generations, this cultural basis created an appropriate environment for the development of Armenian political parties.³²

The Politics Among Western and Caucasian Armenians

The failure of the Armenian middle classes and the intelligentsia in western Anatolia and in the capital in the resolution of their “national problem” helped to

²⁹ Very possibly, he was Kegham Der Garabedian, a prominent Tashnak leader, and later deputy from Muş in the Ottoman Parliament; “Daronian” means “a man from Muş” in Armenian.

³⁰ Kegham D. G. Daronian, “Mer Tbrotsnere” (Our Schools), *Masis*, December 1886, p. 291; cited in Etmekjian, p. 302.

³¹ *ibid.*, p. 306.

³² Dasnabedian, p. 118.

bring into existence political organizations that more openly defended the rights of the Armenian people. Following the Bulgarian nationalist and Russian/Caucasian socialist movements, their methods were not reformist but revolutionary, especially as a reaction to the Armenian liberal/libertarian movement developed by the Armenian intellectuals in mid-century İstanbul: “The Armenian intelligentsia in Turkey studied in Italy and France: It was aroused by the French revolutions, the liberation of France, the unification of Italy, and pre-Marxian socialism. The Armenian intelligentsia in Russia studied in Moscow, Saint Petersburg, Dorpat, Leipzig, Berlin. It went through the same phases as the Russian intelligentsia and discovered Marxism.”³³

These differences between the political movements developed in İstanbul and in the Caucasus were clearly diagnosed by Ronald Grigor Suny. He stresses that the Young Armenians of the Ottoman Empire were educated in Western countries, influenced by the Western literary movements, and developed a stronger liberal streak than the Russian Armenians. This movement was developed by a reformist intelligentsia “that largely avoided the more violent revolutionary influences of the Caucasians.” The Armenian bourgeoisie was not happy with revolutionary ideas and “did not for the most part see itself as responsible for the welfare of the Armenian masses, the peasant majority and the new, emerging working class. Rather than developing a sense of national leadership, or placing themselves at the head of a national movement, the Armenian bourgeoisie tended to attach its fortunes to the fate of the imperial powers.” Under these conditions Armenian revolutionary parties had

³³ Anaide Ter-Minassian, “Le mouvement révolutionnaire arménien, 1890-1903,” *Cahiers du monde russe et soviétique*, XIV, October-December 1973 (4), p. 554.

established, and the most influential ones, the Hnchags and Tashnaks, wanted to “shake down” the Armenian bourgeoisie “by threatening it with terrorism.”³⁴

The problem of the Armenian people in the Anatolian *vilayets* was often described as an agrarian one. Anaide Ter Minassian notes the conditions that the Armenian peasants experienced in the nineteenth century and emphasizes some of the crucial problems that the Armenians suffered. There was a new system of taxes, but the modes of collection remained archaic. As a result, fiscal pressure was increasing. An additional problem was “double taxation” in the rural areas, one paid to the state and the other generally to the Kurdish tribes. There were also many related issues causing distress, such as the “feudal rent,” abuses, corruption, and anarchy, extortions by tax farmers and usurers (often Armenian *ağas*), and Muslim landowners; famines; the dispossession of the Armenian peasantry with the appearance of the Circassians or other Caucasian or European Muslims and the settling down of the nomadic Kurds; the pressure of Kurdish tribes forcing them to purchase their own protection (“*hafir*” in Kurdish) and the pillaging and carrying off women and flocks.³⁵

To sum up, although the Armenian middle classes and the intelligentsia, who initiated this cultural-political movement, were the first to underline the problems of the rural Armenian population in the nineteenth century, under the relatively liberal winds of the Tanzimat period, they were unable to transform their gains, especially the Armenian National Constitution and the Armenian National Assembly, into means of talking about the problems in the provinces. Their elitism and the

³⁴ Suny, *Ararat*, pp. 19-20.

³⁵ Ter Minassian, “Nationalism,” pp. 145-146; for an account of a foremost researcher in the history of Tashnaktsutun see Dasnabedian, p. 116.

limitations of the Ottoman political environment prevented them from helping the rural population by making their voices more audible. The activities of the Armenian National Assembly of the Patriarchate had ceased in 4 September 1891 by an imperial decision.³⁶ This was the most important means of suppression of the Hamidian regime, and one can assume that, with the closure of the only legal gate for the expression of Armenian political demands, this act resulted in the strengthening of the Armenian revolutionary parties which were proclaimed illegal by the regime. Until 1908, Armenian National Assembly convened three times, but solely to elect the new Patriarch or the committee which would be sent to the elections for new Catholicos. Only after the Declaration of the Liberty in July 1908, the Armenian National Assembly started its activities again.

On the other hand, after the establishment of various local self-defense organizations in eastern Anatolia and their relatively quick fall, revolutionary organizations were established by the Caucasian Armenians and these assumed a representative position of the Armenian sufferings in the Anatolia. Armenian bourgeoisie in Tiflis, Baku or İstanbul accepted the disparity between them and rural communities as natural, and they more easily tend to a evolutionary transformation of their countries; on the other hand, "...to a small minority of young and sensitive Armenians, this disparity was intolerable and was justified neither by nature nor history."³⁷

As Ter Minassian points out, these revolutionary organizations had "a messianic revolutionary and national vocation: to drag the Armenian people out of

³⁶ Alboyadjian, p. 421, and pp. 421-430.

³⁷ Suny, "Populism," p. 136.

its ‘Asiatic darkness’ and economic backwardness, give it back its dignity lost during the centuries of subjection, and inculcate it with a national consciousness and a political will.”³⁸ In the beginning, Armenian revolutionary circles, being nationalist more than socialist, were far from criticizing Russian autocracy and aiming Russian help in the solution of their national question:

The peculiar position of the Armenians as a people divided between two empires imposed a stark political choice on radical Armenians: as radical opponents of political oppression they might join with their comrades of other nationalities and work toward the elimination of Russian autocracy, or they might go their own way, organize autonomously, and work against the Ottoman oppressors of the Armenian peasants in Anatolia. Paradoxically, the Armenians’ contact with Russian populism helped to form their consciousness of the conditions in which their brethren in Turkey lived, and, therefore, impelled Caucasian Armenians to turn from the struggle against Russian autocracy toward the national struggle in Turkey.³⁹

Although remained as a minority, there were also some groups or fractions opposing the tendency to concentrate only on Anatolia. Such groups argued working on problems facing Caucasian Armenians. Especially after 1880s especially the Russification policies of Russian autocracy in Caucasus created unrest. In 1881 Russian government closed down Armenian schools in Baku, Tiflis, Batum and Yerevan. Afterwards Armenian revolutionaries started to search co-operations with revolutionary organizations of other nationalities in Caucasus.

Consequently, the claim that the Armenian political movements, especially the revolutionary ones, emerged as a result of the imperialist projects is unfounded. It is perfectly justified to say that, especially after the Berlin Congress Armenian revolutionaries usually tried to attract foreign intervention to the Armenian *vilayets*

³⁸ Ter Minassian, p. 148; the author underlines that the expression “Asiatic darkness” was found in the writings of Hnchags, Tashnaks, and Social-Democrats alike.

³⁹ Suny, p. 138.

through uprisings, and to claim that imperialist power politics often benefited to the Armenian revolutionary activities in order to control the area –especially in a time when the western public opinion was very ready to condemn the “Muslims” because of the “Christian” sufferings in the “Orient.”⁴⁰ Nonetheless, the Armenian political activities, in essence, were responses and reactions against the sufferings experienced, and they mostly emerged because of the new economic regulations of the Tanzimat era.⁴¹ Moreover, Armenian upper classes, living especially in western big cities like İstanbul or İzmir and dealing with trade or occupying the ranks of higher officials, was mostly very antagonistic to Armenian revolutionary activities. The tension and split between Armenian higher and lower classes became very evident in the last quarter of the nineteenth century. There are even various short stories and novels written through a realistic perspective dwelled upon this issue.⁴²

It is understandable that the Ottoman government approached to the problem under the fear of Russian occupation of the area, especially after the changing international politics, particularly the British-Russian rapprochement in the last decade of the century. Various historical sources, such as the diary of Sadettin Paşa, who was sent to the area Van as an inspector in 1896, displays how the state’s main

⁴⁰ Jeremy Salt, *Imperialism, Evangelism and the Ottoman Armenians 1878-1896*, (London and Portland: F. Cass, 1993).

⁴¹ Hans-Lukas Kieser, *İskalanmış Barış, Doğu Vilayetlerinde Misyonerlik, Etnik Kimlik ve Devlet 1839-1938*, (İstanbul: İletişim, 2005), p. 33.

⁴² Arus Yumul-Rıfat N. Bali, “Ermeni ve Yahudi Cemaatlerinde Siyasal Düşünceler,” in *Modern Türkiye’de Siyasi Düşünce: Cumhuriyete Devreden Düşünce Mirası Tanzimat ve Meşrutiyet’in Birikimi*, vol. I, (İstanbul: İletişim, 2001), p. 363. Krikor Zohrab was one of the most important members of this realist Armenian literature. Other prominent writers were: Arpiar Arpiarian (1852-1901), Melkon Gurdjian (1859-1915), Hrant Asadur (1862-1928), Sibil (Zabel Asadur, 1863-1934), Dikran Gamsaragan (1866-1941), Levon Pashalian (1868-1943), Yeruhan (1870-1915). See “Ermeni Gerçekçiliğine Dair Birkaç Not” in Yeruhan’s *Balıkçı Sevdası*, (İstanbul: Aras, 2000), p. 8.

concerns were focused on the prevention of foreign intervention.⁴³ It is clear that, especially after Berlin Congress where Ottoman state promised to introduce “improvements and reforms demanded by local requirements in the provinces inhabited by the Armenians,” Abdülhamid II aimed to gain time in order to dilute the application of the reforms.⁴⁴ This defensive attitude was one of the main reasons of violent Armenian revolutionary activity practiced in order to attract western attention to the region. Thus, historical analyses show that claiming that the emergence of Armenian revolutionary activities were directly and solely were the results of imperialist intervention seems groundless.

The First Armenian Political Organizations in Anatolia

The first Armenian national organizations in the Anatolian provinces, such as *Azadoutian Miutiun* (The Union of Salvation) in Van (1872), *Sev Khaç Ingeroutiun* (Black Cross Society) in Van (1878), *Bashdban Hayreniats* (The Defender of the Motherland) in Erzurum (1881), *Yergrakordzagan Ingeroutiun*⁴⁵ (Agricultural Society) in Erzurum (1882) and the *Armenagan* (the followers of *Armenia* newspaper)⁴⁶ in Van (1885), were local organizations and “were unable to transform genuine feelings of patriotism and devotion to the people into a viable movement

⁴³ *Sadettin Paşa'nın Anıları, Ermeni-Kürt Olayları (Van, 1896)*, Sami Önal (ed.), (İstanbul: Remzi, 2nd edition 2004).

⁴⁴ Ali Karaca, *Anadolu Islahâtı ve Ahmet Şâkir Paşa (1839-1899)*, (İstanbul: Eren, 1993), pp. 37-54

⁴⁵ According to an Armenian historian, Saroukhan, the founders of the Society had chosen this “innocuous” name, first, to hide their clandestine aims (“self defense against heavily armed Kurdish element”), and the second, because of “the initial members a substantial numbers were farmers.” See his “The Agricultural Society: The First Popular Movement in Western Armenia,” *Armenian Review*, vol. 36, (Summer, 1982), p. 156.

⁴⁶ This name was inspired by the magazine *Armenia* which was published by an Armenian intellectual Mgrdich Portukalian in Marseille.

with an adequate strategy.” They remained local and failed to become national organizations “because their articulation of grievances did not encompass a conceptual framework.”⁴⁷

We know little about *Azadoutian Miutun*, *Sev Khaç Ingeroutiun* and *Bashdban Hayreniats*, but according to the program of the *Armenagan*, the party was to “win for the Armenians the right to rule over themselves through revolution.”⁴⁸ The party was usually considered as the first Armenian political party in the Ottoman territories. According to its Program, the party planned to accomplish its objectives “By uniting all patriotic Armenians⁴⁹ who believed in the same ideal,” “By disseminating revolutionary ideas through literature and oral propaganda, by proper education, by the cultivation of regular and continual relationship... By inculcating in the people the spirit of self-defense –training them in the use of arms and military discipline, supplying them with arms and money, and organizing guerrilla forces... By preparing the people for a general movement, especially when the external circumstances –the disposition of the foreign powers and the neighboring races– seem to favor the Armenian cause,” etc.⁵⁰ As can be seen, the party planned armed resistance. According to Louise Nalbandian, “Most of the military equipment was produced from the Turkish officials through bribery, and although the transportation

⁴⁷ Gerard J. Libaridian, “Revolution and Liberation in the 1892 and 1907 Programs of the Dashnaktsutiun,” in *Transcaucasia, Nationalism, and Social Change: Essays in the History of Armenia, Azerbaijan, and Georgia*, Ronald Grigor Suny (ed.), (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1996), p. 189.

⁴⁸ A summary of the Party’s Program was published in: Louise Nalbandian, *The Armenian Revolutionary Movement, the Development of the Armenian Political Parties Throughout Nineteenth Century*, (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1963), p. 97.

⁴⁹ According to Nalbandian, the phrase “all patriotic Armenian” symbolizes that the Party expected to unite three Armenian denominations: Armenian Orthodox Apostolics, Catholics, and Protestants; Nalbandian, p. 98.

⁵⁰ Artak Darbinian, *Hay Azadakragan Sharjman Ozeren* (From the Days of Armenian Liberation Movement), (Paris, 1947), pp. 125-128; see also Nalbandian, pp. 97-98.

of arms from Persia was a difficult and hazardous work, some came from that source.”⁵¹

In 1896, at a time when the political tension was increasing in Van because of the political and ethnic unrest the Armenagan Party reached the peak of its popularity. The Hnchags and Tashnaks also participated in the armed movement, but Armenagan –as the local force– led the “defense of Van” during the massacres of 1896. When the Ottoman military force suppressed the “defense/uprising,” the party was driven toward the East and then faded away. After the Young Turk Revolution in 1908, the Armenagan Party joined the other two small Armenian groups – a fraction from the *Veragazmial* (Re-Organized) Hnchag Party, and the *Miutiunagan* (Unity Society) – in establishing the *Ramgavar* (Democrat) Party. As will be seen in the next chapter, afterwards the Ramgavar Party adopted a legal line, and worked to strengthen the constitutional rule.

The importance of three Armenian educational institutions in the Armenian political movements must be underlined in the development of Armenian parties. The Nersesian Academy in Tbilisi, the Kevorkian Academy in Echmiadzin, and the Lazarian (or Lazarev) Academy in Moscow were the most important Armenian educational institutions that had the greatest effect in the formation of a young and dedicated Armenian intelligentsia. Most of the graduates of these schools were recruited in the Armenian schools in western and eastern Anatolia, and the Caucasus as teachers, and then played important roles in the formation and development of different political movements.⁵²

⁵¹ Nalbandian, p. 100.

⁵² Ter-Minassian, “Nationalism,” p. 148

The Hnchagian Party

The Hnchagian Party⁵³ was founded in August 1887 in Geneva by seven Caucasian Armenians. The founders were students at the universities in Europe, in their twenties, from bourgeois families, who were financially supporting them.⁵⁴ The political considerations of the Hnchagian organization were strongly influenced by Russian *Narodniki* and other populist movements; and especially by the views of G. V. Plekhanov and Vera Zasulich. Their methods and political formulations strongly resembled the Russian *Narodnaya Volya* (People's Will).⁵⁵ Even the party's name, *Hnchag* (which means "bell" in Armenian) was a simile of Alexander Herzen's newspaper *Kolokol*.

The ideology of the Hnchagian Party included both nationalist and Marxist elements. Nalbandian underlines that the Hnchags were the only Armenian political party in the nineteenth century whose program demanded an independent and united Armenian state, and a socialist order for all the peoples.⁵⁶ As a result of its cooperation with revolutionary movements other nations in Caucasus, and Russian suppression especially on the Armenian cultural and religious foundations which increased after 1880s, Hnchagian Party struggled against Tsarism as well. According to Ter Minassian, the Caucasian Hnchags were the first to introduce socialism into the Armenian Question, and they were also the first to concern

⁵³ In 1890 the Party was named *Hnchagian Heghapokhagan Gusagtsutiun* (Hnchagian Revolutionary Party), in 1905 *Hnchagian Sotsial Democrat Gusagtsutiun* (Hnchagian Social Democrat Party) and in 1909 *Sotsial Democrat Hnchagian Gusagtsutiun* (Social Democrat Hnchagian Party)

⁵⁴ Nalbandian, p. 104.

⁵⁵ *ibid.*, pp. 113-114; Ter Minassian, p. 149.

⁵⁶ Nalbandian, p. 113.

themselves with problems of propaganda. “In its early days, Hunchak political thought, literally bogged down in sentiment, was reduced to a turgid and incantatory revolutionary verbiage in which words like ‘revolution,’ ‘revolutionary,’ ‘freedom,’ ‘despotism,’ ‘barbarism,’ ‘misery,’ ‘humiliation,’ ‘sacrifices,’ and ‘socialism’ recurred with regularity.”⁵⁷

The Program of the Hnchagian Party which was drafted in 1886 by the founders of the Party had two grand aims. One of them was a criticism to the “oppression” and “exploitation” of the existing system, suggesting the foundation of a new system on the basis of humanitarian and socialist principles, through a revolution. In the Program, Party divided the existing society into two elements: “the exploiters” and “the exploited”.⁵⁸ The second aim was resulting of their nationalism and patriotism: The political and national freedom of Turkish Armenia.⁵⁹ Additionally, the program enumerated the principles that will be followed after the realization of the immediate objectives mentioned above. These were: “Extensive provisional autonomy,” “extensive communal autonomy,” “complete freedom of press, speech, conscience, assembly, and electoral agitation,” and “universal military service.”⁶⁰

The Hnchags received considerable support, especially from the educated circles of Armenians. According to the account of a contemporary, *in the first few months*, seven hundred people became members of the party in İstanbul alone, which is hard to believe when the political environment of İstanbul of the time under

⁵⁷ Ter Minassian, p. 150.

⁵⁸ *Dzrakir Hnchagian Gusagtsutiun* (Program of Hnchagian Party), (London, 1897), p. 3.

⁵⁹ *ibid.*; Nalbandian, p. 108.

⁶⁰ *ibid.*, p. 109.

Hamidian rule is considered.⁶¹ But until 1896 the leading force in the Armenian revolutionary movement was the Hnchagian Party.⁶² Although the Party mostly stressed the Marxist and socialist principles in the articles appearing in its paper *Hnchag* –which was being distributed secretly in İstanbul and in other parts of the Empire– the supporters of the Party knew little about socialism. “Many party members were not socialists by persuasion, but rather joined the Hnchags because of their immediate objective of winning the freedom of Turkish Armenia.”⁶³

In order to understand the mottos that inspired the Armenian youth or intelligentsia even in the early years of the Hnchagian movement, the memoirs of an Armenian revolutionary, Vahan Papazian, give us some important clues. Vahan Papazian, a native of Van, became a member of the Hnchagian branch in Rostov when he was nineteen, in 1896. However, we know that later on he converted and became one of the most important figures of the Tashnaktsutiun. According to him, heroism and the nationalist ideas mattered greatly for the youth.

We were all searching; looking for big, dangerous, important adventures fitting our age. ...Then, in 1896, Father Khrimian⁶⁴ came to *Nor* Nahcivan. ...In the church, with his great simplicity, with exciting pictures, he described the sufferings of the Armenians of Turkey, the uprisings of Sasun and Cilicia, the massacres, and the miserable life that our compatriots were living; and invited us to help them.

⁶¹ Aderbed [Sarkis Mubahaajian], *50 Amyak 1878-1928 Voskya Hopelian Hai Heghapokhoutian* (Fiftieth Year, 1878-1928 The Golden Jubilee of the Armenian Revolution), (Leninagan –today Gyumri: 1927); cited in Nalbandian, p. 117.

⁶² Lima, xvi.

⁶³ Nalbandian, p. 117.

⁶⁴ Mgrdich Khrimian: The Armenian Patriarch of İstanbul (1869-1873), and the Catholicos of all Armenians (1876-1882). During his mission in Van he published a patriotic-religious paper called *Ardzvi Vaspurakan* (The Eagle of Van); he was also a member of the committee who represented the Armenians in the Congress of Berlin in 1878. The Armenian population in the eastern vilayets labeled him as “Hayrig” (Father) and “Ardziv” (Eagle) because of his nationalist-humanitarian activity in the region.

The influence of that sermon remained unforgettable to me. I was thinking that, I had to help my people in a way; especially because the people suffering there were the people of my motherland.

(...) When Mrs. Sirmakeshian introduced me to a nice guy, who was a merchant, Arshag Hodjaian; he encouraged me to enter a more active movement. It was not clear the meaning of “the active movement” to me; understanding the meaning of my questioning eyes, he gave me an appointment for a more detailed conversation. When I went to his place, in the beginning he was reserved, but then gradually relaxed and told about the uprisings of Sasun and Cilicia and the Hnchagian Party. I had heard about the demonstrations that were organized by the Hnchag, and also about its famous leaders; but from Hodjaian I learned its history with admiration. As a result of all of this, after a few days, he introduced me to the administrators of the Hnchagian branch. ...As the first mission they wanted me to organize the students at *Nor Nahcivan*. They gave me the Program of Hnchagian, the paper *Hnchag*, and let me out from a hidden door.⁶⁵

As mentioned above, the main concern of the most of the members of the Hnchagian Party were the liberation of Armenia and their people, and the struggle against Tsarism. The center’s emphasis on socialism continued –very possibly, in order to provide the support of European and Russian socialists for the Armenian Question. At the London Hnchagian Conference in 1896, because of a huge disagreement about the socialist principles of the Party, the Center was criticized harshly by the nationalist elements of the Party. The nationalists argued that the Party’s emphasis on socialism in the resolution of the Armenian Question alienated the Armenian middle classes, and the bourgeoisie, and thus, limited the Party’s power. They also insisted on abandoning socialism and adopting a more reformist, democratic, liberal ideology. The result of the Congress was the separation of the Party; consequently, in 1898, a liberal-democrat wing of the Party founded: *Veragazmial Hncahagian Gousaktsoutiun* (the Reorganized Hnchagian Party).

⁶⁵ Vahan Papazian, *Im Houshere* (My Memoirs), (Beirut: Hairenik, 1950), vol. 1, pp. 7-9.

Party's struggle against Tsarism became more violent especially after 1903, when the government took a decision to confiscate all Armenian national properties. Although the situation changed in June 1905 through the imperial decision that ordered returning the confiscated properties,⁶⁶ the attitude of the Party against Russian authorities remained unchanged: "It is apparent from the news of the last days that Tsarist government approaching to the Armenians with a meaningful smile on its face. But, he must know that we are not the kind of believing such smiles any more!"⁶⁷

As will be seen in the next chapter, after the Young Turk Revolution, the Hnchagian Party, like other Armenian parties, adopted a legal line, declared its respect to Ottoman territorial integrity, and aimed at the democratization of the constitutional rule. Although it supported the CUP in the days of the 31 March counter-revolutionary attempt in İstanbul, the party remained as an opposition party, especially after the Adana events, but co-operated with the non-Armenian parties opposing the CUP policies. In the first electoral period in 1908 a representative of the Hnchagian Party, Hampartzum Boyadjian was elected from Kozan to the Ottoman Parliament.

The personality of Hampartzum Boyadjian terrifically symbolizes the transformation that the Hnchagian Party underwent during the constitutional rule. Actually, he was the one of the best known Armenian *fedais*, who had been known by the nickname "Murad" before the revolution, struggling against the Ottoman

⁶⁶ "Ludzum Tbrotsagan yev Galvadzagan Khntrots Rusahayots" (The Solution of the School and Property Problems of the Russian-Armenians), *Arevelian Mamul* (Eastern Press), 10 August 1905, p. 848.

⁶⁷ *Hnchag*, January 1908 (1), p. 2.

forces to overthrow the Hamidian rule; but thanks to the constitutional rule, he became a respected member of the parliament and the political circles.

The Armenian Revolutionary Federation (*Tashnaktsutiun*)

In the summer of 1890, three years after the foundation of the Hnchagian Party, *Hay Heghapokhagan Tashnaktsutiun* (The Armenian Revolutionary Federation) was founded in Tbilisi by three Caucasian Armenians. Before the foundation of the party, several small revolutionary groups in Tbilisi – socialists, nationalists, liberals, democrats – suffering from their lack of power, discussed the necessity of a new party. The party organization aimed at coordinating the activities of various student and radical groups in order to “mounting a unitarian struggle for the political and economic liberation of Turkish Armenia”⁶⁸ The name, *Tashnaktsutiun* (Federation) symbolized the unity of these divided groups.

Influenced mostly by the Russian *Narodniki* movement, and the Caucasian or Balkan revolutionary groups, politically and sociologically the Tashnaktsutiun was not very different from the Hnchag. In fact, the main aim in the foundation of the Tashnaktsutiun was to form a unity especially with the Hnchags as the most important party in the political arena: “The Hnchagian and Tashnaktsutiun parties were sociologically identical, had identical objectives (the defense and emancipation of Turkish Armenians), and saw the ‘Armenian revolution’ as a means to activate

⁶⁸ “Manifesto” (1890) in *Tivan Hay Heghapokhagan Tashnaktsutiun* (The Collection of [Documents] On Armenian Revolutionary Federation), Simon Vratzian (ed.), (Boston: Amerigayi Getr. Gomite, 1934) p. 36; see also Lima, p. vii, and A. Sevian, “The Founding of the Armenian Revolutionary Federation,” *Armenian Review*, vol. 34, June 1981, p. 126.

European diplomacy and advance the political solution of the Armenian Question.”⁶⁹ But, after some attempts “it had also become clear that the Tashnaktsutian had failed in its effort to include within the federation the largest and most important ...group, the Hnchag Party.”⁷⁰ According to Suny, “What ultimately divided them appeared in 1890 to be a mere difference of emphasis on the relative weight to be given to the socialist program of the Geneva revolutionaries and the nationalist sentiments of the Armenians in the Caucasus and in Turkey.”⁷¹

Since the formation of the Party was prepared by the coalition of various groups, the earliest document of it was a “naive and patriotic *Manifesto* calling on all Armenians –including the young, the old, the rich, the women, the priests– to support the ‘people’s war’ and the ‘Secret Task’ against the Turkish government.”⁷² In the founding meetings in Tiflis in 1890 one of the most important decision of the participants was “to set the organizational goal to bring about the political and economic freedom of Turkish Armenia.”⁷³ In the Second Congresses in 1892 the Party declared that “the aim of Armenian Revolutionary Federation is to gain the economic and political freedom of Turkish Armenians through rebellion.”⁷⁴ If the aims declared in the 1907 Program of Tashnaktsutian is considered the transformation of the political discourse of Tashnaktsutian become very apparent:

⁶⁹ Ter Minassian, “Nationalism...”, p. 150.

⁷⁰ Libaridian, p. 187.

⁷¹ Suny, “Populism,” p. 143.

⁷² Ter Minassian, p. 151.

⁷³ *Tivan Hay Heghapokhagan Tashnaktsutian* (The Collection of [Documents] On Armenian Revolutionary Federation), p. 36

⁷⁴ *Dzrakir Hai Heghapokhagan Tashnaktsutian Gazmvadz 1892i Enthanur Joghovin* (The Program of Armenian Revolutionary Federation Formed in the General Congress of 1892), (Geneva: Publication of Tashnaktsutian, 1906) 4th edition, p. 11.

“Political-economic freedom, based on a local autonomy and federative ties, *within the boundaries of a democratic Ottoman state...*”⁷⁵

Party aimed activating nationalist feelings of the Armenian populace especially in order to create a bigger bloc of activity. In most cases, “the glorious days of Armenian historical kingdoms and nobility” were the most important means to secure this, such as a letter written by Father Mgrdich Khrimian to the people of Van:

The appearance of political parties among you is an example of the rebirth of the historical houses of our nobility, while the Tashnaktsutiun Party is the new Armenian Knighthood. Its pioneers have shown themselves to be true knights in Van or elsewhere. Rise, rise Armenians, join this new Armenian knighthood, take heart.⁷⁶

In the beginning, the Tashnaktsutiun regarded socialist propaganda unfit for the Ottoman Empire; since there was not a working class, or factories, the application of socialist principles in the Ottoman Empire was regarded as “*udobiagan*” (utopian). Instead, they were defending “the real equality of all nations and religions on the basis of law.”⁷⁷ But in the course of time, they inserted socialist terminology into their activities: According to 1907 Program Tashnaktsutiun was “a revolutionary and socialist party.”⁷⁸ Especially in the six year gap separating the party’s first congress (1892) from the second (1898) the Tashnaktsutiun became “a growing organization with roots not only in the Caucasus, Persia and Armenia

⁷⁵ *Dzrakir* (Program), (Geneva: Publication of Tashnaktsutiun, 1907, p. 17.

⁷⁶ Cited in Dasnabedian, p. 121.

⁷⁷ *Dzrakir Hai Heghapokhagan Tashnaktsutiun Gazmvdz 1892i Enthanur Joghovin* (The Program of Armenian Revolutionary Federation Formed in the General Congress of 1892), pp. 3-5.

⁷⁸ *Dzrakir* (Program, 1907), p. 17.

Major,⁷⁹ but also had become quite a force in Constantinople, Egypt, the Balkans, the United States, etc.”⁸⁰

Especially during the negotiations in the second congress the Party started actively discussing to spread the revolutionary activity and propaganda among non-Armenian circles: A letter sent to Party’s Varna committee from *Troshag* editorial board in Geneva confirms this judgment: “...The matters [in the Congress] concerned our whole organization – tactical, where forces have to be concentrated, strengthening revolutionary organizations, *propaganda among non-Armenians* and Turkish-Armenian circles, *the question of cooperation and union*, etc.”⁸¹

At the second congress the party decided first, “to fashion ties with the Macedonians, Greeks and others,” and second, “to continue to work harmoniously with the Young Turks, to have their newspapers and ours to explain to the Turkish government our goals, and to have them create a new revolutionary force.”⁸² On the other hand, “the Congress unanimously accepted the principle that without European intervention it would be impossible to bring to a successful conclusion the struggle to free our people and that, therefore, before choosing the methods and times of operations, efforts must be funneled into the task of bringing about such intervention

⁷⁹ Geographically “Armenia Major” was bounded on the North by the River Cyrus (Kour), Iberia, Colchis, and the Moschici Mountains.; on the West by Asia Minor and the Euphrates; on the South by Mesopotamia and Assyria; on the East by the Caspian and Media. (*Haygagan-Sovedagan Hanrakidaran* (Armenian-Soviet Encyclopedia), (Yerevan: 13 vol. 1974-1982; and *International Standard Bible Encyclopedia*, <http://www.biblicalarcheology.net/OlderWorks/Armenia.html>.)

⁸⁰ Simon Vratzian, “Hai Heghapokhagan Tashnaksutian Yergrotr Enthanor Kongrese” *Hairenik* (Motherland), vol. xvi (1938), no 12, p. 68; in English, “The Second World (Untanoor) Congress of the Armenian Revolutionary Federation,” *Armenian Review*, September 1979, vol. 32.

⁸¹ Vratzian, p. 70 (*The emphases are mine*).

⁸² “Hagirdj yev Grdjadvadz Hushakir of the Kongres” (Condensed and Abbreviated Report of the Congress), in *Tivan Hay Heghapokhagan Tashnaksutian* (The Collection of [Documents] On Armenian Revolutionary Federation), # 1522; see also Vratzian, p. 250.

through all means.”⁸³ Moreover, the Party declared that, bringing the end of despotism was only possible through “a violent revolution” by which “compromise of nations, security of work, freedom of conscience, freedom of expression, and freedom of opinion” would be gained.⁸⁴ As a result of these decisions, the Tashnaksoutiun entered into a dialog with the Ottoman opposition movements in Europe, and in Anatolia when it was possible. An article published in the *Troshag* (Flag), the official organ of the Tashnaksutiun publishing in Geneva, called all opposition groups to co-operation in order to overthrow the Hamidian rule.⁸⁵ The first Congress of Ottoman Opposition Parties was gathered in Paris in 1902. The Hnchags and the Tashnaks attended the Congress along with several opposition groups, mainly the Young Turks. Although Armenian revolutionaries and the group of Prince Sabahaddin insisted on violent revolutionary activity as the sole solution to overthrow the despotism, especially Ahmed Rıza, an “*évolutionniste convaincu*”, refused this principle and defended that the struggle against despotism must not leave a legal line.⁸⁶ The Congress ended with a call for restoration of the Constitution of 1876.⁸⁷

In 1904, in the Third Congress of Tashnaksutiun the Party decided to continue to seek for cooperation with other revolutionary elements in the Empire:

⁸³ *ibid.*.

⁸⁴ *Dzrakir Hai Heghapokhagan Tashnaksutiun Gazmvadz 1892i Enthanur Joghovin* (The Program of Armenian Revolutionary Federation Formed in the General Congress of 1892), p. 7.

⁸⁵ Arsen Avagyan, “İttihat ve Terakki Cemiyeti ile Ermeni Siyasi Partileri Arasındaki İlişkiler,” in *Ermeniler ve İttihat ve Terakki*, (İstanbul: Aras, 2005), p. 17.

⁸⁶ *Rapport présenté au Congrès Socialiste International de Copenhague par le parti Arménien Daschnaktzoutioun, Turquie-Caucase-Perse*, (Geneve: Publication of Tashnaksutiun, 1910), p. 12.

⁸⁷ *ibid.* See also, A. Asdvadzadurian, “İttihad-Tashnaksagan Haraperutiunnere” (Unionists and Tashnaks Relationships), *Hairenik*, vol. XLII, no 12 (1964), p. 69.

It is necessary to remain loyal to principle of Tashnaktsutiun, which was current until today, to cooperate with several subject peoples of Turkey (Kurd, Turk, Assyrian, Lebanese, Macedonian, etc.). With this aim, all local responsible organs, bureaus, and central committees are informed to accomplish the needs of this rapprochement in an effective way. ... Related to Kurdish and Turkish people, it is suggested to the Western Bureau to make publications from time to time in Kurdish and Turkish, in which our attitude towards the foreigners in the country and towards their interests and our mission will be explained.⁸⁸

In its Fourth Congress in 1907, Tashnaktsutiun decided to continue “to hold the cases of Turkish Armenians and Russian Armenians, and additionally, to establish reel cooperation and compromise with Kurd and Turk elements against the common enemy –the dishonorable regime.”⁸⁹ At the same time, *Troshag* started to increase publishing articles under the titles of “Armenian-Turkish Compromise”.⁹⁰

In 27-29 December 1907, just seven months before the Young Turk Revolution the second Congress of the Ottoman Opposition Parties was gathered in Paris through the initiative of Tashnaktsutiun and CUP. The Hnchagian Party was not participated in the Congress. In January 1908 an article published in *Hnchag* by Sdepan Sapah-Gulian, the official organ of the Party in Paris, and listed the causes that prevented the Party to participate the Congress. According to this declaration/article, Hnchag was regarding searches for a legislation program in order to draw a detailed picture of the essences of the future revolution as crucial, and since there was not any mention about this issue the Party had suspicions on the sincerity of the Congress and Young Turks. The Party also demanded a new

⁸⁸ *Kaghvadzkner Hay Hegh. Tashnaktsutiun Yerrort Enthanur Joghovi Adrenakrutiunneren* (Collection of Third General Congress of Armenian Rev. Federation), pp. 25-26.

⁸⁹ “Sultanagan Tsasumn” (Rage of Sultan), *Troshag*, June-July 1907 (6-7), p. 1

⁹⁰ “Hai-Trkagan Hamerashkhutiun” (Armenian-Turkish Compromise), *Troshag*, June-July 1907 (6-7), p. 2.

Constitution instead of “Mithadian Constitution of 1876” on which the participants of Congress regarded as the basis for all legislative activity.⁹¹

At the Congress, the Tashnaksoutiun intended to create a coalition in order to overthrow Abdülhamid II. In fact, just before the Congress, the representatives of the parties agreed on some basic principles including the territorial integrity of the Ottoman Empire. During the negotiations, the methods to be followed in order to overthrow the existing political regime of the Empire were discussed. The Tashnaksoutiun proposed urging people to resist the government, not to pay their taxes, to resist to serve as conscript soldiers, and to organize guerrilla bands. Prince Sabahaddin and his supporters agreed to the proposal of the Tashnaksoutiun, but the Committee of Progress and Union objected to certain points, such as resisting to conscription on patriotic grounds. They also called for strict regulation of the guerrilla bands so that they did not degenerate into brigands. Moreover, they insisted that terrorism be limited to individual assassinations and not collective acts.⁹²

A declaration was issued after the gatherings and it was announced that the groups had agreed to force the Sultan to abdicate, to radically change the existing administration, and to establish a system of constitutional government.⁹³ Amongst the tactics to be adopted were armed resistance against the government, strikes, non-

⁹¹ Sdepan Sapah-Gulian, “Turk Prnabedutiune yev Yeridasart Turkere” (Turkish Despotism and Young Turks), *Hnchag*, January 1908 (1), pp. 2-11.

⁹² Şükrü Hanioglu, *Preparation for a Revolution: The Young Turks, 1902-1908*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 2001), pp. 192-197; for an interpretation of the decisions of the Congress made by Tashnaksutiun see “Turk Prnabedutiune yev Yeridasart Turkian” (Turkish Despotism and Young Turkey), *Troshag*, 1908 January (1), p. 2.

⁹³ *Haidararakir Osmanian Gaisrutian Enttimatir Darreru Gonkrein, Kmarvadz Yevrobayi Mech* (Declaration of the Congress of Ottoman Opposing Elements, Convened in Europe), (Geneva: Publication of Tashnaksutiun, 1907), p. 7.

payment of taxes, propaganda within the army, general rebellion etc.⁹⁴ Trusting in the permanence of the cooperation among the different elements of the Empire –as pointed out in the text accepted by the Congress: Turks, Armenians, Bulgarians, Wallachs, Albanians, Arabs, Jews, Druzes, Kurds– *Troshag* saluted the congress as “a perceptible evidence, standing in front of us, that will open a new century in the work of overthrowing Ottoman despotism.”⁹⁵ Although Hanioglu rightly points out the drawbacks of the sides about each other, and the vulnerability of the cooperation, their common bases about the Ottoman territorial integrity is very important for us to display the transformation in the Tashnaktsutiun’s targets. Lima underlines the most important consequences of the Congress as follows: “[After the Congress] the Young Turks had come to the conclusion that brute force may in fact be necessary, while the Dashnaks had decided to try the route of internally driven reforms without European intervention and guarantees.”⁹⁶ On the basis of Armenien Question it is also important that the participants accepted the sufferings of Armenians emerged through non-application of the reforms suggested by Congress of Berlin, and the opposition movements was a result of these sufferings.⁹⁷

As come to the activities in Caucasus, in 1903, in a time when the Tsarist Russia decided to confiscate the Armenian church and school properties, the Party organized general popular uprisings. Afterwards, Armenian revolutionaries became

⁹⁴ *Haidararakir Osmanian Gaisrutian Enttimatir Darreru Gonkrein, Kmarvadz Yevrobayi Mech* (Declaration of the Congress of Ottoman Opposing Elements, Convened in Europe), p. 10. Hanioglu, p. 203-205; see also Dikran Mesrob Kaligian, *The Armenian Revolutionary Federation Under Ottoman Constitutional Rule, 1908-1914*, (unpublished PhD dissertation presented to Boston College the Graduate School of Arts and Sciences Department of History), 2003, pp. 2-3.

⁹⁵ “Michgusagtsayin Gonkren,” (Interparty Congress), *Troshag*, January 1908 (1), p. 1.

⁹⁶ Lima, p. x.

⁹⁷ *Haidararakir Osmanian Gaisrutian Enttimatir Darreru Gonkrein, Kmarvadz Yevrobayi Mech* (Declaration of the Congress of Ottoman Opposing Elements, Convened in Europe), p. 6.

one of the important targets of anti-revolutionary campaign of Tsarist regime. The Party decided to cooperate with Russian revolutionary movement in the Third Congress in 1904, especially with Social-Revolutionary Party and Sagardvelo Party of Georgia.⁹⁸

Armenian Revolutionary Federation, though accepting that its founding and current aim is the historical mission of Ottoman Armenia that is acknowledged by the international treaties, it cannot deny the fact that recently human rights are being violated also outside Turkey. Party has the principle of taking its decisions in the direction of the protection of these rights and self-defense. At this moment, Tashnaktsutiun takes the responsibility of defending the Caucasian Armenians and tells the Responsible Council of Caucasus to take also the name of “Self-Defense Central Committee” and from that moment onwards take action in the name of Tashnaktsutiun. The Congress, adopts the tactics of oral and written propaganda, terror, public demonstration, and armed resistance, on the basis of self-defense.⁹⁹

The Party played an important role in the Constitutional Revolution in Russia in 1905. In 1906 *Troshag* was writing about “The scanty policies of Tsarism” which meant “Creating anti-revolutionary handcuffs from the movement of Caucasian Turks against Armenian reformatory demands.”¹⁰⁰ Only after Young Turk Revolution the center of gravity for Tashnaktsutiun became Ottoman territory where an important number of revolutionaries from Caucasus found refuge fleeing from Tsarist oppression.¹⁰¹ “The roles were reversed –Turkey was now the free environment where Tashnaktsutiun operated as a legal-parliamentary political party,

⁹⁸ *Kaghvadzknner Hay. Hegh. Tashnaktsutiun Yerrort Enthanur Joghovi Adrenakrutiunneren* (Collection of Third General Congress of Armenian Rev. Federation), p. 26.

⁹⁹ *ibid.*, p. 27.

¹⁰⁰ “Sultanagan Yerazner” (Dreams of Sultan), *Troshag*, February 1906 (2), p. 1.

¹⁰¹ Some of Caucasian revolutionaries who came İstanbul after constitutional revolution: Agnuni (Khachatur Malumian), Simon Zavarian, Rosdom, Avedis Aharonian, Khajak, Avedik İshagian, Dr. Der-Tavitian, Rupen Tarpinian, Nazarian. See Asdvadzadurian, p. 76.

while the Caucasus was an arena for underground operations.”¹⁰² In 1909, Armenian revolutionary movement was under big pressure in Caucasus and complaining about “a policy of wild torture started against the Armenian social movement.”¹⁰³ Even in its 1909 Program the Party declared the struggle against Tsarist despotism will continue.¹⁰⁴ In 1912 *Troshag* writing that: “There is no anything new in the ‘New Course.’ Russian winter is continuing. It is a winter especially for the Russian-Armenians. The dungeons are still chock-full. There are new arrests and punishments.”¹⁰⁵

It is usually believed that the cooperation of Armenians and other revolutionary groups was limited to the struggle against Hamidian rule, which was symbolized by Yıldız Palace, “the ‘Ottoman Bastille’” as one of the Turkish participants of the 1907 congress called it.¹⁰⁶ But as mentioned above, and as it will be examined in the next chapter, the collaboration and sometimes coalition, between the different Armenian groups with their Turkish counterparts continued after the Young Turk Revolution, although there were a number of important problems regarding certain issues, casting a shadow on the cooperation, such as different dimensions of the Armenian Question; the Tashnaktsutium, the Reorganized Hnchag and the Ramgavar parties supported the CUP in order to achieve a more stable

¹⁰² Dasnabedian, p. 123.

¹⁰³ “Stolypin-Vorontsovean Regime yev Tashnaktsutium” (The Regime of Stolypin-Vorontsov and Tashnaktsutium), *Troshag*, 1909 February-March (2-3), p. 17; see also *Rapport présenté au Congrès Socialiste International de Copenhague par le parti Arménien Daschnaktzoutioun, Turquie-Caucase-Perse*, pp. 4-11.

¹⁰⁴ *Haidararakir yev Voroshumner HH Tashnaktsutian Hinkerort Enthanur Joghovi-1909* (The Declaration and Decisions of the Fifth General Congress of AR Federation-1909), (Geneva: Publication of Tashnaktsutium, 1910), pp. 21-22,

¹⁰⁵ “Rusasdan: Stolypinitis Hedo” (Russia: After Stolypin), *Troshag*, 1911 July-December (7-12), p. 90.

¹⁰⁶ “Michgusagtsayin Gonkren,” p. 2.

regime, and to strengthen the constitutional rule. As pointed above, the Tashnaktsutian saw a strong modernist and progressive trend in the CUP. This was the main reason for their cooperation. The Hinchagian party, which never approached a collaboration with the CUP sympathetically, co-operated with its rivals, Prince Sabahaddin's *Teşebbüs-i Şahsi ve Adem-i Merkeziyet Cemiyeti* (The Society for Private Enterprise and Decentralization), and then *Hürriyet ve İtilaf Fırkası* (Liberal Entente Party, LEP). All in all, these alliances, rapprochements, and cooperation with other parties show that the Armenian revolutionary movements became the legal actors of the Ottoman party system in the second constitutional era.

CHAPTER II

Armenian Political Parties in the Second Constitutional Period

Although the roots of Armenian political organizations go as far back as 1870, and their activities reached their apex in the 1890s, such activities remained in an illegal line, and Armenian political organizations stayed underground, as did the Russian-Caucasian or Balkan organizations strategically akin to them. The Young Turk Revolution and the Proclamation of the Liberty in 10/23 July 1908 brought for the first time in Ottoman history free political activity for the political parties, as well as other important liberal particularistic attributes for the Ottoman political arena.

As early as 1907, especially after 1906-1907 tax payers' revolts occurred in different Anatolian cities, such as Erzurum, Kastamonu, Trabzon, Sivas, Diyarbakır, Van, Mamüretülaziz, Halep, Muğla, Aydın, Konya, etc. Armenian revolutionary organizations happily saluted the "Turkish revolutionary movement."¹ Tashnaktsutiun, although complaining the huge economic burden that brought by drought and shortage in Anatolia to the Armenian peasants that year was becoming hopeful with Turkish revolutionary activity and calling the Armenian population to support that movement:

The horrible nightmare of Turkish movement is knocking on the doors of Yıldız and leads the Red Savage to put new plans into force. Suffering Armenian people look at the Turkish rebels with admiring eyes and begin to hope for the future. Yet for today they are aware that a smallest action of the Turkish movement is putting a lot responsibility on their shoulders. Turkish people of Erzurum refuses to pay individual tax [*şahsi vergi*] and the authorities, knowing very well what kinds of

¹ "Nor Daknabe" (New Crisis), *Troshag*, March 1907 (3), p. 1.

discontents lie behind this, do not take any precaution. Instead, they increase the tax responsibility of the Armenian people of the district by 60% and collect it with military force.²

As most scholars point out, the Armenian community strongly supported the new political developments that they hoped would come through the Constitution and the Parliament. Even today, the most popular photographs from İstanbul, Merzifon, Erzurum, Harput, İzmir or any other place of the meetings related to the Young Turk Revolution in July-August 1908 display the participation of the Armenian communities in celebrations with their placards and flags displaying the mottos of the constitutional revolution “liberty, equality, fraternity and justice” both in Armenian and Ottoman Turkish. This participation in the celebrations and the meetings were a natural result of Armenians’ sufferings from the Hamidian despotic rule, and their hopes concerning the “constitutional life” (*hayat-ı meşrutiyet*) that the constitutional regime was expected to bring.

Troshag, the official organ of Tashnaktsutiun saluted the Young Turk Revolution as follows:

History had witnessed only a few of such happy surprises. Enlightened and freedom-loving humanity salutes this beautiful step taken by the Young Turks. We are happy due to this new and powerful gain of the idea of struggle. We, after the mass movements of Erzurum, Kastamonu and Bitlis,³ are happy due to the victorious awakening of our neighbors, citizens, which points to their revolutionary maturity. Therefore, it is happily declared that starting from today Turkey and all its population has entered a new era.⁴

² *ibid.* See also, *Rapport présenté au Congrès Socialiste International de Copenhague par le parti Arménien Daschnaktsoutioun, Turquie-Caucase-Perse*, (Geneve: Publication of Tashnaktsutiun, 1910), p. 13; in this report Tashnaktsutiun gave some information about their cooperation with a socialist “Young Turk” organization, *Sabah’ül-hayr*, formed in Van in 1906, p. 14.

³ These were the most important (tax) revolts of 1905-1907 period, in which Tashnaktsutiun-Young Turk rapprochement played an important role; for details see Aykut Kansu, *1908 Devrimi*, (İstanbul: İletişim, 2001), pp. 35-95.

⁴ *Troshag* (Flag), 31 July 1908.

Although greeted the end of the despotism *Hnchag* is more self-possessed about the future of the Revolution:

The present events show that we can consider the Hamidian despotism as being collapsed. The baladian camarilla, and its head, the Sultan himself, who suppressed, tortured, and tormented the multi-language nations of the Empire, had lost the helm of power. That piece of old Turkey – which adopted the mottos of reaction and brigandry, set the races against each other, and play the role of grave digger of the nations – no more exists. No more exists the official power that wanted to solve the Armenian Question through annihilating the Armenian nation. The construction the old state is shaken, but it is not fallen down. The old is shocked, and the new is in the period of coming into existence. All things are in a beginning era of giving seeds, fruits, and producing. The productivity of all of these is depended on the determination of the effective factors.⁵

The Declaration of Liberty was welcomed not only in the territories of Ottoman Empire but also among the Armenian circles in Caucasus. *Yergri Tzayne* (Voice of Motherland) which was an Armenian revolutionary journal in Tiflis declaring that: “Turkish-Armenian comrades! It is the doors of a new era that is opening in front of you! The despotism of Abdülhamid’s monarchy is shaken with its foundation, its about to collapse. The dream of yesterday, today comes true.”⁶

On the basis of the activities of political parties, the spirit of freedom displayed its effects quickly, and four Armenian parties, 1. *Hai Heghapokhagan Tashnaktsutiun* (Armenian Revolutionary Federation, ARF), 2. *Heghapokhagan Hnchagian Gusagtsutiun* (Revolutionary [“Social-Democrat” after 1909] Bell Party), 3. *Sahmanatragan Ramgavar Gusagtsutiun* (Constitutionalist People’s Party), and 4.

⁵ “Sahmanatragan Turkia yev Haygagan Khntir” (Constitutional Turkey and the Armenian Question), *Hnchag*, June-July 1908 (6-7), p. 49.

⁶ “Sahmanatrutiun Turkiayum,” (Constitution in Turkey) *Yergre Tzayne* (Voice of Motherland), 18/31 July 1908 (26), p. 1.

Veragzmial Hnchagian Gusagtsutiun (Reformed Bell Party) started to work freely following one another.

Although some historians in Turkey studying the Armenian Question consider these political parties as terrorist organizations, as seen in the Introduction, in the period of 1908-1914 the political activities of Ottoman-Armenians was mostly limited to a legal line. All the Armenian political parties mentioned above declared their respect and support of the constitutional rule, and perhaps most importantly, their respect of the territorial integrity of the Ottoman state. Against the conservative movements, loyalist to Sultan Abdülhamid, who aimed to weaken constitutionalist principles and maybe the closure of the parliament, they collaborated with the modernist, progressive political groups. Armed struggle was a means of political language that the Armenian revolutionary groups adopted before 1908; but after the Young Turk Revolution – although in most cases, problems between Armenians and Muslims continued after Revolution in the provinces and created a differentiation in the considerations about the situation for the Armenian revolutionaries in big cities and provinces– they put their arms down.

For instance, when Tashnaktsutiun’s branch of Van demanded some money in order to buy arms for self-defense, Party’s İstanbul Bureau reacted firmly. Bedros Agnoui of İstanbul Bureau accused Meloyan, one of the directors of Van branch, as being “naive,” and wrote that: “We are living in a time that Turkish police will defend the honor of the Armenian women.”⁷ Thus there is no record of any important

⁷ Vahan Papazian, *Im Houshere* (My Memoirs), (Beirut: Hairenik, 1952), vol. 2, p. 36.

armed incident during the period of 1908-1914 in the “Armenian *vilayets*”.⁸ Even after the Adana incidents in April 1909, where approximately 20.000 Armenians died, Armenian revolutionaries did not undertake any armed action. In this chapter, it will be shown how Armenian political parties integrated into the Ottoman party system through their alliances, cooperation, and agreements with other legal parties active in the country. Such factual evidences may help to create a more authentic picture of the constitutional period in which Armenians played their roles as other Ottoman peoples did, which is usually ignored.

Armenian Parties in the Legal Political Activity

It is clear that most of the prominent Armenian political figures were not aware of the Revolution in 10/23 July 1908. For instance, Vahan Papazian, who later became the deputy of Van, was in the mountains, fighting against an army unit, and suspiciously ceased the struggle when letters came from his comrades declaring the Declaration of the Liberties.⁹ Krikor Zohrab, escaping from the Hamidian follow-up, was in Paris. Like Papazian, Rupen Der-Minassian and his group were fighting near

⁸ In the First Balkan War, Antranig Ozanian (aka Baruyr), one of the most prominent Armenian *fedai* leaders attached to the Armenian Revolutionary Federation (Tashnaksutiun) commanded an Armenian voluntary unit in the Bulgarian Army. But it must be noted that after the alliance between Tashnaksutiun and Committee of Union and Progress (CUP) in 1908 he was resigned from the party, and it was a personal initiative. Very tragically, in the Balkan Wars, in the Ottoman Army which he fought against, there were a lot of Ottoman Armenians. See, Dikran Mesrob Kaligian, *The Armenian Revolutionary Federation Under Ottoman Constitutional Rule, 1908, 1914*, unpublished PhD dissertation presented to Boston College the Graduate School of Arts and Sciences Department of History, December 2003, p. 374; see also, Leon Troçki [Trotsky], *Balkan Savaşları*, (İstanbul: Arba, 1995), pp. 283-295.

⁹ Papazian, p. 480; see also Gaidz F. Minassian, “Birinci Dünya Savaşı Öncesinde Ermeni Devrimci Federasyonu ile İttihat ve Terakki Cemiyeti Arasındaki İlişkiler,” in *Ermeniler ve İttihat ve Terakki*, (İstanbul: Aras, 2005), p. 153.

Muş, and Ottoman soldiers told them the good news with their white flags.¹⁰ Aram Manukian, who was a *fedai* leader in Van, was in prison since January 1908.¹¹

But, it might be said that, although Armenian revolutionaries did not participate directly in the Macedonian uprising that brought the revolution very fast, their armed struggle of years, and then cooperation with the Young Turks played an important role in overthrowing the Hamidian regime. Although the “moment” of the Revolution had no direct relation to the Congress that gathered in December 1907 in Paris¹² through the initiative of the Tashnaktsutium Party and the Young Turks (both Ahmed Rıza and Prince Sabahaddin groups), Tashnaks succeeded in benefiting the common and general feeling of enthusiasm and acted as one of the owners of the Revolution.

In September 1909, the Fifth Congress of Tashnaktsutium was convened. In this Congress the Party discussed its new policies which would be adopted under constitutional rule.

Tashnaktsutium leave the confidential methods by which it struggled against despotic regime as a revolutionary and fighting party. As a supporter of constitutional regime, which is the most appropriate regime for the development and the practice of its program and principles, the Party naturally comes out with its all fighting forces against reaction, when it threaten the constitutional instruments and attempts to re-establish the conditions which were the causes of the recession and under-development of this country.¹³

¹⁰ Rupen, *Hai Heghapokhagani me Hushere* (The Memoirs of an Armenian Revolutionary), (Beirut: Hamazkain, 1977) vol. V, p. 354; see also Minassian, p. 154.

¹¹ Vahe Tashdjian, *Ishkhane* (Iskhan [Nikol Mikaelian-Boghosian], (Yerevan: Varantian, 1994), p. 126; interestingly, after his release from prison in June thanks to the general amnesty, the Muslim population of Van also called him as “Aram Paşa”

¹² “Inchu yev Inchbes Dzakets Heghapokhagan Sharjume,” (Why and how Emerged the Revolutionary Movement) *Yergre Tzayne* (Voice of Motherland), 18/31 July 1908 (26), p. 5.

¹³ *Haidararakir yev Voroshumner HH Tashnaktsutian Hinkerort Enthanur Joghovi-1909* (The Declaration and Decisions of the Fifth General Congress of AR Federation-1909), (Geneva:

The other parties, especially the most influential one, the Hnchag Party, although permitted to work freely,¹⁴ since it not participated to the 1907 Congress regarded with definite suspicion by the constitutional governments. In a nutshell, just after the Revolution, the CUP regarded the Tashnaktsutium as an associate, but the other Armenian parties –especially Hnchagian Party – as potential rivals that would be tolerated in the name of the virtues of the Constitutional regime.

Just after the Revolution Hnchagian Party issued a “Program for Turkey” and mostly in order to gain the trust of the Young Turks the leaders of Party declared in its foreword that “Hnchagian Party had never been a party nationalist aiming absolute separation... We wanted separation only from Turkish absolutism, Turkish despotism. ...And since the regime is not despotism or absolutism today, ...consequently, *the idea of separation* completely loses its causes of existence.”¹⁵ In 26 January 1910 Ministry of Internal Affairs ratified The Program of Social-Democrat Hnchagian Party.¹⁶

Publication of Tashnaktsutium, 1910), pp. 1-2, and “Haidararakir HH Tashnaktsutian Hinkerort Enthanur Joghovi” (The Declaration of the Fifth General Congress of AR Federation), *Troshag*, September 1909 (9), p. 113.

¹⁴ One of the leaders of Revolutionary Hnchagian Party, Suren Bartevian met with Ahmed Rıza in order to get some guarantees from Committee of Union and Progress; only after this meeting Hnchags could start to work legally in the Ottoman Empire. Manuk G. Çizmeciyani, *Badmutium Amerigahai Kaghakagan Gusagtsutians 1890-1925* (The History of American-Armenian Parties 1890-1925), Fresno 1930, s. 141, cited in Arsen Avagyan, “İttihat ve Terakki Cemiyeti ile Ermeni Siyasi Partileri Arasındaki İlişkiler,” in *Ermeniler ve İttihat Terakki*, (İstanbul: Aras, 2005), pp. 40-42.

¹⁵ Sdepan Sapah-Gulian and Murad (Hampartzum Boyadjian), “Harachapan” (Foreword), in *Dzrakir Hnchagian Gusagtsutian (Dacgasdani Hamar)* (The Program of Hnchagian Party / For Turkey), (İstanbul, 1908), pp. 3-4; The refusal of seperatism was also declared in the Fifth Chapter of the Program “[The Party] refuses all kinds of seperatism from constitutional Turkey” , p. 13; the same sentence was also in the 1910 Program of Hnchagian Party, *Dzrakir Social-Democrat Hnchagian Gusagtsutian (Dacgasdani Hamar)* (Program of Social-Democrat Hnchagian Party/For Turkey, (İstanbul, 1910), p. 15. Also Tashnaks declared their refusal of seperatism in their Fifth Congress in 1909 with a reference to Adana event, *Haidararakir yev Voroshumner HH Tashnaktsutian Hinkerort Enthanur Joghovi-1909* (The Declaration and Decisions of the Fifth General Congress of AR Federation-1909), p. 3 and 6.

¹⁶ *Dzrakir Social-Democrat Hnchagian Gusagtsutian (Dacgasdani Hamar)* (Program of Social-Democrat Hnchagian Party/For Turkey), p. 3.

The opposition of Hnchagian Party to the CUP policies get them closer to the other opposition parties. Even before the Young Turk Revolution Hnchags was in a collaboration with Prince Sabahaddin's the Society of Private Entrepreneurship and Decentralization. In the Constitutional period Liberal Entente Party (LEP) became the most important political associate of Hnchagian Party. As far as is known, after the foundation of the LEP, two anti-Unionist parties, the LEP and the Hnchag, signed an agreement of cooperation on 1912. Although there is no mention about this agreement in the Turkish historiography, the memoirs of Sabah-Gulian, reveal the concerns of the Hnchagian Party on the issue: "The Central Committee of the Party, after a discussion in which all the details were discussed from all respects, took the decision to start negotiations with the Central Committee of Liberal Entente Party. And that agreement was signed, which was one of the historical achievements of the Social Democrat Hnchagian Party and which occupies a respectable place among the pages of the war of freedom of the Armenian people."¹⁷

The Ramgavar Party, which was a union of three small Armenian parties¹⁸ was founded on 31 October 1908 in Alexandria, Egypt. The Party was a continuation of Armenagan Party – founded in Van, in 1885. But Ramgavars, as a fruit of constitutional new political circumstance, adopted a legal line, and aimed "Our demands and tasks, which are perfectly in line with reason and rationality and beneficial from the point of view of the general interests of the country, serving for the production and confirmation of harmonious relations between our party and

¹⁷ S. Sapah-Gülyan, *Badaskhanaduneri* (Responsibles), (Beirut, 1974), p. 312, (cited in Arsen Avagyan, p. 94).

¹⁸ 1. the Armenagan Party founded in 1885 in Van and remained as a local movement, 2. a fraction in the Veragazmial Hnchag Party, 3. *Miutiunagan* (Unity) Society.

political parties of other Ottoman elements, presence of which was desired from the beginning and which is necessary from the point of view of assuring, in a relatively short period of time, the essential interests and the general prosperity of the country...”¹⁹ Declaring that their main principle would be “Being Armenian together with being Ottoman,”²⁰ the Ramgavar Party abandoned the revolutionary way of political struggle, joined the powers who would fight against the “enemies of the Constitution,”²¹ and aimed for the democratization of the Constitution, the territorial integrity of the Ottoman Empire, and lastly the decentralization of the Ottoman administrative scheme.²²

The Ramgavar Party attempted to transform itself into a popular movement among the Armenians and worked to create organizations in İstanbul and Anatolia. But these attempts failed. Darbinian explains that, “Founding a few clubs in the neighborhoods of the capital was hardly possible in two years.”²³ As a result, the Ramgavars remained only an elite movement (especially among the religious hierarchy and intellectuals), and although they had an important impact in the Armenian National Assembly as the “central group,” were unable to gain any

¹⁹ “Meşrutiyet ve Hukuk-u Avam Taraftarı Ermeni Fırkasının Beyanname ve Programıdır,” in Anaide Ter Minassian, *Ermeni Devrimci Hareketi'nde Milliyetçilik ve Sosyalizm 1887-1912*, translated by Mete Tunçay, (İstanbul: İletişim, 1992) p. 88; “Akıl ve mantığa tamamiyle muvafık ve memleketin menafi-i umumiyesi nokta-i nazarından müfid olan işbu metalib ve âmalin fırkamızla diğer anasır-i Osmaniyyeye mensup siyasi firkalar arasında vücudu ez-ser nev arzu olunan ve memleketin menafi-i esasiye ve saadet-i umumiyesinin bi'n-nesibe az bir müddette temini nokta-i nazarından elzem bulunan revabıt-i vifakın istihsal ve teyidine hizmet...”

²⁰ “Ermenilik Osmanlılıkla beraber ibaresi fırkamızın üss-ü mesleğidir.” *ibid.*, p. 93.

²¹ *ibid.*, p. 92.

²² *ibid.*, pp. 93-105.

²³ Artag Darbinian, *Hay Azadagrakan Sarjman Oreren (Huser 1890-en 1940)* (From the Days of Armenian National Struggle [Memoirs from 1890 to 1940]), (Paris, 1947), p. 205; in Avagyan, p. 47.

noteworthy support from the populace.²⁴ This is why the CUP often ignored them while founding a relationship with Armenian parties.

The Veragazmial Hnchag Party also was unable to create a strong impact in the political arena. Declaring the end of revolutionary activity and that it did not seek the separation of the Armenian *vilayets*, Veragazmial Hnchag re-organized as a legal party like the other Armenian parties. In September 1908 the party's İstanbul bureau published an announcement and saluted the Constitution, referring to it as the only way for a peaceful, liberal, and participatory political environment. Like the Ramgavar Party Veragazmial Hnchags remained under the shadow of the two other important Armenian parties, the Tashnaktsutiun and the Hnchag, and had little impact. In 1912, the number of the members of the Veragazmial Hnchag Party was not more than 100.²⁵

Armenians as the “Mortar” or the “Salt” of the Constitutional Regime

Since the Armenian parties played the role of the defenders of constitutional rule against the counter-revolutionary attempt on 31 March 1909,²⁶ the public opinion regarded the Armenian community mostly as a power providing the longevity of the constitutional regime. It was clear that the expectations of the Armenians from the constitutional rule were a direct result of their sufferings during the Hamidian era. The ideas of a Unionist leader reflect this general admission: “The Armenians take side with the Constitution as a whole. They seem as the salt of the

²⁴ Avagyan, p. 47.

²⁵ *ibid.*, pp. 48-49.

²⁶ *Troshag* welcomed the suppression of counter-revolutionary attempt as “Second Revolution”, in April 1909 (4), p. 41.

state, and they pull the other elements with them.”²⁷ Asdvadzadurian, reminds a statement of a *molla* exalting the efforts of the Armenians defending the constitutional rule: “All the revolutionary movements in the other countries were started through shedding blood, but in our country the revolution started by the blood shed from Armenians.”²⁸

Vahan Papazian, in his memoirs, tells that Ahmed Rıza, one of the Unionist leaders and the chairman of the Parliament at that time and who was known to be antagonistic to the revolutionary methods, welcomed him and Vartkes Serengulian, the deputy of Erzurum from Tashnaksutiun, in the parliament. Serengulian introduced Papazian as “a *fedai* descended from the mountains” to Ahmed Rıza, he replied warmly “How nice! Our trustworthy friends are descending from the mountains in order to defend constitutional institutions.”²⁹

Another example of such considerations in the parliamentary debates occurred in relation to the Adana incidents, which started coincidentally³⁰ with the counter-revolutionary attempt in İstanbul, and caused a great distress between Armenian and Muslim communities. Rıza Tevfik, the deputy of Edirne defended Armenian *fedais* against the accusations of organizing an uprising in Adana: “...today, we cannot accuse Armenians of being *fedais* or of other things of the same sort. There are *fedais* among the Armenians, I saw them, they really sacrificed their lives for

²⁷ In Taner Akçam, *İnsan Hakları ve Ermeni Sorunu*, (Ankara: İmge, 1999), p. 248; “Ermeniler tek vücut olarak Anayasa’nın yanındalar. Devletin tuzu gibiler, bütün öteki unsurları peşlerinden çekiyorlar.”

²⁸ A. Asdvadzadurian, “İttihad-Tashnaksagan Haraperutiunnere” (Unionists and Tashnaks Relationships), *Hairenik*, vol. XLII, no 12 (1964), p. 71.

²⁹ Papazian, p. 89.

³⁰ The Armenian public opinion of the time related the Adana event with the mutiny in İstanbul: “The beginning of the massacre at Thursday 1/14 April was not a accidental coincidence. Naturally, Yıldız [the Sultan] played an important role in the Adana massacre.” “Giligian Sarsapner,” (The Horrors of Cilicia), *Troshag*, May 1909 (5), p. 54.

freedom and worked for our martyrs in the hospital. I do not know another sort of *fedai*. We cannot accuse a nation with a great crime who served for the freedom together with ourselves and a nation and who after facing all these oppressions and insults... still competes with several non-Muslim elements that are not from us....”³¹

Alliances: CUP and Tashnaktsutiun, LEP and Hinchags

As known, the Young Turk Revolution is a revolution from above lacking the crucial support from society, and thus the CUP felt powerless to take the government and the authority in their hands in the beginning. According to the Unionists, the anti-revolutionary and anti-CUP forces were waiting for the appropriate opportunity to defeat them. Under such circumstances, the CUP was in the need of powerful political allies. The Armenian community, sharing the Unionist worries of a counter-revolutionary attack because of the fear of the Hamidian despotism, was a convenient ally for the CUP. As Gaidz F. Minassian has pointed out, four important resemblances between CUP and the Tashnaktsutiun made their cooperation more comfortable: Similar (revolutionary) partisan attributes, the desire to overcome the *Ancien Régime*, the aim of creating a renaissance for the state organization, and the

³¹ *Meclisi Mebusan Zabıt Ceridesi: Devre: I, İctima Senesi: I, Cilt: 3: 28 Mart 1325 Tarihli Elli Beşinci İnikattan-14 Mayıs 1325 Tarihli Seksen Birinci İnikada Kadar* (Ankara: TBMM Basımevi, 1982), p. 116; “(...) bugün Ermenileri fedaidir, yok bilmem nedir diye itham edemeyiz. Ermenilerde fedai vardır, ben gördüm onları, hakikaten hürriyet için canlarını feda ettiler ve hastanede bizim şühedamız için hizmet ettiler. Başka türlü bir fedai bilmiyorum. Hürriyete, bu kadar bizimle beraber hizmet eden bir milleti ve bunca zulüm ve hakaret gördükten sonra ...büyük bir kabahatle itham edemeyiz.”

aim of giving sovereignty to the people³² (at least on the basis of their doctrines and discourses).

These political similarities between the two powerful political organizations played important roles in their cooperation and thanks to such cooperation a mutual co-existence became possible in the political arena. The CUP benefited from these by providing the endurance of the constitutional regime by the Armenian political circles and population, which was the one of the most active and influential masses in the Ottoman country. The Tashnaktsutium and the intellectuals who were thinking parallel to their policies, such as Krikor Zohrab, one of the most influential Armenian figures of the time whose discourses will be examined thoroughly below, were open to the collaboration with the Turkish element, and were preaching the qualities of the constitutional regime, and the advantages of supporting the CUP. The Armenians started to express their problems more freely, and hold a political power through political parties, the press, and the Patriarchate, which had been impossible in the Hamidian era. On the other hand, the CUP also benefited from the loyalty of the Armenian people to the constitution and felt a guarantee against the “obscurantist” “reactionary” or “religious” elements’ threats to the constitution through relying on the Armenian community. This mode of co-existence brought a political climate of cooperation.

In the second constitutional period, the Tashnaktsutium was the most powerful and influential Armenian political party in the Ottoman empire. For the first electoral period of the Ottoman Parliament the Armenians won eleven seats; four of them were Tashnaks who had participated in armed revolutionary activity before the

³² Minassian, p. 149.

Young Turk Revolution: Vahan Papazian (aka ‘Koms’) from Van, Karekin Pastrmajian (aka ‘Armen Garo’), and Vartkes Serengulian (aka ‘Kissag’ and ‘Hovhannes’) from Erzurum, and Kegham Der Garabedian (aka ‘Dadrag’ and ‘Asoghig’) From Muş. It can be assumed that this situation was the result of, first, the Tashnaktsutiun’s widespread branches in Anatolia, and second, its cooperation with the CUP. The latter had special importance, because thanks to this cooperation the Tashnaktsutiun felt comfortable claiming a significant role of their own in the Young Turk Revolution. Thus, the Tashnaktsutiun gained an evident superiority to other Armenian parties, and especially its most important rival the Hnchagian Party which remained an opposition party and could not benefit from the advantages of cooperation with a governmental party, except its alliance with the LEP in 1912.

Beginning with 1907 until World War I the Tashnaktsutiun and the CUP signed four agreements. As mentioned above, the first agreement took place in December 27-29, 1907. This was a practical mutual contract in order to overthrow Hamidian despotism. Second, after the Young Turk Revolution, the two parties negotiated on the basis of an election alliance, and after the compromise, although the Tashnaktsutiun could not obtain the number of seats sought,³³ the Tashnak candidates were elected from the CUP lists. Third, and maybe most importantly, after the Adana Incident, which Armenian public opinion believed to have had the participation of the CUP to a great extent, the Tashnaktsutiun took a grand risk and declared the continuation of the cooperation with the CUP in its Fifth Congress in

³³ For instance, Vahan Papazian writes that they must get three seats from the *vilayet* of Van if the Armenian population is concerned. In fact, the total number of deputies elected from Van were three (two of them from Van, one of them from Hakkari); this situation displays that in some cases the expectations of Tashnaktsutiun from the elections were far from being realistic. (Papazian, p. 89)

August 1909. Just a few days after this declaration, the Western bureau of the Tashnaktsutiun and the Central Committee of the CUP prepared a contract of the conditions in Salonica, and in September two parties signed the agreement in İstanbul.³⁴

The Agreement which created a reaction among some Armenian circles such as the Hnchagian Party and Patriarchate,³⁵ was focused mainly on the strengthening of the Constitutional rule, the restoration of the good relationship between the Ottoman nations, and the unity and the independence of the motherland. The important thing is that reaction of the Hnchags or the Patriarchate was not anti-constitutionalist in essence; rather, it was the result of the power politics in the Armenian community. The Hnchagian Party and the Patriarchate were anxious because they saw that thanks to the compromise with the CUP, the Tashnaktsutiun was gaining a strong foothold in the Armenian community. In the agreement, the cooperation between Tashnaktsutiun and the CUP was formulized under five titles:

1. Uninterrupted application of the democratic-constitutional rules.
2. United struggle against the anti-constitutionalist elements.
3. The re-organization of the administrative institutions on the basis of de-centralization principles.
4. Equality and removal of the discrimination for the non-Muslim communities.
5. The foundation of a special body by the two parties in order to guard the application of the decisions of this agreement.³⁶

The last agreement between the two parties took place in 1912, again as an alliance for the elections. This alliance was inherently a response to the agreement between the Hnchagian Party and the LEP which was aiming to become a strong

³⁴ Avagyan, pp. 70-71.

³⁵ *ibid.*, p. 72.

³⁶ *Troshag*, October-November 1909 (10-11); Papazian, pp. 128-129; and Avagyan, pp. 71-72

alternative to the CUP's power. The Hnchags' cooperation with the Liberal Entente Party was an attempt to gain power against the Tashnaktsutiun. In 1962, 50 years after these political movements, the *Zartonk* (Awakening), the official organ of the Ramgavar Party in Beirut, determined that, "Some factions among the radical Armenians have united with the *Hürriyet ve İtilaf*, the opponent of the *İttihat ve Terakki*, only to remain in a position contradictory to the Tashnaktsutiun."³⁷

After the alliance in 1912, the relationship between the Tashnaktsutiun and the CUP deteriorated. During the 1912 elections the CUP used many illegal suppressive methods, such as violence or hiding ballot box as in order to gain the majority in the parliament; thus 1912 parliamentary elections were called "*sopalı seçimler*" (elections with beating). Although both parties worked together in the election campaign, the promises given to the Tashnaktsutiun for the elections were not carried out by CUP. For instance, although 19 Armenian deputies were promised, but only ten were elected,³⁸ which was lower than the 11 deputies of the 1908 elections. On the other hand, because of the unsolved land question and the rising demands for reforms in the Armenian *vilayets* the ties between two parties became stretched.³⁹

³⁷ *Zartonk Patsarig. Nvirvadz Ramgavar Azadagan Gusagtsutian Karasnamiagin yev Zartonk Orateri Ksanhingamiagin 1885-1962* (Zartonk Special. Presented to the 40th Anniversary of the Ramgavar Liberal Party and 25th Anniversary of the Zartonk Daily 1885-1962), (Beirut, 1962), p. 76; See also Avagyan, p. 95.

³⁸ Avagyan, p. 99; Avagyan mentions the number of nine for the Armenian deputies for the 1912 elections which is wrong; the ten Armenian deputies are: İstanbul: 1. Bedros Haladjian (CUP), and 2. Krikor Zohrab (Independent); Aydın: 3. Vahan Bardizbanian; Sivas: 4. Dr. Paşayan; Aleppo: 5. Artin Boshgezenian; Ergani: 6. Isdepan Cheradjian; Erzurum: 7. Karekin Pastrmajian, 8. Vartkes Serengulian; Bitlis: 9. Kegham Der Garabedian; Van: 10. Onnig Tertsagian Vramian.

³⁹ "Four-year experience of New Turkey displayed that differentiation between 'new' and 'old' is only a window dressing." Vaghinag, "Ankhusapelin" (The Unavoidable), *Troshag*, November-December 1912 (11-12), p. 290; for a detailed list for the reasons of this policy transformation see "HH Tashnaktsutiun Yoterort Enthanur Joghovi Voroshumnere" (The Decision of Seventh General Congress of Tashnaktsutiun), *Troshag*, September-October 1913 (9-10), p. 147.

The *coup d'etat* that brought absolute domination for the CUP in January 1913 accelerated the deterioration.

The interesting thing is that although the tensions between the CUP and the Tashnaktsutium, and more generally between the CUP and the Armenian community increased after 1912, the relationship between the two parties never came to a stage of a brake off. In the second part of the 1913, when the CUP felt the need to negotiate the reform program with the Ottoman Armenians, they accepted the Tashnaktsutium as their counterpart, and they aimed to reach the Armenian public opinion through Tashnaktsutium, and even attempted to use the Tashnak press. Moreover, in August 1914, the CUP sent Bahaeddin Şakir, Ömer Naci and Hilmi Beys to the 8th Tashnaktsutium Congress in Erzurum in order to ask the position of the party, and more generally the Armenian's attitude in the World War, in which the Ottoman state would possibly enter.

Then contact between Hnchagian Party and Young Turks goes as far as 1890's. Both Ahmed Rıza and Mizancı Murad, the leaders of Young Turk movement in Europe seek for an alliance with Hnchagian Party in 1895-96.⁴⁰ But their differences on the issues of methods of revolutionary activity (terrorism, foreign intervention) prevented a real cooperation. The Hnchagian Party found an appropriate collaborator in the personality of Prince Sabahaddin and his *Teşebbüs-i Şahsi ve Adem-i Merkeziyet Cemiyeti* (The Society for Private Enterprise and Decentralization). His ideas on decentralization and cosmopolitanism made such a cooperation possible. Just a few days after the Revolution, in August 1908, the leaders of Hnchagian Party,

⁴⁰ M. Şükrü Hanioglu, *Bir Siyasal Örgüt Olarak Osmanlı İttihad ve Terakki Cemiyeti ve Jön Türklük (1889-1902)*, (İstanbul: İletişim, 1986), p. 191.

Hampartzum Boyadjian (Murad) and Sdepan Sapah-Gulian met with Prince Sabahaddin in order to negotiate the future political developments.⁴¹ Tashnaktsutiun was strengthening its position in the Ottoman political circles thanks to its cooperation with CUP, and Hnchag Party felt the obligation of creating an effective bloc against them. After the foundation of *Osmanlı Ahrar Fırkası* (Ottoman Liberals Party) in 14 September 1908 in which Sabahaddin appeared as secret honorary president Hnchags remained close the policies of that party against CUP. Since they supported the 31 March events, the Liberals dissolved when the CUP take the political control.⁴² Contrary to the attitude of their collaborators, the Hnchags remained loyal to the constitutionalism and they supported the CUP against rebels in 31 March. They even offered to form the brigands from Hnchag volunteers, and established an unit of doctors for the injured.⁴³ But especially after the Adana events the relationship between Hnchags and CUP deteriorated. In November 1911, when “the biggest and most strong”⁴⁴ opposition party against CUP, the Liberal Entente Party was established, Hnchag supported them with the hope of changing the political situation dominated by CUP and detrimental for its own interests. In fact, LEP was “a lake in which all rivers of opposition against CUP were spilled.”⁴⁵ The agreement between Hnchag and LEP which was signed in 3 February 1912 must be interpreted under the lights of such a search. Although mentioning some promising

⁴¹ Avagyan, p. 41.

⁴² Tarık Zafer Tunaya, *Türkiye’de Siyasi Partiler, İkinci Meşrutiyet Dönemi*, (İstanbul: Hürriyet Vakfı, 1984), vol. II, p. 154.

⁴³ *Azadarar Sharjoun Panagi Haghtagan Mudke i Gonsdantnubolis* (The Victorious Entrance of the Action Army To Constantinople), (İstanbul: 1909), p. 164.

⁴⁴ Tunaya, 264.

⁴⁵ *ibid.*, p. 265.

reforms on the land and security problems,⁴⁶ which were the most important actual political issues for Hnchag Party, this agreement created little change in the existing conditions even when the LEP formed a government in July 1912.⁴⁷ The *coup d'état* in January 1913 that brought an authoritarian CUP administration until 1918 gave an end to the Hnchags search for political alliances in the Ottoman political arena.

To sum up, in the period of 1908-1914, the Tashnaksutiun and the CUP regarded themselves as allies in the political arena; and the opposing parties, such as the Hnchagian Party or the LEP, formed their policies on the basis of this alliance. In the first period until 1912, the relationship was more hopeful, but afterwards, with the disappointments and tensions mentioned above, the alliance dissolved. Though the CUP and the Tashnaksutiun continued political talks and negotiations on some important issues in the 1913-1914 period, which displays the possibility of a political cooperation, or at least a political mutual existence, which disappeared later. In fact, the most teaching experience of the relationship between the Tashnaksutiun and the CUP in the constitutional period is this “possibility” of a common political base, the “sharing” the same political language (both as political parties, or secret organizations) although there were huge problems on the basis of the struggling nationalisms of Armenians and the Turks. Finally, without ignoring the problems rising from ethnic distress or without idealizing the relationship between the Tashnaks and the CUP or the Hnchags and the LEP one can argue that the

⁴⁶ Avagyan, p. 95

⁴⁷ Tashnaksutiun's opposition to the cooperation between Hnchag and LEP: “The anti-İttihadist government came on the scene with the slogans of decentralization and the real equality of the nations. There are lots of stupid –even in our national circles– believed them, and applauded the the fall of İttihat. ... The miserable slogan, ‘The ittihad had fallen, it is necessary to overthrow its Armenian partner’ is strolling all around from İstanbul to Tiflis.” “Grkere Lur” (The Ambitions are Quiet), *Troshag*, July-August 1912 (7-8), p. 177.

constitutional period –at least until the World War– was a “lost ground” on the basis of common the political activities between the Armenians and the Muslims.

CHAPTER III

Krikor Zohrab: An Armenian-Ottoman Intellectual and Political Activist

The political activity of Krikor Zohrab, one of the most prominent Armenian political actors of the constitutional period in the Ottoman capital, gives us some important clues about the dominant Armenian political conceptions of the time. As a central figure in the middle of intersecting political affairs among the Armenian and Turkish intellectuals and revolutionaries, Zohrab fervently supported solidarity between Armenian and Turkish political organizations, and thought over creating a convenient environment for the economic, social, and political development of his country, especially on the basis of a peaceful social agreement among Ottoman people of different ethnic origins.

He supported a libertarian Ottomanism on the basis of cosmopolitanism, not homogenization or assimilation, in order to save the Ottoman state from separatism. In order to create a voluntary devotion to the idea of being an Ottoman he developed projects about the military conscription of the non-Muslims, education, justice, and several other social problems. His political activity was not limited to national questions; as a strong believer of modernization of the Ottoman country he preached citizen rights for the people, sought the means to develop the condition of women in society, public health, freedom of expression, censorship, the press, and the social rights of the workers and so on. These activities very clearly display his concerns about the Ottoman Empire, which he wanted to transform into a more developed and peaceful place.

Political activity of Krikor Zohrab, which will provide information about the dominant Armenian attitude during the 1908-1915 period, which embraced the constitutional rule with a great enthusiasm, aimed both the cultural and national existence of the Armenian people in the Ottoman state. Zohrab's efforts to create a real Armenian-Turkish fraternity, and to realize the equality on the basis of basic citizen rights which he believed as the sole way of solving the Armenian question, made him a real Ottoman-Armenian. After determining the central role of Zohrab in the Armenian-Ottoman political circles, which will help in understanding that his position was not an exception, we will comprehend his political way of thinking thoroughly through an examination of his attitudes in several political cases. As a result of this examination, it will be seen that Zohrab's political and intellectual career mostly was devoted to the development and the modernization of the Ottoman state and country, in which he hoped to make his own contribution as an intellectual and a politician.

Zohrab: A Brief Biography

Krikor Zohrab was born in 1861 in Beşiktaş, İstanbul, and attended the Makruhian school of the quarter, and after his father's death, the Tarkmanchats school in Ortaköy. In 1876, he entered the Engineering Institute of the Lycee of Galatasaray, the *Mekteb-i Sultani* ("Imperial School"). He wrote poems and short stories in Armenian under the influence of one his professors at the Tarkmanchats school, Tovmas Terziyan, who was a famous writer of the time. When he was a student at the *Mekteb-i Sultani*, his first articles published in the Armenian *Lrakir* (Journal) in 1876. After his graduation from the Engineering Institute with a degree

of *Ingenieur des Ponts et Chaussées* (engineer of roads and bridges) he started to work in the law office of his stepfather, and then entered the Law School of Galatasaray in 1880. One year later, the Law School of Galatasaray merged with the Istanbul Law School (*Mekteb-i Hukuk*) and he graduated from that school. After graduation, he started to work as a lawyer, and published a literary magazine *Yergrakund* (Planet Earth), in which he published several short stories depicting the daily life of the different public strata with a realistic perspective.

As a writer Zohrab was especially a talent in short stories. According to Bardakjian “Allied with his literary fame was a bright public side to this man of shining intellect, tempestuous emotions, and impeccable appearance and manners, which put him in the limelight as one of the foremost, if not the leading, writers and public figures from the early 1890s onwards.”¹ He was especially successful in painting the women emotions with strong brush strokes skillfully.² His characters were usually chosen from the lower strata of the society, workers, servants, refugees, whom he knew very well as a keen observer. He takes side with the unfortunate women and men excluded from the society, and challenges the artificial values of a growing social decadence. It is very clear that he was taking the advantage of his experiences as a lawyer in his short stories and novellas.

He published his first study on law in Turkish, *Hukuk ve Ceza Mürûr-i Zamanları* (The Law of Prescriptions in the Criminal Law) in 1885. He worked on several Armenian newspapers and magazines, such as *Hairenik* (Motherland) and *Masis* (Mount Ararat). *Masis*, which Garabed Utudjian, one of the most respectable

¹ Bardakjian, Kevork B. *A Reference Guide to Modern Armenian Literature 1500-1920*, (Detroit: Wayne State University, 2000), p. 130.

² Minas Teoleolian, *Tar me Kraganutium 1850-1950* (Literature of a Century 1850-1950), (Cairo: Husaper, 1955), 375.

members of the Young Armenian movement of mid-nineteenth century İstanbul, started to publish in 1852, was the most important Armenian magazine of the time.³ In 1891, Zohrab became the editor of *Masis*, which had become the symbol of struggle of the liberal Armenians in the second part of the nineteenth century.

In 1889, Zohrab defended the case of 50 Armenians who had come to İstanbul from Muş, where they escaped from the torments of a Kurdish notable, one Musa Bey, who had stolen their herds, and kidnapped an Armenian girl, Gülizar.⁴ In the Hamidian period Zohrab defended some other politically dangerous cases, such as that of a group of Zeytun (later Süleymanlı) Armenians against accusations of making a revolt, or of some revolutionaries working against the despotic rule. Zohrab also participated in the foundation of two important Armenian educational societies, *Asiagan Engerutiun* (the Asian Society) and *Miatsial Engerutiun* (the United Society). Especially in the *Miatsial Engerutiun*, he worked to guide society to revolutionary activity against despotism.⁵

In 1899, he prepared a text of defense for Captain Dreyfuss, who was to be discharged from the French Army because of his Jewish origin. After sending the text of defense to the Jewish Committee of France, he received a letter of gratitude and a medal from the Committee. In 1906, when he defended a Bulgarian

³ In its first editorial in 1852, *Masis* declared its aim to be “to reform, to enlighten, and to help the nation... It is necessary, on the one hand, to spread enlightenment and to develop certain skills through well-organized schools, and on the other, to cultivate the desire for virtue, diligence, economy, and self-sufficiency.”; cited in Arshag Alboyadjian, “Hisnamyag Me” (A Fifty-year Anniversary), *Masis*, 3 February 1901, p. 65 and 67.

⁴ The incident of Gülizar later became one of the most popular stories of the time. Many Armenian folktales and songs were produced narrating the story of Gülizar, kidnapped and detained by Musa Bey who wanted to take her as his wife, later saved by an Armenian *fedai*, *Msho* Kegham (Kegham of Muş), who married her in order to save her “honour”. *Msho* Kegham was Kegham Der Garabedian, who became the deputy of Muş in the second constitutional period.

⁵ Krikor Zohrab, in *Jamanak*, October 24 / November 6 1908, n. 9, (in *Yerger*, vol V, pp. 95-96)

revolutionary tortured by the authorities, the Ottoman government banned him from practicing his profession.⁶

After living under the governmental ban for two years, he decided to leave the country, and to live in Egypt. In May 1908 he traveled to Paris in order to settle down in Egypt. After the Young Turk Revolution, and the Declaration of Liberties, he immediately returned to İstanbul. He entered the Department of Law at İstanbul University as a professor, participated in the foundation of the Club of the Ottoman Constitution (*Osmanian Sahmanatragan Agump / Meşrutiyet-i Osmani Kulübü*)⁷ and the Ahrar (Liberal) Party. In the parliamentary elections of 1908, 1912, and 1914 he was elected as deputy from İstanbul; first as a member of Ahrar,⁸ and then as independent. Additionally, during the period of 1908-1915 became a member of Armenian National Assembly.

In the parliament he was the one of the most popular deputies, and considered as the leader of the Armenian deputies. His rhetorical talent and knowledge of Ottoman political circles made him the spokesman of the Armenian population of the empire. As will be seen below, he worked to strengthen a liberal Ottomanism, freedoms, basic humanitarian rights, the rights of workers, and the social position of women. He also worked in the reform negotiations in 1913, in which he discussed both the Russian side through Andre Mandelstam, the translator of the Russian

⁶ *ibid.*, (p. 96).

⁷ According to a letter sent by Krikor Zohrab to the Turkish newspapers, the Club of Ottoman Constitution was founded by some Armenian tradesman in order to strengthen the brotherhood between Armenians and Turks; Zohrab was also a founder of the Club. In *Arevelk* (East), 20 July 1908, no 6860 (in *Yerger*, vol IV, p. 141).

⁸ In the elections of 1908, Zohrab and Bedros Haladjian were the members of joint-lists of Liberal Party and CUP in which was formed by five candidates: Pandelaki Kosmidi (342 votes), Konstantin Konstantinidi (36 votes), Vitali Feradci (461 votes), Bedros Haladjian (455 votes), Krikor Zohrab (392 votes). Tarık Zafer Tunaya, *Türkiye’de Siyasi Partiler, İkinci Meşrutiyet Dönemi*, (İstanbul: Hürriyet Vakfı, 1984), vol. II, p. 27 and 144.

embassy in İstanbul, and the Committee of Union and Progress through Talat and Halil Beys (Menteşe), who were his close friends. As noted in the last section of the Introduction, in the last days of May 1915, he was arrested with Vartkes Serengulian, the deputy of Erzurum, and sent to Diyarbakır where they told they would be judged. Although Zohrab wrote several letters on the road to Diyarbakır to Talat Paşa, Hüseyin Cahit Bey, Necmettin Molla, the German ambassador Hans Wangenheim, and Halil Bey⁹ in order to learn of what they had been accused, and demanded that they be judged in İstanbul and not in Diyarbakır, he was unable to obtain an answer. They were killed near Urfa in July 1915.

Krikor Zohrab as the Spokesman of the Armenian People

As mentioned above, Krikor Zohrab was a central Armenian figure of the constitutional period. As a writer of well-known novels and short stories, as an editor of the most important Armenian journal *Masis*, and as a famous lawyer, he was a well-known and respected personality in Armenian society. In his declaration of the candidacy to the Ottoman Parliament, published in *Jamanak* in October 24 / November 6 1908, he stated his undertaking as an *azkayeen kordzich* (national [political/cultural] activist) which was an adjective given to the well-known and respected Armenians, valuable for their work for the Armenian people.

As I declared orally in the last session, I offer myself to the Armenian community of the capital as a candidate to the Ottoman Parliament. My titles? The national activity of the thirty-one years, from my sixteenth to these days. First, in the national education institutions, beginning with *Asiagan Engerutiun* (the Asian

⁹ Halil Bey was his biggest hope, because Zohrab had rescued him from the angry crowds of the counter revolutionary attempt of 31 March 1325 (1909) by hiding him in his home.

Company) which was publishing *Yergrakund* (the Planet Earth), until the most sorrowful and last days of *Miatsial Engerutiun* (the United Company).¹⁰ It was I who paved the way to the revolutionary activity of the teaching cadre of this second institution.

... As a journalist my work has recognized with the *Hairenik* (Motherland), *Arevelk* (East) and *Masis*, always libertarian, always struggling against unfairness and for people, always opposing the catastrophes of a despotic regime.

... As a lawyer I defended the Armenians of Zeitun before the massacre, in the Punishment Council. Because of this defense the Council decided to arrest me; after living under illegal conditions as a fugitive for one month, I saved myself through indirect ways from condemnation.¹¹

On 5 September 1908, the Club of Ottoman Constitution (*Osmanian Sahmanatragan Agump / Meşrutiyet-i Osmani Kulübü*) in a special gathering voted for the candidates of the İstanbul Armenians. Zohrab became the champion of the election by collecting 40 votes out of 43.¹² The other winning candidate was Bedros Hallacyan, who as a member of the CUP later occupied ministerial chairs several times. Zohrab's election to the Armenian *Azkayeen Joghov* (National Assembly) shows his popularity among the Armenians. In the elections for the Assembly, first the Regional Assembly of İzmir elected Krikor Zohrab as their deputy in the National Assembly, although Zohrab had not declared his candidacy. Then, on August 24, the Sammatia and Topkapı Regional Assemblies elected him with an absolute majority. The communities of Pera and Kasımpaşa also wanted to elect him and put his name on the candidate's list, but since his membership was definite after

¹⁰ The *Asiagan* and *Miatsial Engetutiun* was the educational institutions founded in order to develop the quality of education in the Armenian national schools. As Niyasi Berkes point out, especially during the Hamidian Era the educational foundations were the sole and thus most important "in fact political" occupation for the non-muslim communities; for the non-muslims the educational institutions was the only way to express their national identity, and culture, which helped their national awakening.

¹¹ Zohrab, in *Jamanak*, October 24 / November 6 1908, n. 9, (in *Yerger*, vol V, pp. 95-96)

¹² *Piuzantion*, September 6/19 1908, no 3633, (in *Yerger*, vol. V, p. 448).

Sammattia and Topkapı elections, these candidacies remained without result. The most interesting thing is, in 1891, when the elections for a new assembly were held, Zohrab was elected in two different neighborhoods: Kuzguncuk-İcadiye and Gedikpaşa-Kumkapı. But since he

The process of the elections was the scene of the most important political struggle in 1891 between the Armenian liberal and conservative groups, in which the conservatives won a victory with the cancellation of Zohrab's election in the end.¹³ In 1910, in one of his speeches Zohrab referred to this incident and said that "One day they elected me as a national deputy. I had no turned my thirty, and the reactionaries, pretending that they were righteous, rejected me as a deputy, they won. Thirty years later, six regions elected me as their deputy in one lot. Did not I tell you that the future is ours?"¹⁴

Finding such acceptance from the Armenian community made Zohrab politically a central figure in the Armenian community. The Armenian people, inspired by his novels, short stories, and articles, which had described the social injustice in broad brush strokes over the previous twenty-five years, and had heard about his rhetorical talent as a lawyer, regarded him as the representative of their cultural and political demands. This is why he was elected by several regions to the Armenian National Assembly, and this is why he was seen as the most worthy Armenian candidate to the Ottoman Parliament. This is why the Armenian journal

¹³ Alboyadjian, *ibid.*, p. 189; see also Albert Sharurian, "Azkayin yev Kaghakagan Kordziche," (National and Political Activist) in *Krikor Zohrab: Yeger* (Works), vol. 5, pp. 6-12; interestingly enough, in 1888 Zohrab elected by the Harput community for the National Assembly, but this election was also cancelled because of the same reason.

¹⁴ Krikor Zohrab, "Hay Badkamavori Me Hashvedvutiune" (The Account of an Armenian Representative), in *Yeger* v. 5, p. 381; I could not find the two other electoral regions that Zohrab was elected.

Manzume-i Efkâr wrote about him, while describing the Armenian candidates of the Parliament as follows: “Krikor *Efendi* Zohrab is so familiar to us through his international reputation, his great proficiency in law and his rhetoric that, we see unnecessary to talk about him more.”¹⁵ Moreover, one must not forget that Zohrab was the one of six Armenian deputies who succeeded to be elected in all three elections among a total of twenty-four who were elected to the Ottoman parliament during the years of 1908-1914. In addition to his membership in the parliament, his membership in the Armenian National Assembly continued until his death in 1915. He was also elected to the *Azkayeen Getronagan Varchutiun* (National Central Administration) which was a kind of executive body arising from the National Assembly.

Except for his political activities in the Parliament and in the Armenian National Assembly, he published abundant articles in the Armenian newspapers, and participated in many political conferences, gatherings, and meetings. As mentioned above, he was the founder of the Ottoman Constitutional Club which was founded in 1908 by some Armenian tradesman in order to strengthen the brotherhood between Armenians and Turks. As a defender of pluralistic and participatory principles in politics, he also founded the Liberal Group in the Armenian National Assembly in 1911. His first political speech was the one delivered in the Taksim Bahçesi which was organized in order to commemorate the Muslim martyrs who had died under the perpetrations of Hamidian regime. Nearly 50 000 people listened to his strong and

¹⁵ *Manzume-i Efkâr*, September 8/21 1908, no 2221; in Albert Sharurian, *ibid.*, pp. 16-17.

emotional oration. The organizer of the meeting was Ottoman Constitutional Club in which Zohrab played an important role.¹⁶

On 19 August / September 1, in Sammatia Zohrab gave a speech in a meeting organized by the Armenian Revolutionary Federation (*Tashnaktsutiun*) in the Surp Kevork church. The subject was the possible modifications on the *Kanun-ı Esasi*, and Zohrab's ideas about them. On October 26, again in a *Tashnaktsutiun* meeting in Pera Surp Yerrortutiun church, Zohrab talked about the expectations of the Armenian community from the Ottoman Parliament. As mentioned above, all of these three speeches were printed in Turkish in his *Siyasi Nutuklar* (Political Orations) at the end of the year.

On 23 March/5 April 1909, he gave a speech again in the Surp Yerrortutiun church on the issue of the participation of the non-Muslims in military service. The other speakers were Bedros Hallacian, the deputy of İstanbul from CUP; Vahan Papazian, the deputy of Van from Tashnaktsutiun; and Yervant Agnuni from the Tashnaktsutiun central committee. According to the Armenian newspaper *Puzantion*, (Byzantine) the church was packed, and during the gathering the audience several times supported the speakers with standing ovations. On March 25, the Turkish newspaper *Osmanlı* (Ottoman) shored up the ideas defended by Krikor Zohrab in the

¹⁶ According to press releases that announcing the meeting: "Tomorrow, Thursday, at Pera Taksim Garden, the printed version of the Turkish speech which will be delivered by Krikor Zohrab will be sold in front of the doors of the Garden. The income of this brochure will be given to the national company for the Niyazi and Enver assault boats." *Arevelk*, July 31 1908, no 6882; (in *Yerger*, vol V, p. 444).

Zohrab's own account about the meeting appears in a French letter written to his son, Levon Zohrab in 14 August 1908: "*J'ai organisé un grand meeting de 50 000 personnes où mon discours a été acclamé et devenu l'objet d'ovations enthousiastes: les turcs m'embrassaient, me portaient en triomhe.*" (I organized a grand meeting of 50 000 and it became a means of a joyful happiness. The Turks were kissing me, carrying on their hands.) (in *Yerger*, vol. IV, p. 147)

gathering.¹⁷ In 7 February 1910, Zohrab again gave speech in the Surp Yerrortutiun church to a crowd of 3000, and talked about the current political events.

On 25 September 1910, in a conference organized by the Raffi Armenian Society in Üsküdar, Zohrab gave a speech under the title of “*Hay Badkamavori Me Hashvedvutiune*” (The Account of an Armenian Representative), in which he described the activities of the Armenian deputies in the Ottoman Parliament, and supported the constitutional regime and the CUP, which in his opinion deserved the support of the Armenian community because it was the only progressive party in the country.

On 5/18 December 1910, in a meeting organized by Armenian Liberal Party in Kadıköy with the participation of Bulgarian deputy Dimitr Vlahov and Russian-German revolutionary Alexander Israel Helpfand (*Parvus Efendi*), Zohrab, although his name was not written in the program, after a big ovation from the audience, and the clamor of the 5000 people calling his name and chanting “We Want Zohrab! Zohrab!” came to the podium, and talked about the contemporary political questions and especially on the issue of the resignation of the Patriarch Yeghishe Turian after the pressure of the “conservative” group in the Armenian National Assembly. He insisted that for the sake of the constitutional regime, and in order to provide a good relationship between the Armenian nation and the government, the Patriarch must not yield to the pressure and must continue his mission.¹⁸

In 8 February 1911 after the invitation of Greek deputies Kosmidi and Konstantinidis approximately 30 Christian deputies gathered in the Tokatlian Hotel

¹⁷ Zohrab, *Yerger*, vol. V, p. 476.

¹⁸ *Azadamard*, 6/19 December 1910; (in *Yerger*, vol. V, pp. 423-426 and p. 522).

in Pera-Beyoğlu in order to discuss the political conditions of the country. Zohrab, representing the Armenian deputies takes floor and talks about the crucial need of Turkish deputies' participation to such gatherings:

This gathering has not any political character. We, as Armenian deputies responded our Greek associates, since we want to establish a perfect acquaintance with them. The podium of the Ottoman parliament must serve to all parts of the motherland. These gatherings are important opportunities for the deputies, who exchange their ideas with each other, which help to the development of the country. Therefore, I regard this meeting as a first step, and hope that our Turkish colleagues will be invited to future gatherings. We can reach our aims only when we work all together. If you share my opinion, my suggestion is to form a commission for the organization of the meetings including deputies coming from different nations.¹⁹

In 1912 election campaigns Krikor Zohrab supported both Tashnaktsutium and the Committee of Union and Progress as defenders of the constitutional rule. He participated several meetings, especially organized by Tashnaktsutium. For instance, in March 23 he addressed to Tashnaktsutium's Pera Club and by comparing the old and new regimes assumed that the Armenians live under considerably good conditions than Hamidian period.²⁰ In another meeting organized by Tashnaktsutium in Üsküdar Zohrab made some comparisons between CUP and LEP, and concluded that since the former was the real defender of the constitution the Armenians must vote for them.²¹

In a nutshell, during the period, Krikor Zohrab used his supra-party politics position and political power in order to provide the affection of the Armenian community to the Constitution, and tried to create a real peace between Armenians

¹⁹ *Puzantion* (Byzance), 8/21 January 1911; (in *Yerger* (Works), vol. VI, pp. 9-10).

²⁰ *Azadamard*, 24 March / 6 April 1912 no 854; (in *Yerger* (Works), vol. VI, p. 168).

²¹ *Azadamard*, 30 March / 12 April 1912 no 858; (in *Yerger* (Works), vol. VI, p. 169).

and the Muslim elements of the Empire. Forming healthy relationships between the various elements and the government became his most important political goal. Since he regarded constitutionalism as a regime of liberties, the strengthening of the constitutionalist institutions was critical for him. According to Zohrab, for the sake of the state, constitution, and Ottomanism, liberties, and libertarian practices were crucial as this was the only way to gain the faithfulness of the different elements, such as the Armenian element, living in the Ottoman Empire.

Krikor Zohrab Regarding the *Ancien Régime* and the “New Life”

Krikor Zohrab’s various speeches, statements and writings provide a very clear picture while determining his position during the constitutional period. Interpreting such testimonies reveals that Zohrab was an absolute supporter and advocate of constitutional rule, and a merciless opponent-antagonist of despotism. His efforts to exalt the merits of constitutionalism, and to despise the calamities of absolutism were one of the most important aspects of his political career, starting in 1908, with the Proclamation of Liberties (*İlan-ı Hürriyet*), and ending with his tragic death in July 1915.

Zohrab’s considerations about despotism or absolutism were direct results of his experiences during the Hamidian era. It can be said easily that, born in 1861, all of his youth and middle-age passed under Abdülhamid’s rule. Experiencing the suffocating political environment of this period, and additionally the sufferings of Armenian people in the provinces as a lawyer, transformed Zohrab into an inconvenient person for the watchful eyes of the regime, in which those who paid

attention to political issues were regarded as potential terrorists, or revolutionaries. In February 1909, in a session in the Parliament discussing the rights of *içtima-i umumiye* (general meeting) Zohrab declared that “We are a nation who had been crushed for thirty years under this term, meeting [*içtima*] (...) For my part, I went to the police at least ten times because of this *meeting* issue.”²²

Having suffered under the absolutist rule, after reaching the constitutional regime, Zohrab divided his life into two parts. He regarded the “*Ancient Regime*” as a source of the all problems, which he expected to be solved under the “new life.” The economic, social, and national problems of the Ottoman state were the inheritance of the Hamidian rule; the new regime was burdened by them, but destined to overcome them. For instance, famines and shortages (*kaht u gala*) in the provinces were the one of the biggest problems during the first months of the constitutional rule. Especially the eastern *vilayets* of Anatolia were restless because of the distress caused by famine and shortage, which were considered as dangerous for the vigor of the new regime. The parliament discussed some precautions to prevent this disquiet which had the potential to be transformed into activities against the regime. Zohrab, accepting the importance of the problem, emphasized the responsibility of the *Ancien Régime*: “(The importance of this article is huge... Now the situation that is derived from the explanation displays that the shortage that you have mentioned is quite severe. In fact, we are sure of the good intentions and it is

²² *Meclisi Mebusan Zabıt Ceridesi: Devre: I, İçtima Senesi: 1, Cilt: 1: 4 Kanunuevvel 1324 Tarihli Birinci İnikattan-19 Şubat 1324 Tarihli Otuzuncu İnikata Kadar* (Ankara: TBMM Basımevi, 1982), p. 150; “Biz 30 sene bu içtima kelimesinin altında ezilmiş bir milletiz. (...) Ben kendi payıma belki içtima meselesinden dolayı, belki on defa zabıtaya gittim geldim.”

necessary to admit that even the responsibility of this situation certainly belongs to the *ancien régime*.”²³

In February 1909, in a time when two officials responsible for some abuses in the Hamidian era, Ethem and Rüştü Paşas, were under inspection because of their repressive attitude against libertarian activities, some members of the parliament claimed that the Paşas had been under control of the Sultan, and that is why they had acted in such a way. Zohrab heavily opposed such arguments of defense. His argument in this discussion clearly shows his considerations about the absolutist rule:

Who was free from the force and oppression applied? Was there a single person in the Ottoman Empire who was not under force and oppression? Therefore, if we were to apply the theory of force and oppression, we have to release everyone. ... Since I do not consider those who were not involved directly in secret informing, but oppressing others on the basis of reports of informers, as helpless, having no other choice. I do not see these apart from private interest.²⁴

In addition to his negative judgments about Abdülhamid’s rule, Zohrab strongly believed that the Sultan was the perpetrator of the events of April 1909, which is usually considered as an attempt at a counter-revolution against the Young Turk Revolution of July 1908. After the failure of this counter-revolution attempt, when the Sultan was dethroned and was sent to Salonica, the Ottoman parliament discussed the destiny of Abdülhamid’s properties in the Yıldız Palace. In the

²³ ibid. p. 191; “(...) Bu maddenin ehemmiyeti azimdir. (...) Şimdi bütün istizahtan istinbat olunan hal, o dediğiniz galananın pek şiddetli olduğu merkezindedir. Esasen hüsn-ü niyetlerinden biz eminiz ve şu halin mesuliyeti dahi, devr-i sâbıkaya ait olduğunu elbette teslim etmek lâzımdır.”

²⁴ ibid., p. 642, 643; “Cebir ve tazyik kimin üzerinde yoktu? Acaba Memalik-i Osmaniyede bir ferd var mıydı ki cebir ve tazyik altında bulunmasın? Binaenaleyh eğer cebir ve tazyik nazariyesini tatbik edecek isek herkesi salıvermeliyiz. (...) Zira onların böyle kendileri doğrudan doğruya hafiyelik etmeyip de fakat hafiyeler tarafından verilen jurnalları medar ittihaz ederek ötekine berikine zulmedenleri ben muztarr göremem. Ben bunları menfaat-ı şahsiyeden ari göremem.”

parliament discussions, Zohrab warned his colleagues about the political importance of the documents kept by the Sultan in the Palace:

Gentlemen, the issue does not only relate to property. If it was only related to property, it would be enough for it to be seized by the Ministry of Finance. But the place is a treasury of secrets. The presence of many political documents can be assumed. In fact, it may have been possible to locate evidence concerning this most recent incident [The counter revolutionary attempt on March 31, 1909].²⁵

The Adana incidents of 1909 which resulted in the massacre of thousands of Armenians in the region, created great distrust among the Armenian people and political movements.²⁶ But most of the Armenians, and Zohrab as a leading figure, looked for the traces of the methods of the Hamidian rule in the incidents. Even in the parliamentary debates, Zohrab claimed that the measures taken by the Ministry of Interior in order to prevent the massacres of the Armenians had been inspired by absolutist methods.²⁷ For instance, telegrams sent to Adana had been a basic replica of the Hamidian telegrams ordering “Secure public order... Especially, protect the foreigners, banks, and the trade companies.” In Zohrab’s opinion, this was in reality

²⁵ *Meclisi Mebusan Zabıt Ceridesi: Devre: I, İctima Senesi: 1, Cilt: 3: 28 Mart 1325 Tarihli Elli Beşinci İnikattan-14 Mayıs 1325 Tarihli Seksen Birinci İnikada Kadar* (Ankara: TBMM Basımevi, 1982), p. 140; “Efendim mesele yalnız mala taalluk etmez. Eğer yalnız mala taalluk etse, Maliye Nezareti tarafından vaz-ı yed olunması kafidir. Fakat orası bir hazine-i esrardır. Birçok evraki siyasiyenin mevcut olması melhuzdur. Hatta bu son vakaya [31 Mart Vakası] dair birçok delaile derdest olunmak taht-ı ihtimalindedir.”

²⁶ The estimates about the number of Armenian victims in the Adana incidents vary from 17000 to 30000. The parliament appointed an inspection committee, under the leadership of Hagop Babikyan (1856-1909; Tekfurdağı [Tekirdağ]) and Yusuf Kemal (Tengirşenk, 1873-1976; Kastamonu). The other members of the committee were Arif Bey (head secretary of Council of State), and Mosdichyan Efendi (judge) After their return to capital Babikyan wrote a report which was not published until 1912. In his account Babikyan gives 21 000 Armenian victims after the incidents. Hagop Babikian, *Adanayi Yegherne, Hagop Babikiani Deghegakire* (The Catastrophe of Adana, The Report of Hagop Babikian), (İstanbul, 1919), p. 48. In his foreword to that book Hagop Sarkisian claims that “Babikian was poisoned by Jeune Turks in reply to the truth he reported , and died in July 20, 1909.” (ibid., p. 6). Cemal Paşa cites 17 000 Armenian and 1850 Muslim victims in the incidents in his memoirs, *Hatıralar*, (İstanbul: Selek, 1959), p. 354. For Yusuf Kemal’s account on Adana see his *Vatan Hizmetinde*, (İstanbul: Bahar, 1967), p. 120-124.

²⁷ *MMZC*, ibid, p. 116, “(...) idare-i müstebidenin lisanını mutazammın... Ve idare-i müstebidenin her kelimesi bir mazarratı, bir vehameti münderçtir.”

another way of giving way to the killing of Armenians in a chaotic atmosphere like in Adana.²⁸ Zohrab believed that the responsibility of the governor of Adana, Cevdet Bey, who was assumed to be the main perpetrator of the massacres by the Armenian political organizations, was very big, because he was a “member of the Palace,” and the sole concept of the Palace was “compromising a huge disaster.”²⁹

It is clear that Krikor Zohrab’s ideas about the Hamidian rule lead him to support the constitutional rule fervently. According to him, the Declaration of the Liberties and the Constitution was the only way to save the Ottoman Empire from “darkness” (*zulmet*),³⁰ which was represented by the absolutist rule of Sultan Abdülhamid. This is why he was politically very active in the constitutional period. His mastery in addressing the people and skills at rhetoric made him one of the most popular faces at political gatherings, not only those organized by the Armenians, but also those organized by the Young Turks. His expectations from the constitutional rule were especially focused on the democratization of the regime, the modernization of the state and the government, and a peaceful solution for the Armenian question. He believed that the new regime must embrace the whole Ottoman nations and this is why he addressed the people as “Free Ottomans! Free compatriots!”³¹ At the meetings and praised the virtues of the constitutional life and saluted the combatants

²⁸ ibid.; “Dahiliye nezaretinin emrini gördük. Asayışı iade ediniz. Ve alt tarafında da bahusus ecnebileri, bankaları ve müesseseleri muhafaza ediniz. Ben[ce] şu bahusus tabirini[n] ahval-i ruhiye-i mahsusaya göre, oradaki efkar-ı irticaiyeye nazaran pek fena sui tefsire uğrayacağı derkindir. İşte mesuliyet-i maneviye buradadır. Yoksa ‘Ermenileri katledin’ diye bir emr-i sarih yoktur.”

²⁹ ibid.; “(...) Oradaki valinin methali ne derecededir? Şüphe yok ki, bunu tayin etmek için elde esbab-ı کافیye yoktur. Fakat *saray mensubininden olması ve saray tabirinin ihtiva eylediği bütün vehamet* haddizatında oldukça ağır mukaddime-i sübut demektir.”

³⁰ Krikor Zohrab, *Siyasi Nutuklar*, (İstanbul: 1324/1908), p. 6.

³¹ ibid., p. 3.

of the freedom: “the martyrs, the learned leaders, the writers, the officers, the students,” and “the Armenians, the Turks, the Bulgarians, the Greeks.”³²

Krikor Zohrab in the Crossroads of Tashnaktsutium, CUP, and *Ahrar* (Liberal) Party

Although officially never been a member of the Armenian Revolutionary Federation (*Tashnaktsutium*), scholars often regard Zohrab as a Tashnak, which is literally wrong, but figuratively not, because he usually defended the same political or doctrinal lines as the Tashnaktsutium, especially after the Young Turk Revolution, and participated in the political activities organized by the same party. On the other hand, some historians, such as the priest Y. G. Çark in his book *Türk Devleti Hizmetinde Ermeniler 1453-1953* (Armenians in the Service of Turkish State 1453-1953) made another mistake and wrote that Krikor Zohrab was a member of the Committee of Union and Progress³³ very possibly under the influence of Arshag Alboyadjian, who wrote that Zohrab mostly voted parallel to CUP politics in the

³² *ibid.*, p. 7; The first meeting he was addressed to the crowds was in 31 July 1908 in Taksim; he spoke in the name of Ottoman Constitutional Club (*Meşrutiyet-i Osmani Kulübü*). His three orations were collected in a book published in 1908. In “Political Orations” (*Siyasi Nutuklar*)³² apart from the speech that he addressed in Taksim there were also two other speeches, given in Beykoz and Tepebaşı. The titles of these speeches were as follows: 1. “Meşrutiyet-i Osmani Kulübü Namına Taksim Bahçesinde İrad Olunan Nutuktur.” (p. 3) 2. “Beykoz İttihad ve Teavün Cemiyeti Tarafından Tertip Edilen Mitingde Verilen Konferanstır: Vatan-ı Osmaninin Esbab-ı Tealisi Nedir?” (p. 10) 3. “Tepebaşı Bahçesi Kışlık Tiyatrosunda Verilen Konferanstır: İntihabat ve Uhuvvet.” (p. 26). The first speech also published in *Osmanlı Meclisi'nde Bir Ermeni Mebus: Öyküler*, (İstanbul: Aras, 2001) pp. 175-180; the second speech also published in Mehmet Ö. Alkan (ed.), *Cumhuriyete Devreden Düşünce Mirası: Tanzimat ve Meşrutiyet'in Birikimi*, v. 1, (İstanbul: İletişim, 2001), pp. 570-471.

³³ Rh. Y. G. Çark, *Türk Devleti Hizmetinde Ermeniler 1453-1953* (The Armenians in the Service of Turkish State), (İstanbul: Yeni Matbaa, 1953), p. 236.

Parliament.³⁴ Moreover, Tunaya regarded him as a “moderate socialist” and incorrectly stated that he was not only a member of Liberal Party but also Hnchag.³⁵

During the constitutional period, Zohrab on various occasions announced his sympathy to the Tashnaktsutiun. As early as October 23, 1908, when he made public his candidacy to the Ottoman Parliament, he wrote that “They said that I was a Tashnak. If I were, I would be proud of such an attribute; I am only a revolutionary intellectual, but a determined man of literature and speech.”³⁶ A few days later, in his speech at the Surp Yerrortutiun church, he saluted the Tashnaktsutiun as the most important Armenian revolutionary party which had brought the new regime with the Committee of Union and Progress.

Today, all hearts in our community drop with the revolutionary organizations, and especially with the *Hai Heghapokhagan Tashnaktsutiun* (Armenian Revolutionary Federation), which is adorned by nobleness, self-sacrifice, and talent; it is a power devoted to a sublime ideal, whom most important representatives today surrounded me, that is why I feel myself to be very lucky. Without denying the roles of the revolutionary bodies of other nationalities, and especially the role of CUP in our emancipation, without hesitation I can say that the primary place is the Tashnaktsutiun's. The sentence dedicated to the big French revolutionary, Mirabeau, is very suitable to the Tashnaktsutiun: “*Mirabeau, ce n'est pas un homme, ce n'est pas un peuple, c'est un événement, un immense événement. C'est la chute du gouvernement monarchique en France.*”³⁷

³⁴ Arshag Alboyadjian, *Anhedatsogh Temker: Krikor Zohrab, Ir Geanke yev Ir Kordze* (Vanished People: Krikor Zohrab, His Life, and His Work), (İstanbul: Der Nersesian, 1919), pp. 204-208; Turkish summary in Krikor Zohrab, *Öyküler*, p. 169.

³⁵ Tunaya, p. 144.

³⁶ *Jamanak*, October 24 / November 6 1908, n. 9, (in *Yerger*, v. 5, p. 96).

³⁷ Krikor Zohrab, “Inch Ge Bahanche Haye Osmanyen Khorkhertaranen,” (What do the Armenians Expect from the Ottoman Parliament), *Jamanak*, October 30 / November 12, no 14. (in *Yerger*, v. 5, p. 101); “Mirabeau is not a personality, not a people, he is a reality, an immense reality. He is the collapse of the monarchic French government.”

In fact, especially at some certain points, defending the Tashnaksutiun was equal to approving of its cooperation with the CUP. As mentioned above, as a result of the agreements signed by the CUP and the Tashnaksutiun in 1907, 1908, 1909 and 1912 the two parties were working as allies. Zohrab, critical at some certain points against the CUP, regarded good relations with the CUP as a matter of life and death for the Armenian people. As a result of this situation, when the Hnchagian Party and other Armenian parties sharpened their opposition against the Tashnaksutiun and the CUP, Zohrab defended their cooperation sincerely:

I don't want to leave a critique, directed at the Armenian deputies in the Parliament, unanswered. This critique is about their harmonious attitude and support of the *İttihat* and *Terakki* Party.

...The real liberals in the Islamic element, the real liberals like us are very rare; but they belong to that party to a great extent. Our persuasions, our feelings, order us to support them with their hard work, and make their work easier.

Nobody points out the deficiencies of this party [CUP] in such a strict and cruel manner as I do, but this does not prevent me from seeing their libertarian bases. What is more, is there another party more libertarian than theirs!³⁸

In 1908, Krikor Zohrab was a member of the *Ahrar* (Liberal) Party. His membership in the *Ahrar* was a result of his admiration of Prince Sabahaddin, and closeness to the political ideas supported by him. In October 1908 Zohrab was a member of the committee that welcomed Prince Sabahaddin when he returned from Paris. The Committee formed by Turk, Armenian and Greek liberals greeted Sabahaddin in Dardanelles with a ship departed from İstanbul. In his return, Zohrab published a two daily article in the Armenian journal *Sourhantag* (Postman) about his impressions, and admiration about the personality of Sabahaddin:

³⁸ Krikor Zohrab, "Hay Badkamavori Me Hashvedvutiune" (The Account of an Armenian Representative), *Azadamard*, 16/29 September-18/1 October 1910, no 388-390, (in *Yerger* v. 5, p. 389-390).

Sabahaddin Bey is one of the most developed intellectuals among the Turks. His vocation is intensified on a most earnest and scientific libertarianism.

He is not a populist orator, but a good rhetorician, whose stresses have eagle-like descents and ascents, and his wisdom is bright. His sentences carry the stamp of a man who writes and thinks.

This is the impression – I would say “admiration” – which he leaves on us with his speech when he talked in front of his father’s coffin, which was in fact a pledge, promise, and oath. As far as I remember, Turkish rhetoric never showed such advancement.³⁹

It is clear that the principle of decentralization advocated by Sabahaddin’s *Teşebbüs-i Şahsi ve Adem-i Merkeziyet Cemiyeti* (The Society for Private Enterprise and Decentralization) and *Ahrar* were suited for Zohrab’s own ideas about the solutions to the most important problems of the Empire. One must not forget that, during the period, all of the Armenian organizations favored decentralization as the main solution to their national question.⁴⁰ That is why Sabahaddin and his followers had widespread support among Armenians. In 1908 and 1909 the issue of decentralization was one of the most important political instruments that determined the political differentiations.⁴¹ On the other hand, although the politics of the CUP and its practices often were regarded as centralist, which is correct to a great extent, but sometimes, as a result of the heterogeneity or opportunism of the CUP’s ideology, and according to the needs of political conjuncture, the Committee also supported decentralization; for instance, during the reform negotiations in the Eastern *vilayets* in the 1912-1913 period. As is known, when the reforms in the Armenian *vilayets* became a crucial issue in terms of the Armenians’ relationship

³⁹ Krikor Zohrab, “Sabahaddin Beye Timavorelnis,” (Our Greeting to Sabahaddin Bey), *Sourhantag* (Postman), 27 September / 9 October 1908 (In *Yerger*, vol. 3, p. 425).

⁴⁰ See an article displaying general Armenian worries about political centralization in *Troshag* “Turkia” (Turkey), 1909 February-March (2-3), p. 17.

⁴¹ Tunaya, p. 146.

with the government, the CUP government prepared a Law of Provinces (*Vilayât Kanunu*) on the basis of decentralization and self-government principles.

It is normal that Krikor Zohrab, “a revolutionary intellectual” in his words, could have a sympathy for the Tashnaktsutiun, which he regarded as a modernist, liberal, and progressive political movement. In the roots of this sympathy one can find the Tashnaktsutiun’s positive approach towards the CUP. According to Zohrab’s view, the Armenians had to support the CUP, because, first, there was no other libertarian movement in the Ottoman political arena,⁴² and second, because the CUP was the party governing the state, in other words, the party which held the power in its hands: “Remember that the CUP is the party in power. Even if our persuasions and feelings would not lead us in their direction, the special interests of our nation order us to be compromised with them.”⁴³

Such a formulation can be adopted in order to understand his support of the Tashnaktsutiun. Zohrab supported the Tashnaktsutiun, since there was no “other party more libertarian than” the Tashnaktsutiun in the Armenian circles, and since the Tashnaktsutiun was “the party in power” thanks to its cooperation with CUP. The Hnchags, who could be an alternative to Tashnaks on the doctrinal basis for his support, kept themselves away from cooperation with the CUP and chose to work as an opposing party. Thus, it would be a “mission impossible” to try to transform the

⁴² See, for instance “The real liberals in the Islam element, the real liberals like us are very rare; but they belong to that party to a great extent. Our persuasions, our feelings order us to support them in their hard work, and make their work easier. Nobody points out the deficiencies of this party in such a strict and cruel manner as I do. But this does not prevent me to see their libertarian bases. What is more, is there another party more libertarian than theirs?! *Ahrar* and *Mutedil Hürriyetperveran* parties contain a lot of reactionary and religious elements into their bodies.” Zohrab, “Hay Badkamavori Me Hashvedvutiune” (The Account of an Armenian Representative), *Yerger*, v. 5, pp. 389-390.

⁴³ See, for instance, Zohrab, “Hay Badkamavori Me Hashvedvutiune” (The Account of an Armenian Representative), in *Yerger*, v. 5, p. 390.

dominant political discourses that had been poisoned by ethnic hostilities, surrounded by reactionary forces because of the remnants of the Hamidian regime, and society, which was suffering from backwardness through the Hnchag Party. The other Armenian parties, the *Ramgavars* (Democrats) and the *Veragazmial* (Reformed) Hnchag's were out of the question, because they could have only an insignificant impact on the grand politics.

As pointed out above, except for his state of belonging to the Liberal Group which he founded in 1911 in the Armenian National Assembly, Zohrab's only party membership was in *Ahrar*. The *Ahrar* Party was founded in 1908 with "a western style"⁴⁴ program, which was politically very attractive to Zohrab. In his letter to his son Levon Zohrab on 14 August 1909 he wrote that "*Je participe à la formation d'un grand parti politique exclusivement turc. Là aussi on me donne un poste d'honneur.*"⁴⁵ The Party's being "*exclusivement turc*" was especially important and explains that why Zohrab avoided becoming a member of the Tashnaktsutium, although its revolutionary and socialist ideas fit more than *Ahrar*'s economically liberal program. Zohrab was searching a way to strengthen Ottomanism and believed that instead of working in a radical and national(istic) Armenian party, working in a central Turkish party would help to realize his political agenda.

He preferred *Ahrar* to the CUP for specific reasons. First of all, in the beginning, *Ahrar* seemed a more liberal and democratic party than the CUP. *Ahrar*'s insistence on decentralization and Prince Sabahaddin's existence were very attractive to him, especially on the basis of the Armenian question. The CUP's centralistic

⁴⁴ Tunaya, p. 17.

⁴⁵ "I am participating to the formation of a big, exclusively Turkish party. Here, they will give me an honorable position." (in *Yerger*, vol. IV, p. 147).

tendencies repelled him from that organization. Moreover, as mentioned above, Ahrar's organization was –although very weak and superficial– had strong resemblances to western style political parties. On the other hand, in 1908 the CUP was not even a political party, and was still working mostly as a secret organization.

As a result, even though he participated in the foundation of the *Ahrar* Party, Zohrab chose a political language that was not so antagonistic to the CUP. One can assume that he regarded the *Ahrar* as the liberal wing of the Young Turk political organizations, and participated in its formation with the hopes of influencing the other, centralistic –may be conservative– wing, the CUP, through a positive opposition from the outside. This is how his negative attitude against the Liberal Entente Party, which was founded after the closure of *Ahrar* can be explained.⁴⁶ After the counter-revolutionary attempt on 31 March 1909, Zohrab saw that the Ahrar's strong anti-CUP policies and cooperation with the “reactionary” forces which sought to remove the constitutional regime, and he withdrew his support from *Ahrar*. In September 1910, while calling on the Armenian community to support the co-operation between the Tashnaks and the CUP he warned them, saying that “*Ahrar* and *Mutedil Hürriyetperveran* parties contained a lot of reactionary and religious elements within them.”⁴⁷

In May 1909, when the deputy of Berat, İsmail Kemal Bey (from *Ahrar* and then *Mutedil Hürriyetperveran*⁴⁸), was accused of benefiting from the March 31st

⁴⁶ Eşref Yağcıoğlu (ed.), *İttihat ve Terakki'nin Son Yılları, 1916 Kongre Zabıtları*, (İstanbul: Nehir, 1992), p. 91.

⁴⁷ Zohrab, “Hay Badkamavori Me Hashvedvutiune” (The Account of an Armenian Representative), in *Yerger*, v. 5, p. 389-390.

⁴⁸ Aykut Kansu, *1908 Devrimi*, (İstanbul: İletişim, 2001), p. 383.

events, and the Parliament discussed whether send him to Martial Court, Zohrab clarified his position amongst the CUP, *Ahrar*, and the counter-revolution attempts:

In my first interview with him [İsmail Kemal Bey] I saw how this event [the events of March 31st] has been interpreted, and I was not content at all. I really got upset. You know, gentlemen, that there is a party struggle here. One has to make this clear. I am not from the Union and Progress Party and I have fought many times against certain principles of this party. But I have never stood against the fact that this is a respected party and always defended its permanence. In that respect I do not have hostile feelings about that party, in the events and when I sensed efforts and a determination to destroy the party and when I sensed the stroke hit to our constitutional regime, I felt deep sorrow. ...Only İsmail Kemal Bey has not joined in my sorrow. ...He should have felt the same sorrow from the stroke that hit the opposition party as if it were a threat to his own party. He did not feel that way. When I even cried from my sorrow, he encouraged me by saying “Why do you feel so upset? This is no big deal.” In that moment, I consider İsmail Kemal Bey's attitude as worthy of a scold.⁴⁹

As can be seen, as a result of *Ahrar*'s participation in the counter revolutionary attempt in April 1909, Zohrab distanced himself from that party. *Ahrar*'s cooperation with religious and reactionary elements to overthrow the CUP was unacceptable to Zohrab. Because he believed that the anti-CUP camp was aiming to remove the gains of the constitutional rule. Against this camp he was on the same side as the CUP, the *Tashnaksutiun*, and the other Armenian groups supporting the constitutional rule.

⁴⁹ *Meclisi Mebusan Zabıt Ceridesi: Devre: I, İctima Senesi: I, Cilt: 3: 28 Mart 1325 Tarihli Elli Beşinci İnikattan-14 Mayıs 1325 Tarihli Seksen Birinci İnikada Kadar* (Ankara: TBMM Basımevi, 1982), p. 715; İlk defa kendisiyle (İsmail Kemal Bey'le) mülakatımda bu vakanın (31 Mart) ne surette telakki edildiğini gördüm ise, bundan pek memnun olmadım. Ben bunu gayet müteessir olarak telakki ettim. Biliyorsunuz ki efendim, bunda bir fıkra mücadelesi vardır. Bunu açık söylemeli. Ben İttihat ve Terakki Fırkasından değilim ve çok defa da o fırkanın düsturları aleyhinde mücahedede bulundum. Fakat o fırkanın muhterem bir fırka olduğunun hilafında hiçbir vakit değildim ve bakasının taraftarıyım ve idim. Bu itibarla, olan vakada bu fırkaya karşı bir husumet beslemem ve fırkayı mahvetmek için bir cehd ve azim gördüğümden dolayı ve onun zımında Meşrutiyetimize de vurulan darbeyi gördüğümden dolayı son derece müteessir oldum. (...) Yalnız İsmail Kemal Bey bu teessürüme iştirak etmedi. (...) Kendisi bir fırka-i muhalifeye vurulan darbeden kendi fırkasına olan bir tecavüz gibi müteessir olması lazım gelirdi. Böyle müteessir olmadı. Hatta ben teessürümden ağladığım vakit “Canım niçin böyle müteessir oluyorsunuz? Bu kadar ortada bir şey yok” diye beni teşci etti. Bu noktada ben İsmail Kemal Bey'in hareketini şayan-ı muaheze görürüm”

During the constitutional period in most cases he criticized the CUP, especially when that party tended to create a kind of authoritarian rule after 1913, but he never left the constitutionalist side against anti-constitutionalist one. This was his main line of political activity.

On Freedoms and Rights

Zohrab defended the constitutional rule throughout his political activity, and especially in the parliament. A thorough inspection on his activities in the parliament reveals that he was very sensitive about the offenses against the constitutional rule, and often defended the virtues of the constitutional regime especially on the legal basis. Zohrab regarded the constitution and free political activity as means of modernizing the state and society, which were worries shared with influential groups in the CUP. Such examples are varying, and could be useful to study in order to understand his attitude about the “constitutional life” (*hayat-ı meşrutiyet*).

Zohrab considered constitutional rule as a regime of freedoms and rights, which had never existed under absolutist rule. Considering freedom as the essence of the new period, from the podium of the parliament he advocated freedom of speech, freedom of gathering, freedom of press, freedom of voyage, freedom for women and such, and opposed the regulations which put freedoms under restraint, such as censorship, limitations on freedom of speech and freedom of gathering, limitations on freedom of travel in the Passport Law, some articles in the Regulation on Vagabonds and Suspect People (*Serseri ve Mazanna-i Su Eşhas Hakkında Nizamname*) which restricted civil rights, and against the concept of adultery (*zina*)

in the Criminal Law (*Ceza Kanunu*) by which the oppression of women was brought into existence by the own hand of state.

For instance, in March 1909 when the Parliament discussed the issue of limiting public meetings, he advocated the freedom of speech by claiming that an open meeting must not be banned: “Is prohibiting or restricting the right to gather an effective remedy? As far as I know, mischief takes place in a quite secret manner. I have heard for the first time that mischief took place in a public discussion. Therefore, the issue of mischief could not, really, be the subject. This would be out of place.”⁵⁰

Zohrab, opposed to the dominating idea on the Parliament in the issue of inserting the punishment of “beating” into Regulation on Vagabonds and Suspect People. According to Zohrab, beating as a punishment was unreasonable and fruitless. It had been discontinued in the Ottoman law system a long time ago –for him the exception was the Hamidian era, in which the beating had been put into practice in clandestine ways,⁵¹ and to establish it again would be a reactionary pace, which was inharmonious with the essence of constitutionalism.⁵²

Zohrab was a strong defender of libertarian principles, especially regarding the law on the press. As a famous writer and as a former editor of Armenian periodicals, during the absolutist rule he saw how the political power could use censorship

⁵⁰ *Meclisi Mebusan Zabıt Ceridesi: Devre: I, İctima Senesi: 1, Cilt: 1: 4 Kanunuevvel 1324 Tarihli Birinci İnikattan-19 Şubat 1324 Tarihli Otuzucuncu İnikata Kadar* (Ankara: TBMM Basımevi, 1982), p. 150.

⁵¹ *Meclisi Mebusan Zabıt Ceridesi: Devre: I, İctima Senesi: 1, Cilt: 2: 11 Kasım 1324 Tarihli Otuzdördüncü İnikattan-26 Mart 1325 Tarihli Ellidördüncü İnikada Kadar* (Ankara: TBMM Basımevi, 1982); “Mademki evvelden mevcut idi, binaenaleyh onun hüsn-ü tesiri görülmüş olması lazım gelirdi. Denilecek ki, ben bunu teslim ederim ki, efendim o darp gayrıresmi, hafı, yani bir nevi zulmi bir darp idi. Çünkü hüküm hâkimde değil idi.” p. 681.

⁵² *ibid.*, p. 601.

against freedom of expression. Thus, his reaction against censorship was merciless. In his opinion, censorship was a means of despotism, and since the Ottoman people could easily recall the bitter experiences of censorship, there was no need to pursue the newspapers in order to censor ideas in a constitutional regime: “*there is no doubt that censorship kills the thought*. Yes, censorship means murdering the thoughts of the whole nation. I do not think that any of my sublime friends would approve to put pre-print censorship. All our tragic experiences are against these.”⁵³ Moreover, when a member of the parliament recommended punishing the owner of the printing-house and the distributor if the content of the publication contained the elements of crime, Zohrab argued that since the editor and the owner of the paper had to obtain a license from the government there was no need to punish the printing-house and the distributor, because they did not have direct connection with the content of the paper.⁵⁴

During the parliamentary debates about the amendments to the *Kanun-ı Esasi* when some groups wanted to insert the concept of “harmful publications” (*neşriyyat-ı muzırre*) to the constitution, Zohrab, arguing that there was no such a concept in the Press Law, again followed the same parallelism, and equated the concept of *neşriyyat-ı muzırre* with despotism (*istibdat*): “*Harmful publications can only exist under a despotic regime*. That's why the 31st article of the Press Law very clearly states that '20th article necessitates that provocation for the crimes against

⁵³ *Meclisi Mebusan Zabıt Ceridesi: Devre: I, İctima Senesi: 1, Cilt: 3: 28 Mart 1325 Tarihli Elli Beşinci İnikattan-14 Mayıs 1325 Tarihli Seksen Birinci İnikada Kadar* (Ankara: TBMM Basımevi, 1982); p. 190; “Hiç şüphe yok ki, sansür efkârı katletmek demektir. Evet, kablettab, sansür vaz etmek, bütün milletin efkârını katletmek demektir. Kablettab, sansürü vaz etmeyi zannetmem ki rüfeka-yı kiramdan hiçbiri tensib etsin. Bizim gördüğümüz acı tecrübeler tamamıyla bunların aleyhindedir.”

⁵⁴ *ibid.*, pp. 508-509.

constitutional order and that violates domestic and external security...’ Look, there is no casual mention of harmful publications here, and cannot be. *If there would be such a record, then we would be returning back to despotism.*”⁵⁵

Zohrab’s ideas about adultery found a great mass of opponents in the parliament. His modernist approach to gender relationships caused a great reaction, and the deputies cut his speech off, and protested several times while he was at the podium. Aware of the reasons for this reaction, Zohrab chose a moderate way of speaking, but again insisted on his ideas: “I am afraid, since the parliament is made up of men, we are a bit unable to consider the condition of women, whose rights we seek to limit, in an impartial and just manner.”⁵⁶ Arguing that both Ottoman laws and the Islamic Law gave a prominent role to the men in the family, and in society on the basis of rights, privileges etc., he claimed that the women must be protected by law when the concept of adultery was considered. In addition to this, when some of the representatives argued that adultery was a big crime, because it harmed the purity of the generations, he opposed by saying that:

In those centuries, it was valid to use such expressions as, ‘I am the son of so and so, so and so is my ancestor, this is an illegal child, a bastard.’ I, myself, do not accept these expressions. For the dignity of the twentieth century and for the dignity of whole humanity, I strongly reject these expressions; from this moment on there are only humans on earth, no more illegal children, and no more bastards. (Noises) ...If you let me, in an article or in the

⁵⁵ ibid., p. 660; “*Neşriyat-ı muzırre yalnız idare-i istibdatiyede bulunabilir.* Buna mebnidir ki bu Matbuat Kanunu’nun 31. maddesinde pek musarrah surette deniliyor ki ‘20. madde mucibince usul-ü meşrutiyet aleyhine ve emniyet-i dahiliye ve hariciyeyi muhil ceraime tahriki havi...’ Bakınız, bunda lalettayın neşriyat-ı muzırre kaydı yoktur ve olamaz. *Eğer böyle bir kayıt olursa istibdatı iade etmiş olacağız.*”

⁵⁶ *Meclisi Mebusan Zabıt Ceridesi, Devre: 1, İctima Senesi: 3, Sinci Cilt: 27 Mart 1327 (1911) Tarihli Yetmişikinci İnikaddan-13 Nisan 1327 (1911) Tarihli Seksenaltıncı İnikada Kadar* (Ankara: TBMM Basımevi, 1990); p. 400; “Meclis-i Mebusan’ın erkeklerden müteşekkil olması hasebiyle haklarını tahdit etmek istediğimiz kadınların vaziyetini münsifane, bitarafane düşünmekte zannedersen biraz aciziz.”

fundamental provisions of the Constitution, it says 'all the Ottomans are equal.' Can the constitutional rule survive, if you deprive a man of the honor of being an Ottoman, who is already destined for an unfortunate life due to the fact that his father is unknown, and if you will render him stained, with a deficiency, forever? (Noise)⁵⁷

Krikor Zohrab believed in constructing a constitutional rule and a constitutionalism on the basis of developing basic citizenry rights. The democratization of the regime through freedom of speech, freedom of press, human rights, and most importantly, the principle of equality which found its expression in the constitution was his main political motive. In fact, as in the instances mentioned above, his opposition to the different governments of the constitutional period arose because of the limitations on such principles. This is why he usually displayed a manner of positive opposition: Because he wanted to channel the regime in a more libertarian direction in which cultural, ethnic, and most importantly political differentiations could be expressed more freely. These considerations had also direct relations with his perception of the Armenian question.

Zohrab and “National Economy”

In the parliamentary discussions Krikor Zohrab several times declared his ideas and imaginations about the appropriateness of a liberal or a protective

⁵⁷ *ibid.*, p. 400; “(...) O asırlarda ben falanın oğluyum, falan benim ecdadımdandır, bu veled-i zinadır, piçtir tabirleri cari idi. Bendeniz bu tabirleri kabul etmem. 20nci asrın şerefi için ve bütün insanîyetin şerefi için bu tabirleri kemal-i şiddetle reddederim; bundan sonra dünya yüzünde yalnız insanlar vardır, veled-i zinalar, piçler yoktur. (Gürültüler) (...) Müsaade ederseniz, Kanun-ı Esasi'nin bir maddesinde yahut ahkam-ı esasiyesinde diyor ki 'bütün Osmanlılar müsavidir.' Eğer babası meçhul olduğundan dolayı zaten bedbahtlığa mahkum olan bir adamı siz Osmanlılık şerefinden mahrum ederek bir nakisa ile ebedi surette lekedar edecekseniz, Meşrutiyet kalır mı? (Gürültü).” For a detailed account of parliamentary sessions on adultery derived from *Meclis-i Mebusan Zabıt Ceridesi* see Osman Köker, “İstanbul Mebusu Krikor Zohrab Efendi'nin 'Erkekler Meclisi'nde Kadınları Savunması: Meclis-i Mebusan'da Zina Tartışması,” *Toplumsal Tarih*, no 56, August 1998, pp. 13-20.

economic model. In most cases he discussed the issue with Cavid Bey, deputy of Salonica (Biga, after loss of Salonica), and Minister of Finance, who was a strong supporter of a “*laissez faire laissez passé*” kind liberal economy. In such discussions he appeared as one of the most influential defenders of a protective economic system.

According to Zohrab, under the conditions of existing economic system, since Ottoman Empire had not the power of production (*kuvvet-i istihsaliye*) the only way to solve the problems was to accumulate the small capitals in order to create a capital accumulation. He believed that, while trying to create a capital accumulation, the most important thing is to protect small capital ownership.⁵⁸ At this point he strongly opposed the “Spencerian Darwinist”⁵⁹ approach of Cavid Bey and claimed that “the most developed countries, the nations which are the most important supporters of a liberal economy, at the end, accepted the method of moderate protection.”⁶⁰

Zohrab, being aware of the results of economic imperialism which was aiming “economic conquests instead of military conquests”⁶¹ supported the idea of Ottomanism in the economic sphere and claimed that, since the Ottoman capital ownership was mainly based on small capital, and since such capital was not able to

⁵⁸ *Meclisi Ayan Zabıt Ceridesi: Devre: 1, İctima Senesi: 2, İnci Cilt: 1 Teşrinisani 1325 (1909) Tarihli Birinci İnikaddan-1 Mayıs 1326 (1910) Tarihli Altmışsekizinci İnikada Kadar* (Ankara: TBMM Basımevi, n.d.), p. 363; “Onun için geçen gün büyük servetler teşkiline dair olan sözlerine cevap olarak ‘küçükleri ezmemek şartıyla’ dedim;

⁵⁹ *ibid.*, p. 362; “...Spencer’in bu nazariyesini yalnız hayvanat ve nebatat için cari olur. Fakat heyet-i içtimaiyeler için cari olamayacağını [ulema] çoktan beri kemal-i vuzuhla ispat ettiler.”

⁶⁰ *ibid.*; “...En müterakki devletler, en serbesti-i ticaret taraftarı olan milletler bile, nihayetünnihaye, gelmişler, himaye-i mutedile usulünü kabul etmişlerdir.” MMZC, “12 Nisan 1326” (25 April 1910).

⁶¹ *ibid.*, pp. 362-363; “Bir ecnebi memlekete Avrupa’nın bir lirası gitmesi, bir nefer süngülü askerinin gitmesi kadar mühimdir. Bizim memleketimiz mehmeamken istikraz etmekten müçtenip olması icap eder. ...Bugün harben fetih yoktur. Bugün harp, feth-i iktisadidir.”

compete with its European rivals the Ottoman economic system must be protected against the flow of European capital:

Today, you know that there are not borders. The borders are only political, there are not any economic border. ... (Our trade is) mixed with all European trade. Do you think that, if we adopt all the discourses of Ministry of Finance in this battlefield, all the desired wealth will be accumulated at the hands of Ottomans. Because of natural developments and absolute competition the result would be the destruction of the small wealth of Ottomans and the domination of foreign capital ownership. ... If you completely open our borders, if you destruct our border of defence against such economical offences, against such economic penetrations, you made us a completely conquered country.⁶²

Zohrab, accepting the necessity of foreign capital in some branches in which Ottoman capital was not competent, aiming to create an Ottoman capital ownership through providing some protection to the Ottoman citizens in some economic areas needing small capital. According to him, this is the only way to accumulate the capital at the hands of Ottomans:

It is possible to made whether the Navy Corporation, whether Haliç, or telephon with Ottoman capital. I agree, there are some fields of activity in which Ottoman capital is not enough. ... In that small works which we deliver to the Ottomans, the interests will belong to the Ottomans; we must not begrudge this to the Ottomans, and match with Europeans.⁶³

As is known, after attempts to establish a liberal economic system, the governments of CUP gradually slided to a nationalist economy especially after

⁶² ibid., “(...) Bugün, bilirsiniz ki, hudut yoktur. Hudutlar yalnız siyasidir. İktisadi hiçbir hukuk yoktur. (...) (Bizim ticaretimiz) Bütün Avrupa'nın ticaretiyle muhtelittir. Şimdi şu müthiş saha-i mübareze içinde maliye nazırlarının düsturlarını öyle mutlak bir surette tatbik edecek olursak, ümit eder misiniz ki, arzu edilen o büyük servetler, Osmanlılarda hasıl olsun? ... Cereyan-ı tabii ve rekabet-i mutlakadan, Osmanlılarda olan servet-i cüzienin mahvından ve ecnebi sermayedarının tahakküm etmesinden başka bir netice hasıl olmaz. ... Bu iktisadi tecavüzlere, bu iktisadi hatvelere karşı siz hudutlarınızı tamamen açarsanız, hudud-u müdafamızı yıkarsanız, bizi tamamiyle meftuh bir memleket haline korsunuz. ”

⁶³ ibid., “Gerek seyr-i sefain şirketi, gerek Haliç ve gerek telefon, hep bunları Osmanlı sermayesiyle yapmak mümkündür. Ötede öyle faaliyet sahaları vardır ki, ona Osmanlı parası kifayet etmez. Bunu tasdik ediyorum. (...) Osmanlılara tebliğ olunacak ufak işlerde hasıl olan kâr ve menfaat, yine Osmanlılara ait olacağından bunu çok görmemeli ve ecnebilere kıyas etmemeli.”

Balkan Wars. According to Toprak, CUP was both the initiator of the liberal economy and the organizer of the nationalistic reactions of small producers, and *esnaf* who were the sufferers of economic liberalism.⁶⁴ This reaction was usually turn towards non-Muslims, who were dominant especially in trade. 1913-14 Muslim Boycottage was one of the most significant evidences of this reaction.⁶⁵ Especially in the years of First World War, when the gates for the foreign trade were closed a new economic model, “etatist bourgeoisie system,” was established.⁶⁶ Dramatically, the protective ideas defended by Krikor Zohrab against a Unionist, Mehmed Cavid Bey were adopted by CUP a few years later with a significant differentiation: Instead of “Ottoman” of Krikor Zohrab, which he claimed to be defended, CUP used the expressions “Turk” or “Muslim” in order to eliminate both the foreign and non-Muslim Ottoman capital from the economic markets.

Zohrab and the Armenian Question

It is clear that Zohrab’s opposition to the Hamidian despotism and partisanship to the constitutional regime were directly related to the Armenian question. As an Armenian-Ottoman intellectual, and especially as a lawyer, being interested in the sufferings of Armenians mistreated in Anatolia, such as land problems, confiscations, backwardness, the problems with Kurdish tribes, and the problems caused by Hamidiye Cavalries, and even the massacres of 1894-1896 and 1905, he saw the problems of the Armenian people as a result of the Hamidian despotic methods, and thus supported the Young Turk Revolution fervently. Although his

⁶⁴ Zafer Toprak, *Türkiye’de Ekonomi ve Toplum (1908-1950) Milli İktisat-Milli Burjuvazi*, (İstanbul: Tarih Vakfı Yurt Yayınları, 1995), pp. 4-5.

⁶⁵ *ibid.* p. 5.

⁶⁶ Zafer Toprak, *Türkiye’de Ekonomi ve Toplum (1908-1950) İttihat-Terakki ve Devletçilik*, (İstanbul: Tarih Vakfı Yurt Yayınları, 1995), p. 159.

secular, modernist, democratic world view played an important role in determining his attitude against two regimes, it can be easily said that the Armenian question itself was very crucial in determining his political position.

As mentioned above, on 6 November 1908, after the invitation of the Armenian Constitutionalist Club, Zohrab made public his candidacy for the Parliament with an article published in *Jamanak* (Time) in which he discussed his activities during the reign of Abdülhamid as a lawyer, writer, and journalist. He stated that he was one of the few Armenians who publicly struggled against the regime, and even call the victims of 1896 massacres “victims” (“*zoh*” in Armenian) in the Armenian newspapers. Moreover, he declared that “I defended the Armenian, Greek, Bulgarian political rebels without differentiation until these last days, always free of charge. Since I defended a Bulgarian revolutionary, who was tortured by the Istibi Macedonian authorities, against the *kaymakam* of Istibi, the government even banned me from practicing my profession, and I was compelled to go far away from İstanbul. Here are my titles!”⁶⁷ Zohrab then alienated himself from the Armenians who had gained much by serving the despotic regime and said that: “Many people gained money, missions, various marks, and built positions by being closer to the regime, but I stayed far away from all of these. I saved my own independent position as a lawyer, and stayed far from any expectation of interest.”⁶⁸

Zohrab knew that the participation of the Armenians in the work of discussing the Armenian Question was impossible in a despotic rule, and thus saluted the constitutional regime with great enthusiasm. He believed that the Young Turks, and

⁶⁷ *Jamanak*, October 24 / November 6 1908, n. 9, (in *Yerger* v. 5, p. 96).

⁶⁸ *ibid.*, p. 97.

the CUP had the potential to transform the Hamidian regime into a liberal, democratic one. This was the main motive of his support of the CUP. He concerned the CUP as a modernist, progressive, and liberal party, although some of its elements resist such principles. For instance, he believed that during the Adana events some of the officers participated in the abuses and created an anarchy in the city –especially the governor of Adana, Cevdet Bey, and the mütesarrıf of Cebel-i Bereket, Mehmed Asaf Bey.⁶⁹ The result of that anarchy was the massacre of thousands of victims. On the other hand, he opposed to the claims that Adana events were resulted because of the rebellion organized by the Armenians.

I reject a slander, an aspersion with all my being, all my heart,
all my conscience that the Armenians, who are analyzed their all
existence into Ottomanism, were ready to organize a rebellion.⁷⁰

According to Zohrab, in order to create an atmosphere of reliability, and a confidence towards constitutional rule the government must act harshly against abusers, and must appoint a commission of investigation from neutral people who were not participated in the events. He proposed sending 20000 Ottoman liras for the mistreated people of Adana and claimed only such precautions would help the constitutional rule to survive.⁷¹

On the other hand, even after the Adana event Zohrab called the Armenian people to support the CUP at a time when Armenian public opinion generally had suspicions about the CUP because of the Adana massacres. In his speech at the Raffi Armenian Society in September 1910, he gave several pasts to the audience that even

⁶⁹ *Meclisi Mebusan Zabıt Ceridesi: Devre: I, İctima Senesi: 1, Cilt: 3: 28 Mart 1325 Tarihli Elli Beşinci İnikattan-14 Mayıs 1325 Tarihli Seksen Birinci İnikada Kadar* (Ankara: TBMM Basımevi, 1982); p. 117

⁷⁰ *ibid.*, p. 130; “Bugün bütün mevcudiyetlerini Osmanlılığın içinde tahlil etmiş olan Ermenilerin böyle kıyam için, mürettep olmak için müheyya bulunmak gibi bir bühtanı, bir iftirayı bütün mevcudiyedim, bütün kalbim, bütün vicdanımla reddederim.”

⁷¹ *ibid.*, pp. 129-130..

in the controversial events of Adana the Ottoman government did its best to solve the problems of the Armenians.

[The result of the catastrophe of Adana] is untreatable. But one must accept that the Ottoman government did which we could demand from it ‘under the present conditions.’ When did you see that because of a Christian massacre approximately 100 Muslims were hung up, or when did you see that approximately 1000 Muslim perpetrators were imprisoned? The constitutionalist government showed this bravery, and it is the debt of all Armenians who are judicious, to recognize and to act towards government according to this. Moreover, to compensate the economic loss arising from the events, the government openhandedly paid the money needed.⁷²

Zohrab’s approach to the CUP was a direct result of his anxieties about the *Ancient Regimé* (in the terms of the Armenian Question, the most important threat of this regime was the massacres), and his worries about the endurance of the constitutional regime. Because he believed that if the constitutional rule failed the Hamidian regime would be revived. Edwin Pears (1835-1919), who has lived in İstanbul as a lawyer more than forty years, and corresponded with a leading London newspaper, *Daily News*, had written about Zohrab’s attitude in his *Forty Years in Constantinople* and confirmed this situation:

[After the massacres in Adana] Two or three of the leading Armenian deputies did their best to stem the current of hostility in their own community against the Committee for what they believed to be its conduct in that province. My friend Mr. Zohrab, an Armenian deputy of ability with whom I discussed the question very fully at the time, felt that in the interest of his race it was better not to give prominence to the massacre. Whether they liked it or not, Armenians had to live among the Turks, and unless they could continue on good terms with the Committee, the only alternative to a series of new massacres was to make an appeal to be united to Russia. But as Russia up to that time had been curiously narrow in its treatment of the Armenian church and

⁷² Krikor Zohrab, “Hay Badkamavori Me Hashvedvutiune” (The Account of an Armenian Representative), in *Yerger* v. 5, p. 384.

community, and seemed to wish to have nothing to do with its people, there were very few amongst them who were in favor of such an appeal. The choice said others is between massacre and Russia. Hence the general sentiment amongst them was that they must make common cause with the Turks as represented by the Young Turkey Party, and this they continued to do until the outbreak of the war in 1914.⁷³

According to Vahan Papazian's memoir Zohrab aimed leading Tashnaksutiun to this position in order to gain the continuity of the constitutional rule, which he regarded as most important guarantee of the security of Armenian population. Papazian writes parallel to Pears about Zohrab's position against CUP:

[Zohrab] was knocking the door of the bureau of Tashnaksutiun everyday and was advising us "not to make something foolish, not to make CUP an enemy of ourselves, that our destiny was at their hands, that it was possible that what happened at Adana today may take place in other places tomorrow, that if the helm of the country and power is in their hands, we must gain their confidence by being friendly towards them."⁷⁴

Moreover, Zohrab in his speech at the Raffi Armenian Society, declared that the benefits of the Armenian society ordered cooperating with the CUP, because it was the party that governed the state.

Remember that the *İttihat* and *Terakki* Party is the party in power. Even if our persuasions and feelings would not lead us in their direction, the special interests of our nation order us to compromise with them. In politics you cannot walk with only your feelings, the survival of the nation must be the most important guide. You can see how reasonable our co-operation with that political party is, for which we are already grateful since they give the Constitution to the country.⁷⁵

The traces of Zohrab's ideas about the Armenian question were revealed in a parliamentary discussion that focused on the revolt in Albania and governmental

⁷³ Edwin Pears, *Forty Years in Constantinople*, (London: H. Jenkins, 1916), pp. 299-300.

⁷⁴ Papazian, p. 129.

⁷⁵ Krikor Zohrab, "Hay Badkamavori Me Hashvedvutiune" (The Account of an Armenian Representative), in *Yerger* v. 5, p. 390.

measures to suppress it. During the discussions Zohrab several times stepped to the podium and criticized the government for its violent attitude in Albania.

Politics... according to the model adopted in Albania by the government, is a single piece politics. It [government] sees a nation or some individuals or a collectivity that murdered itself. It kills this, and closes case. I, myself, do not call this politics. In fact, politics is the measures taken, by a number of thoughtful ideas and by coming to terms with the other in a peace-loving way. Drawing a sword in the face of an obstacle is not politics. First of all, there was a background of last year's military dispatch. This background was Cavit Paşa's military operations. These military operations of Cavit Paşa were not a good memory of Albanians and our government was warned by the deputies of Albania. What did the government do? Nothing. In my opinion, it was seized by a completely superstitious theory. What is this? Government was called by the theory of esteeming the information and actions of its own man. It considered whatever he was informed by his own man as absolute truth. In no instance, it attempted to investigate whether this was true or false. I even can say that it did not take into consideration a very definite document, which was at least very valuable in the time of constitutionalism.⁷⁶

These statements were very similar to his perception of the Armenian problem, and I believe that if we changed the words "Albania" to "Armenia" or "Armenian provinces", and the word "Albanian" to "Armenian" we could follow up his way of thinking: political and civil liberty for the minorities, decentralization, governmental affirmative attitude for ethnic groups, confidence instead of suspicion over citizens,

⁷⁶ *Meclisi Mebusan Zabıt Ceridesi: Devre: I, İctima Senesi: 2, Cilt: 1: 1 Teşrinisani 1325 Tarihli Birinci İnikaddan-13 Kanunısani 1325 Tarihli Otuzuncu İnikada Kadar* (Ankara: TBMM Basımevi, 1985), pp. 323-324; (...) *Siyaset, (...) Arnavutluk'ta hükümet tarafından ittihaz olunan şekle göre yekpare bir siyasettir. Kendisine karşı kıyam etmiş bir millet görüyor, yahut bazı efrat görüyor veyahut bir heyet-i müçtemia görüyor. Bunu tenkil ediyor, meseleyi bitiriyor. Bendeniz buna siyaset demiyorum. Haddizatında siyaset diye birçok teenni ile ve yekdiğeriyle anlaşmak suretiyle sulhperverane bir tarzda ittihaz olunan tedabire denilir. Yoksa bir müşkilin önünde bulununca hemen kılıca sarılmak, bu siyaset değildir. Bir kere geçen sene icra kılınan sevkıyat-ı askeriyenin mukaddematı vardı. Bu mukaddemat Cavit Paşa'nın hareket-ı askeriyesi idi. Bu Cavit Paşa'nın hareket-ı askeriyesi Arnavutlarda iyi bir hatıra teşkil etmiyordu ve bu hükümete bütün bizim Arnavut mebusları tarafından ihtar olundu. Hükümet ne yaptı? Hiçbir şey yapmadı. Bendenizce tamamıyla batıl bir nazariyeye kapıldı. Nedir o? Hükümet kendi adamlarının ihbarını sahih ve hareketini doğru addetmek nazariyesine meclup oldu. Kendi adamları tarafından kendisine her ne ihbar olundu ise bunu bir hakikat-ı katiyye olarak telakki etti. Hiçbir vakit bunun haklı ya da haksız olduğuna dair tetkik etmek için bir teşebbüste bulunmadı. Hatta diyebilirim ki pek katı bir vesikayı, hiç değilse zaman-ı meşrutiyette pek kıymettar olan bir vesikayı nazar-ı dikkate almadı.⁷⁶*

political and cultural measures instead of military intervention. According to Zohrab, only according to this formulation the principle of Ottomanism and the union of the elements would be realized which were crucial for the existence of the Ottoman state.

The most important face of the Armenian Question was land and property problems before and after Young Turk Revolution: “The return of the real estates, which were seized by the local people in the 1890's, especially by the Kurds during the mass violence between 1895-96, to their Armenian possessors.”⁷⁷ It is not a secret that most of the Armenians regarded the Constitutional Revolution as an opportunity to solve the land and property question. If the Armenian support for the Constitutional rule examined we can easily see that this expectation was the most important motive behind the Armenian support. As early as September-October 1908, *Troshag* warned the “revolutionary government” by underlining the need of fundamental changes in the Anatolian provinces:

The wave of the social psychology is descended. Free floating optimism left slowly its place to skepticism, pessimism and uncertainty. Will the revolution bring unpleasant surprises? The course of events, in a way, verifies our doubts. .. The fact that revolutionary government shows tenderness to oppressors creates confusion and anger in us. The guilty is familiar: Kurdish bandits, full of appetite of vandalism, under the protection of the local authorities... Armenia cannot be reformed with the agents of Armenian massacres!⁷⁸

Another pessimistic interpretation on the development of the Revolution published five months later in the same journal:

⁷⁷ Hans-Lukas Kieser, “Türk Ulusal Tarihiçiliğinin Gölgesinde ‘Ermeni Tehciri’” *Tarih ve Toplum Yeni Yaklaşımlar*, no 1, Spring 2005, p. 245; “1890’larda yerel ahalice, özellikle 1895-96’daki kitlesel şiddet sırasında Kürtler tarafından el konulmuş olan mülklerin Ermeni sahiplerine iadesi.”

⁷⁸ *Troshag* (Flag) [Editorial], September-October 1908.

Constitutional practices and the institutionalization of those were established in peace and without bloodshed. That is why the social life was not shook, and there was no radical change in manners, values, and point of views. As a result of this, the appearance was saved, but the state remained the same with all its habits, inner structure and nature. Monarchy collapsed but its mechanical force, the power that creates it, remained in its place intact.⁷⁹

According to Kieser, the cooperation between Tashnaksutiun and CUP was mainly based on a compromise to solve the “*question agraire*”.⁸⁰ The Decisions of Sixth Congress of Tashnaksutiun approves the accuracy of this interpretation: “The seizures of Armenian lands and properties from 1890s must be recognized as a systematic cruelty against the Armenians. Consequently, the condition of Armenian land and water ownership of 1890 must be regarded as *statu quo*, and it is one of the most important provisions of constitutional justice and İttihat-Tashnak cooperation.”⁸¹ Moreover, according to Asdvadzadurian, the third, fifth, and sixth articles of secret agreement of cooperation between Tashnaksutiun and CUP were about land problem and reforms in the eastern *vilayets*.⁸² The memoirs of Tashnak leaders confirms this situation:

We had the conviction of perceiving the Ottoman constitutional revolution as something positive and of defending it, making it permanent, and settling it with other freedom-loving elements. We refrained from expressing any political or administrative demand, instead with all the means at hand, we tried to eliminate seizures, pillages (which were supported by the former regime) and distrust. At the same time, we build strong relation with the leaders of the CUP and cooperated with them for the protection of the constitutional liberties.⁸³

⁷⁹ “Turkia” (Turkey), *Troshag*, 1909 February-March (2-3), p. 17.

⁸⁰ Kieser, p. 245,

⁸¹ *HH Tashnaksutiun Vetserort Enthanur Joghovin Voroshunnere* (Decisions of Sixth Congress of AR Federation), (İstanbul: Publication of Tashnaksutiun, 1911), p. 6.

⁸² Asdvadzadurian, p. 75.

⁸³ Papazian, p. 24.

This problem remained as source of tension even throughout constitutional rule. The Armenian Patriarchate frequently applied to Sublime Porte and reported cases of abuses in the Eastern *vilayets*. For instance, in July 1911, the Patriarchate prepared a report declaring the sufferings of the Armenian community during the period of 1908-1911, such as land seizures, plunders, the abuses of local authorities; and then, presented this report to the Sublime Porte,⁸⁴ and Ministry of Justice and Religion. Papazian writes that: “[The report] remained unanswered. Only the president of the administration⁸⁵ was invited in order to hear government’s ‘oral’ explanation, and the promises were given: ‘*icabına bakarız.*’”⁸⁶ According to *Troshag*, the result of these abuses was a huge Armenian emigration to the West and Russia, which was endangering Armenian material being in the country.⁸⁷ In an article entitled “Turkey: The Condition” a Tashnak writer was complaining that CUP government was reacting the cultural demands of Albanian or Arab minorities with “Pan-Turkism... which is a fiasco.”⁸⁸ In 25 December 1912, the Central Administration of the Hnchagian Party declaring that “(the government) wanted to cure the problems of the

⁸⁴ See, *Anadolu Vilâyât-ı Osmanîyesindeki Arazi Meselesine Dair Ermeni Patrikhanesi'nden 7 Temmuz Sene 327 Tarihiyle Makam-ı Sami-i Sadaret-Uzma ile Dahiliye ve Adliye Mezahib-i Nezaret-i Celilelerine Arz ve Takdim Kılınan Takririn Süretidir*, (İstanbul: Dikran Doğramacıyan Matbaası, 1328/1912); in Armenian, “Hayeru Gatsutiune Turkio Mech” (The Conditions of Armenians in Turkey) *Troshag*, February-March 1913 (2-3), pp. 31-36. see another source, *Anadolu'nun Mahall-i Muhtelifesinde Emlâk ve Arazi-i Magsube Hakkında Ermeni Patrikhanesi'nce Teşekkül Eden Komisyon-ı Mahsûs Tarafından Tanzim Olunan Raporların Süret-i Mütercümesi*, (İstanbul: Dikran Doğramacıyan Matbaası, 1327/1911). According to first report, the list of confiscated lands and properties was as follows: a. (national properties): 13 monastries, 27 churches, 16 cemeteries, 18 real estates, b. (private properties): 7000 properties and vineyards/orchards (the smaller ones than 100 hectares were not counted).

⁸⁵ The president of the Central Administrative Body of the Patriarchate.

⁸⁶ Papazian, p. 182.

⁸⁷ “Ardakahgte,” (Emigration), *Troshag*, August 1910 (8), p. 102.

⁸⁸ “Turkia: Gatsutiune” (Turkey: The Condition), *Troshag*, March-Abril 1911 (3-4), p. 44.

people with veterinarians instead of doctors.”⁸⁹ In fact, as Davison argued, the government made some promises, charged commissions, and laid plans for payments to dispossessed Armenians, but nothing had been carried out. On the other hand, the government, since it had to pay regard to the relationships with the Kurdish element in the East, was in a heavily critical situation. Davison approves this position: “Beset with wars and diplomatic problems and not wishing to antagonize the Kurds, the Porte was in an extremely difficult position.”⁹⁰

In the second half of 1912 the Armenian Patriarchate intended to start a propaganda campaign in order to put the reform question in the Eastern *vilayets* in the political agenda. Several pamphlets and books were published in a few months as parts of the political agitation of the public. One of them was the never published report about the Adana Massacres of April 1909, prepared by Hagop Babikian, deputy of Tekfurdağı from CUP, who was charged by *Meclis-i Mebusan* to examine the events that took place there. Another important study was in French, prepared by Marcel Leart, and named *La question arménienne a la lumiere des documents* (Paris, 1913). In fact, Marcel Leart was the pseudonym of the Krikor Zohrab,⁹¹ obviously used to convince the neutral reader and the European public opinion, and to create a pressure upon the CUP to undertake a reform scheme. In this study, Zohrab, after listing the problems that Armenians faced after the Young Turk Revolution, claims the inevitability of a reform in the Armenian *vilayets*, on the basis of:

⁸⁹ “Haidararutium” (Declaration), Hnchag, January 1913 (1), p. 1.

⁹⁰ Roderic H. Davison, “The Armenian Crisis, 1912-1914,” in his *Essays in Ottoman and Turkish history, 1774-1923 : the impact of the West*, (Austin : University of Texas Press, 1990), p. 182.

⁹¹ Krikor Zohrab, *Yerger*, IV, p. 645; also, Krikor Zohrab, *Haygagan Hartse Pasdatgheru Luysin Dag* (Armenian Question Under the Light of Documents), (Beirut: Shirag, 1983,) p. 2-3.

- a. the appointment of a European governor with the approval of the states,
- b. Armenians' participation in the public works,
- c. administrative decentralization,

and suggests that these principles do not mean either “separation,” “autonomy,” or “special regime,” but such reforms could contribute to the creation of a stronger, more peaceful and civilized European style state, which is considered to be the only way of salvation for the Ottoman state.⁹²

In June 1912, during the parliamentary discussion about the budget of *Defter-i Hakani* (Imperial Account-book), Krikor Zohrab and Kegham Der Garabedian, deputy of Muş from Tashnaktsutun prepared a proposal to add 80.000 *kuruş* in order to compensate the damages of some illegal acts against the population.⁹³ The proposal, and afterwards the oration of Zohrab defending the proposal seems very important, because this is a very unusual method for the Armenian deputies to directly insert the land problem to the agenda of the parliament. A long quotation from Zohrab's oration can solidly describes his considerations about the land problem, which was, as mentioned above, most important aspect of the Armenian question:

The true nature of the article is composed of a quite grievous wound that is named as the land question of Armenians in the *vilayets* of Eastern Anatolia. ...As you know my respected friends, what was the condition of the Armenians in the Ottoman Country before the constitutional rule? ...As you know, the former government declared a physical, and then an economic war against the Armenians. ...As you know, economic war was also furthered by evacuating the *vilayets* settled by Armenians. ...What did it do?

⁹² Zohrab, *Haygagan Hartsı...*, p. 27.

⁹³ *Meclisi Mebusan Zabıt Ceridesi: Devre: 2, İctima Senesi: 1, 2nci Cilt: 20 Haziran 1328 (1912) Tarihli Yirmibeşinci İnikaddan-23 Temmuz 1328 (1912) Tarihli Kırkyedinci İnikada Kadar* ([Ankara]: TBMM Basımevi, 1991), p. 284; “Bitlis vilayetinde nameşru mahlulâtın ve kuyudat-ı asliyelerine muğayyir vuku bulan suiistimalatın ber-vech-i hakkaniyet tashih ve tesviyesi zımında beşinci faslın (“*Masarif-i umumiye-i mütenevvia*” hakkındaki fasıl) masarif-i müteferrika maddesine seksen beş bin kuruşun zam buyurulmasını teklif ederiz. İstanbul mebusu Zohrab // Muş mebusu Keğam”

On the one hand, it crushed the Armenians with grief and compulsion, and expelled from the country. On the other, Armenians left their villages. By arguing that the rights of those who expelled from these villages are dissolved [*mahlul*], it distributed their land to others, or ...brought *muhacirs* from foreign countries. ...Gentlemen, I only present one side. 72nd article of the Land Law is quite clear. It says: “While the people of a village or a town as a whole or partially left their homeland as a result of a true excuse, the land that they possess cannot be registered with a title deed.” When the Armenians left their country, did they have an excuse? I think no Muslim with conscience can say that they did not have an excuse. ...When you judge with logic and reason, can you imagine a person, who would leave the place, where he is tied to with dear memories, who would leave the graveyard where his mother, his father, and his brother is buried, who would leave such a valuable place blended with so many memories and go to another place? ... However, a number of villages settled by Armenians in many of the Eastern Anatolian vilayets, especially in Bitlis, are now in ruins. The lands of those were considered to be dissolved [*mahlul*] and were distributed to others.⁹⁴

As can be seen, Zohrab, with his proposal and oration about finding a solution to the sufferings of the land problem declares his expectation from the constitutional government. It is clear that, he thinks that, in order to gain and preserve the loyalty and confidence of the Armenian element to the Ottoman state at least goodwill must be shown by the government through providing compensations for the illegal acts committed against Armenian community both in Ancient Regime and the

⁹⁴ *ibid.*, pp. 284-285; “Maddenin mahiyeti, Anadolu-i Şarki vilayatındaki Ermenilerin arazi meselesi namıyla tesmiye edilen gayet elim bir cerihasından ibarettir. ...Bilirsiniz ki muhterem arkadaşlarım, meşrutiyetten mukaddem Ermenilerin vaziyeti Memalik-i Osmaniye’de ne idi? ...Bilirsiniz ki, hükümet-i sabıka, Ermenilere karşı maddi bir harp ve sonra da iktisadi bir harp ilan etmişti. ...Bilirsiniz ki iktisadi harbi de bütün Ermenilerle meskun olan vilayati boşaltmak suretiyle ileri götürdü. ...Ne yaptı? Bir taraftan Ermenileri öyle kahr-u cebr altında ezdi, memleketten tardı. Diğer taraftan Ermeniler karyelerini terk ettiler. Bu karyelerdeki hakları mahlul oldu diyerek bunların arazisini şuna buna tevfiiz etti yahut ecnebi memleketlerden muhacirler getir(di). Efendiler, yalnız bir ciheti arz ediyorum. Arazi Kanunnamesi’nin yetmiş ikinci maddesi pek sarıhtir. Orada diyor ki, “Bir karye ve kasaba ahalişi umumen veyahut bazısı bir özür-ü sahiha mebni terk-i vatan ettikleri halde, mutasarrıf oldukları arazisi müstahikk-ı tapu olmaz.” Ermeniler arazilerini terk ettikleri vakit mazur mu idiler? Zannedirim bundan vicdan sahibi hiçbir Müslüman diyemez ki bunlar mazur değildir. ...Mantıkan, aklan muhakeme etseniz, bir insan tasavvur eder misiniz ki, kendisini kalben hatırat ile merbut bulunduğu karyesini, kendi anasını, babasını, kardeşini defnettiği toprağını mezaristanını, o kadar hatırat ile memzuç olan kıymettar bir yeri terk ile başka bir yere gitsin? Halbuki, Anadolu-i şarki vilayetlerinin birçoklarında, bilhassa Bitlis vilayetinde Ermenilerle meskun olan birçok karyeler, bugün viran ve harap bir haldedir. Bunların arazisi mahlul denilerek öteye beriye tevfiiz edilmiştir.

constitutional rule. Such a complaint from settling of *muhacirs* and an expectation for solution was also declared by Tashnaksutian in its Sixth Congress convened in August-September 1911.⁹⁵

Zohrab and Ottomanism

Zohrab's attitude towards the CUP reflected his hopes for an easier life for the Ottoman Armenians on the basis of equal citizenship. This is why he addressed the crowd in the first big meeting of the Constitutional period in İstanbul as "Free Ottomans! Free compatriots!"⁹⁶ Zohrab's concept of "Ottoman" which consisted of people from different ethnic origins and religions seems to have been a higher identity in which cultural differentiations lived together in peace, in a mode of symbiosis. According to this understanding, the national problems of the empire were a result of assimilationist methods and the projects of the governments in order to create an "Ottoman nation" because, the assimilationist policies harmed the feeling of being Ottoman and weakened the principle of Ottomanism. On the contrary, his conception preferred to strengthen cultural rights in order to tie people of different ethnic origins to the principle of Ottomanism. The tension of cosmopolitanism versus assimilationism on the basis of Ottomanism leaned on some basic issues in the public sphere. These were military service, education, language, and participation in governmental jobs and much. In Zohrab's words: "The thing which will *establish the union of the fatherland and which will warm the mutual relations of the various elements* who are the products of such a climate, such a

⁹⁵ *HH Tashnaksutian Vetserort Enthanur Joghovin Voroshumnere* (Decisions of Sixth Congress of AR Federation), pp. 4-7; (under the title of "Hogavedje" [Question Agraire]).

⁹⁶ Zohrab, *Siyasi Nutuklar*, p. 3.

country, and such a place, is *education, and on the other hand it is the military service.*”⁹⁷

Military Service

Until the constitutional period service in the Ottoman Army was only open to Muslims. Although in the beginning of the Tanzimat period, some promises were given to the non-Muslim *millet*s of the Empire, the doors to general military service remained closed to non-Muslims. Non-Muslim youth were permitted to enter some military school such as the *Tıbbiye-i Şahane*, *Mühendishane-i Bahri-i Hümayun* and *Mühendishane-i Berri-i Hümayun*, and graduated as officials in the Ottoman Army, but the number of such students remained very low because of restrictions. Thus, the traditional system of *haraç* or *cizye* continued under the name of “*bedel-i askeri*” until the Young Turk Revolution.⁹⁸ The principle of equal military obligation for all national elements of the Empire was defended in the programs of Armenian revolutionary parties even before or after the Revolution.⁹⁹

⁹⁷ *Meclisi Mebusan Zabıt Ceridesi: Devre: I, İctima Senesi: 1, Cilt: 6: 18 Temmuz 1325 Tarihli Yüzyirmibirinci İnikaddan-8 Ağustos 1325 Tarihli Yuzkirkinci İnikada Kadar* (Ankara: TBMM Basımevi, n.d.), p. 302; “Böyle bir iklimin, bir memleketin, bir yerin mahsulü olan ve anasır-ı muhtelifeyi birbirine ısındıracak ve tevhid-i vatani teşkil edecek şey, maariftir, diğer taraftan da askerliktir.”

⁹⁸ Ufuk Gülsoy, *Osmanlı Gayrimüslimlerinin Askerlik Serüveni*, (İstanbul: Simurg, 2000); Gülnihâl Bozkurt, *Alman-İngiliz Belgelerinin ve Siyası Gelişmelerin Işığı Altında: Gayrimüslim Osmanlı Vatandaşlarının Hukuki Durumu (1839-1914)*, (Ankara: Türk Tarih Kurumu, 1989); Eric Jan Zürcher, “Teoride ve Pratikte Osmanlı Zorunlu Askerlik Sistemi,” in his *Savaş, Devrim ve Uluslaşma Türkiye Tarihinde Geçiş Dönemi (1908-1928)*, (İstanbul: Bilgi Üniversitesi, 2005).

⁹⁹ See for instance, *Dzrakir Hai Heghapokhagan Tashnaksutian Gazmvadz 1892i Enthanur Joghovin* (The Program of Armenian Revolutionary Federation Formed in the General Congress of 1892), (Geneva, 1906) (4th edition), p. 4 and 12; *Dzrakir Hnchagian Gusagtsutian (Dacgasdani Hamar)* (The Program of Hnchagian Party / For Turkey), İstanbul, 1908, p. 11; *Dzrakir Sotsial-Demokrat Hnchagian Gusagtsutian (Dacgasdani Hamar)* (Program of Social-Democrat Hnchagian Party/For Turkey), (İstanbul, 1910), p. 9.

With the Proclamation of the Liberties, the non-Muslim communities started to demand their rights to participate in the military services, and the abrogation of the military dues (*bedel-i askeri*). In fact, although the *bedel-i askeri* was a huge economic burden for the non-Muslims, one can assume that the loss of human sources because of military obligation was more crucial than paying the due on the basis of non-Muslim's economic power. But the communities regarded the obligatory general military service for the non-Muslims crucial on the basis of citizenship and Ottomanism. They based their arguments directly on the Constitution, which declared that "all Ottomans are equal." The dialogue quoted below, which occurred during a parliamentary debate on the issue of the abrogation of the *bedel-i askeri* reflects the relationship between this issue and the Constitution, and the difference of views between Muslims and non-Muslims:

Zohrab Efendi: Now, the first conflict is that whether non-Muslims are obliged to pay the military due from now on? I suppose they are not.

Seyyid Bey (İzmir [CUP]¹⁰⁰): It is not known.

Zohrab: If it is not known, then we have a conflict here. I, myself, think that the military due of all the non-Muslims is duly abolished today with the declaration of the constitution.

İsmail Bey: (Gümülcine [*Ahrar, Ahali, Hürriyet ve İtilaf*]¹⁰¹): Why?

Zohrab Efendi: With the principle of equality.¹⁰²

¹⁰⁰ Kansu, p. 402.

¹⁰¹ *ibid.*, p. 391.

¹⁰² *Meclisi Mebusan Zabıt Ceridesi: Devre: I, İctima Senesi: I, Cilt: 4: 16 Mayıs 1325 Tarihli Seksenikinci İnikaddan-11 Haziran 1325 Tarihli Yüzüncü İnikada Kadar* (Ankara: TBMM Basımevi, n.d.), p. 429.; "**Zohrab Efendi:** Şimdi, birinci ihtilaf, evvel be evvel bundan böyle gayrimüslimler bedel-i askeri ile mükellef midirler? Değillerdiz zannederim. / **Seyyid Bey** (İzmir): Malum değil. / **Zohrab:** Eğer malum değilse ihtilafımız var. Bendeniz öyle zannederim ki bugün gayrimüslimlerin bedel-i askerisi Kanun-ı Esasi'nin ilaniyle bihakkın mefsuhtur. / **İsmail Bey:** (Gümülcine): Neden? / **Zohrab Efendi:** Müsavat kaydıyle."

Zohrab also saw military service for non-Muslims as cement that brought all elements together under the flag of being and feeling Ottoman: “Gentlemen, among the various ethnic elements there is now an opportunity that we will love and embrace each other. We are delaying this with futile discussions. I am truly in deep sorrow for this.” Zohrab then explains that the military service is not only a duty, but also a right; and in fact, it is first right, and then a duty. And the government cannot say to a non-Muslim that “you will not execute your military service.”¹⁰³

In another meeting about the issue, he again explained with striking words the importance of the subject on the basis of fraternity, the union of elements and Ottomanism. When one of the deputies opposed the idea of non-Muslims being included in the military service, and argued that non-Muslims must pay the *bedel*, Zohrab was irritated: “In this case they must not be Ottomans until the end of their lives!”¹⁰⁴

...Let's do not consider this as an issue of finance. My Sublime friends! *This is an issue of fraternity, an issue of politics.* We consider and feel it this way and it is wrongly assumed that we are being stingy not to give money for the defense of the fatherland. *We want to give our blood for our fatherland.* While we are touched by this feeling, to say that “you are attempting to be exempt from the military due” is not a true evaluation of our spiritual state. We know what is the most harmful thing for the country today. *With the legislation we made here, we want to ensure to establish a feeling of fraternity, with which this country can only find security.* This feeling of fraternity will be brought about first of all by quickly making the military service a duty to be personally performed.

...The most ancient duty of Ottomanism is this. It is a thousand times more important than the budget. *Today, we want to remove*

¹⁰³ *ibid.*, “Efendim, anasır-ı muhtelifte arasında birbirimizi sevecek, kucaklayacak bir vesile gelmiş. Bunu beyhude münakaşalarla temdit edip duruyoruz. Ben buna hakikaten dilhunum.”

¹⁰⁴ *Meclisi Mebusan Zabıt Ceridesi: Devre: I, İctima Senesi: 1, Cilt: 5: 13 Haziran 1325 Tarihli Yüz Birinci İnikattan-16 Temmuz 1325 Tarihli Yüz Yirminci İnikada Kadar* (Ankara: TBMM Basimevi, n.d.), p. 189; “Hülâsa, ölünceye kadar onlar Osmanlı olmamalı!”

*all of this partitioning for all of this country. We are working to prohibit such things as ethnicity, nationality, and so on. We want to live together. And it is necessary to die together in order to learn how to live together.*¹⁰⁵

After long discussions, and the strict insistence of the non-Muslim deputies, *bedel-i askeri* for non-Muslims was abandoned on 8 July 1325 (1909), and non-Muslims started to be conscripted into the army. Thus, both in the Balkan Wars, and First World War many non-Muslim soldiers fought at the fronts. Today, sometimes newspaper columnists remind the public memory that Greek, Armenian, or Jewish “martyrs” (*şehit*) in the 1911-1918 period as a joke of fate, a colorful memory from history: “On the Gallipoli, Palestine, East Caucasus Fronts, in Iraq, in Galicia, in Romania, in Janja, Serbia, Montenegro... İsak, İlya, Simon, Mihail, Yuala, Murdaray, Nesim, Kasapyan, Yanko, Kostanti, Yorgi, Yakup, Agop, Bedros, Dimitri, Esteban, Liyon, Kirkor, Berho, Hırısto, Mişon, Sarafyan, Lahdo, Savme... who fought shoulder to shoulder with the Turkish soldier [Mehmetçik] and who passed away in the same trenches.”¹⁰⁶ But it is very solid that in 1909 or 1910, the meaning of military

¹⁰⁵ *ibid.*, p. 191; “(...) Biz bunu bir mesele-i maliye diye telaki etmeyelim. Rûfeka-yı kiram! *Bu mesele, bir uhuvvet meselesidir, bir siyaset meselesidir.* Biz böyle telakki ve böyle hissediyoruz ve biz bugün vatanın müdafaası uğrunda para mı esirgiyoruz zannolunuyor. *Biz vatanımız için kanımızı vermek istiyoruz.* Biz bu his ile mütehasis olduğumuz sırada siz bedel-i askeriden muaf olmak için gayret ediyorsunuz demek bizim ahval-i ruhiyemizi doğru olarak muhakeme etmek değildir. Bugün bu memleket en ziyade hangi cihetten mutazarrırdır, biz bunu biliriz. *Burada yaptığımız kanunlar içinde her vakit uğraştığımız bir hiss-i uhuvvet teessüsü içindir ki, bu memleket yalnız onunla selamet bulabilir.* Bu hiss-i uhuvveti evvel be evvel vazife-i askeriyeyi bilfiil ifa etmek noktasından isticlal ile meydana getireceğiz.

(...) Osmanlılığın en akdem vazifesi budur. Bütçeden 1000 kat daha mühimdir. *Bugün bütün bu memleket için bu tefrikaları kaldırmak istiyoruz. Kavmiyet, milliyet vesair birtakım bu gibi şeyleri menetmek için uğraşıyoruz. Biz beraber yaşamak istiyoruz. Beraber yaşamak cihetini öğrenmek için de beraber ölmek lazımdır.*”

After these impressive monitions, Tahir Bey, the deputy of Bursa (CUP) appreciates Zohrab: “Bu bedel-i askeri meselesinde Zohrab Efendi’nin mücerret teyid-i uhuvvet-i Osmaniye nokta-i nazarından irad ettikleri ifadat şayan-ı takdirdir.” (*ibid*, p. 191).

¹⁰⁶ See Mehmet Gündem, “İmparatorluğun Öteki Çocukları, Gayrimüslim Vatan Şehitleri,” *Milliyet*, 1-3 March 2005; “Çanakkale’de, Filistin’de, Şark Kafkas cephele-rinde, Irak’ta, Galıçya’da, Romanya’da, Yanya’da, Sırp Karadağ’da... Mehmetçik’le omuz omuza çarpışan, aynı siperde

service was crucial for the nations of the Empire, and especially it was a *sine qua non* for the non-Muslim elements on the basis of the principle of equal citizenship.

Education

Until the end of the eighteenth century, the non-Muslim Ottoman communities had only ecclesiastical schools on which education was a non-regular activity. Education in such schools did not have a standard program, and this program was highly related to the education level or personal preferences of the teacher-priest. In the reign of Selim III, the communities started to open formal schools in their neighborhoods, which was possible only by an imperial *irade*. In the second part of the nineteenth century, standardization highly increased in the schools. During the reign of Abdülhamid, the government strictly controlled the educational programs, and even banned history lessons in which the schools of different ethnic origin learned their national histories alongside the history of the Ottoman empire.

The issues of reform in the education system, standardization, governmental control, and especially governmental interference created tension in the constitutional period. From the perspectives of non-Muslim communities the problem had two different sides. First, as in the issue of military service, education was regarded as an opportunity for the union of the elements. Especially the education of Turkish was regarded as a unifying practice, by which an Ottoman nation could be created. For instance, in November 1908, the Armenian newspaper *Jamanak* argued that since the education of Ottoman language was in poor conditions in the Armenian schools,

ruhunu teslim eden İsak, İlya, Simon, Mihail, Yuala, Murdaray, Nesim, Kasapyan, Yanko, Kostanti, Yorgi, Yakup, Agop, Bedros, Dimitri, Esteban, Liyon, Kirkor, Berho, Hristo, Mişon, Sarafyan, Lahdo, Savme...”

Armenians could not gain higher positions in the bureaucracy, which was regarded harmful to the principle of equality and fraternity.¹⁰⁷ On the other hand, the non-Muslim communities were anxious about the quality of the standardization. Although they accepted the importance of education in Turkish, and made public that they were ready to assign more Turkish lessons, they did not want to give other lessons in Turkish. They accepted the governmental control over non-Turkish lessons, but were afraid of the attitudes of the government inspectors, who were usually very strict during the Hamidian era.

Krikor Zohrab shared both points of view. In the parliamentary debates he expressed his ideas on the issue many times. For Zohrab, as a defender of the principle of union of the elements, and as a member of Commission of Education (*Maarif Encümeni*) education was undoubtedly one of the most important dimensions that brought peoples together: “There is no doubt that to have a uniform instruction, and even to have a single language of education, are supportive and strengthening factors. If the Ottoman language was expanded to the expected degree, then our union would undoubtedly be strengthened more today. Therefore, we are the supporters of the permanence of the Ottoman language and of the generalization of the Ottoman civilization, our conscience supports this generalization.”¹⁰⁸

¹⁰⁷ *Servet-i Fünun*, 17/30 November 1324/1908; quoted by Recep Karakaya, *Kaynakçalı Ermeni Meselesi Kronolojisi (1878-1923)*, (İstanbul: Türk Tarih Kurumu, 2001), p. 341.

¹⁰⁸ *Meclisi Mebusan Zabıt Ceridesi: Devre: I, İctima Senesi: I, Cilt: 4: 16 Mayıs 1325 Tarihli Seksenikinci İnikaddan-11 Haziran 1325 Tarihli Yüzüncü İnikada Kadar* (Ankara: TBMM Basımevi, n.d.), p. 208; “Şüphe yok ki terbiyenin yeknesak olması, hatta mümkün olduğu takdirde lisanın bir lisan olması esbab-ı takviye ve tahkimiyesinden biridir. Eğer ki lisan-ı Osmani matlub derecede tevessü etmiş olsaydı, hiç şüphe yok, ittihadımız bugün daha muhkem olacaktı. Binaenaleyh biz lisan-ı Osmani'nin bekası ve medeniyet-i Osmaniye'nin ta'mim taraftarıyız, biz vicdanen o ta'mim taraftarıyız.”

As can be seen, Zohrab was not against the teaching of Turkish in non-Muslim schools. He also supported the idea of central control or programming in the schools: “First of all, I suggest the permanence of the Council of Education and Directory of Education. Moreover, from the point of view of the continuous progress of education, I find it indispensable to keep the schools under inspection and to take the level of European education into consideration, and accordingly to conserve these committees to ensure the progress in our country.”¹⁰⁹

Moreover, since it only aimed to restrict the education programs of the community schools and did not support their needs in a sympathetic way, he complained about the control mechanisms of the *Ancien Régime*. Instead of such a threatening and excluding manner he offered an affirmative attitude, in which the governments regarded community schools as a governmental institution:

...In practice, there are two ways. One, it can be the case that the government is completely indifferent to these schools. It does not even deal with the presence of them. That is a one. Another one considers these as private schools; an even another may consider truly the public schools and applies the same generosity, protection, and order to all public schools. I am the supporter of this last model. (Noise) I am talking about primary schools. What did the government use to do before? It is even unaware whether there are Armenian schools. Sometimes it scrutinizes the programs of the teachers. And only for prohibition or compulsion. Not a scrutiny made with good will. Do Armenian schools need anything? Who will take care of this? ...What I ask, from the point of the Armenians, which comprise one component of this great nation, from the government is not to remain indifferent to Armenian schools. I want to assert the necessity that the state must

¹⁰⁹ *Meclisi Mebusan Zabıt Ceridesi: Devre: I, İctima Senesi: I, Cilt: 6: 18 Temmuz 1325 Tarihli Yüzyirmibirinci İnikaddan-8 Ağustos 1325 Tarihli Yuzkirkinci İnikada Kadar* (Ankara: TBMM Basımevi, n.d.), p. 303; “Evvvel be evvel Maarif Meclisi’nin ve Maarif Müdüriyeti’nin ibkasını teklif ederim. Kezalik daima maarifin terakkisi noktasından mekatibi murakabada bulundurmak Avrupa’nın maarifinin derecesini nazar-ı itibara almak, ona göre memleketimizde terakki etmek için bu gibi heyetlerin muhafazası bendenizce elzemdir.”

show these schools the same protection, generosity and supervision as it does with all other schools, as schools of this fatherland.¹¹⁰

But as a pedagogical method he claimed that education with the mother tongue was necessary for a perfect education:

Today, many experts who deal with the science of national education, have fixed, as an established truth, the fact that everywhere primary education will be delivered with the mother tongue. Why? This is current and indispensable only from the point of view of the progressing children's training, nothing else. There is no political idea involved here.

...When the language of the primary education is transformed to the mother tongue, then it is also necessary that the children study also geography, history, and arithmetic in their own mother tongue. *But does it mean that we will not study the official language of the state? It is necessary to study it as much, or even more. We must ensure this with all our beings.*¹¹¹

Zohrab agreed on a standard education for all Ottomans, but supported the usage of mother tongues in primary schools, for pedagogical reasons. On the other hand, he put the education of Ottoman Turkish again into primary schools. He believed that, after primary education, school children could continue in a general school, instead of community schools, if they wished, because they had arrived at a

¹¹⁰ *Meclisi Mebusan Zabıt Ceridesi: Devre: I, İctima Senesi: I, Cilt: 4: 16 Mayıs 1325 Tarihli Seksenikinci İnikaddan-11 Haziran 1325 Tarihli Yüzüncü İnikada Kadar*, p. 209; “(...) Ameliyatta iki şekil var. Bir, olabilir ki hükümet bu mekatipten büsbütün biganedir. Bunların mevcudiyetini bile arayıp sormasın. Bu, bir şekildir. Biri de bunları mekatib-i hususiyeden addetsin; bir de olabilir ki bunlar devletin mektebini iyi telakki etsin ve devletin mektebine ait olan sahaveti, himayeyi ve nizamı aynı zamanda icra etsin. Ben bu şekl-i ahirin taraftarıyım. (Gürültü) Mekatib-i iptidaiyeden bahsediyorum. Şimdiye kadar hükümet ne yapardı? Ermeni mektepleri var mıdır, farkında bile değil. Ara sıra muallimlerin programlarını tetkik eder. Onda da ya men ya zecr için. Yoksa hüsn-ü niyetle bir tetkik değil. Ermeni mekteplerinin ihtiyacı var mıdır? Kim bununla meşgul olacak? (...) Ben şimdi şu millet-i muazzamanın bir cüzünü teşkil eden Ermeni noktasından benim istediğim hükümetin Ermeni mekteplerinden bigane durmamasıdır. Devletin mektebi, bu vatanın mektebi olmak itibarıyla, diğer mekatibi nasıl himaye ediyorsa, nasıl sahabet ve nezaret ederse o suretle nazar-ı sahabetle bakması lüzumunu arz ederim.”

¹¹¹ *ibid.*, p. 209; “Bugün ilm-i ilim-i terbiye-i akvamla meşgul olan birçok hükkam, bir hakikat-ı müselleme olmak üzere tayin etmiştir ki her yerde terbiye-i iptidaiye lisan-ı maderzad ile olacak. Ne için? Bu hiçbir noktadan değil, çocuğun terbiyesinin tekamülü noktasından caridir, elzemdir. Bunda bir fikr-i siyasi cari değildir. (...) Terbiye-i ibtidaiyenin lisanı lisan-ı maderzad olunca, coğrafyayı da kendi lisanından okumalı, tarihi, hesabı da kendi lisanından okumalı. *Fakat bu demek midir ki asıl o devletin lisan-ı aslisini okumayacağız? Aynı derecede ve belki daha ziyade okumak lazımdır. Bunu bütün mevcudiyemizle temin etmeli.*” (*The emphases are mine*)

certain phase of growth. In this way, the school children who had learned both their mother tongue and Turkish in the community primary school could easily attend secondary or higher education in a public school.

As can be seen, here again, Zohrab's "cosmopolitan" Ottomanism showed its traces against a "uniformist" interpretation of Ottomanism. Because, all in all, Zohrab defended the preservation of the community schools, but installed Turkish lessons from the beginning, and increased its hours; suggested the education of other lessons in the mother tongue, and left the choice between communal or general schools to the children and their families for secondary and higher education.

Now if we claim that ... "well, Armenians have certain private schools, there is no need for those, here you have a school, and we will also teach the Armenian language." ... I, myself think that this can not be executed right away. For a certain period of time, this is not even possible for primary education. We have ensure this with all our beings, and those who's training and level has reached to the same degree should certainly attend public schools. ... If we look for such thoughts like religion or so on among five or eight year olds, their thought will be too superficial. ... But a twelve-year old child who has been thorough primary school, and who has reached an age of distinguishing good from bad, will at that time certainly reason such things as fatherland and so on. There will be such a power. From that moment on, public education, a nation-wide education, will start in its entirety.¹¹²

It is interesting to see that although the government declared that a liberal approach to the educational system would be applied, especially on the basis of

¹¹² *ibid.*, p. 208; "Şimdi eğer kalksak da (...) "işte Ermenilerin birtakım mekatib-i hususiyesi var, bunlara ne hacet, işte size mektep, Ermeni lisanını da öğreteceğiz." [desek] (...) Şimdi bendeniz öyle zannederim ki bugün hemen, bu kabil-i icra bir şey değildir. Bir müddet için de daha, hele tedrisat-ı ibtidaiye için mümkün de değil. Bunu bütün mevcudiyemizle temin etmeli, terbiyesi ve seviyesi bir dereceye kadar vâsıl olan elbette mekteb-i umumiyyeye gitmeli. (...) Sekiz yaşında, beş yaşında bir çocuğun fikrinde din yahut bu gibi efkâr ararsak ondaki efkar pek suni bir şey olacak. (...) Fakat terbiye-i ibtidaiyeyi haiz on iki yaşında bir çocuk bir muhakemeye, hiç değilse bir sabi-i mümeyyiz olacak çağa yetiştiği vakit, o vakit elbette vatan ve saireyi muhakeme edecek. Bir iktidar hasıl olacak. İşte o vakitki terbiye-i umumiye, terbiye-i vataniye bütün mevcudiyetiyle başlar."

government-community school relationship, the later oppressive practices of such decision created tension between the state and the non-Muslims. One and a half years later from the first negotiations on education, Zohrab again emphasized the state's right to control educational institutions, but reminded people that the essence of this control must not put the people under pressure.

As a very near example, I may talk of ...the inspectors that the Ministry of Education has recently recruited. Today, many complaints are voiced with respect to these officials who work as inspectors of education. Therefore, this is not an issue that can be gotten rid of. ... *Does the government have the power to inspect each single phase of education and to regard that a uniform Ottoman instruction and education is provided to the Ottoman children?* Yes, if you present the issue with this respect, I do not think that there is single person who would oppose this. But what does the government understand about Ottoman education? Does it understand the oppressions in Albania, claiming "You will not be using this Latin alphabet!?"

... We open the subject of education. The union of elements is not like this. I will tell some vague proofs of this. For instance, they even prohibit history books. That is what the inspectors of education do. Is it the Ottoman education? First of all, how can you publish a book in this country without having the permission of the Ministry [of Education] ? I will tell you as a brother. There is no better way than to open these wounds and get away with the rotten smell, instead of closing the subject. (Noise) ¹¹³

¹¹³ *Meclisi Mebusan Zabıt Ceridesi, Devre: 1, İctima Senesi: III, 2nci Cilt: 20 Kanunuevvel 1326 Tarihli Yirmibirinci İnikaddan-31 Kanunusani 1326 (1910) Tarihli Kırkinci İnikada Kadar* (Ankara: TBMM Basimevi, 1986), pp. 176-177; Ben size pek yakın bir misal olmak üzere Maarif Nezaretinin ahiran ihraz ettiği (...) maarif müfettişlerini gösterebilirim. İşte bugün maarif müfettişi namıyla icra-yı vazife eden memurlardan pek çok şikâyet vuku buluyor. Binaenaleyh bu bahis öyle baş aşağı atılacak bir şey değildir.(...) Hükümetin maarifin her bir safhasını nazar-ı teftişte bulundurmağa ve etfal-ı Osmaniyyeye yeknesak bir tedris ve terbiye-i Osmaniyye verilmesine dikkat etmeye selahiyeti yok mudur? Evet, bahsi bu suretle arz ederseniz buna karşı itiraz edecek kimse yoktur. Fakat hükümet bu terbiye-i Osmaniye tahtında ne anlıyor? Arnautluk'ta "Siz Latin hurufatı kullanmayacaksınız?" diye tazyikleri mi anlıyor." (...) Bir maarif bahsi açıyoruz. İttihat-ı anasır böyle değildir. Buna dair pek müphem deliller söyleyeceğim. Mesela tarih kitaplarını bile men ediyorlar. İşte maarif müfettişleri bunları yapıyorlar. Terbiye-i Osmaniye bu mudur? Bir kere bu memlekette maarifin izni olmadan kitap nasıl basılır? Size kardeşane bir şey söyleyeceğim. Bu bahisleri kapamaktan ise bu yaraları açıp taaffünleri ref etmekten daha iyi bir tarik yoktur. (gürültü)

As seen in the cases of military service and education examined above, Zohrab was searching for a conception of Ottoman citizenship in which he could express his double identities as Armenian and as Ottoman more comfortably. As a famous Armenian intellectual, as one of the most important Armenian novelists and short story writer of the time, but at the same time, as a lawyer in the Ottoman courts with a great talent in Turkish, and with close contact with people of different origins in cosmopolitan İstanbul, he had a multi-layered identity. This identity was very fond of understanding Ottomanism as an umbrella to cover all Ottoman ethnic entities. Zohrab's words addressing his colleagues in the Parliament reflect this understanding: "We, the various parts of this fatherland, have come united to this circle, and unified. We are all the sons of this fatherland, who embrace it with both our hands and with good will. In order to render this union permanent, we support to do anything necessary with good will and with all our beings."¹¹⁴

Being an Armenian and an Ottoman

After the Young Turk Revolution, Krikor Zohrab deeply believed that the Ottoman people finally had the chance to live under a real constitutional rule, and with his full power embraced this constitution in order to serve his nation and his country.¹¹⁵ After the proclamation of the liberties, on every occasion, he declared that he considered himself both as Armenian and Ottoman. In his first important

¹¹⁴ *Meclisi Mebusan Zabıt Ceridesi: Devre: I, İctima Senesi: I, Cilt: 4: 16 Mayıs 1325 Tarihli Seksenikinci İnikaddan-11 Haziran 1325 Tarihli Yüzüncü İnikada Kadar*, p. 208; "Biz, bu vatanın ecza-yı muhtelifesi, müttehiden şu daireye gelmiş, birleşmişiz. Hepimiz hüs-ü niyetle ve iki elimizle vatana sarılmış evlatlarıyız. Bu ittihadı daimi kılmak için her ne yapmak lazım ise onu da hüsünüyetle bütün mevcudiyetimizle yapmak taraftarıyız."

¹¹⁵ Sharurian, p. 7.

speech in Taksim, he declared that national or religious differentiation was no longer important: “Our religions are several, our sect is one. We are the believers of freedom.”¹¹⁶

While examining his political writings, speeches, or his activities in the Parliament one can find that several times when he called himself Ottoman, or defended a position in an argument on the basis of Ottomanism. For instance, in February 1909, when he expressed his liberal points on the issue of freedom of gatherings, the deputy of Biga, Arif Bey, accused him of looking after his self interest, and by doing this, he implied Zohrab’s Armenian origin. Zohrab answered him ebulliently: “He must explain, we are Ottomans here, we do not follow private interests here. (Noises) We are Ottoman deputies; I think we are nothing but this.”¹¹⁷

Zohrab defended this position not only in the Ottoman parliament, but also in the Armenian political circles. He worked to convince the Armenians that the future of the Ottoman Armenians and their peace lay in the success of the constitutional rule, and the Ottomanist principles. Thus, he invited all Armenians to struggle to strengthen the constitutional rule and Ottomanism. Zohrab’s attitude always had the traces of his ideas about the CUP, which he wanted to build with a positive approach.

You should know o’ our fellow citizens that the revolution which came out with the proclamation of the Ottoman Constitution is not a perfect one. The Islamic element could not easily leave its centuries old persuasion that it was the ruler of the country. It needs a big effort, and years to change this psychology. By sowing

¹¹⁶ Zohrab, *Siyasi Nutuklar*, p. 9; see also Zohrab, *Öyküleri*, p. 179. “Dinimiz muhtelif, mezhebimiz birdir. Hepimiz hürriyet meslekdaşlarıyız.”

¹¹⁷ *Meclisi Mebusan Zabıt Ceridesi: Devre: I, İctima Senesi: I, Cilt: 1: 4 Kanunuevvel 1324 Tarihli Birinci İnikattan-19 Şubat 1324 Tarihli Otuzuncu İnikata Kadar* (Ankara: TBMM Basımevi, 1982), p. 152; “İzah etsin, biz burada Osmanlıyız, biz burada menafi-i hususiye takip etmiyoruz. (Gürültüler) Osmanlı mebusuyuz, biz bundan başka bir şey değiliz zannederim.”

a seed in the soil can you expect it to begin developing, become a tree, dress up with leaves, and gives fruit in one minute?

The real liberals in the Islamic element, the real liberals like us are very rare; but they belong to that party to a great extent. Our persuasions, our feelings order us to support them in their hard work, and make their work easier.¹¹⁸

When the Bulgarian journal *Dnevnik* asked Zohrab that how they (as Armenian deputies) would act in the Parliament on the basis of state interests Zohrab declared that:

There are not organized groups in the Parliament today. There are some nationalities, but none of them are organized as a national party. Frankly speaking, I want that instead of the national groups that some political parties would be organized in, and the nationalities would dissolve in the parties. In any case, in the name of Armenian deputies I can say that they will work for the general interests of the Empire – and it is the same for other deputies. The self-interests of the Armenian nation will come after.¹¹⁹

In a meeting in the Surp Yerrortutiun Armenian church in Pera in which Zohrab declared his candidacy for the Ottoman Parliament, he declares that he would work to remove the “national hostilities” between Ottoman nations which the *Ancien Regime* had used to “build gaps between us and especially to leave us with our Turkish fellow citizens.”¹²⁰ Then he added: “First of all, I must say that, I will build my studies on the principle of founding an honest and generous relationship and co-operation with the other Ottoman nationalities and especially with the Turkish element.”¹²¹

¹¹⁸ Zohrab, “Hay Badkamavori Me Hashvedvutiune” (The Account of an Armenian Representative), in *Yerger* v. 5, p. 389-390.

¹¹⁹ *Jamanak*, December 24, 1908 / January 6 1909, no. 61. (in *Yerger* v. 5, p. 139)

¹²⁰ Zohrab, “Inch Ge Bahanche Haye Osmanyen Khorhertaranen,” (What do the Armenians Expect from the Ottoman Parliament), *Jamanak*, October 30 / November 12, no 14. (in *Yerger*, v. 5, p. 101).

¹²¹ *ibid.*, p. 102

In 22 October 1908, when the previous Patriarch of Constantinople, Matteos İzmirlian who had been sent away by the Hamidian regime from his office, come back to take his position again Zohrab made a speech in the Armenian National Assembly in the Patriarchate and stressed that since the regime had changed the function of the Patriarch radically, in the existing conditions, he must work as a conciliatory power between the state and the Armenian nation. This attitude resembled the manner of the Armenian parties declared to cease their revolutionary activities:

In 1894, the Patriarch İzmirlian was elected as a man of struggle, demand, and protest; today, in a time in which the Ottoman government is already a constitutional one, he is again recalled to sit on his Patriarchal chair *in the name of conciliation and defense of the lovely relationships, which are the symbols of the Ottoman nation*. Since there is no longer a despotic rule, Patriarch İzmirlian from now on can strengthen and intensify the relationship between the nation and the government. He is a symbol of reconciliation, and this is why all of us united our votes around his name, and I have no doubt that the whole Ottoman nation will do the same and salute him.¹²²

In August 1909 in Psammata, Zohrab gave a speech about his ideas about the Constitution, the *Kanun-ı Esasi*, to the local Armenian community. The organizer of the gathering was the İstanbul branch of the Armenian Revolutionary Federation (*Tashnaksutiun*). At the end of the speech, Zohrab gave as an example Krikor Odian,¹²³ who had helped Mithat Paşa in the work of preparing the Kanun-ı Esasi, as a perfect Ottoman-Armenian.

¹²² *Adenakrutiunk Azkayeen Joghovo 1908-1909* (The Minutes of National Assembly), (İstanbul: 1910), p. 65. (in *Yerger*, vol. V, p. 93-94) (Emphasis is mine).

¹²³ Krikor Odian: (1834, İstanbul-1887, Paris) Author, lawyer, bureaucrat, one of the most respected members of Young Armenians. While he was in Paris for his university education he witnessed the 1848 Revolution. He returned İstanbul and worked in the Education Committee of Armenian Patriarchate. He contributed the most important Armenian journal of the time. In 1855 and 1860 he became the member of the commission which were charged to prepare a constitution for the

Today, while I put in order my ideas about the Ottoman constitution to serve them before you, my mind immediately leaves this place and goes to a foreign country, to salute a man who rests in a foreign cemetery; my minds flies to Oadian, who was one of the talented establishers of the Ottoman Constitution.

Why am I reminded of this name? Because he was splendidly Armenian and Ottoman. Oadian was not that kind of *efendi*, who easily forgets his nationality in order to gain title, honor and money, and see every mission, under every regime. He was not one of them. In our literature, in our language, he became a real Armenian, and he became a real Ottoman. He dealt with our intellectual development and on the other hand with the new organization of the Ottoman state. What a wonderful model, what a shining personality! All of us could not have his big talent, but we can walk on his road by always defending our dual identities as Armenians and as Ottomans.¹²⁴

Krikor Zohrab several times called himself and the entire Armenian nation Ottoman from the podium of the Parliament on various occasions. He always tried to convince public opinion that Armenians were working for the development of the country. But, as mentioned before, the topics he talk about varied; he did not only talk about the issues of Ottoman Armenians, but also several other problems of the political, cultural or social life from the most insignificant to the most important.

For instance, in January 1910, when the Parliament discussions about the kind of donations that must be given to the Society of Navy (*Donanma Cemiyeti*), Zohrab, as an Armenian deputy, supported the idea that since there were some military threats to the Ottoman motherland, the Society could collect some donations: “Today

Armenian community. He became a counselor of Mithat Paşa and helped him in the preparations of the first Ottoman Constitution. Just before the Congress of Berlin he prepared a reform project for the reforms in the Armenian *vilayets*. In 1880 he settled down in Paris.

¹²⁴ “Osmanyen Sahmanatrutyen Verakknnutyune” (The Interpretations on the Ottoman Constitution), *Manzume-i Efkar*, August 20 / September 2 1908, no 2205 (in *Yerger*, v. V, p. 67-68).

Ottoman nations are united under the constitutional rule and they are ready to defend at all times even the smallest part of this land.”¹²⁵

In March 1911 Zohrab organized the budget of the Ministry of Navy and since the conditions in the Navy were very poor he demanded an increase in the budget. In his speech on the issue Zohrab again stressed the importance of the defense of the Ottoman motherland.

... The previous *Hakan* had accepted, as needed for his personal politics, a principle of destruction against our naval force and for thirty years this principle is in use.

... Our constitutional rule has found the Navy under these conditions. Therefore, the duty that was disposed to the constitutional rule is not to preserve the Navy – since there was nothing else to preserve – but to reestablish it.

... Ottoman land consists both of its own territories and its own waters. To be able to defend one part and unable to defend the other or to be tolerant about its defense, is not to perform the duty of defending the fatherland properly.¹²⁶

In May 1911 when the parliament was discussing the expenditures on public health, Zohrab argued that since the health of the people was under a great threat of epidemic invasion, the budget and the expenditures of public health services (*hıfzıssıhha*) should be high, and the parliament must not be stingy. When some

¹²⁵ *Meclisi Mebusan Zabıt Ceridesi: Devre: I, İctima Senesi: 2, Cilt: 1: 1 Teşrinisani 1325 Tarihli Birinci İnikaddan-13 Kanunısani 1325 Tarihli Otuzuncu İnikada Kadar*, p. 490; “Bugün akvam-ı Osmaniyye meşrutiyette birleşmiş ve bu toprağın en ufak bir cüzünü bile müdafaaya, her vakit müdafaaya müheyyadır.”

¹²⁶ *Meclisi Ayan Zabıt Ceridesi: Devre: I, İctima Senesi: 3, 2nci Cilt: 24 Subat 1326 (1910) Tarihli Otuzdokuzuncu İnikaddan-25 Nisan 1327 (1911) Tarihli Ellisekizinci İnikada Kadar* ([Ankara]: TBMM Basımevi, 1989), pp. 325-326, “(...) Kuvve-i bahriyemize karşı Hakan-ı Sabık kendi siyaset-i şahsiyesi iktizasından olmak üzere bir tahrip düsturu kabul etmiş ve 30 seneden beri o düstur istimal olunmuştur. (...) Meşrutiyetimiz Bahriye’yi bu şekilde buldu. Binaenaleyh, Meşrutiyet’e terettüp eden vazife, Bahriyeyi muhafaza değil – zira muhafaza edecek bir şey kalmamıştır – Bahriyenin yeniden ihdası vazifesi idi. (...) Vatan-ı Osmani, gerek kendi toprağından ve gerek kendi sularından teşekkül eder. Bir kısmını müdafaya muktedir olmak ve diğer kısmını müdafadan aciz kalmak yahut onun müdafası hususunda müsamaha etmek, müdafa-i vatan vazifesini hakkıyla ifa etmek değildir.”

deputies called the expenditures on public health “extravagance” (*israf*) Zohrab opposed them:

If the government wants to recover the deficiencies, it has to establish, with considering our special position and our exceptional position, a ministry for health affairs. I, while organizing the budget of the Navy, have seen this building in our sight, the magnificent Navy hospital. If one looks around its wards, one would see pale faces in this hospital, which is very visible and thought to be our most important institution. Once see the situation of the children of the fatherland there, you will feel pity, you will cry.

... Think gentlemen, when it becomes necessary to fight with one of our neighbors, is there a self-sacrifice that we will not make? Will not everyone run? However, such an enemy waits in the bedside of the nation that it destroys the nation with, on the one hand, tuberculosis, and on the other syphilis. And you shout that this is extravagance. What kind of national dignity is this? ¹²⁷

When the parliament discussed a loan that the municipality of İstanbul wanted in order to compensate some losses of income he strongly supported the loan. He claimed that since the city was the capital of the whole Ottoman nation, they had to accept this loan, because it was for the benefit of the capital: “This is the honor of all the Ottomans in the capital. This is the honor of the Ottoman fatherland. We are all involved in and shareholders of this honor. I support that getting into debt, which is

¹²⁷ *Meclisi Ayan Zabıt Ceridesi: Devre: I, İctima Senesi: 3, 3ncü Cilt: 28 Nisan 1327 (1911) Tarihli 59ncü İnikaddan-21 Mayıs 1327 (1911) Tarihli 75nci İnikada Kadar* ([Ankara]: TBMM Basımevi, 1989), p. 695; “Eğer hükümet noksanları tanzim etmek isterse, bizim mevki-i mahsusumuzu, mevki-i istisnaimizi düşünerek, umur-u sıhhiye için bir nezaret teşkil etmeli. Bendeniz Bahriye bütçesini tanzim ettiğim zaman şurada pek gözümünüzün önünde mutena bir binayı gezdim, bu gayet muhteşem Bahriye Hastanesi idi . Onun koşulları gidip gezilse, en göz önünde bulunan ve en mühim bir müessesemiz zannedilen bu hastanede sararmış solmuş çehreler görüldü. Oradaki evlad-ı vatanın bir kere halini görün, acıyacaksınız, ağlayacaksınız. (...) Düşününüz efendiler, mesela komşularımızdan biriyle bir muharebe etmek lazım gelse, acaba bir fedakarlık var mıdır ki, yapmayalım? Herkes koşmayacak mı? Halbuki milletin başucunda öyle bir düşman bekliyor ki; bir verem illeti, diğeri de illet-i efrenciye namıyla milleti tahrip ediyor. Siz burada gelmiş, israfı diye bağırıyorsunuz. Nasıl hamiyet bu!”

related to the security of the capital, should be accepted without much hesitation. (Applause)”¹²⁸

Moreover, in April 1909, after the massacres of Adana, when Adil Bey, the under-secretary of the Ministry of Internal Affairs, described the events as an Armenian mutiny, Zohrab began to speak and emphasized that the Armenian nation imagined its future in the principle of Ottomanism and refused such claims: “I reject with all my being, my heart, and my conscience the slander and the aspersion that Armenians, who transferred all their existence within Ottomanism, have been ready to arrange such a massacre.”¹²⁹

These instances must show that Krikor Zohrab, as a deputy in the Ottoman Parliament, as an Armenian, and most importantly as a representative of the Armenian nation in the Ottoman political circles, first, regarded the principle of Ottomanism as a means of holding the whole Ottoman nations together, and second, planning his and his nation’s future in the Ottoman state as the members or citizens of the Ottoman state, not in a separate or independent Armenian state.

As is known, during the second constitutional era, especially during the period of 1908-1912, Ottoman politics experienced a very pluralist political struggle which had never been experienced before. The political activity of Krikor Zohrab which gives important clues about the thinking of the time, displays certain common

¹²⁸ *Meclisi Mebusan Zabıt Ceridesi: Devre: I, İctima Senesi: 2, 2nci Cilt, Fihristi: 16 Kanunusani 1325 Tarihinden-25 Subat 1325 Tarihine Kadar*, p. 102; “Bu payitahta umum Osmanlıların şerefidir. Osmanlı vatanının şerefidir. Bu şerefte hepimiz alakadar, hepimiz hissedarız. Bu payitahtın selametine ait olan bu istikrazın işgal edilmeyerek kabul olunması taraftarıyım. (Alkış)”

¹²⁹ *Meclisi Mebusan Zabıt Ceridesi: Devre: I, İctima Senesi: 1, Cilt: 3: 28 Mart 1325 Tarihli Elli Beşinci İnikattan-14 Mayıs 1325 Tarihli Seksen Birinci İnikada Kadar*, p. 130; “Bugün bütün mevcudiyetlerini Osmanlılığın içinde tahlil etmiş olan Ermenilerin böyle kıyam için, mürettep olmak için müheyya bulunmak gibi bir bühtanı, bir iftirayı bütün mevcudiyedim, bütün kalbim, bütün vicdanımla reddederim.”

political ground among the different political groups, especially on the basis of their world views and reveal the possibility of a political consensus between Turkish and Armenian political groups. Zohrab, usually a sharp opponent of the CUP, sought a peaceful language with the CUP, because he saw the potential to transform the regime and the state into a more pluralistic, libertarian, democratic one in that party. Moreover, from a perspective of the *realpolitik*, Zohrab defended that Armenians must support the CUP in order to prevent the possible massacres in the Anatolian *vilayets*. Unfortunately, today we can easily determine that this last calculation was a vital fault, but in Zohrab's time, in which the danger of massacres always existed for Armenians like the sword of Damocles, this strategy seemed understandable.

Conclusion

The main aim of this thesis is to present evidence-examples for the unfounded nature of the historical researches which display the group known as Ottoman Armenians as if they were a politically monolithic entity. With this aim, I tried to put under lenses the transformation experienced by certain groups and individuals within the Ottoman Armenians, in the passage from nineteenth to twentieth century, before and after the Young Turk Revolution. Parallel to the reformation of the state in the nineteenth century, during the Tanzimat era, the novelties within the Ottoman Armenian community, such tools as the councils, constitution, national assembly, prepared the starting point of this research. An important side of the research is the birth of Armenian political organization/parties and their reorganization as legal political parties with the Young Turk Revolution. While doing this, I tried not to overlook the developments in Russia and the Caucasus, where these movements were founded, yet – especially due to practical reasons – my focus was on the Ottoman lands. Due to my conviction that Constitutional era communicates the possibility of a common political ground between Armenians and non-Armenian Ottomans, I placed special emphasis on the political cooperation and coalition schemes between Armenian parties and other Ottoman parties before and during the constitutional period. In my opinion, present day historians – due to the shadow of the catastrophe of 1915 – usually construct late Ottoman history by ignoring and excluding such a possibility.

It is not an accident that the historical subject of this thesis is chosen to be Krikor Zohrab. Let me start from the incident which led me to work for understanding Zohrab's mental-political thinking. The publishing house that I was working for was planning to publish a book by Krikor Zohrab, who was mostly known with his literary works, especially with his novels and short stories, considered as one of the pioneers of the movement called "Armenian Realism". However, he had a political side as well, though much less known – most important of all he was elected a deputy in the Ottoman parliament three times. While translating Zohrab into Turkish,¹ we wanted to focus on his forgotten political side and for that reason we read some biographies of him, written in Armenian. One of the best examples of these biographies is the one written by Arshag Alboyadjian, *Anhedatsogh Temker: Krikor Zohrab, Ir Geanke yev Ir Kordze* (Vanished People: Krikor Zohrab, His Life, and His Work).² In this book, Alboyadjian blames Zohrab for acting in line with the Unionists during his parliamentary career. This was some sort of a surprise, since we knew from the works of Turkish writers and historians that Zohrab was arrested by the Unionists in 1915 and while he was being sent to Diyarbakır for trial, he was killed by a band of Teşkilat-ı Mahsusa, the Special Organization. That is why it was difficult for me, at that time, to understand how Zohrab could be accused of being a sympathizer of the CUP. In this critical time, I

¹ This was not the first Turkish translation from Zohrab. In 1913, famous professor of political sciences, Diran Kelekyan, translated a collection of short stories of Zohrab, called *Gianke Inchbes Vor e* into Turkish with the title, *Hayat Olduğu Gibi* [Life as It is] and published it claiming that "the more we understand each other, the stronger our mutual love becomes"; *Hayat, Olduğu Gibi*, (İstanbul: Ahmed İhsan ve Şürekâsı, 1329/1913); second publication (Ankara: Ayraç, 2000). Other two short stories of Zohrab also took place in an anthology of Armenian literature, in which the works of eight important Armenian writers were given place, published in 1912, with the translation of S. Srents. *Ermeni Edebiyatı Nümuneleri* (İstanbul: Ahmed İhsan ve Şürekâsı, 1328/1912).

² İstanbul: Der Nersesian, 1919.

thought that the effort to comprehend the political mentality of Zohrab and to place into historical context his attitude toward the CUP in the light of the political developments of the time, would be a way to better understand the past.

What was the thing which led Krikor Zohrab an adversary of the regime during the Hamidian era, which hindered him from performing his job as a lawyer, and what were the developments which made him leave his dear İstanbul, his birthplace, for Alexandria? And what was the reason for his return only in one week when he heard the news of the Young Turk Revolution in Paris? What made him take part in the foundation of Liberal Party (Ahrar), and what made him support the CUP, which he also criticized to a great extent? The answers to these and some other questions that I attempted to respond in this thesis may help the reader to find some of the missing pieces of the reconstructed late Ottoman history

First and foremost, Zohrab was an Ottoman liberal. He was convinced that both the Armenian community that he belonged to and the Ottoman state should be ruled with more liberal laws and institutions and he worked for the realization of this aim. Thanks to the higher education he received, he followed the political developments taking place in Europe, and he very well knew the meaning of the French Revolution. He sincerely believed in freedom of thought, freedom of press, freedom of association and political participation, women's rights and their rightful place in the public. These were more than enough to make him an unwanted person under Hamidian despotism.

As an Armenian intellectual, also as a lawyer, he was aware of the problems of the Armenian people in Anatolia. He used to accept the visits of Armenian peasants who came to İstanbul due to land seizures in the area, and defended their cases. He

knew a lot about the massacres of 1894-96 and he personally witnessed the Armenian hunt in the streets of İstanbul, which took place after the Ottoman Bank raid organized by the Hnchags. Zohrab used the idiom *zoh* (victim) for the massacred Armenians of Anatolia – which was a real sign of courage under the reign of Abdülhamid.

As an Ottoman and as an Armenian, these were the reasons for Zohrab's opposition and hatred toward the regime. At the same time, these were the reasons why he supported strongly the Young Turk Revolution, which, for Zohrab and many others, together with the constitutional regime were the realization of their hopes. His political career was devoted to more freedom, prosperity, and progress for all the Ottomans; and peace and tranquility for the Armenians.

It is necessary to dwell upon the reasons why Zohrab did not become a member of an Armenian party but took place in the foundation of Ahrar. First of all, before the constitutional regime, for the Armenian circles of İstanbul, Armenian political parties did not really weigh much. The intellectuals did not generally define themselves with their relation to the parties, with the identity of being a Tashnak or Hnchag. The most important reason, for sure, is the inconvenience of these identities under the despotic regime. But the other significant issue is the fact that the newly emerging political parties, mainly founded in the Caucasus and having supporters mainly from Caucasian and Anatolian Armenians, were really unfamiliar movements for the İstanbul Armenians. That is why, humorist Yervant Odian from İstanbul, in his famous satire criticizing the revolutionists, *Comrade Panchuni*, tries to add words and phrases from the eastern Armenian to the dialect to the hero of his novel, who was born in Trabzon, with the aim of conveying this alienness. Even during

constitutional regime, the representatives of the revolutionary Armenian parties in İstanbul were mainly from the Caucasus and Anatolia, not from İstanbul.

Another reason for Krikor Zohrab's membership in Ahrar was related to his final aim of establishing perpetual peace between the various elements of the Ottoman empire. It is not really reasonable for an Armenian, who voices this aim in several instances, to be a member of one of the Armenian revolutionary parties, of which he had heard a lot but never had a close contact. Moreover, the two most important of these parties, Hnchag and Tashnak, were viewed as the representatives of the nationalist discourse, which seemed to be predominant over their socialism till that time. For Zohrab, Ahrar was important as a place where he can get into politics without hearing the accusation of “Making politics of Armenianness!” That's why he says in a letter he wrote to his son abroad during those days: “*Je participe à la formation d'un grand parti politique exclusivement turc. Là aussi on me donne un poste d'honneur*”.³

Though a member of Ahrar, Zohrab generally stood close to the Tashnaks, followed parallel lines to them in the parliament, made recommendations to them in agenda and policy setting, and tried to influence them to cooperate with other parties. Yet, Zohrab never became a member of the Tashnaktsutiu. The reason for that, probably, should be looked for in his remoteness to the socialist movement. Though close to left-wing politics, he was nevertheless a product of the values of the bourgeoisie of İstanbul.

³ *Yerger*, vol. IV, p. 147; It is more relevant to consider “*turc*” as “non-Armenian”. It is necessary to remember that both in Armenian and in Western languages, this term refers mostly to Muslim Ottoman people of those lands.

Another dimension of the matter is ideological. It should not be forgotten that at that time one of the most important ideological cleavages of the Ottoman political arena was related to the issue of decentralization. An overwhelming majority of the Ottoman Armenians were of the opinion that for solving the Armenian Question, giving weight to the provincial administrations was a real achievement. There is nothing abnormal for Zohrab, a liberal and a supporter of decentralization, to take part in this party, which introduced itself as the defender of these values – especially when he was respectfully invited to the party by its founders.

One may ask why Zohrab did not choose to become a member of the CUP as the İstanbul deputy Bedros Haladjian or Tekirdağ deputy Hagop Babikian did. First of all, in my opinion, compared to Haladjian, the representative of the İstanbul bourgeoisie and Babikian from Thrace, Zohrab as writer and as a lawyer was much more sensitive to the problems of the Armenians of Anatolia. That is why it seems crucial to underline the impact of the stress on the decentralization in determining his final decision. Furthermore, the impossibility of raising his political concerns and criticisms as an adversary within the CUP, the holder of the power, may also have affected the choice of Zohrab.

Another question is why and how Zohrab, as a supporter of Ahrar in the fall of 1908, invited the Armenian community to support the CUP in the speeches he made in 1910. It is obvious that the primal reason for this transformation is the incidents that took place during the March 31 Event. It was not possible for Zohrab, who was a liberal, and a legalist to support a counter-revolutionary movement for Abdülhamit and against the organization which succeeded in bringing about the so much desired Young Turk Revolution. The anti-CUP attitude of Ahrar during the days of March

31 Event was perceived by Zohrab as a sort of cooperation with the anti-constitutionalists and this perception alienated him from the party. He was even hiding the Unionist Halil Bey (Menteşe) in his house, who was searched for by the rebels everywhere!⁴ Therefore, we can assume that Zohrab's relation was over with Ahrar by May 1909, when he accused and condemned Berat deputy İsmail Kemal Bey in a speech in the parliament due to the latter's negative attitude towards the Unionists and the constitutional regime during the March 31 Event.

In that sense, it is clear that Zohrab's support for the Unionists was completely pragmatic. According to him, the constitutional regime was a crucial necessity for the progress of the country. In that respect, it was necessary to stand against all the attacks directed to the party, which defended the constitution. The Unionists had to be guarded against the political groups which aimed at returning to the Ancien Régime. Furthermore, siding with the CUP, who held the destiny of the country in his hands, might bring about new gains for the Armenians and might prevent the occurrence of new Armenian massacres.

According to Armenian public opinion, the involvement of the Unionists in Adana incidents was without doubt. Yet, the *ex post facto* measures taken by the CUP – though largely insufficient – the sentencing of certain Muslim, can be shown as a sign of partial protection. It was possible only under a constitutional regime to force the government to take some precautions, to raise complaints in the parliament, and to call the ministers to duty. In that sense, those who worked for the constitutional regime had to be backed up strongly. The fact that Zohrab, not only in

⁴ Krikor Zohrab, "Orakrutian" (Diary), in *Yerger* (Works), p. 413.

1910, but also in 1912, recommended the Armenians to vote for the CUP, can only be explained with this background in mind.⁵

It is very clear that there were lots of people in the Armenian community who regarded Zohrab as an “acute optimist”⁶ and criticized him harshly. On the basis of his attitude against the Unionists, some Armenians regarded him as a submissive political actor who was not able to defend the interests of the Armenians enough. On the other hand, very possibly, some others were opposed to his materialist/modernist world view, or despised his leftist tendencies. In my opinion, this situation supports the opinion that the Armenian community of Ottoman Empire was not a homogeneous entity. It is very normal that people having different social, psychological, political notions had different engagements in the Constitutional period. To note these contradictory interests –which I could not dwell upon thoroughly because of the limitations of this thesis –would help us to grasp the multi-sided political environment of the time.

While arguing for these within the Armenian community, in the parliament Krikor Zohrab was one of the deputies, who took the floor many times, performed a duty in many committees, and thus was quite active. As already discussed in the previous chapter, he never refrained from criticizing the CUP. In time, he saw that the CUP was hesitant in realizing the reforms that it promised and that in some cases the CUP was not even able to do these due to certain structural problems. These made him to take a stronger stance, but never get involved in anti-CUP movements,

⁵ Krikor Zohrab, “İttihadi yev İtilafi Masin” (About İttihat and İtilaf), *Azadamard* (Fight for Freedom), 30 March / 12 April 1912, no. 858; in *Yerger* (Works), vol. 6, pp. 173-175.

⁶ *Puzantion* (Byzance), 18 September / 1 October 1910, no. 4226; in *Yerger* (Works), vol. 5, p. 514.

such as LEP. The activities of Zohrab have moved to the area of reform issue of 1912-13, when this was discussed a lot, but never followed a separatist line. On the contrary, as far as we can follow from his diary comprising the end of 1913 and the beginning of 1914, he was one of the two mediators between the Unionists and Armenian political circles, together with the Unionist Haladjian.

There are a couple of points of view in regarding the final aims of the Armenian political actors in the constitutional era. The thesis that Armenians mainly aimed at independence has many supporters in today's Turkey. However, it is generally ignored that two important Armenian political parties, Hnchag and Tashnak, were respectful of Ottoman territorial integrity and that they had promised to carry out policies for the progress of the country. Tashnaks, even before the Young Turk Revolution, in December 1907 in Paris, declared this in the pre-declaration of the congress that they held with the Unionists. Also Hnchags made the same declaration in the summer of 1908. Some may claim that this was nothing but a cover up, a tactic to hide the real aim. In my opinion, however, since Armenian parties, not only made verbal promises but also presented a real transformation in their activities, it is possible to argue that they moved to a loyalist line. The fact that, first, they quit the tactics of terror, and then the fact that they made political agreements and cooperation with other Ottoman political organizations, namely the CUP and LEP, are two crucial signs of this change. A detailed analysis of the political declarations, announcements, and press of the period may shed light on the changes in the "parole". The fact that there were no serious armed resistance in Anatolia, except for a number of regions near the Russian border during the deportation and massacres of 1915, also falsifies the conviction that these parties

were secretly rearming themselves and that they were into paramilitary organizations and activities.

The sensitivity of Zohrab over the Armenian question can be explained with a composition of intellectual responsibility and ethnic identity, and, in my opinion, is not related to a vision of Armenian independence at all. Zohrab was emphasizing that he was an Armenian and an Ottoman in every possible instance and underlining the importance of cosmopolitanism and multiculturalism. In that respect, one of the important ingredients of his identity was İstanbul, which was crucial in understanding this state of mind. Zohrab thought that the Ottoman Empire should not be fighting in the First World War as an ally of Germany and he was frequently getting in touch with Cavit Bey, the minister of finance, to discuss the issue. What he wrote to his diary when it became definite that the country would go to war, is really telling.

I am afraid that this decision will result in an inevitable end, a death, and this condition of this great empire hurts my heart. We were born here, we grew up here, we lived here and we wanted it to live, to live long, with all our sincerity. Pity...! Pity...!⁷

⁷ *ibid.*, p. 396.

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