

# ARMENIAN PARTICIPATION IN THE LEBANESE LEGISLATIVE ELECTIONS DURING THE FRENCH MANDATE 1934-1943

ZAVEN MESSERLIAN

The Lebanese confessional system, which was set up during the period of the *Mutasarrifiyeh* under Ottoman suzerainty (1861-1915), continued under the French mandate, as well as after the independence of the Lebanese Republic in 1943.

The Armenian communities were among the constituent communities of Lebanon under the French mandate and had to play the role granted by the country's electoral laws. However, the granted parliamentary representation opened the way, from day one, for intra-Armenian party struggles during successive electoral campaigns.

In this study, the legislative elections in Beirut during the French mandate, are presented with emphasis on Armenian participation during each of the election campaigns for the years 1934, 1937 and 1943.<sup>1</sup>

## INTRODUCTION

Until 1914, Beirut had about 120 Armenian families.<sup>2</sup> Early in 1919, the Armenians in Lebanon counted only a thousand.<sup>3</sup> The evacuation of Cilicia by the French and its return to Turkey in 1921, forced the Armenians to migrate in large numbers from that region to different countries, including Lebanon.

On the whole, Christian elements in Lebanon welcomed the Armenians, ushered in by the French mandatory authorities, but some Moslem leaders did not look with favor on the increase of the number of Christians in Lebanon.<sup>4</sup> Armenians were a frequent topic of discussion in the Representative Council of Greater Lebanon, elected in April 1922.<sup>5</sup> According to the stipulations of the Treaty of Lausanne (1923), Armenians who had settled in Lebanon during and after the First World War, were to have Lebanese citizenship. This measure was favored by native Christian clerics and political leaders. Armenians were granted Lebanese citizenship by the decision of the French High Commissioner on 31 August 1924. Armenian spirited participation in the elections for a new Representative Council, in late June 1925,<sup>6</sup> aroused a complaint on the part of some natives.<sup>7</sup> Armenians were even suspected of trying to establish a national home in Lebanon and of competing with the natives in the economic field.<sup>8</sup> During an interpellation in Parliament in March 1927, Emir Fouad Arslan described the entry of Armenians to Lebanon as 'shocking,' at a time when some natives were emigrating.<sup>9</sup> However, Christian leaders like Emile Eddé and Ayub Tabet defended the Armenians. In 1929 Abdallah Ishak, an Armenian Catholic, was elected a member of Parliament, as the representative of Minorities.<sup>10</sup>



According to the 1932 census, there were 26,102 Orthodox and 5,890 Catholic Armenians in Lebanon, although some sources claim that not all Armenians actually living in the country were counted during this census.<sup>11</sup> Emigrants included, the Orthodox Armenians numbered 28,072 and the Catholics, 6,344. No separate estimate was given for Armenian Evangelicals, termed in Lebanon as Protestants. Incidents in which the Armenians were involved after the signature of the Franco-Lebanese Treaty of 1936 aroused the suspicion of the Moslems.<sup>12</sup> However, the Armenians, who were adapting to a new environment, gradually inspired confidence through loyalty to their adopted country. In 1934, the Armenian Orthodox were given a seat in the Lebanese Parliament and they immediately demanded the teaching of Arabic in their schools.<sup>13</sup> Three years later, they opened subscriptions for the defense of Lebanon.<sup>14</sup> In 1939, Armenians demanded a ministerial seat in the Government.<sup>15</sup> During the difficult days of the Second World War (1939-45) and especially in May 1945, when the French escalated military tension in Beirut, Damascus and other towns in a last bid to keep some military presence in Lebanon and Syria after these countries had become independent, the Armenians supported the Arab movement. They also participated in the successful strike organized by the Lebanese National Congress against the mandatory power on 2 June 1945.<sup>16</sup>

#### THE ELECTIONS OF 1934

On 12 October 1933, the Comte Damien de Martel arrived in Beirut to replace Henri Ponsot as the new French High Commissioner in Syria and Lebanon. On 2 January 1934, de Martel issued *arrêtés* (orders) accepting the resignation of the President of the Lebanese Republic, Charles Debbas, and delegating his functions to M. Aubouard, a French official, until the appointment of a new President, the promulgation of an amended constitution and a new electoral law. The decree issued on 31 January 1934 appointed Habib Pasha Saad as President of the Republic for a period of one year. The amended Lebanese Constitution of 1926 remained in force for all items not mentioned in the High Commissioner's decree. The new amendments further limited the authority of the Parliament.<sup>17</sup> The President of the Republic was to exercise executive powers with the assistance of a Secretary of State, who had to countersign every act of the President.<sup>18</sup> Legislative power was to be exercised, according to these amendments, by a single chamber, composed of 25 members. Elections for 18 of those 25 members were to be held on the basis of universal male suffrage, while the remaining seven deputies would be appointed by the President of the Republic, on the suggestion of the Council of Government.<sup>19</sup>

On 26 December 1933, Catholicos Sahag II of the Great House of Cilicia, now based in Antelias, and coadjutor Catholicos Papken I had a meeting with de Martel about problems concerning the Armenian community.<sup>20</sup>

According to the decree of 2 January 1934, the Armenian Orthodox community was given for the first time the right to have a deputy in Parliament. The elections were to be held on 21 January 1934.<sup>21</sup>



Beirut, had 33,803 voters in total, of whom 9,403 were Armenian. The three parliamentary seats in Beirut were distributed between the Sunnites, the Armenian Orthodox and the Minorities.<sup>22</sup>

The situation within the Armenian community was very tense. In retaliation for the murder of Vahan Vartabedian, a prominent member of the Armenian Revolutionary Federation or the Tashnag Party, Mihran Aghazarian, one of the leaders of the opposing Huntchag Party, was also shot dead by Tashnag gunmen on 11 October 1933. The situation within the Armenian-inhabited quarters of Beirut, especially in the Nahr area, was unstable.<sup>23</sup> The situation within the other communities of the Armenian Diaspora was also strained. In France, an anti-Tashnag, Ohannes Keyedjian, was killed in 1933, and in New York, the Prelate of Armenians in North America, Archbishop Ghevont Tourian, was killed by nine Tashnags on 24 December 1933.<sup>24</sup>

Within the Armenian community in Lebanon, people started to speculate on who would be a suitable candidate for the country's parliament. In an editorial, the pro-Tashnag Armenian daily *Aztag* suggested:

Our candidate must be a disinterested Lebanese Armenian, who enjoys the confidence of all popular circles and has political maturity and at least knows how to speak Arabic. If we want to maintain our national prestige and not to appear ridiculous in front of the local people, we must present ourselves in one list.<sup>25</sup>

On 10 January 1934, in an editorial entitled 'Who must be the Armenian Deputy?', *Aztag* wrote that the Armenian candidate 'must be someone who enjoys the confidence of the Mandatory power.' The Armenian deputy

must be the echo of the loyal and sincere feelings of the Armenian community to the local and mandatory authorities, whose benefits and care the Armenian community is enjoying. He will be the person who will defend our rights and will teach us our obligations. The people, who have great sympathy for France, must show their feelings by voting for the Government candidates.<sup>26</sup>

On the same day, the probable pro-Government list was published in newspapers. It consisted of Dr. Halim Kaddura (Sunnite), Vahram Leilekian (Armenian Orthodox) and Dr. Nejib Aboussouan (Minorities).<sup>27</sup> But when the list was officially announced, Dr. Ayub Tabet had replaced Aboussouan.<sup>28</sup>

The Armenian candidates on the scene were Leilekian, Missak Vehouni, Zakaria Bezdigian, Dr. Melkon Hairabedian, Dr. Antranik Tchavoushian, and Dr. Dikran Bezirdjian. Former Deputy Ishak was a candidate for the Minorities seat.<sup>29</sup>

According to information received from the Ministry of Interior, the newspapers published the names of all officially registered candidates, including



the following Armenians: Leilekian, Tchavoushian, Hairabedian, Bezdigian, Dr. Henri Arslanian and Artin Madoyan (Haroutiun Madeyan).<sup>30</sup>

Meanwhile, efforts were made by community leaders to have a single Armenian candidate. A meeting of the representatives of the Armenian candidates took place in the Armenian Orthodox Prelacy on 14 January. *Aztag* reported that the representatives had, after long discussions, come to the conclusion that out of the five candidates, three – Leilekian, Arslanian and Bezdigian – should withdraw, because they had but few acquaintances in Beirut.<sup>31</sup> If this plan were carried out, only Tchavoushian and Hairabedian would remain. However, a clarification was published in *Aztag* on 17 January, signed by H. Abadjian, E. Vishabian, and M. Kehiayan, the representatives of Arslanian in the Prelacy meeting. They declared that the meeting had no right to make decisions; it had been convened only to report on the standing of the candidates, but, as this had proved impossible, it had ended without a consensus.<sup>32</sup>

In a public declaration dated 16 January and published in the anti-Tashnag semi-weekly, *Lipanan*, Leilekian announced his candidacy and outlined his political, communal and economic plans:

I announce my candidacy neither in favor nor against any Armenian faction, but for all without any exception. I will endeavor to satisfy all demands which correspond to the general and supreme interest of Lebanon and the Armenians of Lebanon.

In the political field, my unshakable principle will be to follow a policy, which will be one that will reconcile and harmonize the respective interests and rights of the savior, mandatory state and of Lebanon.<sup>33</sup>

Leilekian entered his candidature, urged by the relatives of his wife, the Haddad family, and upon the suggestion of Vahram Varjabedian, a high-ranking official at the *Banque de Syrie et du Liban* and a former president of the Civil Council of the Armenian Orthodox community of Lebanon. Prior to his announcing his decision to run for elections, Leilekian had conferred many times with the President of the Beirut Local Council of the Armenian General Benevolent Union (AGBU), Mihran Damadian, a national hero from the days of the Armenian liberation struggle against the Turks, and Dr. Hagop Topdjian, the secretary of the same organization.<sup>34</sup> The anti-Tashnag Ramgavar Azadagan (Democratic Liberal) Party (also led by Damadian), the Huntchags (led by Yenovk Dardaghanian) and the anti-Tashnag independents declared their support for Leilekian.

The Tashnag Party adopted the candidacy of Tchavoushian, an independent.<sup>35</sup> Tchavoushian had served the Armenians in Cilicia in the field of public health and had been, after settling in Lebanon, a member of the Communal Council of the Armenian Orthodox Community.<sup>36</sup>

The Armenian Communists had their separate candidate, Artin Madoyan. A former Huntchag, Madoyan had joined the Lebanese Communist Party in 1924



and attained a leadership position. He had been arrested several times by the mandatory authorities.<sup>37</sup> Madoyan's campaign was hampered, however, when, on 13 January, three Armenian Communists were arrested for distributing illegal pamphlets.<sup>38</sup>

Hairabedian was a neutral candidate.<sup>39</sup> The other Armenian candidates eventually withdrew from the race.

The final lists were formed as follows:

List I: Dr. Halim Kaddura, Vahram Leilekian, Ayub Tabet.

List II: Abdallah Yafi, Dr. Antranik Tchavoushian, Abdallah Ishak.

List III: Khairaddin Ahdab, Dr. Melkon Hairabedian, Dr. Nejib Aboussouan.

List IV: Saadeddin Moumné, Artin Madoyan, Ibrahim Haddad.<sup>40</sup>

*Aztag* urged its readers 'to vote for the list that contains two Armenians, i.e. the list including Tchavoushian and Ishak.'<sup>41</sup> *Lipanan* urged its readers to vote for Leilekian and his friends. In an implicit reference to the Tashnag Party, *Lipanan* also wrote that 'the criminal Armenian group which is disguised by the mask of neutralism will be crushingly defeated.'<sup>42</sup>

After declaring his candidature, Leilekian visited coadjutor Catholicos Papken I, his compatriot from the town of Aintab in Cilicia, and requested his encouragement. Papken accompanied Leilekian during a congratulatory visit to the newly appointed President Saad. According to Leilekian, this visit had a great effect. Leilekian claimed that Papken could not present him to the French as the Catholicos 'was accused by the Tashnags as a Communist.' Leilekian could enter the first list because of the friendship his family had with fellow candidate Tabet. Leilekian alleges that his adversaries tried to neutralize him by hinting that he could not become a candidate as he had only settled recently in Beirut. On this matter, the French High Commissioner's office officially inquired with the Armenian Refugee Office. Due to a favorable certificate by Kherlakian, the secretary of M. Bruiné, to the effect that Leilekian had settled in Beirut in 1920, no obstacle was placed before his candidature.<sup>43</sup>

Leilekian invited important personalities from all Armenian factions and proposed that he and Tchavoushian should resign, and that a single Armenian candidate be appointed. He then informed Tashnag leaders Levon Shant and Nigol Aghpalian, as well as Bruiné, about his idea. He said that it was turned down by the Tashnags because they were sure of the support of the French authorities for their candidate.<sup>44</sup>

During 1930-1933, when Leilekian was constructing the first asphalt roads of Lebanon, he had come to know M. Fovel, an influential Frenchman and the Director General of *Shell* for Lebanon and Syria. Leilekian appealed to Fovel to intervene with the High Commissioner's office and recommend him as a suitable candidate. Leilekian concludes:

It seems that the letter reached the necessary place rather late. So, in the first round, they were against me, and the officials of the *Sureté* caused



difficulties to my supporters. But, in the second round, the result of the intervention was obvious; the French kept absolute neutrality.<sup>45</sup>

The first round of elections took place between 8 a.m. and 4 p.m. on 21 and 22 January.<sup>46</sup> There was a fierce struggle, especially in the Mudawar district. Out of 32,811 eligible voters registered in Beirut, 11,758 actually voted. More than 2000 of them were from Mudawar. The final results were the following: Tchavoushian, 5184 votes; Ishak, 5148; Yafi, 5043; Ahdab, 3930; Tabet, 3877; Leilekian, 3092; Kaddura, 2959; Hairabedian, 2482; Aboussouan, 1972; Madoyan, 565; Haddad, 534; Moumné, 412; Bahige Baroudi, 50; and Selih Hadari, 14.<sup>47</sup>

Some of the results per quarter are presented in the following table:

	<u>Mudawar</u>	<u>Zokak el Blat</u>	<u>Mazraa</u>	<u>Marfaa</u>	<u>Museitbe</u>
Yafi	880	733	960	208	496
Ishak	892	721	935	209	524
Tchavoushian	1079	772	940	210	481
Ahdab	504	110	578	21	770
Kaddura	466	87		64	371
Leilekian	621	107	481	66	481
Hairabedian	325	84	535	19	537
Madoyan	264				
Aboussouan	226	436			
Tabet	690	111	669	69	666 <sup>48</sup>

5879 votes were needed for anyone to be considered elected after the end of the first round. As no candidate had received the required number of votes, a second round was to be held on 27 January.

*Aztag* wrote that Tchavoushian had received over 2000 votes more than his opponent (i.e. Leilekian), who, the newspaper claimed, was placed on two separate lists at the last minute.

After the first round, Ahdab had a mild heart attack. Kaddura and Aboussouan withdrew from the race,<sup>49</sup> while Hairabedian withdrew his candidature upon the advice of Catholicos Sahag II.<sup>50</sup> Yafi retired from the race in favor of Ahdab, upon the request of the Mufti of the Republic.<sup>51</sup>

According to Leilekian, Kaddura had promised his allies 80 percent of the votes in the quarter of Basta, but all that they had received was 20-25 votes. Therefore, Leilekian informed Tabet that if Kaddura were not replaced, he would withdraw. Tabet agreed, and, on Thursday night, i.e. three days before the second round, a new list was published, which included Ahdab, Leilekian and Tabet.

Meanwhile, twenty electoral rallies took place. During a rally at the Sahagian School, Leilekian announced that if he were elected he would serve all Armenians, without any party distinction. By Saturday night, Leilekian had become confident of his success.<sup>52</sup>



*Aztag* also announced a new list composed of Ahdab, Tchavoushian and Ishak.<sup>53</sup> Madoyan, Moumné and Haddad maintained their candidature.

According to *Aztag*, everything was normal in the Armenian quarters until 10 o'clock on election day. At 11 o'clock, however, some events disturbed the freedom of the election.<sup>54</sup> At 1 p.m., Ishak ordered his men to withdraw from the polling centers. Tchavoushian did likewise.<sup>55</sup> At 1 p.m., Ishak and Tchavoushian issued a statement which read:

We participated in the electoral campaign based upon the Government's promise of impartiality and the confidence shown in us by the people. We notice with regret that the liberty of last Sunday's and Monday's elections and the impartiality of the police has changed. The police followed a completely different policy, which is the opposite of their former attitude. They acted openly and worked against us and made our participation impossible in the election until its conclusion. We announce that we have protested to the High Commissioner because, while these lines are being written, the police are not allowing our supporters to approach the ballot boxes.<sup>56</sup>

Leilekian claimed that, by noon, the result of the elections had already become clear; their opponents withdrew 'to save money, as they had hired many cars.'<sup>57</sup>

The official results, proclaimed at 9 p. m.,<sup>58</sup> were as follows: Ahdab, 9333 votes; Leilekian, 7545; Tabet, 7521; Tchavoushian, 2323; Ishak, 2082; Madoyan, 180; Moumné, 134; and Haddad, 74.<sup>59</sup>

With the exception of the Nahr quarter, the second round of the elections were peaceful. In Nahr, fifteen policemen were wounded during incidents. The Nahr results were as follows: Ahdab, 1412 votes; Tabet, 968; Leilekian, 959; Tchavoushian, 446; Ishak, 446; Madoyan, 34.<sup>60</sup>

The success of Leilekian was acclaimed by the anti-Tashnags as a great victory. *Lipanan* announced the news of his election under the following headline: 'The Fascist Tashnagsutun Crushinglly Defeated; The Glorious Victory of the Anti-Tashnag Current.'<sup>61</sup>

The publishers of *Aztag* wrote that the reason they had not defended the candidature of Leilekian was because he had not been known to them. However, they would know him better during his upcoming mandate and would mark his achievements.<sup>62</sup> In a separate editorial, the same newspaper appealed to the Armenian people to stop all controversies which had come forth as a result of the electoral campaign, not only to uphold the authority of the elected deputy, but also in the interest of the Armenian people. The editorial concluded with the hope that Leilekian would justify the expectations placed in him.<sup>63</sup>

The Prelate of the Armenian Orthodox community in Lebanon, Archbishop Yeghishé Garoyan, visited President Saad and the newly elected deputies, including Leilekian, on 2 February. Garoyan was accompanied by Hagop Der Melkonian, the Chairman of the Armenian Communal Council, Dr. Topdjian, the



President of the Civil Council, Dr. Bezirdjian and Bezdigian. During this visit, Leilekian expressed his desire to do his best to help his community, in agreement with the community authorities.<sup>64</sup>

Leilekian, in turn, visited the editorial offices of the Armenian newspapers, *Lipanan* and *Aztag*, and expressed his wish to see the community in concord.<sup>65</sup>

#### THE ELECTIONS OF 1937

As the cry for the restoration of the 1926 Constitution was as strong as ever, and to avoid charges of obstructionism, High Commissioner de Martel reinstated it on 4 January 1937, with the further provision of a President with a four year term and a Chamber of Deputies with a three year term. On the same day, Khairaddin Ahdab was entrusted with the task of forming the new cabinet.<sup>66</sup> On 29 July, de Martel decreed that the Chamber should consist of forty elected and twenty appointed members.<sup>67</sup> On 7 October, he again increased the total number of members of the Chamber by two elected and one appointed deputies. The elections were to be held on 24 October.<sup>68</sup> The Armenian Orthodox community was to have two deputies: one elected and one appointed.

The situation within the Armenian community was comparatively calm. No major disturbances had occurred since the previous parliamentary elections.

On 15 September, the newspaper *L'Orient* mentioned the names of several possible Armenian candidates. The list included Vahram Leilekian, Dr. Karekin Tabourian, Missak Vehouni, Khosrov Tutundjian, Hratchia Chamlian and Puzant Kehiayan.<sup>69</sup>

On 17 September, the Armenian Prelacy declared in an official communiqué that no person was authorized to negotiate with the authorities in its name and that the Prelacy had no preference for any candidate, who had nominated or would nominate himself.<sup>70</sup>

On 26 September, the Ramgavar Azadagan Party started publishing *Zartouk*, its daily newspaper. On 6 October, *Zartouk* proposed in an editorial that one and the same Armenian candidate should appear on all lists.

Meanwhile, negotiations were taking place for an agreement between the Lebanese Government in office and the opposition to divide the seats under the supervision of the mandatory power. *Zartouk* wrote:

We are not giving our opinion as to how constitutional these decisions and agreement are, but by these agreements Vahram Leilekian, the most highly qualified candidate for one of the two seats of the Armenian Orthodox community, will regain his seat in the next Parliament. We want the second candidate, possibly Hratchia Chamlian, to be announced. In this way both Government and opposition will satisfy the desires of our community.<sup>71</sup>

At the *Palais des Pins*, the residence of the French High Commissioner in Beirut, an agreement was signed between the Government and the opposition, in the presence of Prime Minister Ahdab, opposition leader Sheikh Bishara Khoury,



and Captain François Dejoue. This agreement was immediately transmitted to the High Commissioner, who was then in Damascus.<sup>72</sup>

Ahdab informed his cabinet that, according to the terms of this agreement, seats in Mount Lebanon would be left to the opposition. However, the opposition would have only two candidates in South Lebanon, and a single candidate in North Lebanon and the Bekaa. The Government candidates, who generally had Christian support, would fill all seats in Beirut, where the "new" opposition or the nationalists, led by Riad Solh, had wide Moslem support.<sup>73</sup>

It was thought that the following deputies would be appointed to the next parliament: Bishara Khoury (Maronite), Petro Trad (Greek Orthodox), Khalil Kseib (Greek Orthodox), Jibran Tueni (Greek Orthodox), Gabriel Khabbaz (Greek Catholic), Vahram Leilekian (Armenian Orthodox) and Elie Khayat (Minorities). It was similarly thought that the Government list for Beirut would be composed of Khairuddin Ahdab (Sunnite), Abdallah Yafi (Sunnite), Kamal Jabr (Sunnite), George Tabet (Maronite), Habib Abi Chahla (Greek Orthodox), Hratchia Chamlian (Armenian Orthodox), and Anis Heneykati (Minorities).<sup>74</sup>

Beirut would thus elect two Sunnite, one Maronite, one Greek Orthodox, one Armenian Orthodox deputies, together with a member representing the Minorities.<sup>75</sup> The number of Armenian Orthodox registered voters in Beirut was 9,179, the number of Armenian Catholic voters, 2,048.<sup>76</sup>

The Tashnag Party had decided, three months before the elections, to present a separate candidate: Khosrov Tutundjian, the chairman of the Party's Central Committee in Lebanon. However, a group of Tashnags, led by Haig Balian, the proprietor of *Aztag*, Movses Der Kaloustian, Ghazar Tcharek and Mihran Tourigian, and gathered around the daily *Aztag*, were against the candidature of Tutundjian because of internal party conflicts. Tutundjian had the support of the former Tashnag rulers of the Republic of Armenia from 1918 to 1920, who were now in exile after the sovietization of the country in 1920. He also had the reputation of being an able lawyer.<sup>77</sup>

The Huntchag Party had allied itself with the Armenian faction of the Lebanese Communist Party and formed a United Front, picking Mardiros Emile Iskenderian as its candidate. The latter was a young businessman, born in 1910, who had recently arrived from Baghdad and was proficient in Arabic.<sup>78</sup>

The Ramgavar Azadagan Party supported the candidacy of Hratchia Chamlian, a young lawyer, who knew both spoken and written Arabic, and was also the candidate of the moderate neutrals, who were generally anti-Tashnag.<sup>79</sup>

Overall, there were twenty-three Armenian Orthodox candidates, in addition to two other Armenians among the Minority candidates.<sup>80</sup>

Meanwhile, the Armenian political parties and independent candidates organized pre-election rallies. At 10 a.m. on Sunday, 10 October, the 47th anniversary of the Tashnag Party was celebrated in the presence of 600 persons in the cinema *Majestique*.<sup>81</sup> The speakers at the rally were Kaspar Ipekian (in Armenian and French), Garo Sasouni, Aghpalian and Tutundjian (in Armenian and French). Tutundjian spoke about his electoral platform and explained the



reasons behind the decision of the Central Committee of his Party to take part in the election.<sup>82</sup>

On the same day, the United Front of Huntchags and Armenian Communists held a rally on Sahagian Playing Field, under the presidency of K. Surmelian. Mihran Nadjarian and Mihran Seferian spoke on behalf of the Huntchag Party; Madoyan and Sissag Tellalian, on behalf of the Communists. The candidate of the Front, Iskenderian, was also among the speakers.<sup>83</sup> Kehiayan, the Front's candidate for the nominated seat of the Armenian Orthodox, was also present.<sup>84</sup> According to *L'Orient*, 5000 people were present at the rally,<sup>85</sup> while according to *Le Jour*, 8000.<sup>86</sup>

In Beirut, the situation was critical. Riad Solh's followers were threatening the success of the pro-Government candidates. The Armenian candidate, therefore, had to be selected carefully. It had to be someone who could assure a great number of votes for the pro-Government list.

In an editorial titled 'The Legislative Elections and the Armenian Candidate of Beirut,' *Zartok* wrote that the above-mentioned agreement between the Government and opposition did not mean that the people accepted it without discontent. As regards the Armenians, the paper argues that since the appointed deputy would be Leilekian and the candidate on the Government list would be Chamlian, it was untimely for the Armenian political parties to present their own candidates. It was necessary that all Armenian parties and individuals vote, without any reservation, for the mixed list of Beirut, which included two ministers, Habib Abi Chahla and George Tabet.<sup>87</sup>

*Aztag* wrote, in an editorial entitled 'Our Attitude,' that since there was a coalition list composed of the National Bloc of President Eddé (elected in 1936) and the Constitutional Bloc (the *Destouris*) of opposition leader Khoury, the Lebanese Armenian voters must vote, without any reservation, for this list. The pro-Tashnag newspaper added that the voter must be convinced that he was carrying out his national duty; the High Commissioner's Office was also interested in the success of this list for it had helped the people concerned to reach an agreement. *Aztag* continued: 'The Armenians of Lebanon cannot follow a path which will hurt the mandatory power for whom they feel sympathy and gratitude.' It concluded that 'without exception, all Lebanese Armenians must vote on the 24th of the month in favor of the Government list.'<sup>88</sup>

The Popular List – also called the "Moslem list" – led by Riad Solh and Omar Beyhum, included Jean Tyan, Jean Tueni, Ramez Sarkis and Iskenderian. Later, Habib Rbeiz replaced Tueni, who retired.<sup>89</sup>

On 15 October, Premier Ahdab, Interior Minister Abi Chahla, and Finance Minister George Tabet met with the French High Commissioner and later announced their coalition list.<sup>90</sup> It consisted of Abdallah Yafi (Sunnite), Dr. Selim Lababidi (Sunnite), George Tabet (Maronite), Habib Abi Chahla (Greek Orthodox), Hratchia Chamlian (Armenian Orthodox) and Chafik Nassif (Minorities).<sup>91</sup>

*Zartok* and *Aztag* simultaneously announced Chamlian as the Armenian Orthodox candidate on the coalition list.<sup>92</sup> *Horizon*, the anti-Tashnag weekly of



Joseph Adjemian, also declared its support for Chamlian, who 'can better represent the people.'<sup>93</sup>

Chamlian did not belong to any Armenian political party; he was recognized as a neutral person and was well known as a young lawyer in the mixed courts. The idea of presenting his candidature had come from his friends. The French judges of the mixed courts, Commandant de Maurepas, Duaibis Murr, and M. Fregate, who later became *chef du bureau de la presse*, also intervened in his favor. Thus, through the intervention of the French authorities, Chamlian was accepted on the pro-Government list. After Chamlian had applied to be included in the list, Prime Minister Ahdab informed him to 'pay 1500 LL to George Tabet as your share of the electoral campaign.'<sup>94</sup>

Meanwhile, the situation was still critical for the Government. The newspaper *Al-Bashir* wrote:

The situation in Beirut is uncertain. The Government list seems to be weak because of the new opposition. Despite the Prime Minister's insistence, George Tabet and Habib Abi Chahla are afraid that they would lose, because of their Moslem colleagues, who are struggling against Riad Solh and Omar Beyhum. But it is said that the candidature of the latter will not be assured by the High Commissioner's Office.<sup>95</sup>

*Le Jour* also reported that Abi Chahla had complained about the weakness of the coalition list.<sup>96</sup>

When *Aztag* started publishing propaganda on behalf of the pro-Government list, which included Chamlian, the Central Committee of the Tashnag Party in Lebanon issued the following statement on 16 October:

Lately, the newspaper *Aztag* has been trying hard to present the electoral campaign of Lebanon as a struggle between Christianity and Islam.

We consider this interpretation not only wrong, as there are Moslems and Christians on both lists, but as being detrimental to the interest of the Armenians.

On the occasion of these irresponsible and harmful declarations, the Lebanon Central Committee of the Armenian Revolutionary Federation declares to Armenians that the newspaper *Aztag*, its editor and his opinions have no relation whatsoever with the Armenian Revolutionary Federation.<sup>97</sup>

By Sunday, 17 October, there were 131 candidates in Beirut: 55 Sunnites, 20 Greek Orthodox, 12 Maronites, 22 Armenian Orthodox and 21 from the Minorities.<sup>98</sup>

Electoral rallies succeeded each other. On 17 October, Damadian, the Ramgavar Azadagan leader, left for Cairo. A farewell reception was held at the



Antranik Club, where the presence of both Leilekian and Chamlian was especially noted.<sup>99</sup> On 17 and 18 October, rallies were held for the pro-Government list in the Christian quarters of Beirut. The candidates, including Chamlian, were present.<sup>100</sup> The opposition held its rallies in the Moslem quarters; the most massive was at the Zeydani quarter.<sup>101</sup>

In an editorial, *Zartouk* wrote:

We are compelled to declare that the current elections in no way represent the desired practical example which would increase the love of free constitutional regime and democracy.

But loyalty obliges us to obey the laws set by the Government. We should also take precautions not to do anything that would hurt any of the elements of this country and not to give the suspicion that the newly established Armenian community prefers one element to another or is with one against another.

The newspaper appealed to the Armenian voters to vote for the pro-Government coalition list, which included Chamlian.<sup>102</sup>

A public rally organized by the friends of Chamlian was announced both in *Zartouk* and *Aztag*.<sup>103</sup> It took place at the Amanos Camp at 7:30 p.m. on Wednesday, 20 October and followed another rally for the pro-Government candidates at Karantina. All candidates were present, and Interior Minister Abi Chahla made a speech.<sup>104</sup> Chamlian issued his platform, which included the following points:

First, to work hand in hand with all patriotic deputies and groups for the prosperity of Lebanon.

Second, to represent the rightful interest of the Armenian community when the need arises.

Third, to get state help for the settlement of poor Armenian refugees.

Fourth, to propose laws and a budget to solve the crisis of unemployment and high cost of living, to defend the interests of the workers and provide jobs for the unemployed.<sup>105</sup>

On Thursday afternoon, 21 October, the news spread – to be confirmed the next day – that Chamlian had been left out of the pro-Government coalition list and had been replaced by the Tashnag candidate, Tutundjian.<sup>106</sup> On Friday evening, a massive rally took place at the Tashnag Club, in the presence of George Tabet and Abi Chahla. *Aztag* reported that 'Mr. Tutundjian and comrades Garo Sasouni and Kaspar Ipekian spoke.'<sup>107</sup>



The leaders of the pro-Government list, Abi Chahla and Tabet, were worried about the "new" opposition. Hence, the Armenian votes were to be decisive.<sup>108</sup> Chamlian was not a member of any political party, and his followers lacked the disciplined organization of a party. The unsuccessful rally organized by the friends of Chamlian made Abi Chahla and Tabet doubt his electoral power.<sup>109</sup> At first, they tried to dissuade Tutundjian from presenting himself as a candidate by offering him a position in the courts as a judge.<sup>110</sup> After Tutundjian – whose Party claimed to possess some 3,000 votes – refused, and as the anti-Tashnag votes were to be divided between Iskenderian and Chamlian, the pro-Government list leaders decided to replace Chamlian by Tutundjian.<sup>111</sup>

According to Tutundjian, the Government approached the Tashnags. They had already asked for the opinion of the Armenian Catholic Patriarchate, and Archbishops Jean Nazlian and Kedikian had recommended Tutundjian. Then, the High Commissioner's Office called Sasouni and Ipekian and suggested that they come to an agreement with the Government, the members of which were waiting in the *Petit Serail*. An agreement was finally reached.<sup>112</sup>

Other obstacles in the way of the success of the Government were also removed. After he had spoken at the Ras Beirut rally of the opposition, Iskenderian was deprived of the right to present himself as a candidate on the pretext that he did not have proper Lebanese identity papers.<sup>113</sup> Iskenderian published a communiqué on his withdrawal, which stated:

For personal reasons, which I will not state now, I have withdrawn my candidacy for member of Parliament for the Armenians of Beirut in favor of my friend, Mr. Hratchia Chamlian. I and those who are with me support him and wish him and his list success in the elections. Vote for the Popular List.<sup>114</sup>

The second candidate, Kehiayan, was appointed member of the Beirut Municipal Council, replacing the late Dr. Potoukian.<sup>115</sup> All the other Armenian candidates withdrew, with the exception of Chamlian, who joined Solh's Popular List, upon the invitation of Solh's colleagues and the advice of his friends. Admittedly, he had no hope of success when he joined the opposition list.<sup>116</sup>

On election day, *Zartonk* suggested in an editorial that the Armenian deputy should be the representative of all Armenians and not the representative of a single party. It advised Armenians to vote for 'the independent Armenian candidate Chamlian.'<sup>117</sup> *Aztag* urged its readers to vote for the pro-Government list, without making any propaganda, however, for Tutundjian.<sup>118</sup> The Armenian edition of *Horizon* asked its readers to vote for the pro-Government list, but changed Tutundjian's name on that list with that of Chamlian.<sup>119</sup> The French edition of *Horizon* strongly suggested to its readers to vote for the pro-Government list, including Tutundjian.<sup>120</sup>

Some Tashnags (only a hundred, according to Tutundjian) were discontented with Tutundjian's candidature.<sup>121</sup> Chamlian said some of them (Balian, Tcharek and Der Kaloustian) encouraged his candidature against Tutundjian. However,



Der Kaloustian later told Chamlian that 'we cannot vote for you as *Zartonk* is defending you and writing propaganda on your behalf.'<sup>122</sup>

The elections were held on 24 October 1937 and were marked by fraud.<sup>123</sup> The newspaper *La Syrie* wrote:

Les partisans de Me Chamlian venu en masse au bureau du Fleuve se heurtèrent aux dashnaks et auraient déclenché une violente bataille sans l'intervention des chasseurs libanais. Deux arméniens Aram et Agop furent grièvement blessés dans la mêlée. Peu après arrivaient sur les lieux pour protester Mm. Jean Tyan, Favez Ahdab, Ramez Sarkis, et Negib Mossaouar. Une bagarre éclata à ce moment et les candidats de l'opposition durent se retirer pour empêcher de plus graves désordres.<sup>124</sup>

*Le Jour* mentioned that, in certain quarters, there had been a serious movement of intervention in favor of the greater part of the Government candidates.<sup>125</sup>

At 11 a.m. on Sunday, at a meeting held at the residence of Selim Ali Salam, the President of the Moslem National Council and the candidates on Solh's list decided to withdraw from the race, because of the pressure and vexation of the Government and their own care to avoid any new effusion of blood.<sup>126</sup>

The opposition candidates sent people to Haifa in Palestine to send cables of protest to the Egyptian and international press, in addition to official protests to the High Commissioner, the French Government and the League of Nations.<sup>127</sup>

The official results were as follows: Tabet, 22,763 votes; Abi Chahla, 22,680; Yafi, 22,709; Lababidi, 22,671; Tutundjian, 22,642; Nassif, 22,545. And here is what the opposition candidates had obtained until 11 a.m.: Ramez Sarkis, 1729 votes; Beyhum, 1636; Chamlian, 1634; Riad Solh, 1595; Tyan, 1557; Rbeiz, 1500; Gabriel Menassa, 122; Moumné, 10; Nikola Shaoui, 10; Benoit Aboussouan, 10; Rafiq Baraj, 1; and Kazem Solh, 1.<sup>128</sup>

*Zartonk*, commenting on the elections in an editorial entitled 'The Electoral Results - The Armenian Point of View,' wrote about the 'moral black-mail' that made the Government replace Chamlian with Tutundjian, as it feared that the majority of Armenians would not vote for its list. The paper concluded: 'The seat of a deputy should be given to an Armenian for whom the majority of Armenians have voted, and not only to an Armenian party.'<sup>129</sup>

*Aztag* congratulated 'Tashnag candidate, comrade Khosrov Tutundjian for his success' and announced a reception in the Tashnag Club on Monday evening.<sup>130</sup>

Meanwhile, the High Commissioner had prolonged, in Decree No. 133/LR of 6 October 1937, President Eddé's presidential term of office from three to six years with no possibility of re-election, except after an interval of six years.

Eddé now nominated 21 deputies with Decree No. 1368/EC of 25 October 1937, which was countersigned by Premier Ahdab.<sup>131</sup> One of the appointed deputies for the Armenian Orthodox seat was Vahram Leilekian. His appointment was welcomed by all Armenian groups. Leilekian had been with



Bishara Khoury's group in the previous parliament and he had been preparing to run again for election in 1937 when Khoury had informed him that his name would be on the list of appointed deputies. 'We do not forget friends,' said Khoury. Leilekian also thought that the High Commissioner's office did not object to his candidature.<sup>132</sup>

On 8 November, Leilekian visited the editorial office of *Zartouk*.<sup>133</sup> Moreover, a reception was given in his honor at the Antranik Club on 5 December.<sup>134</sup>

#### THE ELECTIONS OF 1943

The Free French Government of General Charles de Gaulle, established in Algiers after the fall of Paris to the Germans in 1940, proclaimed the independence of Lebanon on 16 November 1941 and confirmed it for the second time on 20 November 1942. In the meantime, the Lebanese Head of State, Alfred Naccache, was appointed president of the republic. Meanwhile, the Government of Prime Minister Ahmed Daouk had resigned on 21 July 1942 and a new cabinet, led by Sami Solh, had been formed on 27 July. It remained in office until 18 March 1943.

A marked change in the war situation in the autumn of 1942, following the defeat of the German troops at El Alamein, led the Free French authorities to change their attitude. The National Committee at Algiers gave permission to General Georges Catroux, the Delegate-General of the Free French in the Levant (a new position created to substitute that of High Commissioner), to restore the Lebanese Constitution of 1926 and proceed to general elections in 1943.<sup>135</sup>

Catroux reintroduced this Constitution by a series of decrees issued on 18 March 1943. These decrees also provided for the setting up of a provisional government. The Head of State was to be appointed by the French Delegate-General and would exercise executive powers. He was to be assisted by two Ministers of State appointed by him and responsible to him only.<sup>136</sup>

President Naccache and Prime Minister Solh both resigned on 18 March 1943. Dr. Ayub Tabet was appointed Head of State, with Emir Khaled Chehab and Jawad Bulos as Secretaries of State. Article 24 of the 1926 Constitution was amended by decree so that all deputies in the next parliament would be elected and none would be appointed.<sup>137</sup>

The question of the distribution of seats among the various denominations in the new Chamber of Deputies proved problematic. Dr. Tabet began enfranchising by decree all Lebanese emigrants who had not yet adopted any other nationality. He thus intended to increase the number of Christian deputies in the next parliament.<sup>138</sup> The number of deputies was fixed at 54 by Legislative Decree No. 50/ET; 34 members of the next chamber were to be Christians.<sup>139</sup> The Armenian Orthodox community, which numbered 58,073 souls, was to have three seats: two in Beirut and one in Mount Lebanon.<sup>140</sup> Beirut was to have eight deputies with the following distribution: three Sunnites, two Armenian Orthodox and one each from the Maronites, the Greek Orthodox and the Minorities.<sup>141</sup>



Dr. Tabet's firm intentions met with strong opposition from the Moslems, who threatened to boycott the elections. Jean Helleu, who had succeeded Catroux as Delegate-General on 9 June 1943, was compelled on 21 July to replace Dr. Tabet with Petro Trad. Trad appointed Abdallah Beyhum as his Secretary of State and Toufic Aouad as Undersecretary. On 31 July, Helleu's Decree No. 312/FC fixed the number of deputies in the Chamber, while Decree No. 323/FC of August 7 followed up by fixing the number of deputies from the Christian denominations at 30 seats and from the Moslems at 25.<sup>142</sup> The number of seats reserved for the Armenian Orthodox community was reduced from three to two, both in Beirut.<sup>143</sup>

After the German surrender at Stalingrad on 2 February 1943, a marked change was also noticed in Tashnag policy, which had been, on the whole, pro-Axis, on the eve and during the initial stages of World War II. The Tashnag leaders not only became pro-Allies, but became conciliatory with other Armenian factions and started to cooperate with them in local community matters, including the election of Archbishop Karekin Hovsepian, the Primate of the Armenians of North America, as the new Catholicos of the Cilician See on 10 May 1943.<sup>144</sup>

As the distribution of seats by Dr. Tabet had provided for three Armenian seats, the Armenian political parties had decided to participate in the elections with their own candidates.

The Huntchags proposed a United Front for Armenians, under the leadership of the three Armenian political parties.<sup>145</sup> The Party declared that it would participate in the elections with its own candidate, who was to be announced later.<sup>146</sup> The Party's choice was again Mardiros Emile Iskenderian, its candidate in 1937.<sup>147</sup>

The Armenian Communists announced the candidature of one of their leaders, Artin Madoyan, who had also run as candidate in previous elections.<sup>148</sup>

The Ramgavar Azadagan Party first declared that a deputy must have as his motto a liberal and democratic spirit.<sup>149</sup> *Zartonk* followed on 25 June by officially announcing in an editorial that the Party's candidate was Meguerditch Messerlian, the Plenipotentiary Delegate of the Ramgavar Azadagan Party's Central Committee in Lebanon, the treasurer of the Central Civil Council of the Cilician See, and a member of the AGBU Central Relief Committee, the chief executive body of this pro-Ramgavar philanthropic organization from 1939 to 1945. He had played a decisive role in helping arrange the election by consensus of Karekin I as the Catholicos of Cilicia in 1943.<sup>150</sup>

On 6 August, the independent, but anti-Tashnag Armenians formed the Lebanese Armenian Citizens' Bloc. Their aim was to bring forth a United Front and to nominate the best candidates to defend the rights of the Armenian community.<sup>151</sup> Their preferred candidate was Hratchia Chamlian, who had been the anti-Tashnag candidate in 1937. Chamlian had been appointed a member of the Beirut Municipal Council in 1940 and had served in that capacity until 1942.<sup>152</sup>



Meanwhile, the Tashnag Party refrained from any official statement regarding the elections.

When the Delegate-General's decrees of 31 July and 7 August reduced the seats of the Armenian Orthodox community to two, instead of the previous three, an entirely different situation emerged as regards the electoral campaign within the Armenian community.

The French brought pressure to bear on and used all available means under their influence to create a single powerful pro-French list in Beirut. To this effect, they also tried to create a united Huntchag-Tashnag Front.<sup>153</sup>

Pressure was brought upon the Huntchags to accept the French proposal. The Huntchag acceptance of the French proposal was going to be considered as proof of their loyalty to the mandatory power.<sup>154</sup> Ipekian, representing the Tashnags, finally came to an agreement with Huntchag leaders on cooperation during the elections at a meeting held in the offices of the newspaper *L'Orient* where Gabriel Khabbaz and Dikran Tosbath were also present.<sup>155</sup> The French then asked the leading Christian candidate, George Tabet, to include pro-French elements like Sami Solh and Dr. Ayub Tabet in his list, but George Tabet refused.<sup>156</sup>

On 12 August, the first list was officially formed, consisting of George Tabet (Maronite), Habib Abi Chahla (Greek Orthodox), Abdallah Yafi (Sunnite), Saeb Salam (Sunnite), Ibrahim Ahdab (Sunnite), Mohsen Slim (Shiite), Movses Der Kaloustian (Armenian Orthodox), Mardiros Iskenderian (Armenian Orthodox) and Moussa de Freige (Minorities).<sup>157</sup>

On 18 August, Major-General Edward Spears, British Prime Minister Winston Churchill's chief emissary to Syria and Lebanon, forwarded a secret report to London. The British now had an important say in Lebanese and Syrian politics, after British-led troops had played an important role in evicting the pro-Nazi French Vichy regime from both countries in 1941. The following is an extract from Spears's report:

In Beirut, one list is almost completed and another is in [the] throes of formation under the inspiration of the Délégation Générale, whose political director was dissatisfied with the main list. Neither list has any strong political bias; each merely represents a collection of individuals who have agreed to band themselves together in order to pool their united electoral resources, but will certainly separate again so soon as the Chamber comes into being. Various recent political discards, including Alfred Naccache, Sami el Solh, and Dr. Ayoub Tabet are expected to figure on the second, or reserve list.<sup>158</sup>

Messerlian wanted an Armenian national concord to be reached; two candidates should be presented by the Armenian Orthodox Prelacy as the only Armenian candidates participating in the elections.<sup>159</sup> Archbishop Ardavazt Surmeyan, the Catholicos of the Vicar-General and the President of the Armenian community's Civil Council, invited representatives of the four Armenian



political parties, the National Bloc of Independents, as well as members of the community's Civil and Economic Councils to hold consultations on forming a United Front and decide upon the Armenian candidates.<sup>160</sup> This meeting was held in the Prelacy at 4 p.m. on Monday, 16 August. It was presided over by Surmeyan. The Civil Council was represented by Hagop Abadjian; the Economic Council, by Pakarad Bakalian; the National Bloc, by Dr. Levon Altounian and Hovhannes Porsoukian; the Communists, by Artin Madoyan and Hovhannes Aghbashian; the Ramgavar Azadagans by Ghevont Der Bedrossian and Baghdassar Darakdjian. Representatives of the Tashnag and Huntchag parties were absent.<sup>161</sup> Those present at the Prelacy meeting were in favor of the creation of a United National Front, but, due to the negative attitude of the Tashnag and Huntchag parties, the meeting was fruitless.<sup>162</sup>

After the failure to forge a united list, the National Bloc of Independents cooperated with the Ramgavar Azadagan Party. In the meantime, the Tashnag Party declared on 18 August its intention of participating in the elections with a candidate of its own. The Tashnags considered that it would be inadvisable to participate in the elections through a single front and a single list; this would mean that the Armenians were devoid of organized parties and political ideals.<sup>163</sup> On 22 August, the Tashnags announced that, by mutual agreement, the Tashnag and Huntchag parties were going to participate in the elections together.<sup>164</sup> On 25 August, *Aztag* officially announced that the Tashnag candidate would be Movses Der Kaloustian, a former officer in the Armenian Legion that had fought alongside the French Army during the First World War, and a former deputy of Armenians from the Sandjak of Alexandretta in the Syrian Parliament for twelve years.<sup>165</sup>

Meanwhile, Sami Solh was working to bring forth a new list. His adversaries tried to prevent his candidature under the pretext that he had not resigned from the magistracy in time. Solh overcame that obstacle, however. Despite being discouraged by his cousin, Riad Solh, and being handicapped by having to take on his list Dr. Ayub Tabet, against whom the Moslem voters were hostile,<sup>166</sup> Sami Solh nevertheless succeeded in forming a list. The list, which he headed, also consisted of Alfred Naccache (Maronite), Jibran Tueni (Greek Orthodox), Ayub Tabet (Minorities), Mohammed Beydoun (Shiite), Mohieddin Nsouli (Sunnite), Kamal Jabr (Sunnite), Hratchia Chamlian (Armenian Orthodox) and Meguerditch Messerlian (Armenian Orthodox).<sup>167</sup>

Sami Solh was not so sure of the strength his list. He later wrote about his adversaries that "they enjoyed great prestige without forgetting that they had taken the Armenian community on their side, which Dr. Tabet had promised to win to our list."<sup>168</sup> After the two lists had been formed, the French asked Iskenderian and Der Kaloustian to withdraw from George Tabet's list and join Sami Solh's list. Der Kaloustian obeyed the wish of the mandatory power,<sup>169</sup> while Iskenderian refused on the grounds that he had signed a pledge and could not abuse the trust George Tabet had in him. Der Kaloustian's position remained undetermined for some 30-35 hours. Sami Solh sent Dr. Michel Abboud and a relative to Iskenderian, offering him 25,000 LL if he accepted to be on his list.



The pro-Sami Solh daily, *Ad-Diyar*, even announced that Der Kaloustian and Iskenderian had left the George Tabet- Abi Chahla-Yafi list and had joined Sami Solh's list.<sup>170</sup>

Der Kaloustian returned to George Tabet's list upon Iskenderian's intransigence.<sup>171</sup> On 25 August 25, *Le Jour*, which favored the George Tabet list, wrote:

D'étranges rumeurs avaient couru ces deux derniers jours sur l'attitude des deux candidats arméniens représentant respectivement le parti Tachnak et le parti Hentchak. On peut considérer que toute équivoque à ce sujet est dissipée. M. Movses Der Kaloustian du parti Tachnak et M. Iskandarian du parti Hentchak ont fait officiellement savoir qu'ils demeuraient solidaires de leurs amis et colistiers de la première heure.<sup>172</sup>

On 25 August, during a rally, at which 10,000 people were present, Sami Solh declared:

We delayed choosing the Armenian candidates, as we wanted to find amongst them the purest, the healthiest and the most suitable. We found them: Meguerditch Messerlian and Hratchia Chamlian, who were praised everywhere.<sup>173</sup>

There were pro-French elements on both lists, although public opinion held the view that the British also had their favorites. As Dr. Ayub Tabet and other pro-French elements were on the second list, the mandatory power brought all available means of influence to bear upon the electorate so as to give success to supporters of the French in Beirut, regardless of the list on which they were found.<sup>174</sup>

A period of keen electioneering began. Parties campaigned for their candidates and held rallies to promote them. The majority of the Huntchags approved of their leaders' decision to cooperate with the Tashnags, having taken into consideration the attitude of Ramgavars during the Syrian legislative elections in Damascus the month before and the above-described change in Tashnag policy in favor of Soviet Armenia.<sup>175</sup> A further point that was probably taken into consideration was their ideological differences with the Ramgavars. The Huntchags considered the latter to be bourgeois capitalists and conservatives, while both the Huntchag and Tashnag parties were revolutionary socialists.<sup>176</sup> The younger generation of the Huntchags reproached the Ramgavars for their bitter attacks in *Zartonk* on Homenmen, the Huntchag sports organization.<sup>177</sup> The Huntchags, in their turn criticized, the Armenian Youth Association, the youth wing of the AGBU, which, as mentioned, had close ties with the Ramgavars.<sup>178</sup> Hence, tensions emerged between the youth organizations of the Huntchag and Ramgavar parties. The Ramgavar Party declared that the godfathers of the Tashnag and Huntchag agreement were from outside the Armenian community, an indirect reference to the mandatory power



and its local allies.<sup>179</sup> *Zartonk* wrote in an editorial that although the Tashnags had lessened their attacks on the Soviet Union and a change was being noticed in their policy, the Ramgavars would continue to struggle against their dangerous path, methods and autocratic spirit. The Ramgavar newspaper concluded: 'Armenia is our only hope of salvation; the regime is secondary.'<sup>180</sup>

Some Huntchags disagreed with the leaders of their Party. A group of neutrals and Huntchags published an appeal in *Zartonk*, in which they declared that they were against the Huntchag-Tashnag cooperation and resented the idea of two militant parties dividing among themselves the seats reserved for the Armenian community.<sup>181</sup> On 26 August, Melkon Dkhrouni, the brother of the murdered Huntchag leader Sarkis Dkhrouni, declared, in an appeal addressed to Huntchags, that:

Huntchags are now associating with the killers of my brother. He was a martyr of Huntchag ideology. Uniting now with the Tashnags means the bankruptcy of our ideology. Noble Huntchags do not participate in this organized treachery. Refuse to vote for the Huntchag-Tashnag alliance.<sup>182</sup>

The Huntchag Party organized rallies in the Armenian quarters of Beirut and Bourj Hammoud: Adana camp (August 13),<sup>183</sup> Hadjin camp (August 15),<sup>184</sup> Yozgat-Tomarza quarters,<sup>185</sup> Sis camp,<sup>186</sup> Marash camp (August 18),<sup>187</sup> Rmeil-Khalil Bedewi quarter (August 19),<sup>188</sup> Tiro-Sandjak camp (August 20),<sup>189</sup> Sin-el-Fil (August 24).<sup>190</sup> Candidate Iskenderian, Huntchag leaders M. Mardouni, Armenak Eloyan and Missak Tchavoush all spoke at those rallies, accompanied occasionally by the Tashnag representative, Khatchig Fenerdjian. On 18 August, a rally took place at the Adana-Trad quarter in the presence of more than 1500 people, including Iskenderian, the Huntchag District Committee members, the Armenian Catholic priest, Father Boghos Ariss, and the Armenian Orthodox priest of the quarter, the Rev. Krikor Sahagian.<sup>191</sup> Huntchag leaders, Iskenderian and Ariss spoke during the rally. Iskenderian declared that if he were elected as their deputy in the Parliament, he would obey the instructions and orders of the Huntchag Party like a soldier.<sup>192</sup>

The Huntchags and Tashnags also organized joint rallies. The first such gathering was held at the Tashnag Club in Zokak el Blat, at 8:30 p.m. on Wednesday, 25 August, in the presence of fellow candidates Yafi, Salam, Ahdab and Abi Chahla. Tashnag leaders Ipekian, Sasouni, Aram Sahagian, their candidate, Der Kaloustian, and the Huntchag representative, Arsen Gidour, spoke during the rally, which came to an end with the singing of the Tashnag and Huntchag Party anthems.<sup>193</sup> At 6 p.m. on 27 August, the Huntchags held a rally in the Sahagian Playing Field, under the presidency of the Huntchag veteran leader, Dardaghanian, and the Tashnag Ipekian. The speakers during this rally were the Huntchag Pakarad Sunik, the Tashnags Sasouni and Ipekian, and the two candidates, Iskenderian and Der Kaloustian. 15,000 people attended this rally.<sup>194</sup> *Ararad*, the organ of the Huntchag Party, wrote on this occasion that the Huntchag and Tashnag ranks had shown that ideals and unity would win.<sup>195</sup>



George Tabet's list also organized a rally in Mazraa at which 15,000 people were present.<sup>196</sup>

The Huntchags campaigned, through their daily mouthpiece, *Ararad*, for Iskenderian and asked their followers to vote for him, having in mind the interest of the working class for the progress of Lebanon and the victory of the Democratic Front.<sup>197</sup> *Aztag* campaigned for the Tashnag candidate, Der Kaloustian, writing that the latter was ready to sacrifice his life for his people.<sup>198</sup>

Since both Iskenderian and Der Kaloustian were from the Sandjak of Alexandretta, Garabed Dzaghgouni, a former police officer from that region, made an appeal to all former inhabitants of the Sandjak, who now had obtained Lebanese citizenship, to vote for these two candidates. Dzaghgouni wrote that Der Kaloustian would defend the rights of the proletarian class upon a socialist basis and would follow the Tashnag policy 'for the prosperity of our community, hand in hand with our other militant party, the Huntchags.'<sup>199</sup> Another appeal in favor of Der Kaloustian was made by former Armenian Legionnaires.<sup>200</sup> Der Kaloustian allegedly also enjoyed the support of the mandatory power.<sup>201</sup>

The Ramgavar Azadagan Party campaigned in *Zartouk* for its candidate, Messerlian, and his ally, Chamlian. Messerlian was well known outside the Armenian community because of his business connections. Moslem and Jewish circles in Beirut and Tripoli knew him and offered him their support. Leaders of the Armenian Evangelical community had also promised to back Messerlian. He claimed that he did not have the support of the French, but the British wished him success.<sup>202</sup> He received an invitation from the *Destouri* leader, Khoury, and visited him, accompanied by George Karam, a business acquaintance. Khoury made Messerlian understand that he was in favor of his election.<sup>203</sup> During the pre-election campaign period, Messerlian and his wife made a number of handsome donations to Armenian educational institutions.<sup>204</sup>

On 25 August, a rally for Sami Solh's list was held for the first time at Tarik Jedide, in the presence of 10,000 people.<sup>205</sup> The Armenian candidates on Solh's list were also present. On 28 August, a rally took place opposite camp Hadjin in the Khedr Mosque quarter, in the presence of all candidates on Solh's list.<sup>206</sup>

Chamlian claimed that he was not opposed either by the French or by the British and that he had many friends amongst the first.<sup>207</sup> He was backed by *Zartouk* and some Arabic language newspapers.<sup>208</sup> On 26 August, *Aravod*, a left-wing, daily newspaper published by Hrant Devedjian, a former Tashnag activist, presented both Messerlian and Chamlian as 'our candidates.'<sup>209</sup>

*Zartouk* wrote that the important traits of Messerlian's character were his impartiality, his love of concord, his readiness to put public interest above his personal interest and his unbending nature in front of difficulties to maintain national sovereignty. The paper claimed that their candidate donated for charitable purposes without party distinction.<sup>210</sup>

The Ramgavar Azadagan daily wrote that, although Messerlian was a Ramgavar, the Party considered him, together with Chamlian, as a popular national candidate. The paper's editorial stated that Messerlian was already an elected member of the Central Council of the Cilician Catholicosate. He had



recently helped end the strike of Armenian teachers against low pay by providing them with financial and moral assistance.<sup>211</sup> The paper concluded that, if its two candidates were defeated, they would not be in despair in defending their democratic principles and views, 'which are that of Lebanon, France and the United Nations,' and, if they won, they would not boast.<sup>212</sup> The non-partisan *Aztarar* claimed that Chamlian was 'known as a person of character respected for his moderation, energy and honesty.'<sup>213</sup> *Zartonk* declared that both Messerlian and Chamlian hated Nazism and Fascism and supported the Allies.<sup>214</sup>

On 27 August, *Joghovourti Tsayn*, the Armenian language Communist daily, announced that its candidate, Madoyan, had withdrawn his candidature 'to ease and strengthen the realization of the unity of Armenians of Lebanon.' Madoyan suggested to his followers to vote for whom they wanted.<sup>215</sup>

Meanwhile, Delegate-General Helleu declared: 'La France, par la voix de ses représentants les plus qualifiés, a solennellement déclaré que les élections seraient libres. Cette assurance, je tiens à la réitérer aujourd'hui.'<sup>216</sup> However, on 25 August, R. G. Casey, the British Minister of State in Cairo, told Prime Minister Churchill that 'in the Lebanon [the] French are doing everything possible to rig the elections and to ensure a French dominated Government.'<sup>217</sup>

The elections were held from 8 a.m. to 4 p.m. on Sunday, 29 August. Public opinion then held that, during the elections, the forced restraint of the mandatory power from interference was accompanied by 'the spending of large amounts of money by Britain and France to secure the success of their partisans.'<sup>218</sup>

Among the 43,781 voters in Beirut, there were 12,181 Armenians. The Armenian voters were distributed as follows: Mazraa, 87 Armenian voters; Ras Beirut, 98; Marfaa, 184; Dar al Maysé, 194; Museitbe, 233; Minet el Hosn, 205; Bashura, 438; Zokak el Blat, 631; Ashrefieh, 1346; Rmeil, 1530; Khan Seifi, 327; and Mudawar, 6868.<sup>219</sup>

Of the 43,781 registered voters in Beirut, only 11,433 cast their votes on polling day.<sup>220</sup> Voter participation was therefore only 26%, with numerous abstentions. A further twenty-four votes were disqualified. Hence, the total number of votes needed to get elected in the first round was 5700.<sup>221</sup>

Messerlian told the present writer the following:

When the voting stopped at 4 p.m., we went to the municipality for the counting of the votes, which was not done in the presence of the candidates, but in secret. At 2:30 a.m. on August 30, the Armenian member of the returning board, municipal councilor Dr. Karekin Tabourian, coming out of the room, where the counting was taking place, congratulated me and Chamlian as elected deputies by embracing us. I had 126 votes above the minimum necessary, while Chamlian had 151 extra votes. This confirmed the number we had obtained ourselves from the different electoral districts. Dr. Tabourian himself phoned to the residence of Zawzawatjian, the leader of the Bloc of Independents, where the Independents and the Ramgavar leaders were assembled, and informed them of our victory. The Armenian candidates on George



Tabet's list had not come to the municipality, probably because they were aware of their defeat, by adding the number of votes from different electoral districts. Abdallah Yafi, a personal friend of ours, congratulated us, followed by the *Muhafiz* (Governor of Beirut - Z.M.) Amin Bey Halabi. The *Muhafiz*, after phoning the French delegate responsible for the elections, M. David, informed us of our victory. So we learned from him that Mohammed Beydoun was elected by 115 votes above the necessary minimum, that Jibran Tueni had to undergo a second ballot and that Mohieddin Nsouli and Kamal Jabr were defeated. Sami Solh sat silently in the office of the *Muhafiz*. He was not sure of the elections of Chamlian, Beydoun and myself. He advised us to sit with him and the *Muhafiz*. Chamlian stayed. I left at 3:30 a.m. as I was very tired and hungry. I returned home at 6 a.m. My wife told me that Chamlian had come and informed her that my election as a deputy was not certain, but Chamlian's was. I immediately returned to the municipality. The people, who had congratulated me a few hours ago, could not look to me in the face. After investigations, we found out that, at 5:15 a.m., they had brought members of the electoral committee of the Upper Basta district to the municipality in their pajamas and had them change the written report by omitting 264 votes cast in our favor. Half of it is 132. I had previously had 126 votes above the minimum necessary, so I now failed by 6 votes and Beydoun by 17 votes, while Chamlian was elected with a safe majority. I immediately went to see Ibrahim Ahdab of the opposing list, who, by this arrangement, was also losing. There I met many Moslem friends, who were on their way to come and congratulate me, having heard of my victory from Abdallah Yafi. When Ahdab left, I hurried to see Mohammed Beydoun at his Ashrefieh residence. After having heard about his victory, he had celebrated from 2:30 to 5:30 a.m. As soon as I went in, Mohammed Beydoun congratulated me. Doing likewise, I informed him of what had happened. He became pale and sent his sons to the municipality. At 8 a.m., they returned, confirming what I had said. They went to see Petro Trad, the Head of the State, but it was of no use, because the illegal action had been legalized and officially announced. At 8:30 a.m., I returned to my summer residence of Bhamdoun to rest.<sup>222</sup>

The official results were as follows: Sami Solh, 5967 votes; Alfred Naccache, 5880; Hratchia Chamlian, 5813; Abdallah Yafi, 5795; Ayub Tabet, 5740; Meguerditch Messerlian, 5692; Mohammed Beydoun, 5680; Moussa de Freige, 5561; Mardiros Iskenderian, 5554; Movses Der Kaloustian, 5540; Mohsen Slim, 5527; Ibrahim Ahdab, 5511; George Tabet, 5440; Habib Abi Chahla, 5205; Saeb Salam, 5193; Jibran Tueni, 5157; Kamal Jabr, 4663; Mohieddin Nsouli, 4510; Omar Fakhoury, 2046; Habib Rbeiz, 985; Mohammad el Baker, 37; Toufic el Natour, 36; Joseph Harmouche, 14; Chemli Haider, 9; Paul Fayad, 5; Louis Baccasheh, 3; Anis Kaddura, 2.<sup>223</sup>



Solh, Naccache, Chamlian, Yafi and Ayub Tabet were declared elected, while Messerlian, Iskenderian, and Der Kaloustian (Armenian Orthodox), Beydoun and Slim (Shiites), Salam and Jabr (Sunnites), Abi Chahla and Tueni (Greek Orthodox) were to have a second ballot to determine Beirut's remaining deputies in the next parliament.<sup>224</sup>

Newspapers also published the election results in some of Beirut's various quarters. The results in the quarters of Seifi, Zokak el Blat, Mazraa and Rmeil follow:

	<u>Seifi</u>	<u>Zokak El Blat</u>	<u>Mazraa</u>	<u>Rmeil</u>
Alfred Naccache	260	505	1068	327
Ayub Tabet	283	496	1007	365
Habib Abi Chahla	252	395	664	416
Abdallah Yafi	324	414	699	465
Ibrahim Ahdab	300	411	679	461
Mohieddin Nsouli	111	447	1114	140
Sami Solh	256	509	1080	352
Mohsen Slim	269	418	648	430
Kamal Jabr	169	454	963	221
Mohammed Beydoun	241	250	148	322
Saeb Salam	234	400	590	352
George Tabet	258	396	676	434
Jibran Tueni	208	430	1055	313
Moussa de Freige	236	466	?	398 <sup>225</sup>

The *Huntchag* daily gave the following results obtained by the Armenian candidates in Mudawar, Ashrefieh and Rmeil, where a total of 9744 voters were registered: Der Kaloustian, 1520 votes; Iskenderian, 1496; Chamlian, 765; and Messerlian, 625.<sup>226</sup>

After the results of the first round were published, *Zartouk* wrote that although Messerlian had received 132 votes more than Der Kaloustian and 138 votes more than Iskenderian, he still lacked 7 votes to be considered elected, so he would run for second ballot.<sup>227</sup> The Ramgavar Azadagan organ added that 20 votes cast in favor of Messerlian were not accepted because they were crumpled.<sup>228</sup> Moreover, the Ramgavar Azadagan daily wrote that, on election day, a statement was distributed to the public, signed by Communist leader Madoyan, urging Armenian voters to vote for Der Kaloustian. *Zartouk* added that the Communist daily *Joghovourti Tsayn* had denied distributing such a statement and had called this act a 'moral fraud.'<sup>229</sup>

*Ararad* and *Aztag* complained that, in the Armenian electoral districts, 25% of the Armenian voters did not find their names registered and, hence, could not vote. *Aztag* added that this irregularity caused the defeat of the George Tabet list, which included the candidates Iskenderian and Der Kaloustian, who enjoyed the majority of Armenian votes.<sup>230</sup>

Once the British Foreign Office files preserved at the Public Record Office



in Kew, London, were opened to the public, after a lapse of 30 years, what had happened became apparent.

In a secret report to London dated 23 August 1943, Spears reported that Boegner, the head of the French *Cabinet Politique*, and Rozek, the organization counselor, 'have been engaged in open and flagrant electioneering.'<sup>231</sup> Earlier, on 22 August, Spears had sent a telegram (No. 467) stating that the French were 'generally interfering in a quite shameless way.'<sup>232</sup> On 24 August, he wrote that Boegner had intervened actively and in an unconcealed manner on behalf of Ayub Tabet, but when he had failed to obtain a place for Ayub Tabet on the list headed by George Tabet, Boegner had made approaches to a number of other, disappointed candidates in order to produce a rival list in which Ayub Tabet could be included. Among these candidates were Naccache and Solh. Spears added: 'I have it on good authority that M. Boegner has been in frequent touch with the Armenian community in Beirut with a view to ensuring their support of the Ayoub Tabet-Sami Solh list.'<sup>233</sup> In other words, Boegner had tried to convince Der Kaloustian and Iskenderian to join this list, after abandoning Georges Tabet's list.

Then Boegner and Rozek had openly intervened in the formation of an alternative list, which would include Ayub Tabet. They had also exercised pressure on the Armenian community to support what was known to everybody in Beirut as "the Boegner list."<sup>234</sup>

Despite Spears's objections, the French Delegate-General, Helleu, had continued with French interference, according to a "most secret" cable sent from Beirut to the British Foreign Office.

On 28 August, the eve of the elections, Spears informed London, in cipher cable No. 488, that between open French interference, two members of the Lebanese Government had shown 'gross partiality.' So the election 'will be held tomorrow in a very unsatisfactory atmosphere.'<sup>235</sup>

On 30 August, Spears informed London, that 'the only results are victory at Beirut of "Boegner's pirates" (including Ayoub Tabet, Naccache and Sami Solh). Rival list and Armenian community allege the same malpractice by Administration are collecting evidence.'<sup>236</sup>

Spears sent another cipher cable (No. 491) to London, on 1 September 1943, reporting that

serious malpractices are widely alleged both in Mt. Lebanon and Beirut. In both districts it appears certain that a very large number of electors were unable to vote because lists of voters had been incorrectly made out and posted 48 h[ou]rs or less before elections, though period laid is a fortnight. In Beirut where some 8000 Armenians are said to have thus been prevented from voting, only 26% of the electorate polled, as compared 60% everywhere else... In view of the fact that in Beirut alone transport of voters presented no real problem, it is difficult to avoid the conclusion that some sort of trickery resorted to.



The British Foreign Office concluded in its minutes: 'Except in Beirut and Mt. Lebanon, the Lebanese seem to have diddled or out-tricked the French fairly successfully.'<sup>237</sup>

Spears wrote in his memoirs that 53.6% of the electors voted in Lebanon, but only 25% in the capital city, Beirut, which, according to Spears, 'was a great disappointment to the French, for it was here alone that their candidates were successful; they failed everywhere else.'<sup>238</sup>

After the end of the first round of elections, Surmeyan, the Armenian Orthodox Vicar-General, accompanied by members of the community's Civil Council, visited and congratulated Chamlian and all other elected deputies.<sup>239</sup>

The second round of elections was going to take place from 8 a.m. to 4 p.m. on Sunday, 5 September.

On the evening of Monday, 30 August, the members of Solh's list, with the exception of Alfred Naccache and Ayub Tabet, met at the residence of Jibril Tueni at Bhamdoun Gare. Then, the whole group visited Ayub Tabet at his Bhamdoun home and Naccache at his Sofar home. They all took an oath to work for the victory of those on their list, who had to run again in the second round.<sup>240</sup>

On the evening of 1 September, members of the Solh list gathered at the Grand Hotel in Sofar. The presence at the hotel was noted of members of George Tabet's list, Riad Solh, the Tashnag deputy Hratch Papazian from Aleppo in the Syrian Parliament and the latter's friend, the Syrian politician, Saadallah Jabri, who was also the brother-in-law of Riad Solh. No agreement was reached; members of Solh's list dispersed after agreeing to meet the next day at his Beirut residence.<sup>241</sup> Meanwhile, Zartouk announced that their candidate, Messerlian, would run on the same list as before.<sup>242</sup>

At 10:30 a.m. on 2 September, a meeting of Greek Orthodox notables was held at the Greek Orthodox Archbishopric upon the invitation of Archbishop Elie Saleeby. Tueni accepted their request to withdraw his candidature in favor of Abi Chahla.<sup>243</sup> Slim and Ibrahim, in turn, also withdrew their candidatures on 4 September.<sup>244</sup>

A meeting took place at Sami Solh's house on Thursday evening, 2 September.<sup>245</sup> Messerlian described the meeting as follows:

When I went there, I saw Der Kaloustian and Tashnag leaders waiting for Riad Solh. Meanwhile, Sami Solh, who had invited us to his home, left for a dinner offered by Mrs. Sursock. After seeing the Tashnag leaders, Riad Solh wanted to see me alone. He told me: 'my friend, you are an independent man and do not need our assistance financially. In reality, we want to see you elected as a deputy, considering that you can speak and write Arabic fluently, but it is with regret that we have to sacrifice you as we are not yet completely independent and we have many things to arrange with the French, who are obliging us to accept Der Kaloustian. If we do not accept him, we will face difficulties in our negotiations with the French. As a good Lebanese citizen, help us in obtaining better results for our independence by withdrawing from the second ballot, because



whatever you do, you will be defeated and Der Kaloustian will be elected as a deputy.<sup>246</sup>

Messerlian decided to withdraw, although *Zartonk* announced on 4 September that he still maintained his candidature.<sup>247</sup>

Meanwhile, Iskenderian also withdrew, without making any public statement. He told the present writer the following:

For the second round, the French preferred Der Kaloustian. Monsieur Boegner, Chief of the Political Bureau of the High Commissioner, called me and told me not to participate in the elections. He told me that they had certain obligations towards Der Kaloustian, whom they trusted, and were disappointed with me, as I had refused to go over to Sami Solh's list. They offered me a post in the Government administration. I objected to this direct intervention, but I was told clearly that they wanted Der Kaloustian to be the second Armenian deputy. I had no money to run individually, so I withdrew with bitter feelings.<sup>248</sup>

The Lebanon District Committee of the Huntchag Party formally withdrew Iskenderian's candidature through an official statement dated 4 September 1943. It declared that Der Kaloustian remained as the Tashnag candidate and this could not have any negative reaction upon their front of national unity.<sup>249</sup> *Ararad* wrote in an editorial that the Tashnags were not only welcoming the victories of the Western Allies, but also the successes of the Red Army during the ongoing war. They were also accepting Soviet Armenia as bright reality. Thus, nothing separated the two parties. Hence, cooperation on an even wider field was justified.<sup>250</sup>

*Aztag* announced that a new list had been formed, consisting of candidates from the former two lists and enjoying the support of Sami Solh. Abi Chahla, Jabr, Beydoun and Der Kaloustian formed the new list. *Aztag* also announced that the Tashnag and Huntchag parties were going to cooperate in the second round; victory would belong to both parties and the elected deputy would be the candidate of both parties.<sup>251</sup>

Messerlian invited the leading members of his Party to a meeting at Zareh Nubar Club on Saturday, 4 September, where he announced his intention to withdraw his candidature in face of the impossibility of the electoral situation in the light of what Riad Solh had told him. The Ramgavar leaders dispersed after accepting Messerlian's decision.<sup>252</sup>

That same afternoon, however, the Sunnite Moslems had a meeting in the residence of the Mufti, Hajj Mohammed Toufic Khalid, and decided to ensure the success of their candidate, Saeb Salam, by all means.<sup>253</sup>

This decision changed the situation. The Ramgavar leaders, seeing a hope of success for their candidate, forced Messerlian to participate in the second round. Messerlian told the present writer the following:



I was in bed with fever, when the Ramgavar leaders one by one came to my home. At 10 p.m., Saeb Salam sent Dr. Melih Sinno, a good friend of mine, who informed me about the decision of the Moslem meeting and proposed to me to join the list. I told him what Riad Solh had told me. He said that these were electoral tactics. The Ramgavar leaders, led by Parounag Tovmassian, and accompanied by the lawyer George Bitar, urged me to participate. I accepted the will of my Party leaders. At 1 a.m. on Sunday, the agreement was concluded by George Bitar, Parounag Tovmassian and Baghdassar Darakdjian in the presence of Abdul Hamid Karamé. I was to be on Saeb Salam's list. I paid 5000 LL in cash and had to pay a further 5000 LL after the election. At 9 a.m. in the morning, I went to Saeb Salam's house, where I understood that, after our representatives had left, Habib Abi Chahla had come to the residence of Saeb Salam at 2:30 a.m. and, with the assistance of Riad Solh, had issued another list with Der Kaloustian's name on it. Although I knew that I was going to be defeated, I continued the struggle.<sup>254</sup>

On election day, Sunday, 5 September, the Ramgavar Azadagan mouthpiece appealed to Huntchags, Communists and Armenian neutrals to vote for Messerlian if they wanted to oppose Tashnag autocracy in the Armenian community's administrative bodies. It said that the Tashnags had tricked the young Huntchag candidate, Iskenderian, in the past four days.<sup>255</sup>

The second round of elections took place in a peaceful atmosphere on Sunday, 5 September 1943. 10,920 people out of a total of 43,781 (i.e. 24.9%) registered voters participated. Five votes were nullified.<sup>256</sup>

The election results were as follows: Abi Chahla, 7935; Beydoun 6655; Der Kaloustian 6057; Salam 5622; Messerlian 4755; Slim 4157; Jabr 3790; Fakhoury 1400.<sup>257</sup>

Abi Chahla, Beydoun, Der Kaloustian and Salam were considered as elected.<sup>258</sup> This was an obvious victory for the supporters of the French in Beirut.<sup>259</sup>

On 20 September 1943, Spears sent to London a secret weekly summary (No. 75), dated 8 September 1943. The paragraph concerning the second round of elections in Beirut stated:

Balloting in Beirut, which also took place on the 5th September resulted in one more person getting elected of the Ayoub Tabet list and 3 of the opposing list. Before the balloting there seems to have been much jockeying for position among the candidates, and at least one was induced to stand down in favor of his opponent on prompt repayment of his electoral expenses. In this maneuver also the Sureté Générale are taxed by the Constitutionalist [Destouris] with direct complicity.<sup>260</sup>



A few months later, on 29 June 1944, Spears sent to the British Minister of Foreign Affairs another report titled "Armenians in the Lebanon." Paragraph 26, which dealt with the parliamentary elections of 1943, stated:

In the first ballot Chamlian was returned, whilst Misirlian missed election by five votes. In the second ballot, Der Kaloustian, who would certainly not have been elected by the Armenians alone, was returned as a result of the strong support given to him by the French and, according to some sources, of an intervention by the Syrian Prime Minister, who, himself violently anti-Turkish was assiduously seeking all possible allies in an irredentist campaign against the Turks in the Sandjak.<sup>261</sup>

Commenting on the second round of the elections, *Aztag* wrote that flyers had been circulated on election day, claiming that Iskenderian had withdrawn his candidature in favor of Messerlian. This claim had been denied, however, by other flyers.<sup>262</sup> *Aztag* stated, that during the election, 'our Huntchag comrades, by their correct and honest attitude, gave a good answer to those who wanted to see the destruction of this union.'<sup>263</sup> Later, *Aztag* wrote in an editorial that Der Kaloustian had received the votes of not only Tashnags but also of Huntchags, Communists and especially of the neutral masses.<sup>264</sup> *Aztag* wrote that Messerlian had received the votes of few Armenians; the majority, with the exception of Ramgavars, had voted for Der Kaloustian.<sup>265</sup>

*Ararad* congratulated all elected deputies and wrote that the greatest victory for them was 'the defeat of the gold,' an indirect reference to the failure of the relatively wealthy Ramgavar candidate.<sup>266</sup>

*Zartouk* also congratulated all elected deputies, friend or opponent. Moreover, it wished that the Armenian deputies, strengthened by patriotism, would serve Lebanon.<sup>267</sup>

Messerlian congratulated Der Kaloustian in the municipality on Sunday evening, the day of the election. The next evening, Monday, 6 September, Messerlian went to the Tashnag club and officially offered his congratulations.<sup>268</sup>

## CONCLUSION

As the reader will have noted, there was active involvement of the Armenian political parties, together with tense intra-Armenian contests, in the three legislative elections in Beirut during the period of the French mandate in Lebanon. The Armenian votes mattered not only to Armenians, but to their local, non-Armenian electoral allies on various lists. That is why Armenian candidates were solicited on the different, competing lists.

Looking retrospectively, there also appears to have been a desire on the part of the French mandatory authorities to have different Armenian political currents represented in the Lebanese Parliament.



## ENDNOTES

- <sup>1</sup>This study is based on my thesis, submitted in partial fulfillment for the requirements of the degree of Master of Arts in the History Department of the American University of Beirut, in October 1963. In the light of newly accessible British documents from the Public Record Office in London, minor changes and some additions have been made to the original text of the thesis during the analysis of the 1943 campaign. Nikola Bagrad Schahgaldian has also written briefly about Armenian participation in the 1934, 1937 and 1943 elections in his unpublished doctoral thesis, 'The Political Integration of an Immigrant Community into a Composite Society: The Armenians in Lebanon, 1920-1974,' Columbia University, 1979, pp. 178-181, 183-186 and 192-195. Extensive parts of this article, dealing with the elections of 1943, have been used in my book, *Meguerditch Messerlian Azk.-Kaghakagan Kordzuneutiune* [The National-Political Activities of Meguerditch Messerlian], Beirut, 1981, pp. 193-228.
- <sup>2</sup>Sissag Varjabedian, *Haïere Lipanani Mech* [The Armenians in Lebanon], Vol. I, Beirut, 1951, p. 432.
- <sup>3</sup>Jean Chami, 'La Communauté arménienne du Liban, facteur de dynamisme', *L'Orient*, no. 10326, 20 December 1959, p. 7.
- <sup>4</sup>*Oriente Moderno*, 1926, p. 203, quoted in Pierre Rondot, *Les Institutions politiques du Liban*, Vol. I, Paris, 1947, p. 55.
- <sup>5</sup>Stephen Hemsley Longrigg, *Syria and Lebanon under French Mandate*, London, 1958, pp. 146-147.
- <sup>6</sup>Dr. Melkon Hairabedian, a second degree elector in 1925, told the present writer during an interview in January 1962, that the Armenians in the Mudawar quarter had eighteen second degree electors during the 1925 elections. These second degree electors chose the members of the Lebanese Representative Council. The eighteen Armenian votes were cast in favor of the pro-French Maronite politician and future President Emile Eddé.
- <sup>7</sup>*Oriente Moderno* 1925, p. 407, quoted in Rondot, p. 55.
- <sup>8</sup>*Mogattam*, 9 October 1926, quoted in Rondot, p. 55.
- <sup>9</sup>*Ahram*, 24 March 1927, quoted in Rondot, pp. 37-38.
- <sup>10</sup>In the Lebanese Parliament, elected in 1929, only six confessional groups (Maronites, the Orthodox, Catholics, Sunnites, Shiites and the Druze) had pre-allocated seats for them. The other, smaller communities in the country (including the Armenians) were to be represented through Ishak under the label of 'minorities.'
- <sup>11</sup>Rondot, p. 55.
- <sup>12</sup>*Ibid.*
- <sup>13</sup>*Ibid.*
- <sup>14</sup>*Le Jour*, 12 January 1937 and *L'Orient*, 7 February 1937, both quoted in Rondot, p. 55.
- <sup>15</sup>*Journal Officiel de la République Libanaise. Chambre des Députés. Quatrième Législative*, 1938-1939, p. 94.
- <sup>16</sup>Rondot, p. 55.
- <sup>17</sup>Longrigg, pp. 204-205.
- <sup>18</sup>*Ibid.*
- <sup>19</sup>The Council of Government was composed of the Secretary of State, directors of the main Government services and the two highest judges in the country.
- <sup>20</sup>*Aztag*, 7th year, no. 218 (1056), 17 January 1934.
- <sup>21</sup>*Ibid.*, no. 210 (1048), 4 January 1934.
- <sup>22</sup>*Ibid.*, no. 211 (1049), 5 January 1934. The Lebanese electoral laws stipulated multi-member constituencies. The laws determined which communities would have the



right for parliamentary seats in every constituency. A specific number of seats was granted to certain communities in each constituency according to the number of electors that given community had in the particular constituency. Hence, several rival lists were formed, allotting places for candidates from those communities, who had the right to have a member of parliament from the given constituency. Individual candidates also presented their candidature, but they usually had very little chance to succeed in the face of electoral alliances. However, the lists were not closed. Voters could vote for any candidate from the lists or from outside the lists, provided they did not exceed the number of candidates set for each community's allotted share in the given constituency.

<sup>23</sup>Vartabedian had been killed on 28 September 1926. The Tashnags had already killed in retaliation another Huntchag leader, Sarkis Dkhrouni, on 17 January 1929; see Khosrov Tutundjian, *Piuroyagan Snangoutiounne Yev Irav Tashnagsoutian Ughin (Arapagan Ashkharhi Verchin Tebkeru Louysin Dag)* [The Bankruptcy of the Bureau and the Real Political Line of Tashnagsutian (In Light of Recent Events in the Arab World)], Beirut: Sevan, 1959, p. 74.

<sup>24</sup>*Lipanan* (French Edition), 4th year, no. 111, 13 January 1934.

<sup>25</sup>*Aztag*, 7th year, no. 212 (1050), 6 January 1934.

<sup>26</sup>*Ibid.*, no. 213 (1051), 10 January 1934.

<sup>27</sup>*Aztag*, 7th year, no. 214 (1052), 11 January 1934.

<sup>28</sup>*Lipanan* (French edition), 4th year, no. 113, 20 January 1934; *Aztag*, 7th year, no. 221 (1059), 20 January 1934.

<sup>29</sup>*Aztag*, 7th year, no. 215 (1053), 12 January 1934.

<sup>30</sup>*Ibid.*, no. 216 (1054), 13 January 1934.

<sup>31</sup>*Ibid.*, no. 217 (1055), 16 January 1934.

<sup>32</sup>*Ibid.*, no. 218 (1056), 17 January 1934.

<sup>33</sup>*Lipanan* (Armenian edition), 8th year, no. 35 (716), 17 January 1934.

<sup>34</sup>Correspondence with Leilekian, November 1961.

<sup>35</sup>Khosrov Tutundjian, a prominent Tashnag activist, told the present writer during an interview in March 1962, that he was going to be the Tashnag candidate for the 1934 elections. The Central Committee of the Party for Syria and Lebanon had opposed his candidature, however, and had decided to support a "neutral" candidate.

<sup>36</sup>*Aztag*, 7th year, no. 220 (1058), 19 January 1934.

<sup>37</sup>For Madoyan's autobiography in Arabic see Artin Madoyan, *Hayat 'ala al-mitras* [A Life on the Barricade], Beirut: Dar al-Farabi, 1986. The same work is also available in Armenian; see Haroutiun Madeyan, *Gyank Me Badneshi Vra: Housher Yev Vgaioutiounner* [A Life on the Barricade: Memoirs and Testimonies], Beirut: High Type Compugraph - Technopresse, 1988.

<sup>38</sup>*Aztag*, 7th year, no. 218 (1056), 17 January 1934.

<sup>39</sup>Schahgaldian, p. 179, footnote 53 claims that Hairabedian enjoyed the support of the Huntchag Party during the 1934 elections. Schahgaldian does not state his sources, however.

<sup>40</sup>*Aztag*, 7th year, no. 221 (1059), 20 January 1934.

<sup>41</sup>*Ibid.*, no. 222 (1060), 21 January 1934.

<sup>42</sup>*Lipanan* (Armenian edition), 8th year, no. 36 (717), 20 January 1934.

<sup>43</sup>Correspondence with Leilekian, November 1961. Schahgaldian, pp. 178-179 claims that Leilekian had actually been a resident of Aleppo, while Varjabedian, Vol. V, Beirut, 1983, p. 158 does not give any specific date for his arrival in Lebanon from Aleppo.

<sup>44</sup>Correspondence with Leilekian, November 1961.



<sup>45</sup>Ibid.

<sup>46</sup>Missak Djerredjian, a member of Leilekian's Electoral Executive Committee, told the present writer in an interview in August 1961 that, from 2 a.m. until 6 a.m. on the eve of the elections, some supporters of Leilekian toured the Armenian-populated quarters of Hadjin, Khalil Bedewi, Ashrefieh, Karantina. They had an quarrel with the Tashnags in Ashrefieh and waited in front of the polling center.

<sup>47</sup>*Aztag*, 7th year, no. 223 (1061), 24 January 1934. *La Syrie*, 37th year, no. 18, 24 January 1934, gave by and large the same final tally of results. The only variations were: Ishak, 5184 votes; Ahdab, 3940; and Hairabedian, 2484.

<sup>48</sup>*Aztag*, 7th year, no. 223 (1061), 24 January 1934.

<sup>49</sup>Ibid., no. 226 (1064), 26 January 1934.

<sup>50</sup>Interview with Hairabedian, December 1961.

<sup>51</sup>*La Syrie*, 17th year, no. 21, 27 January 1934.

<sup>52</sup>Correspondence with Leilekian, November 1961.

<sup>53</sup>*Aztag*, 7th year, no. 226 (1064), 26 January 1934.

<sup>54</sup>On 31 January 1934, *Aztag* quoted from *Al-Nahar*, an important Arabic language newspaper, that incidents had taken place in the Nahr area; weapons had been captured and a few arrests had been made.

<sup>55</sup>*Aztag*, 7th year, no. 228 (1066), 30 January 1934.

<sup>56</sup>Ibid.

<sup>57</sup>Correspondence with Leilekian, November 1961.

<sup>58</sup>*Lipanan* (French edition), 4th year, no. 115, 3 February 1934.

<sup>59</sup>*Aztag*, 7th year, no. 228 (1066), 30 January 1934; *Lipanan* (Armenian edition), 8th year, no. 39 (720), 3 February 1934. *La Syrie*, 17th year, no. 23, 30 January 1934, gives completely different final results, where Ahdab has 9341 votes; Tabet, 7520; Leilekian, 6766; Tchavoushian, 2305; Ishak, 2110; Madoyan, 171; Moumné, 125; and Haddad, 73.

<sup>60</sup>*La Syrie*, 17th year, no. 23, 30 January 1934.

<sup>61</sup>*Lipanan* (Armenian edition), 8th year, no. 38 (719), 30 January 1934.

<sup>62</sup>*Aztag*, 7th year, no. 228 (1066), 30 January 1934.

<sup>63</sup>Ibid., no. 231 (1069), 2 February 1934.

<sup>64</sup>Ibid., no. 232 (1070), 3 February 1934.

<sup>65</sup>Ibid., no. 233 (1071), 6 February 1934.

<sup>66</sup>Longrigg, p. 251.

<sup>67</sup>Arrêté No. 119/LR of 29 July 1937; see *Réceuil des lois et décrets de la République Libanaise*, vol. X: 1937, Beirut, 1938, pp. 24-25.

<sup>68</sup>Arrêté No. 135/LR of 7 October 1937; see *ibid.*, pp. 26-27.

<sup>69</sup>*L'Orient*, 15 September 1937 as quoted in *Aztag*, 10th year, no. 159 (2098), 16 September 1937.

<sup>70</sup>*Aztag*, 10th year, no. 161 (2100), 18 September 1937. According to Schahgaldian, p. 184, 'the neutralist position shown by the Armenian clergy was an important victory for secularist Dashnaks.' The blow was especially unpleasant for the Armenian traditionalist merchants who had already grouped around the Ramgavars.'

<sup>71</sup>*Zartouk*, 1st year, no. 10, 9 October 1937.

<sup>72</sup>Ibid., no. 11, 10 October 1937.

<sup>73</sup>Ibid.

<sup>74</sup>*Aztag*, 10th year, no. 179 (2118), 9 October 1937; *L'Orient*, 14th year, no. 75, 8 October 1937; *Zartouk*, 1st year, no. 11, 10 October 1937.



- <sup>75</sup>*Zartouk*, 1st year, no. 11, 10 October 1937; *L'Orient*, 14th year, no. 77, 10 October 1937.
- <sup>76</sup>Rondot, p. 65.
- <sup>77</sup>Interview with Tutundjian, March 1962. Der Kaloustian denied, during an interview in January 1962, having opposed Tutundjian's candidature. He said he was not in Beirut at that time.
- <sup>78</sup>Interview with Iskenderian, January 1962.
- <sup>79</sup>Interview with Chamlian, November-December 1961.
- <sup>80</sup>According to *Le Jour*, 4th year, no. 890, 16 October 1937, p. 5, the Armenian Orthodox candidates were Chamlian, Tabourian, Dr. Nerses Kupelian, Kehiayan, Iskenderian, Tutundjian, Missak Kodjayan, Dr. Leon Altounian, Missak Vehouni, Nouri Nersessian, Avedis Nadjarian, L. Atakian, Arsen Krikorian, Garabed Boghossian, Bedros Norossian, Puzant Balkadjian, Vahan Nakkashian, Melkon Hazaradjian, Khatchadour Chamlian, Levon Yardonian, Mardiros Bolian and Onnik Bojian. The Minority candidates were Karkour Zayakashian and Ohannes Chaderian.
- <sup>81</sup>Tutundjian put, during an interview in March 1962, the number of those present as 3000. The number quoted above is from *Horizon* (Armenian edition), 2nd year, no. 74, 16 October 1937.
- <sup>82</sup>*Zartouk*, 1st year, no. 13, 13 October 1937; *Le Jour*, 4th year, no. 886, 12 October 1937; *La Syrie*, 19th year, no. 217, 13 October 1937.
- <sup>83</sup>*Horizon* (Armenian edition), 2nd year, no. 74, 16 October 1937.
- <sup>84</sup>*Le Jour*, 4th year, no. 886, 12 October 1937.
- <sup>85</sup>*L'Orient*, as quoted in *Zartouk*, 1st year, no. 13, 13 October 1937.
- <sup>86</sup>*Le Jour*, 4th year, no. 886, 12 October 1937.
- <sup>87</sup>*Zartouk*, 1st year, no. 15, 15 October 1937.
- <sup>88</sup>*Aztag*, 10th year, no. 185 (2124), 16 October 1937.
- <sup>89</sup>*Ibid.*, no. 186 (2125), 17 October 1937.
- <sup>90</sup>*Ibid.*, no. 185 (2124), 16 October 1937.
- <sup>91</sup>*Ibid.*, no. 186 (2125), 17 October 1937.
- <sup>92</sup>*Zartouk*, 1st year, no. 16, 16 October 1937; *Aztag*, 10th year, no. 185 (2124), 16 October 1937.
- <sup>93</sup>*Horizon* (Armenian edition), 2nd year, no. 74, 16 October 1937.
- <sup>94</sup>Interview with Chamlian, November-December 1961.
- <sup>95</sup>*Al-Bashir*, as quoted in *Zartouk*, 1st year, no. 16, 16 October 1937.
- <sup>96</sup>*Le Jour*, 4th year, no. 891, 17 October 1937.
- <sup>97</sup>Pamphlet no. 2 of Tashnag Party Central Committee for Lebanon, 16 October 1937.
- <sup>98</sup>*Zartouk*, 1st year, no. 17, 17 October 1937.
- <sup>99</sup>*Ibid.*, no. 19, 20 October 1937.
- <sup>100</sup>*L'Orient*, 14th year, no. 85, 20 October 1937.
- <sup>101</sup>*Aztag*, 10th year, no. 188 (2127), 20 October 1937.
- <sup>102</sup>*Zartouk*, 1st year, no. 19, 20 October 1937.
- <sup>103</sup>*Aztag*, 10th year, no. 189 (2128), 21 October 1937; *Zartouk*, 1st year, no. 20, 21 October 1937.
- <sup>104</sup>*Zartouk*, 1st year, no. 21, 22 October 1937; *Aztag*, 10th year, no. 190 (2129), 22 October 1937.
- <sup>105</sup>*Zartouk*, 1st year, no. 20, 21 October 1937.
- <sup>106</sup>*Le Jour*, 4th year, no. 896, 23 October 1937; *Zartouk*, 1st year, no. 22, 23 October 1937; *Aztag*, 10th year, no. 191 (2130), 23 October 1937; *L'Orient*, 14th year, no. 88, 23 October 1937.



- <sup>107</sup> *Aztag*, 10th year, no. 191 (2130), 23 October 1937.
- <sup>108</sup> *L'Orient*, 14th year, no. 88, 23 October 1937, wrote that the success of the Government list depended upon the voters in the Christian quarters, who, together with the Armenians, represented two-thirds of the registered voters.
- <sup>109</sup> Interview with Missak Djeredjian, member of Chamlian's Electoral Executive Committee, August 1961.
- <sup>110</sup> Interview with Tutundjian, March 1962.
- <sup>111</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>112</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>113</sup> *La Syrie*, 19th year, no. 224, 23 October 1937; *Al-Bashir*, 26 October 1937. Iskenderian said, in an interview in January 1962, that the Prime Minister tried at first to convince him to withdraw from the race, then, offered him 5000 LL and, finally, a Government post. He refused all these offers, however, arguing that he intended to respect his signature. The High Commissioner even threatened to have him arrested.
- <sup>114</sup> *Lissan al-Hal*, 23 October 1937, as quoted in Fares Saadeh, *Mu'assasat al-Hayat al-Niyabiyah fi Lubnan: Khafayah wa Mawaqif* [The Structure of Parliamentary Life in Lebanon: Secrets and Positions], Vol. 4: 1934-1943, Beirut, 1995, p. 303.
- <sup>115</sup> *Aztag*, 10th year, no. 192 (2131), 24 October 1937.
- <sup>116</sup> Interview with Chamlian, November-December 1961.
- <sup>117</sup> *Zartok*, 1st year, no. 23, 24 October 1937.
- <sup>118</sup> *Aztag*, 10th year, no. 192 (2131), 24 October 1937.
- <sup>119</sup> *Horizon* (Armenian edition), 2nd year, no. 76, 23 October 1937.
- <sup>120</sup> *Horizon* (French edition), no. 75, 24 October 1937.
- <sup>121</sup> Interview with Tutundjian, March 1962.
- <sup>122</sup> Interview with Chamlian, November-December 1961.
- <sup>123</sup> Albert Hourani, *Syria and Lebanon*, London, 1946, p. 204. Tutundjian stated, during an interview in March 1962, that, in his opinion, the 1937 elections had not been free and had been fraudulent. 'How could they be free,' he asked the present author rhetorically, 'when we pushed our opponents back from the polling centers at Zokak el Blat and Karantina?'
- <sup>124</sup> *La Syrie*, 19th year, no. 227, 26 October 1937.
- <sup>125</sup> *Le Jour*, 4th year, no. 898, 26 October 1937.
- <sup>126</sup> *La Syrie*, 19th year, no. 227, 26 October 1937.
- <sup>127</sup> *Zartok*, 1st year, no. 24, 27 October 1937.
- <sup>128</sup> *Aztag*, 10th year, no. 193 (2132), 27 October 1937; *Zartok*, 1st year, no. 24, 27 October 1937; *Le Jour*, 4th year, no. 898, 26 October 1937. The election of the successful candidates was first validated by the members of the Parliament's Validating Committee: Mohammad Abboud, Hekmet Djomblat, Abdallah Yafi, Rukoz Abounader and Nejib Nakad. They concluded that the elections had been carried out normally. The Parliament, in turn, validated all deputies by 57 votes for and four abstentions; see *Le Jour*, 4th year, no. 902, 30 October 1937; *L'Orient*, 14th year, no. 94, 30 October 1937.
- <sup>129</sup> *Zartok*, 1st year, no. 24, 27 October 1937.
- <sup>130</sup> *Aztag*, 10th year, no. 193 (2132), 27 October 1937.
- <sup>131</sup> *Le Jour*, 4th year, no. 899, 27 October 1937.
- <sup>132</sup> Correspondence with Leilekian, November 1961.
- <sup>133</sup> *Zartok*, 1st year, no. 34, 9 November 1937.
- <sup>134</sup> *Horizon* (Armenian edition), 2nd year, no. 83, 11 December 1937.
- <sup>135</sup> Longrigg, p. 328.



- <sup>136</sup>Arrêté No. 129/FC of March 18, 1943, *Bulletin officiel des actes administratives de la Délégation*, 1943, pp. 74-76.
- <sup>137</sup>Ibid.
- <sup>138</sup>Longrigg, p. 328-29.
- <sup>139</sup>*Le Jour*, 9th year, no. 2716, 16 June 1943.
- <sup>140</sup>*Ararad*, 6th year, no. 336 (1619), 25 June 1943.
- <sup>141</sup>*Zartouk*, 6th year, no. 1615, 22 June 1943.
- <sup>142</sup>*Le Jour*, 9th year, no. 2754, 1-2 August 1943.
- <sup>143</sup>*Aztag*, 17th year, no. 107 (3821), 3 August 1943.
- <sup>144</sup>The Tashnag Party followed a pro-Soviet line from 1943 to 1946. It was hoping that the Soviet Union would back Armenian territorial demands from Turkey, see Tutundjian, p. 79. After the declaration of the Truman Doctrine in 1947, the Tashnags reverted to their anti-Soviet stand. For details of the agreement reached among the Armenian political parties leading to the election of His Holiness Karekin I, see Zaven Messerlian, *Meguerditch Messerliani Kordzuneutiune*, pp. 117-135.
- <sup>145</sup>Dr. Melkon Hairabedian told the present writer, during an interview in September 1962, that prominent Christian figures like Emile Lahoud and Khalil Abi Jaoudé had asked him to run as an independent for the Armenian Orthodox seat on the *Destouri* list of Metn, until this seat, reserved for the Armenians, was omitted by Helleu's decree.
- <sup>146</sup>*Ararad*, 6th year, no. 334 (1617), 22 June 1943.
- <sup>147</sup>Ibid., no. 380 (1663), 26 August 1943.
- <sup>148</sup>Ibid., no. 334 (1671), 22 June 1943.
- <sup>149</sup>*Zartouk*, 6th year, no. 1617, 25 June 1943.
- <sup>150</sup>Messerlian was born at Elmalu (Turkey) in 1898. He had settled in Lebanon in 1922 and had eventually established a profitable, independent firm of timber trading with offices in Beirut, Tripoli and Haifa. He was proficient in Arabic, Armenian, and Turkish. He had been one of the founders of *Zartouk* in 1937 and, in 1941-1942, had been the chairman of the Lebanon District Committee of the Ramgavar Azadagan Party. For further biographical details and his philanthropic activities, see Zaven Messerlian, *Meguerditch Messerliani Kordzuneutiune*.
- <sup>151</sup>*Azatarar*, 1st year, no. 41, 7 August 1943; *Zartouk*, 6th year, no. 1648, 7 August 1943.
- <sup>152</sup>Interview with Chamlian, November-December 1961.
- <sup>153</sup>Messerlian told the present writer, in an interview on April 1961, that the Tashnags had first asked him – through Sasouni – to run for the elections together with their own candidate, but he had refused. The Tashnags had then begun to cooperate with the Huntchags.
- <sup>154</sup>Interview with Iskenderian, January 1962.
- <sup>155</sup>*Le Soir*, 7th year, no. 2001, 20 June 1953. This piece of information was confirmed by Tosbath, the proprietor of the newspaper *Le Soir*, in an interview held in December 1961. However, the Tashnag candidate, Movses Der Kaloustian, denied, in a separate interview in January 1962, that such a meeting had been held in the offices of *L'Orient*. He told the present writer that the Huntchags had entered George Tabet's list first and that the Tashnags had only followed them.
- <sup>156</sup>Interview with Iskenderian, January 1962.
- <sup>157</sup>*Ararad*, 6th year, no. 372 (1655), 14 August 1943. Iskenderian told the present writer that after he had heard about the creation of the Huntchag-Tashnag United Front, he had first refused to be the candidate of the Huntchags, because the Tashnags had, some twenty years earlier, killed his father, Setrag (in 1921), and his uncle, Hapet



- Iskenderian (on 9 April 1922). After two days of meetings with his relatives, however, he was persuaded to participate in the election.
- <sup>158</sup>F.O. 371/35180/4900, Weekly Political Summary No. 72.
- <sup>159</sup>Messerlian told the present writer, during an interview in April 1961, that he had been ready to forfeit his candidature if it was necessary to bring about an agreement.
- <sup>160</sup>*Zartong*, 6th year, no. 1657, 20 August 1943.
- <sup>161</sup>The Lebanon District Committee of the Huntchag Party officially declared on 22 August that it had not received any invitation to participate in the Prelacy meeting of 16 August; see *Ararad*, 6th year, no. 378 (1661), 22 August 1943.
- <sup>162</sup>*Zartong*, 6th year, no. 1657, 20 August 1943.
- <sup>163</sup>*Aztag*, 17th year, no. 118 (3832), 18 August 1943.
- <sup>164</sup>*Ibid.*, no. 121 (3835), 22 August 1943.
- <sup>165</sup>*Aztag*, 17th year, no. 123 (3837), 25 August 1943. After the annexation of the Sandjak to Turkey in 1939, the French mandatory authorities had permitted many Armenians living in Alexandretta, including Der Kaloustian, to settle in Lebanon and had immediately accorded them Lebanese citizenship.
- <sup>166</sup>Sami Solh, *Muzakkarat* [Memoirs], vol. I: 1890-1943, Beirut, 1960, p. 72.
- <sup>167</sup>Although Solh's list, including the Armenian candidates, was announced in *Zartong*, 6th year, no. 1657, 20 August 1943, the pro-Solh daily, *Ad-Diyar*, published it only in no. 454, 27 August 1943.
- <sup>168</sup>Solh, p. 71. Chamlian said in an interview in November-December 1961 that Solh's claim was partly true since 60% of the Armenians were members or supporters of the Tashnag and Huntchag parties.
- <sup>169</sup>Chamlian confirms the fact that Solh and Ayub Tabet worked to get Der Kaloustian on their list, after they had both promised Chamlian a place on their list.
- <sup>170</sup>*Ad-Diyar*, no. 453, 25-26 August 1943.
- <sup>171</sup>Interview with Mardiros Iskenderian, January 1962.
- <sup>172</sup>*Le Jour*, 9th year, no. 2773, 25 August 1943, p. 2.
- <sup>173</sup>*Zartong*, 6th year, no. 1662, 26 August 1943. Messerlian told the present writer, in an interview on April 1961, that he paid 20,000 LL so that he and Chamlian could be admitted to the Solh list.
- <sup>174</sup>Longrigg, p. 329.
- <sup>175</sup>In Syria, parliamentary elections had taken place in July. Armenians had participated in those elections in both Damascus and Aleppo. In Aleppo, Hratch Papazian (Tashnag) and Movses Salatian (anti-Tashnag) were placed on and elected from the same list; see *Aztag*, 17th year, no. 103 (3817), 26 July 1943. In Damascus, there were two candidates for a single seat. Nazareth Yacoubian, an independent person generally known as anti-Tashnag, obtained the support of the Ramgavar Azadagan and Tashnag parties and defeated Boghos Beshirian, who had been backed by the Huntchags and Communists; see *Aztag*, 17th year, no. 105 (3819), 30 July 1943. The Huntchags congratulated Yacoubian, although this did not stop them from criticizing *Aztag* and *Zartong*, as well as the parties they represented; see *Ararad*, 6th year, no. 356 (1639), 23 July 1943.
- <sup>176</sup>Interview with Jirayr Nayiri, a Huntchag leader, July 1961.
- <sup>177</sup>*Zartong*, 6th year, no. 1632, 18 July 1943.
- <sup>178</sup>*Ararad*, 6th year, no. 358 (1641), 25 July 1943.
- <sup>179</sup>*Ibid.*, no. 379 (1662), 25 August 1943.
- <sup>180</sup>*Ibid.*, no. 381 (1664), 27 August 1943.



- <sup>181</sup> Ibid., no. 380 (1663), 26 August 1943.
- <sup>182</sup> Ibid., no. 382 (1665), 28 August 1943.
- <sup>183</sup> Ibid., no. 375 (1658), 18 August 1943.
- <sup>184</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>185</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>186</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>187</sup> Ibid., no. 377 (1660), 20 August 1943.
- <sup>188</sup> Ibid., no. 378 (1661), 22 August 1943.
- <sup>189</sup> Ibid., no. 380 (1663), 26 August 1943.
- <sup>190</sup> Ibid., no. 383 (1666), 29 August 1943.
- <sup>191</sup> *Zartonk*, 6th year, no. 1663, 27 August 1943, criticised Father Ariss for attending Huntchag meetings with Tashnag groups and his followers, adding that this was not fit for a clergyman. The Ramgavar daily concluded that this way was perhaps shown to him by the staunchly pro-Western Mgr. Grégoire-Pierre Agagianian (Aghajanian), the Catholicos-Patriarch of Armenian Catholics.
- <sup>192</sup> *Ararad*, 6th year, no. 378 (1661), 22 August 1943.
- <sup>193</sup> *Aztag*, 17th year, no. 125 (3839), 27 August 1943; *Ararad*, 6th year, no. 381 (1664), 27 August 1943.
- <sup>194</sup> *Ararad*, 6th year, no. 382 (1665), 28 August 1943. *Le Jour*, 9th year, no. 2777, 29-30 August 1943, considered the number of those present 'as more than 10,000,' also stating that the rally proved that the list had the support of the immense majority of Armenian voters in Beirut.
- <sup>195</sup> *Ararad*, 6th year, no. 382 (1665), 28 August 1943.
- <sup>196</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>197</sup> Ibid., no. 381 (1664), 27 August 1943.
- <sup>198</sup> *Aztag*, 17th year, no. 123 (3837), 25 August 1943.
- <sup>199</sup> Ibid., no. 126 (3840), 28 August 1943.
- <sup>200</sup> Ibid., no. 127 (3841), 29 August 1943.
- <sup>201</sup> Interview with Iskenderian, January 1962.
- <sup>202</sup> Interview with Messerlian, April 1961.
- <sup>203</sup> Interview with Messerlian, April 1961. George Karam was elected to the Lebanese Parliament on many occasions as a deputy from Kesrouan. He was appointed Finance Minister during the early part of the presidency of Camille Chamoun (1952-1958).
- <sup>204</sup> *Zartonk*, 6th year, no. 1647, 6 August 1943. Interview with Messerlian, April 1961.
- <sup>205</sup> *Zartonk*, 6th year, no. 1663, 27 August 1943.
- <sup>206</sup> Ibid., no. 1665, 29 August 1943.
- <sup>207</sup> Interview with Chamlian, November-December 1961.
- <sup>208</sup> *Azatarar*, 1st year, no. 43, 21 August 1943.
- <sup>209</sup> *Zartonk*, 6th year, no. 1663, 27 August 1943.
- <sup>210</sup> Ibid., no. 1618, 26 June 1943.
- <sup>211</sup> Ibid., no. 1665, 29 August 1943. According to the monthly *Hask*, the official publication of the Catholicosate of Cilicia, the said teachers' strike had started on 22 February 1942 and had lasted for 15 days; see *Hask*, no. 3-4, March-April 1942, p. 64.
- <sup>212</sup> *Zartonk*, 6th year, no. 1665, 29 August 1943.
- <sup>213</sup> *Azatarar*, 1st year, no. 42, 14 August 1943.
- <sup>214</sup> *Zartonk*, 6th year, no. 1659, 22 August 1943.



- <sup>215</sup> Ibid., no. 1664, 28 August 1943; *Ararad*, 6th year, no. 383 (1666), 29 August 1943.
- <sup>216</sup> *Le Jour*, 9th year, no. 2774, 26 August 1943.
- <sup>217</sup> Casey telegram, 25 August 1943, PREM 3 305/10, quoted in A. B. Gaunson, *The Anglo-French Clash in Lebanon and Syria, 1940-1945*, London, 1987, p. 120.
- <sup>218</sup> Nicolas Ziadeh, *Syria and Lebanon*, London 1957, p. 72.
- <sup>219</sup> *Ararad*, 6th year, no. 382 (1665), 28 August 1943.
- <sup>220</sup> *Le Jour*, 9th year, no. 2778, 31 August 1943, puts the number of those who voted at 11,429.
- <sup>221</sup> *Al-Bashir*, 31 August 1943. The Armenian newspapers put the minimum number of votes necessary to get elected at 5699; see *Aztarar*, 1st year, no. 45, 4 September 1943.
- <sup>222</sup> Interview with Messerlian, April 1961, Beirut. Chamlian confirmed to the present writer, in a separate interview in November-December 1961, the content of what Messerlian had stated. He added that twenty minutes after Messerlian had left, sometime between 3:30 and 4:00 a.m., Dr. Tabourian had returned, saying that the election of Messerlian was not certain as a few votes were illegible. Chamlian informed Mrs. Satenik, Messerlian's wife, about this development at 5 a.m. Moreover, former Tashnag deputy Tutundjian wrote in an article in the Armenian language weekly, *Nayiri*, 29 May 1960, that Messerlian would have been considered elected with a majority of 100 votes, had it not been for the intervention of the French delegate in the last minute, who cancelled some of Messerlian's votes and forced the latter to run for the second ballot with Der Kaloustian. The Huntchag leader, Arsen Gidour, who had been active in the Huntchag-Tashnag joint electoral campaign of 1943, admitted the veracity of Tutundjian's said testimony in *Ararad*, 23rd year, no. 170 (5538), 1 June 1960.
- <sup>223</sup> *Le Jour*, 9th year, no. 2778, 31 August 1943.
- <sup>224</sup> *Aztag* and *Ararad* reported that Chamlian had obtained 5837 votes. Among the candidates that had passed to the second round, *Zartouk*, *Ararad* and *Aztarar* reported that Messerlian had received 5694 votes. Beydoun was reported elected with 5704 votes, but the Ministry of the Interior denied this the next day; see *La Syrie-L'Orient* quoted in *Aztarar*, 1st year, no. 45, 4 September 1943. These erroneous results were as follows: Solh, 5991 votes; Naccache, 5904; Chamlian, 5837; Yafi, 5819; Ayub Tabet, 5764; Beydoun, 5704; and Messerlian, 5694; see *Zartouk*, 6th year, no. 1667, 1 September 1943. *Ad-Diyar*, no. 457, 31 August 1943, wrote: 'And the difference between the number of votes that Messrs. Al-Hajj Mohammed Beydoun and Meguerditch Messerlian received and the required minimum [of votes to get elected in the first round - Z.M.] was only nine votes, and without the annulment of the 24 votes, to which we have referred, Al-Hajj Mohammed Beydoun and Meguerditch Messerlian would have been among the winners of the parliamentary elections in Beirut.'
- <sup>225</sup> *Al-Bashir*, 31 August 1943. The same newspaper said it had not received and did not therefore publish the number of votes received by the Armenian candidates.
- <sup>226</sup> *Ararad*, 6th year, no. 388 (1671), 5 September 1943, p. 2.
- <sup>227</sup> *Zartouk*, 6th year, no. 1666, 31 August 1943.
- <sup>228</sup> Ibid., no. 1667, 1 September 1943.
- <sup>229</sup> Ibid., no. 1668, 3 September 1943.
- <sup>230</sup> *Ararad*, 6th year, no. 385 (1668), 2 September 1943; *Aztag*, 17th year, no. 128 (3842), 31 August 1943.



- <sup>231</sup>F.O. 371/35180/4900.
- <sup>232</sup>F.O. 371/35180/4974.
- <sup>233</sup>F.O. 371/35180/5120.
- <sup>234</sup>Ibid.
- <sup>235</sup>Ibid.
- <sup>236</sup>F.O. 371/35181/5169.
- <sup>237</sup>F.O. 371/35181/5238.
- <sup>238</sup>Edward Spears, *Fulfillment of a Mission: The Spears Mission to Syria and Lebanon 1941-1944*, London, 1977, p. 222.
- <sup>239</sup>*Zartouk*, 6th year, no. 1667, 1 September 1943.
- <sup>240</sup>Interview with Messerlian, April 1961.
- <sup>241</sup>Ibid.
- <sup>242</sup>*Zartouk*, 6th year, no. 1668, 3 September 1943.
- <sup>243</sup>*Le Jour*, 9th year, no. 2781, 3 September 1943. *Al-Bashir*, 2 September 1943 had written, just before the withdrawal of Tuani, that Solh would support in the second ballot a list composed by Tuani, Nsouli and Messerlian.
- <sup>244</sup>*Ad-Diyar*, no. 460, 4-5 September 1943.
- <sup>245</sup>*Ad-Diyar*, *ibid.*, wrote that Messerlian, Solh, Abi Chahla, Beydoun, Jabr and Nsouli were present at the meeting. The paper stated that it was not certain whether Messerlian or Der Kaloustian would be on the list, but the second had more chance.
- <sup>246</sup>Interview with Messerlian, April 1961.
- <sup>247</sup>*Zartouk*, 6th year, no. 1669, 4 September 1943.
- <sup>248</sup>Interview with Iskenderian, January 1962. *Ararad*, 6th year, no. 387 (1670), 4 September 1943 had written that opposing sides wanted to have their candidate, Iskenderian, on their list, to secure the Huntchag votes. Indeed, Iskenderian was appointed in 1944 as Government inspector of Armenian schools. From 1954 he worked in the Lebanese Ministry of Education.
- <sup>249</sup>*Ararad*, 6th year, no. 389 (1672), 6 September 1943.
- <sup>250</sup>*Ibid.*, no. 387 (1670), 4 September 1943.
- <sup>251</sup>*Aztag*, 17th year, no. 132 (3846), 5 September 1943.
- <sup>252</sup>Interview with Messerlian, April 1961.
- <sup>253</sup>A declaration was issued after the meeting of Moslem leaders. It was signed by Jamil Mekaoui, Ibrahim Ahdab and Saeb Salam and approved of the latter's candidature for the sake of "Islamic spirit" and "Arab nationalism"; see pamphlet preserved in the Nami Jafet Memorial Library of the American University of Beirut.
- <sup>254</sup>Interview with Messerlian, April 1961.
- <sup>255</sup>*Zartouk*, 6th year, no. 1670, 5 September 1943.
- <sup>256</sup>*Azatarar*, 1st year, no. 46, 11 September 1943.
- <sup>257</sup>*Al-Bashir* and *Al-Bayraq* newspapers of 6 and 7 September 1943, quoted in Majed Khaled Majed, *Intikhabat Lubnaniya 1861-1992: Qawanin - Nataij* [Lebanese Elections 1861-1992: Legislation - Results], Beirut, 1992, p. 76. *Azatarar*, 1st year, no. 46, 11 September 1943 gives different results for some candidates: Beydoun, 6550 votes; Jabr, 3795; Messerlian, 2221; Omar Fakhoury, 1158; Slim, 77; Iskenderian, 6; Hajj Salim, 1; el Baker, 1. *Aztag*, 17th year, no. 133 (3847), 7 September 1943 wrote that Der Kaloustian had obtained 6257 votes; Messerlian, 2221. On 8 September, *Aztag* clarified that Der Kaloustian had actually received 6057 votes. *Ararad*, 6th year, no. 390 (1673), 9 September 1943 indicated that Der Kaloustian had received



6057 votes; Messerlian, 2221. *Le Jour*, 9th year, no. 2785, 7 September 1943 gives only the results of the winners.

<sup>258</sup>According to *Al-Bashir*, 6 September 1943, Beydoun had received 6655 votes: Jabr, 3790; and Fakhoury, 1400.

<sup>259</sup>Longrigg, p. 329.

<sup>260</sup>F.O. 371/35181/5238.

<sup>261</sup>F.O.371/4001/A.F. No. 149/E4033.

<sup>262</sup>Iskenderian confirmed, during an interview in January 1962, that he had withdrawn without making any statement.

<sup>263</sup>*Aztag*, 17th year, no. 133 (3847), 7 September 1943.

<sup>264</sup>*Aztag*, 17th year, no. 135 (3849), 11 September 1943. Tutundjian, p. 81, also claims that Der Kaloustian was elected 'by the votes of Communists.'

<sup>265</sup>To support this assertion, *Aztag*, 17th year, no. 133 (3847), 7 September 1943, wrote that the Armenian candidates received the following number of votes in the Armenian quarters. In Mudawar, 641 Armenian votes were cast in favour of Der Kaloustian; 193, in favour of Messerlian. Der Kaloustian received 500 votes in Rmeil; Messerlian, 32. In Minet el Hosn, Der Kaloustian received 326 votes; Messerlian, 91. In Ain al-Mraysé, 358 Armenians voted for Der Kaloustian; and 18, for Messerlian. The paper added that the situation was 'nearly the same in all quarters.' However, according to *Ararad*, 6th year, no. 380 (1663), 26 August 1943, the total number of Armenian registered voters in Minet el Hosn had only been 205 and in Ain al-Mraysé, 194.

<sup>266</sup>*Ararad*, 6th year, no. 394 (1677), 14 September 1943, p. 2.

<sup>267</sup>*Zartonk*, 6th year, no. 1671, 8 September 1943.

<sup>268</sup>Interview with Messerlian, April 1961.

**ՀԱՅՈՑ ՄԱՄԼԱԿՑՈՒԹԻՒՆԸ ԼԻՔԱՆԱՆԻ  
ՖԻՐԱՆՍԱԿԱՆ ՀՈԳԱՏԱՐՈՒԹԵԱՆ ԺԱՄԱՆԱԿԱՇՐՋԱՆԻ  
ԽՈՐՀՐԴԱՐԱՆԱԿԱՆ ԸՆՏՐՈՒԹԻՒՆՆԵՐՈՒՆ (1934-1943)  
(Ամփոփում)**

**ՁԱԻՆ ՄՍԸՐԼԵԱՆ**

Հեղինակը՝ հիմնուելով ժամանակակից լիբանանահայ, առաւել՝ Լիբանանի մէջ լոյս տեսնող մի քանի արաբատառ ու ֆրանսատառ լրագիրներու նիւթերուն, ինչպէս նաեւ հայ թեկնածուներու յատուկ ասուլիսներու ընթացքին հաղորդած բանաւոր վկայութիւններուն վրայ, հանգամանօրէն կը ներկայացնէ 1934, 1937 եւ 1943 թուականներուն կայացած երկրի խորհրդարանական ընտրութիւններուն ընթացքին հայ համայնքին յատկացուած երեսփոխանական աթոռներուն շուրջ ծաւալած պայքարը, այս կապակցութեամբ լիբանանահայ քաղաքական տարբեր հոսանքներու դիրքորոշումները, Լիբանանի միւս համայնքները ներկայացնող թեկնածուներու հետ անոնց հաստատած ընտրական դաշինքները, ընտրութեանց ընթացքին ֆրանսական իշխանութիւններու եւ ապահովական մարմիններու կողմէ կատարուած ուղղակի եւ անուղղակի միջամտութիւնները: