

## ՀՐԱՊԱՐԱԿՈՒՄՆԵՐ PUBLICATIONS

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**VARDAN HAMBARDZUMYAN**

*PhD student,*

*YMCA Europe Executive Secretary*

*vardan.hambardzumyan@gmail.com*

### **REVIEW BY ERNST OTTO JACOB, YMCA SECRETARY GENERAL IN THE OTTOMAN EMPIRE, ON THE STATUS OF THE ASSOCIATION IN 1922 VS 1914**

In 1844 the first Young Men's Christian Association (YMCA) was founded in London by a group of young men led by George Williams<sup>1</sup>. Over the next ten years the YMCA idea and movement spread all over Great Britain and began to expand across Western Europe, the USA, Australia, New Zealand, and India. A crucial impulse in this expansion was The Great Exhibition of 1851 in London.

The idea of creating a truly global YMCA movement with an international headquarters was pioneered by Henry Dunant<sup>2</sup>, Secretary of YMCA Geneva. He successfully convinced YMCA Paris to host the first YMCA World Conference. The Conference took place in August 1855, bringing together 99 young delegates from nine countries. The Conference adopted the Paris Basis affirming the YMCA's global mission and purpose, and created the Central International Committee. The Committee operated without a headquarters until 1878, when a permanent headquarters and formal structure for the Committee was established in Geneva. This was a turning point for the Central International

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<sup>1</sup> Sir George Williams (1821–1905): in 1894 received a knighthood from Queen Victoria and is laid to rest in the crypt at St Paul's Cathedral in London.

<sup>2</sup> Henry Dunant (1828–1910): also the founder of the International Committee of the Red Cross (1863) and the first laureate of the Nobel Peace Prize (1901).

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Committee that would eventually become known as the World Alliance of YMCAs<sup>3</sup>. On the threshold of the 20<sup>th</sup> century the YMCA was already present in 45 countries with a global membership of over 700,000.

The YMCA idea and movement infiltrated into the Ottoman Empire in the early 80s of the 19<sup>th</sup> century<sup>4</sup>. Notwithstanding the continued oppressions by Abdul Hamid's regime, during the next decade the YMCA Movement continued to expand in the empire, mainly working through missionaries and their educational programs. Conditions improved after the restoration of the constitutional rule in the Ottoman Empire and the Bloody Sultan's<sup>5</sup> arraignment in July, 1908. 'Hurriyet'<sup>6</sup> opened up the new prospects for the YMCA intervention. The American YMCA, led by J. R. Mott<sup>7</sup>, was the most active. Soon the International Committee of the YMCA of the USA appointed Lawson Chambers<sup>8</sup> as the YMCA Traveling Secretary in the Ottoman Empire. The first force major Chambers faced was the 1909 massacre in Adana, when 30'000 Armenians were slaughtered. He acted as the British Vice-Consul and played a key role in stopping it and mobilizing international assistance to the survivors<sup>9</sup>. Later on, relief assistance to Adana became the first international aid project of the World YMCA<sup>10</sup>.

1909–1914 became the key period of the consolidation of the YMCA Movement in the Ottoman Empire. In May 1911, the General Committee of the Union of Christian Associations in Turkey held its first meeting at Robert

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<sup>3</sup> Today the YMCA operates in 119 countries worldwide, providing various services to around 58 million people.

<sup>4</sup> See **Համբարձումյան Վ.**, Երիտասարդաց քրիստոնեական ընկերակցության գործունեությունը Օսմանյան կայսրությունում (1881–1909 թթ.), Բանբեր հայագիտության, No 3, Ե., 2017, էջ 126–135:

<sup>5</sup> Sultan Abdul Hamid's nickname

<sup>6</sup> Liberty

<sup>7</sup> John Raleigh Mott (1865–1955): also founder of World Student Christian Federation (WSCF) and World Council of Churches (WCC) and laureate of the Nobel Peace Prize (1946).

<sup>8</sup> See **Համբարձումյան Վ.**, Բրիտանական կայսրության փոխհյուպատոսի ժամանակավոր պաշտոնակատար Լոուան Չամբրսը 1909 թ. Ադանայի ջարդերի մասին, Լրաբեր հասարակական գիտությունների, No 1, Ե., 2015, էջ 155–156:

<sup>9</sup> Balakian, Peter: The Burning Tigris – the Armenian Genocide and America's Response, New York, 2004, pp. 148–155.

<sup>10</sup> Shedd, Clarence Prouty and others, History of the World's Alliance of Young Men's Christian Associations, London, 1955, p. 457, 663.

College<sup>11</sup> in Constantinople, with delegates from all over the country: Marash, Tarsus, Talas, Smyrna, Bourssa, Marzvan, Van, Adabazar, Beirut, Constantinople<sup>1</sup>, etc.. The opening of the new and magnificent YMCA building in Constantinople was expected to be the highlight of these developments, yet the beginning of World War I brought that promising process to a definite termination. Anyway, the building was inaugurated in October, 1915, with U.S. Ambassador Henry Morgenthau delivering the congratulatory address to an assembly of five hundred guests<sup>12</sup>. But almost immediately after, the Turkish government pushed to close down the Association work. The YMCA Board of Managers' final meeting in December, 1915, decided to suspend its operations, and in order to save the building, to rent it to the U.S. Embassy. At that time the Armenian Genocide was at full scale of execution, resulting in the extermination of 1.5 million people. The YMCA chief secretary Ernst Otto Jacob<sup>13</sup> reports:

*"...Christian races must be reduced to a state where they would be forever negligible in the development of a Turkey for Turks. They planned to completely annihilate the national life and institutions of the Armenian race... The Turkish program was fiendishly successful - hundreds of thousands of Armenians had died and many more would perish. The hopes of the Armenians were utterly crushed... As a race and as individuals they feel themselves doomed as long as the Turk is their lord"*<sup>14</sup>.

Through the years of World War I the international YMCA was trying hard to get involved in prisoner of war and relief assistance work in the Ottoman Empire, but it's only after the Armistice of Mudros, signed between the Ottoman Empire and the Allied states (October 30, 1918), that the YMCA was granted back an access by the Turkish government. Operations were limited to areas

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<sup>11</sup> Kautz Family YMCA Archives, University of Minnesota Libraries, Minneapolis, MN: Box - International Division: Folder – Turkey 1884–1929.

<sup>12</sup> Steuer, Kenneth: Pursuit of an Unparalleled Opportunity – The American YMCA and Prisoner of War Diplomacy among the Central Power Nations during World War I, 1914–1923, Kalamazoo, Michigan, 2008, Chapter 15, pp. 1–24, The American YMCA and Allied Prisoner Relief in the Ottoman Empire).

<sup>13</sup> Ernst Otto Jacob (1886–1966): born in Dresden (Germany), apart from the Ottoman Empire then Republic of Turkey served as the YMCA secretary in Krakow (Poland), Athens (Greece) and New York (USA).

<sup>14</sup> Kautz Family YMCA Archives, University of Minnesota Libraries, Minneapolis, MN: Box - International Division: Folder – Turkey 1884–1929.

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under direct control of the Allied states: Constantinople (Britain), Adana, Aintab, Marash in Cilicia (France), Smyrna (Greece). The YMCA in Cilicia was acting within the framework of the American Committee for Relief in the Near East (Americom), which was established by the US Congress to provide assistance to the survivors of the Armenian Genocide, finding refuge under protectorate of French troops, including the Armenian Legion<sup>15</sup>. After almost 3 years of existence, by the end of 1921, both the Armenians and the YMCA had to finally abandon Cilicia as the French treacherously handed it over to Turkey.

Next Smyrna YMCA seized its existence due to the occupation of the city by Kemal Atatürk's army in September, 1922. The Turkish troops and the mob set the city on fire, attempting a holocaust of the Greek and Armenian population of the city. It was then that American YMCA junior staff Asa Jennings stationed in Smyrna led one of the world's biggest rescue missions ever, initiating evacuation of the Armenians and Greeks, sandwiched between the fire and water at the Smyrna Quay. He triggered the unfolding of and led an unprecedented rescue operation, saving more than 250,000 people<sup>16</sup>.

Constantinople YMCA was the only one, which survived for a while. But in July 14, 1939, the Turkish government closed it down and created a foundation to manage the confiscated property.

Hereby we are publishing the report written by Ernst Otto Jacob in 1922 called "1914 vs 1922: A Review of Association<sup>17</sup> Work in Turkey". The copy of the document is obtained from the Kautz Family YMCA Archives, University of Minnesota Libraries, Minneapolis. It gives a summarizing account on how the YMCA emerged, extended and as a matter of fact came to its end in the Ottoman Empire. E. O. Jacob was one of the American YMCA secretaries, operating in the Ottoman Empire and then in the Republic of Turkey during 1910 – 1925. He was still stationed there when writing this report, and in its second part he is trying to justify how very much necessary the YMCA can be for the Turkish society, now almost completely cleansed of Christians. That is why

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<sup>15</sup> See Համբարձումյան Վ., Երիտասարդաց քրիստոնեական ընկերակցության աշխատակից Օլին Փ. Լիի հաշվետվությունը Կիլիկիայի ինքնավարության հռչակման մասին, Լրաբեր հասարակական գիտությունների, No 3, Ե., 2017, էջ 301–302:

<sup>16</sup> Ureneck, Lou: The Great Fire: One American's Mission to Rescue Victims of the 20th Century's First Genocide, (Harper Collins, New York, 2015).

<sup>17</sup> Often the word 'Association' is used for the YMCA.

the first part of the report is narrated in a rather “politically correct” manner. This is the first complete publication of the document. We did some orthographic and punctuation corrections enclosed in square brackets.

## **1924 vs 1922 A REVIEW OF THE ASSOCIATION MOVEMENT IN TURKEY**

*“The Association movement in Turkey is to me like my very child. Today it seems in the grip of death. ‘It sounds like writing an obituary’ said my good wife when she heard the subject. This is the feeling which I myself am trying [to] overcome even as I write.*

*In the origin our movement was true[ly] a historic precedent. Years ago, in some cases in the ‘eighties, little groups of young men in cities, and of boys in mission schools and colleges, got together for mutual help and service and called themselves Young Men’s Christian Associations. There were no employed officers. Occasional visitors like Wishard<sup>18</sup> and Mott (and I believe also Fermaud<sup>19</sup>) cheered them along and made them the harder for being part of a worldwide brotherhood.*

*In 1908, Mr. Lawson Chambers was sent out by the International Committee as travelling secretary. He made a great and helpful tour through Asia Minor. He did heroic work in Adana during the massacre of 1909, and acted as British Vice-Consul after the wounding of Major Doughty-Wylie. He strengthened the student work and encouraged the city Associations to reach out beyond the Protestant circle. When he resigned to help his aging father in the Bithynia High School, he had pleaded his case so well that in autumn of the same year (1910) two men were sent out to take his place – D. A. Davis<sup>20</sup> to Constantinople and the writer as travelling secretary. At the same time the British National Council commissioned Mr. Stuart Donnithorne to Jerusalem.*

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<sup>18</sup> Luther Wishard (1854–1925): In 1877 became the first full-time staff member and later on the founder of the Foreign Department of the YMCA of the USA. In 1888 he went for an almost four-year journey to all over Asia, including visiting the YMCA in the Ottoman Empire.

<sup>19</sup> Charles Fermaud: Secretary of the World Alliance of YMCAs in 1880s.

<sup>20</sup> Dr. Darius Alton Davis (1883–1970): American YMCA international secretary, later on served as Associate General Secretary of the World Alliance of YMCAs (1931–1950).

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*In both Jerusalem and Constantinople, the secretaries proceeded to lay foundations for the typical four-fold work, broad enough to appeal both to Christians of all nationalities, as well as to Muslims and Jews.*

*Jerusalem got under way first. Visiting there in the spring of 1912, I found Donnithorne with a thriving Association (above a livery stable) of several hundred members. He had the heartiest backing of the Orthodox Patriarch and the British Bishop, as well as the heads of other native churches. He was on good terms with the Turkish authorities, with the Jewish leaders and with a number of Roman clergy. Building plans had proceeded to the point where a plot had been picked out and quiet hunt for money had begun.*

*In Constantinople, the work matured more slowly but no less effectively. During the two years nominally set aside for language study, Davis and Van Bommel (who had come out in the spring [of] 1912) were cultivating the friendship of leading men in all nationalities. They secured in advance the approval of the Orthodox and Armenian patriarchs. They had the good will of influential Turks. They had important friends in all the foreign communities.*

*The Association really organized with their able and progressive Board of Directors, who first worked out a constitution, then raised \$3500 locally to furnish the rented quarters, and in the autumn of 1913 opened work in apartment in Pera<sup>21</sup>. In six weeks, and without any public canvass, the Association had nearly 600 members and was actually being strangled by the smallness of its quarters. Fortunately, there was at hand a gift from America which made possible the purchase and remodelling of a splendid building in the heart of the hotel, club and retail district. The Great War<sup>22</sup> intervened before it was ready, and when it was opened to the public the blight which was falling on all religious, and humanitarian enterprises had already beg[u]n.*

*In the meantime the Association movement through the Turkish Empire had been changing from a few separate and largely unrelated cells, into a living organism.*

*The conference in Constantinople of the World's Student Christian Federation (1911) permitted the first expression of a desire for united action. This found vent at once in the formation of a provisional committee. There soon*

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<sup>21</sup> European (Latin) neighborhood of Constantinople, nowadays known as Beyoglu.

<sup>22</sup> World War I

*emerged the Union of Christian Associations in the Turkish Empire (including both the YMCA and YWCA<sup>23</sup>) with an able and representative General Committee, which set out vigorously to enlarge and strengthen the movement. At the historic conference in Edinburgh, in 1913 it was accepted into the World's Alliance, the representatives from Turkey and Bulgaria appearing together on the platform, as a demonstration in that time of war that Jesus can make brothers of even the worst enemies.*

*There was outreach in every direction. More training centres were wanted, and the World's Committee encouraged us by agreeing to support a foreign secretary in Adana, and authorized the call of W. E. Bristol for this post. Constantinople was investigating sites for a boys' camp, and calling James Perry for the projected Stamboul<sup>24</sup> branch. Volunteer Associations, like those of Aintab and Smyrna, had hundred of members, evening schools, social settlement work, and an almost fully developed program. Beyrout was planning to build, and sent its Syrian secretaries to America for further training. Bible study and evangelism were the outstanding activities. As a movement we were proud of magazine, "The Association Quarterly", whose really promising career was broken only by the rigors of the censorship and the collapse of the mails. A helpful conference of workers of city Associations took place in the rooms of the Constantinople Association in the spring of 1914, the first of a signally blessed series of student conferences was held on the slopes of Mt. Lebanon in July of the same year.*

*Within a month, the world catastrophe was upon us. Unfortunately for Turkey[,] the world Turkish nationalism found its most catastrophic expression in severities against Christian races of the Empire. And in the suppression of all those humanitarian institutions which, though financed and largely staffed from abroad, had, by the spread of culture, democratic ideas and vital Christian faith, done more than perhaps any other set of agencies to make revival of Turkey possible. In this engulfing of whole races and civilizations that of the Young Men's Christian Association was not only inevitable but so insignificant as to cause hardly a ripple in the vast sea of ruin. As a matter of fact, and of surprise, a few of the student Associations did survive the deluge. The*

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<sup>23</sup> Young Women's Christian Association: sister organization of the YMCA.

<sup>24</sup> The walled or inner part of Constantinople.

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*uninterrupted series of student conferences at Paradise near Smyrna, with their miraculous results in decisions for Christ, is a not-to-be-despised testimony to the vitality of our movement.*

*Comes next the armistice<sup>25</sup> and with the inflow of various Allies those ubiquitous Association huts and activities which the armies had all come to consider indispensable. In the meantime the writer had secured from the Committee on Allied Armies and Prisoners of War of the International Committee the promise of a fund for service with the refugee population. Just as the Near East Relief<sup>26</sup> and the other relief organizations were providing them with food, clothing, shelter and other economic relief, so it seemed to us the special function of the Association to help re-introduce those social, cultural and spiritual activities which we have always claimed are fundamental to life itself. Under the leadership of James Perry of blessed memory, work was set going in orphanages, schools and refugee centres of Constantinople, Konia, Smyrna, Adana, Aleppo and other places. The Adana and Constantinople Associations were revived and enlarged. The Stamboul branch was finally started. The student Associations regained much of their old vigor. Boys' camps were introduced on a large scale at Constantinople, Smyrna and Adana, and won instant approval. Trained physical and boys' work secretaries, attractive literature, the most intimate co-operation with educators, government authorities and church leaders, all were symbolic of new era.*

*But the storm was far from over. Perry and Johnson fell by irregulars' bullets in January 1920<sup>27</sup>. The Konia work was confronted with obstructions until it had to stop. Adana lost most of its constituency in the evacuation of 1921, and is winding up its affairs. Smyrna lost both constituency and building in the catastrophe of past September. There now remains Constantinople. God grant that it may come through not only unharmed but strengthened for a unique service to Turkey. For he was a true friend of the Turks who prophetically calls this "her hour of great need."*

*Are we justified in hoping for this? It is self-evident that if the Turkish authorities would only once investigate the Association impartiality they could not fail to come to the same conclusion as non-Christian leaders in China,*

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<sup>25</sup> Armistice of Mudros: 30 October 1918.

<sup>26</sup> American Committee for Relief in the Near East – Americom.

<sup>27</sup> Detroit Young Men', Weekly: Detroit, Michigan, Volume XVII, 19 February, 1920.



*Japan, India – yes, even in Turkey itself. For those Turks are not few in number who have recognized the possibilities for their nation of the work and program of Young Men's Christian Association. Hundreds, perhaps thousands of educated Turks, avowed patriots, would eagerly welcome us. All of us who have served here have repeatedly had the blessings of God called down upon us by ardent Turks who were at the same time devout Moslems.*

*It is purely a question of wisdom and vision. If Kemal Pasha and his supporters are worthy of their leadership, they surely must release that in the long run it is to their interest – nay, it is a question of life and death – to be associated with the forward of life itself to produce a race of physical vigor, intellectual sanity, brotherly impulses, and thorough-going religious faith. If they are wise they must have seen before this the folly of former regimes in treating paper projects as if they had been achievements, in imagining that if only they would not lose from the foreigner the end would be well. As Turks and as Moslems their salvation lies in searching the world over for that which will help them, even though it is not labeled in their taste. The Association needs no more encouragement than that. Let the Turkish government merely be neutral, and you will see the youth of Turkey again flocking to the "Y".*

*There remains another powerful objection: "You are carrying on Christian propaganda." Let us avoid the retort that if Islam is superior to the religion of Jesus they ought have nothing to fear. Let us avoid the cynicism that would ask why that matters since so many of them have no religion at all. Let us also avoid the even greater sin of denying their claim. To be sure the word "propaganda" is rightly in disrepute. That does not mean we should wince each time the tainted word is flung at us. Who in the world is not a propagandist? We of the Association pride ourselves on being propagandist of play, of useful, helpful work, of service to one's fellow-men, of the highest life possible in comradeship and sonship with God. We would be criminals against the human race – the Turks included – if we did not publish to the wide world and to every man in it the Good News that to follow Jesus is the only certain way to power and achievement. That does not mean that we must thrust our religion down the throat of a Mohammedan or of any one else. I venture to assert that no movement [like that of the Young Men's Christian Association] is freer from that crazy vice. We know perfectly well that the method defeats itself, and discredits its cause. We are primarily for making friends, not enemies.*

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*But we must not surrender our fundamental character. Without it we are no longer the Young Men's Christian Association. Neither dare we try to hide our fundamental purposes. In that game we are no match for East. "That which y[ou] have spoken in the ear in closest shall be proclaimed upon the housetops." In any case the Western assuredly cannot work effectively if he tries to practice deceit, be the cause ever so good.*

*And so I feel justified in saying to my brother, the Moslem Turks: You fear that your entrance into the YMCA will involve the risk of your being exposed to Christian propaganda. My dear friend, perhaps you do not understand our way of working. You are not compelled to take the whole of our program. Take as much or as little of it as you want. Everything a man does here is by his own consent, we coerce no one. We merely ask fair play. We for our part also want to be free to live our liffe and our faith, and serve our fellowmen, as commanded us by God. If we are to be condemned to snuff out our deepest impulses we have no alternative except to go home. We offer you the benefit of nearly a century of work with men and boys in every part of the world. Forty nations say that the YMCA is just what they need. Some of the wealthiest supporters are loyal members of your faith. They are perfectly well aware that the Association offers every man an opportunity to investigate Christianity. They know that more than one Moslem has turned to the religion of Jesus as a result. They have also noted another result: hundreds of their boys and young men have been made nobler and better though remaining within Islam. And they continue to give us their approval and their money. They have seen how the YMCA strengthens their nations and betters the world. It will do the same for you.*

*W[i]ll he accept us under those conditions? Time will tell. It may be that faithful intercession will avail to bring that answer which we all desire and which we surely trust is the will of God.*

**ENDNOTES**

<sup>1</sup> Enclosed sheet of statistics is provided by the World's Alliance [of YMCAs] to Ernst Otto Jacob. It the list of YMCA local associations in the Ottoman Empire as of 1911. The document is available from the World Alliance of YMCAs' Archives, Geneva, Switzerland: Dossier – Correspondence, Box – Turkey. This the first publication of this document.

Y. M. C. A. 's in the Turkish Empire		
--:O:--		Membership
<i>I. Turkey in Europe</i>		
	<i>1. Constantinople,</i>	
	<i>Stambul Y.M.C.A., (Armenian)</i>	<i>24</i>
	<i>Scutari Y.M.C.A., (Armenian)</i>	<i>6</i>
	<i>Greek Y.M.C.A.,</i>	<i>15</i>
	<i>German Y.M.C.A.,</i>	<i>20</i>
	<i>Robert College Y.M.C.A.,</i>	<i>90</i>
	<i>2. Monastir</i>	
	<i>3. Salonica</i>	
	<i>Agricultural Institute Y.M.C.A.,</i>	<i>45</i>
<i>II. Turkey in Asia</i>		
	<i>1. Adana,</i>	<i>26</i>
	<i>2. Aintab,</i>	
	<i>City Y.M.C.A.,</i>	<i>109</i>
	<i>College Y.M.C.A.,</i>	<i>--</i>
	<i>3. Bardizag,</i>	<i>40</i>
	<i>4. Broussa,</i>	<i>31</i>
	<i>5. Erzurum,</i>	<i>--</i>
	<i>6. Harpout,</i>	<i>--</i>
	<i>7. Konia, - Apostolic Institute, YMCA,</i>	<i>65</i>
	<i>8. Marash,</i>	<i>130</i>
	<i>9. Marsovan</i>	
	<i>City Y.M.C.A.,</i>	<i>80</i>
	<i>Anatolia College Y.M.C.A.,</i>	<i>--</i>
	<i>Samsoun Y.M.C.A.,</i>	<i>--</i>
	<i>Vezir Keupru Y.M.C.A.,</i>	<i>--</i>
	<i>Hereg Y.M.C.A.,</i>	<i>--</i>
	<i>10. Sivas,</i>	<i>65</i>
	<i>11. Smyrna</i>	
	<i>City Y.M.C.A.,</i>	<i>33</i>
	<i>International College Y.M.C.A.,</i>	<i>--</i>
	<i>12. Tarsous,</i>	
	<i>City Y.M.C.A.,</i>	<i>--</i>
	<i>St. Paul's Institute Y.M.C.A.,</i>	<i>55</i>
	<i>13. Tokat,</i>	<i>40</i>
	<i>14. Trabizond Vilayet</i>	
	<i>Ordou Y.M.C.A.,</i>	<i>68</i>
	<i>Bey Alan Y.M.C.A.,</i>	<i>25</i>
	<i>Seman Y.M.C.A.,</i>	<i>15</i>
	<i>15. Van, Y.M.C.A.,</i>	<i>--</i>

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<i>III. Syria and Palestine</i>		
	<i>1. Aleppo,</i>	--
	<i>2. Beirut, Syrian Prot. College YMCA,</i>	--
	<i>3. Brummana, Boys' School Y.M.C.A.,</i>	18
	<i>4. Jaffa,</i>	--
	<i>5. Jerusalem Y.M.C.A.,</i>	179
	<i>6. Schweir, Boy's School Y.M.C.A.,</i>	25
	<i>7. Schwifat, Boy's School Y.M.C.A.,</i>	25
	<i>8. Tripoli, Boy's School Y.M.C.A.,</i>	20