

GARABED KAPIKIAN

YEGHERNABADOUM
[STORY OF GENOCIDE]

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By

Garabed Kapikian

AN ACCOUNT OF THE DEPORTATIONS
AND MASSACRES OF THE ARMENIANS
OF SEBASTIA AND LESSER ARMENIA

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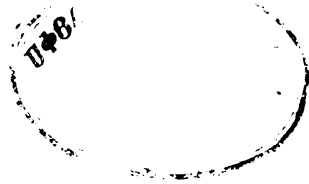
Mrs. Lucintak Isbirian

IN MEMORY

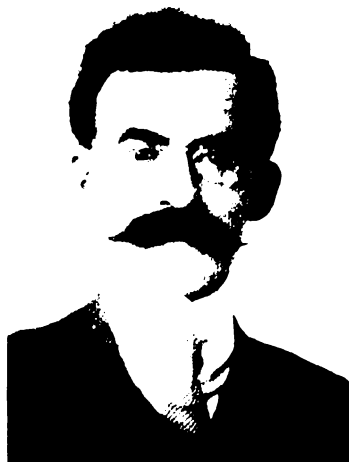
This publication is dedicated to the everlasting memory of that noble lady, Mrs. Lucintak Isbirian, who in her youth witnessed the horrible scenes of the Genocide of the Armenian people by the Turks.

*In accordance with her wishes, the volume titled **Yeghernabadum** [History of Genocide] has been abridged and translated into English to make the truth readily available to the English-speaking world in the fervent hope that **JUSTICE WILL ULTIMATELY TRIUMPH.***

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**BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH
OF
GARABED KAPIKIAN
(1861 - 1925)**



Garabed Kapikian

Garabed Kapikian—philologist, ethnographer, and pedagogue—was one of the few Armenian intellectuals who survived the mass deportations and genocide perpetrated by the Turks on the Armenians living in the Ottoman Empire during 1915-1918. Subsequently, he was to write in the Preface to his *Yeghernabadum*: “The power of suggestion has a strong and profound influence on man’s mind. At the last minute, as I was taking leave from my dear brother, (Haji Hovhannes Kapikian) to set forth on the road of blood (deportation), he said to me, ‘You shall survive, you shall see everything with your own eyes, and you shall tell about it in the near future.’ These words became the supreme dictate for me and, indeed, I owe my survival and my *Yeghernabadum* to them....”

Born in Sebastia, Kapikian studied at the local Tarkmanchats and Nersesian Schools. He began teaching at the Tarkmanchats and Surp Prghich Schools. At the same time, he became one of the founders and leaders of the Sebastia branch of the Hnchak (Armenian Social Democratic) Party. As a result of his political activism, he was arrested by the Turkish government and thrown in jail in 1890. Five years later, along with 300 other Sebastatsi prisoners, he

was released through the efforts of the Prelate of Sebastia, Bedros Srpazan Tahmizian, and the intervention of European ambassadors. Subsequently, Kapikian became an instructor of Armenian, French, Armenian and world history, and commercial geography at the Aramian School. Being one of the schools's most beloved teachers, he eventually became its vice-principal. His twelve-year career, however, was cut short by the forced deportation of 1915, as a result of which he and his family were driven as far as Aleppo. In 1920, he went to Jerusalem and became an instructor of Armenian language and literature at the Zharankavorats Academy of St. James Monastery.

In addition to the aforementioned volume* (*Yeghernabadum*, Boston, 1924), G. Kapikian is known for two other valuable studies: (1) *parkirk Sebastahai Kavarelezvi* (Dictionary of the Dialect of Sebastia Armenians), which was awarded the coveted Izmirliants literary prize in 1905 and published posthumously in 1952; and (2) *Hai Pusashkharh* (Armenian Flora), which likewise won the Izmirliants prize in 1912 and was eventually published in 1968. In addition, Kapikian wrote several articles of an historical-philological nature which were published in *Armenia*, *Hnchak*, *Arevelian Mamul* (Smyrna), *Handes Amsorya* (Vienna), *Hayasdani Gotchnag* (New York), *Nor Aik* (Marzovan), as well as D. Varoujan's *Navasart* and Teotig's literary-artistic *Amenun Daretsuite*, under such pen names as "Gotchnag Sebastio", "Dioniosian Aganch", P. Haiketsian.

Besides his published studies and articles, Kapikian had worked on other topics, including memoirs and sketches of the past life of Sebastia, and a collection of folk beliefs. These materials, presently in manuscript form in the archives of the St. James Monastery in Jerusalem, remain to be brought to light. Their publication would serve as a fitting tribute to a man singularly devoted to the advancement of his people and nation.

Aris G. Sevag

*Though quite comprehensive in terms of describing the deportation and massacre of the Armenians of Sebastia and Lesser Armenia, this book had been intended by the author to contain also (1) individual sections concerning the deportation of each town and village of the Sebastia province; (2) statistics regarding the survivors; (3) an historical and geographical survey of Sebastia; (4) a map of the roads traversed by the deportees; and (5) a list of provincial words and sayings.

THE PURPOSE OF THIS PUBLICATION

In the early part of this century, a monstrous crime took place, one that was unprecedented in the history of mankind.

In the year 1915, the Turkish government, taking advantage of the favorable opportunity created by World War I, undertook to exterminate the Armenian people in accordance with a secret plan drawn up years before.

During the months of May and June 1915, the Turkish authorities deported all the Armenian families living in the Ottoman Empire and drove them to the deserts of Syria and Mesopotamia. Moreover, a million and a half Armenians were massacred along the way by special gangs of massacrers.

The philologist and ethnographer Garabed Kapikian was an eyewitness to many of the execrable events that occurred. After the war, he recorded his and others' horrendous experiences which were published in a book titled *Yeghernabadum Pokur Hayots Yev Norin Mairakaghakin Sebastio* (History of Genocide in Lesser Armenia and Its Capital City of Sebastia). In the following pages, the main episodes from that book are given in summary form for our English-speaking younger generation and all those who are concerned with the future of our civilization.

Indeed, the Armenocide perpetrated by the Turkish government served as an example to Hitlerian Germany during World War II to commit similar atrocities among the peaceful populations of Poland, Byelorussia, Ukraine, and Russia. Fortunately Germany was defeated and then compelled to make restitution for the losses it had brought about. However, the author of the first genocide of the twentieth century, the Turkish government—despite its having been soundly defeated—has yet to be punished....

It is a known fact, that, in 1945, following the end of World War II, the United Nations was founded so that international disputes might henceforth be settled through peaceful negotiations rather than war. Subsequently the UN General Assembly adopted unanimously without debate Resolution 96 (1) of December 11, 1946, affirming "that genocide is a crime under international law, which the civilized world condemns, and for the commission of which principals and accomplices...are punishable;...." In 1948,

the UN adopted a Convention on Genocide which expanded on Resolution 96. Further stipulations were made: material restitution was to be made by the guilty government to the victimized group with no statute of limitations, and lands usurped by means of genocide were to be returned to the victimized party.

Albeit painful, it must be said that the past, as well as the present, Turkish governments have categorically denied having committed such barbaric crimes.

Such denial was made quite recently. On March 6, 1974, during a meeting of the UN Commission on Human Rights, the report of the Sub-Commission on Prevention of Discrimination and Protection of Minorities was under discussion and, inasmuch as it made reference to the massacres of the Armenian people as "the first case of genocide in the twentieth century", Mr. Osman Olcay, Permanent Representative of Turkey, requested that such reference be stricken from the study. Not only did he deny his government's responsibility for such action but also he even dared shamelessly to put the blame on the victims....

No decent person would be able to restrain his disgust and indignation over such obvious contempt for truth and justice.

However the representatives of certain countries, who were present at that session, took the side of the Turkish representative; no doubt the selfish interests of their respective countries involving Turkey were uppermost in their minds....

As can be seen, the tragic Armenian question is not one that solely concerns the Armenians; rather it is an opprobrious transgression that weighs heavily on the conscience of civilized mankind in the twentieth century....

Nevertheless, we believe that the more widely we make our just and timeless cause known, the more we shall have contributed to its victory.

THE TURKS IN RETROSPECT

From time immemorial, numerous Turco-Tatar tribes have lived on the territory stretching from the eastern shores of the Caspian Sea to the steppes of Central Asia, as far as Mongolia and China. They were nomads who, generally speaking, used to engage in animal husbandry and live in tents. In order to secure new grazing lands, they used to constantly wage war against other neighboring tribes, as the Kurds of Armenia. In general, they were horsemen and excellent archers as well. To die in battle was the most desirable kind of death for them. Cruelty was considered an expression of bravery by the Turco-Tatars. In terms of religion, they were idolators, Buddhists.

Aware of their militancy, the Arab emirs would occasionally invite them to come to Bagdad as mercenaries and organize them into fighting regiments. As a result, the Turco-Tatar warriors became acquainted firsthand with the beautiful and rich lands of Persia, Armenia, and Byzantium and, upon returning to their steppes, they began to attack the countries of the West for the sake of pillaging. The Armenian Bagratuni and Vaspurakan kingdoms were able to check the advances of those barbarians for a while; however, on account of the imprudent and ruinous policy of the Byzantine emperors, Armenia's strength became diminished such that, during the eleventh century, the Seljuk Turks gradually advanced toward the Byzantine-held lands, encountering hardly any serious resistance. Eventually they reached the center of Asia Minor, where they established a sultanate at Konya. During the course of the next two centuries, the Seljuk sultanate had begun to weaken, whereupon a new tent-dwelling Turkic tribe, led by chief Ertogrul, came and bolstered the sultan of Konya. Ertogrul's son, Osman (1281-1325), expanded his dominion and laid the foundation of the Ottoman Empire. The power of the Ottomans grew steadily during the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries; by 1453, Sultan Mehmed II (the Conqueror) conquered Constantinople. With the fall of the Byzantine capital, the once majestic and flourishing Byzantine Empire came to an end and over its ruins ruled a barely half-civilized tribe whose only merit lay in brute military force. In all realms of civilized life, on the other hand, only the Greek, Armenian, and other Christian subjects were actively engaged.

In the course of time, many countries under the Ottoman yoke

successively reestablished their independence. Owing to this gradual dismemberment, the Ottoman Empire was already referred to as the “Sick Man” by the beginning of the twentieth century.

However, to prevent the imminent downfall of the Ottoman Empire, the secret society known as the “Young Turks” revolted, overthrowing Sultan Abdul Hamid II and putting an end to his bloody, despotic, thirty-year reign. On July 10, 1908, they proclaimed a Constitution. However, the extremely nationalistic political party known as “Ittihad ve Terakke” (Committee of Union and Progress), which had seized power, had embraced the motto “Turkey for the Turks” and therefore couldn’t tolerate the existence of its Christian subjects. As a first step towards eliminating non-Turks, in April 1909, it secretly organized the massacre of the Armenians living in the province of Adana, whose population was decreased by roughly 30,000.

Thereafter, encouraged by the neutrality of the great European powers dictated by selfish national interests, the Ittihad party convened a secret meeting at its headquarters in Salonika in November 1911, during which plans were drawn up to gradually exterminate the non-Turkic peoples in order to make Turkey’s population homogeneously Turkic in composition. In accordance with that monstrous decision, the Young Turks organized massacres of their subjects living in the Balkans too: Serbs, Bulgars, and Greeks. Shocked by those events, Serbia, Bulgaria, and Greece joined forces and declared war on Turkey. The latter suffered an ignominious defeat and, for the most part, was driven out of the Balkan Peninsula....

Instead of learning from that bitter experience, the Turkish leaders subsequently became filled with infinite revenge and decided to exterminate the defenseless, hapless Armenian people. However, that was difficult to accomplish in peacetime; besides, they were afraid in particular of European or, rather, Russian intervention. Unfortunately, with the outbreak of World War I in 1914, the Turkish leaders were provided a golden opportunity—one which they welcomed with exhilaration—to carry out their plan. Immediately a general draft was instituted, under which males between the ages of eighteen and forty were conscripted. The Armenians, in turn, naturally hastened to enlist. However, from the very first day, the Armenain soldiers suffered discrimination

and harsh treatment in the Turkish army.

While the war was raging in Europe, Turkey, seized with its age-old ideal of establishing a vast Pan-Turanic empire, made an alliance with Germany and Austria and endeavored by all means to enter into a state of war with Russia, while the latter's attention was concentrated on the Austro-German fronts. By so doing, Turkey figured it would be easy to attack the Caucasus and join forces with her Muslim clansmen in that region. From there, together, they would advance as far as Central Asia, liberate the millions of fellow Turks from Tsarist Russian rule, and establish a far-flung Pan-Turanic Empire which would extend from Constantinople to China.... Turkey's Minister of War, Enver Pasha, was particularly excited by these wild dreams. Having studied in Germany, he was an extreme Germanophile. Furthermore, inasmuch as Germany's interests coincided with the realization of those Pan-Turanian dreams, Germany encouraged Turkey in all respects.

On October 15, 1914, Turkey bombed the Russian ports on the Black Sea coast in order to kindle the flames of war; at the same time, she went on the attack on the Caucasian front under the command of Enver Pasha. This campaign resulted in a major defeat for the Turkish army. Moreover, if it hadn't been for Hovhannes Aginian, an Armenian officer and native of Sebastia, who lost his life defending the only line of retreat open to Enver, the ambitious Pasha would have been taken prisoner. Later on, Enver Pasha himself related that heroic episode to an Armenian delegation which had gathered to greet him as he was passing through Sebastia on his return to Constantinople....

The immortal author of *Yeghernabadum* goes on to describe how that same Enver, having heaped praise on the Armenian military hero out of gratitude, nevertheless didn't hesitate in the future to sign secret orders, whereby the Armenian soldiers were disarmed, organized into labor battalions, worked excessively, and treacherously massacred in groups....

Such reckless, ambitious, and adventurous individuals stood at the head of the ruling circles, having two main goals:

1. Annihilation of the Armenian people;
2. Removal of the "barrier" Armenia, joining forces with their co-religionist Turkic brethren in the Caucasus and Central Asia, and realization of their dream of establishing a Pan-Turanian empire with the aid of their ally, a victorious Germany.