

## ONCE UPON A TIME IN DERSIM: OUT OF ARMENIA, BACK TO KURDISTAN?

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The city of Tunceli (25,041 inhabitants) is the capital of the province of the same name (82,100 inhabitants). Before 1936, this region was called Dersim, and the Kurds and Zazas living in this eastern area of modern-day Turkey still use this name. The area has been a bulwark of Kurdish-Alevi identity since the Turkish Republic's proclamation in 1923, and it still is. During the Ottoman period, Dersim was a district (*sanjak*) of the province of Mamuret-ul-Aziz, or Harput (1879-1923). Before the Armenian Genocide (1915-23), over half the population of the southern part of this district, which was then independent and called Charsanjak, was Armenian, while the number of Muslims and Christians fluctuated from town-to-town. Perri, for example, was 79 per cent Christian, while Pertek (Pertag) was 84 per cent Muslim.<sup>1</sup> This basically rural area was marked by a symbiosis that emerged among nomadic Kurds who pastured animals in the highlands, Dersim itself, and Armenian farmers settled in the lower reaches of Charsanjak, though antagonisms and disputes were surely far from absent.<sup>2</sup> Once most of the Christians had been deported or exterminated, the few survivors - mostly women and children - were diversely assimilated into a kind of battleground between Turkish and Armenian political elites who vied to "appropriate" or "recover", as the case may be, those small malleable minds.<sup>3</sup> Many orphans were taken in by Kurdish families, a fact attested to by many testimonies written or narrated by Armenians who managed to escape or chose to become refugees beyond the Ottoman Empire's borders. Others, too numerous to count, either had no chance to escape or opted not to. They stayed on, evidently converted to Islam and assimilated their new Turkish, Kurdish or Alevi identity. As Üngör wrote (2015), some women turned to prostitution, a few of them becoming quite wealthy and famous, like Madame Fexo in Diyarbakir. Others kept their identity secret, awaiting more propitious times when they could tell the story of their Armenian past to their children and grandchildren.<sup>4</sup> This secrecy spawned the existence of crypto-Armenians (hidden Armenians), some of whom later chose to salvage their ancient stigmatized identity.

Some children turned into orphans as a result of the Genocide managed to escape and reach the refugee camps set up for them in Syria or Lebanon or Iraq. Though they later dispersed far and wide, some wrote memoirs or presented other kinds of accounts, all of which emphasized the fury with which many Kurds had participated in the massacres. But other Armenians,

especially those from Dersim, affirmed that had it not been for the help of Kurdish families who took them in during the most savage moments of the Genocide and its aftermath, they simply would have perished.<sup>5</sup> Two sides of the same coin.

In 2015 a kind of pilgrimage mixed with academic curiosity led me to Dersim, in what is now Turkish Kurdistan, the town from which my grandfather had fled 100 years ago, never to return. In fact, no member of my family ever managed to return until my trip. This article presents reflections on my encounters with people living there today, the search for my “grandfather’s house”, and the transformations that my concept of “return” underwent. My grandfather never wrote and hardly ever spoke of his life before coming to Mexico in 1923; the definitive impediment caused by the experience of a trauma was so great that he had lain a heavy shroud over his life as a survivor of genocide. But he did recount small, unconnected vignettes, a fragmented version of his life before, during and after the massacre of his family in Hoshe, a hamlet across the river from Perri, a small town in the Charsanjak district in 1915, but now part of Dersim (Tunceli).

## DERSIM

After a short period of fieldwork in Istanbul, where I arrived on April 24, 2015, to describe the centennial commemoration of the beginning of the Armenian genocide, I traveled with a Turkish friend who was also interested in the Dersim region. Lisa wanted to interview militants of the Peoples’ Democratic Party (*Halkların Demokratik Partisi*, or HDP) to complete her vision of the phenomenon the party was generating in the build-up to legislative elections scheduled in less than a month, on June 7, 2015.<sup>6</sup> The HDP was led by two Presidents: Selahattin Demirtaş, a Kurdish leader of Zaza origin who is currently in prison, accused of “terrorism”,<sup>7</sup> and the socialist Figen Yüksekdağ. In addition to upholding the principle of women’s equality, the HDP supports minority rights (one especially active member is Garo Paylan, of Armenian origin and a member of the Turkish parliament). In fact, 10 percent of the party’s quotas for congressmen is destined for the LGBT community, a rather remarkable - even vanguard - fact in a conservative country like Turkey.

Though Lisa is from a conservative family that doubts the veracity of the Armenian genocide, she had a liberal education and is in contact with Turkish, Kurdish and Armenian human rights groups inside and outside Turkey. Thus, like 30 percent of all Turks (including the HDP), she recognizes that the process of exterminating the Christian population that began in 1915 was, beyond doubt, genocide. She had kindly set up our itinerary and contacted people in towns that we both were anxious to visit.

In Tunceli, she was in touch with Mihran, founder of The Union of Armenians of Dersim, but he was out of his office when we arrived. While waiting, we sat down for a cup of tea in one of the always-packed cafés. Lisa's conversation with other customers revolved around my obviously foreign appearance and the reasons for our journey to a place so far off the tourism trail. She explained that I was born in Mexico but that my grandfather was from Dersim, had survived the massacres and been exiled. She told them I wanted to visit my grandfather's hometown and try to locate the house where he had lived. Just then, a young man of perhaps 24 approached from a corner of the café, a mixed expression of sorrow combined with thanks to Allah on his face. He said, "I help you", in broken English, and then said that he bore a heavy burden... horrible, he went on... "bad karma". He explained that he knew that his forebears had killed Armenians and said it weighed heavily upon him and his family. He said he regretted it and wished to atone by helping me. Other customers also admitted that their parents or grandparents recalled the massacres of Armenians.<sup>8</sup>

Once informed as to the purpose of our trip, Ukber asked us to wait. He returned shortly with his car and for the next three days served as our guide and driver, as we talked incessantly. He never let us pay for meals or gas, but drove us to his hometown in the nearby mountains and explained his origins. My ancestors, he said, "*... left Babylon when Cyrus invaded, fled to the Caspian, then arrived here, a long, long time ago; we're Kurds, but speak another language, distinct, called Zazaki*". The mythical origin of the Zazas is actually the fall of Babylon (539 A.C.). According to linguists, groups like the Gorāni still exist quite close to the Zazaki in Gilan province in northern Iran. But Zaza identity is complex and not well-defined. Some call themselves Kurds-Alevis, others Alevis, still others, Dimilis. Most live as shepherds or farmers in rural areas; it is a society strongly tribal in nature, with powerful clan leaders. One factor that unites Zazas and Kurds in this part of Turkey is that as members of the Alevi religion (considered by some a branch of Shi'ism), they have been persecuted throughout their history by the Sunnis, from the harsh repression that began in the 15<sup>th</sup> century to recent attacks, especially after the establishment of the military dictatorship in 1980.<sup>9</sup> For several years, the Zazas themselves, and scholars who study them, have been piecing together a clearer identity, a process of the never-ending imagined construction of a nation. Ukber, I must say, had this identity clearly delineated.

While we were on our third cup of tea, courtesy of some other customers - manifestation of the ritual of giving that is so widespread in the "East" - Mihran arrived and quickly organized a series of trips for the coming days to introduce us to other "hidden Armenians". He also contacted folks in Perri,



my main destination. Our dialogue with Mihran was somewhat stilted due to our modest knowledge of Armenian. Both of us were studying it at the time, never having had the opportunity to learn it under regular circumstances—me, because I grew up in a small Armenian community with no educational structure; he, because he lived in a State that had exterminated, assimilated and banned the language, while stigmatizing all things remotely Armenian. Kurdish by birth, Mihran knew from a young age that his grandparents were Armenians and, when older, decided to publicly manifest his hidden identity. Ever since, he has devoted his time and energies to identifying vestiges of Armenian architecture in the area and searching out hidden Armenians, whom he urges to learn Armenian using the glossaries he publishes. He and other ex-crypto-Armenians organized The Union, and he travels constantly to the Armenian Republic searching for clues to his origin. His activism is admirable, especially in a State that deems such ‘deviations’ affronts to “Turkish identity”.<sup>10</sup> He could be arrested and tried under Article 301 of the Turkish criminal code, which penalizes: “attacks against ‘Turkishness’”. But in Dersim, the Alevi, Zaza, Kurd and crypto-Armenian populations have battled ‘Turkishness’ and all attempts to achieve a uniform, Turkish identity, at least since Turkey began its campaign of forced ‘Turkification’.

### **THE CLIFFS OF HOZAT: “WE [THE ARMENIANS] WERE THE TURKS’ LUNCH; YOU [THE KURDS] WILL BE THEIR SUPPER”**

The repression that Kurds and Alevis in Dersim recall most clearly occurred in 1937-38. At one point Mihran’s planned explorations took us to Hozat, an ancient, predominantly Armenian town today inhabited almost exclusively by Kurds-Alevis, like the rest of that province. On walls along the main street near the town hall we saw a photographic exposition on the Zaza revolt against the Turks. Angered by the proposal to change the town’s name from Dersim to Tunceli in 1936, a group of notables wrote a letter to the local governor to manifest their opposition to the change; the emissaries who delivered that message were summarily executed. The leader of one local clan, Seyid Reza, united several other clans in a rebellion against the Turkish government. The response from Atatürk was swift: he deployed 25,000 soldiers supported by aerial bombardments to stamp out the uprising. Those troops included Turkey’s first woman combat pilot, the adopted daughter of Atatürk and Armenian orphan, Sabiha Gökçen.<sup>11</sup> During peace negotiations, Seyid Reza was arrested and hanged in Elazig (the ancient capital of Harput). Repression continued, finally costing 40,000 lives.<sup>12</sup> “*It was genocide, just as [the killing] of the Armenians was genocide,*” Mihran told me. In one of my interviews in another town in Dersim, I heard an anecdote that an Armenian had narrated before leaving in 1919: “*We [the Armenians] were the Turks’*



*lunch; now you [the Kurds] will be their supper*". Guided by Mihran, Lisa, Ukber and I visited several other towns, saw their crumbling churches, and met other hidden Armenians. I was surprised to find that whenever we asked about a particular Armenian, everyone seemed to know which family she/he was from and which individuals were Armenians. It thus seemed that their concealment was hardly effective, perhaps not even necessary. Close to Hozat, Mihran showed us the Kayışoğlu cliffs, where many Armenians from the region were thrown to their death in 1915, as were numerous Zazas later during the 1938 rebellion. In recent years this is the place where Mihran and other Armenians of The Union commemorate the dates of April 24<sup>th</sup> and May 4<sup>th</sup>, the latter for the 1937-1938 uprising. It has, thus, been re-signified as a site to honor the memory of the martyrs of both massacres.

### THE RETURN TO HOSHE

After visiting Perri (today, Akpazar) we came to Hoshe, the cradle of my family and the starting point of an odyssey charged with deep suffering. In his *History of Charsanjak*, Kevork Yerevanian describes this town in detail, its more than thirty springs, its fertile soils and beautiful willow trees, its church and, to one side, the school for 60 students built in 1909 with remittances from migrants in the US, and the *K'arin Vray*, an unfinished, 500-meter-long wall that surrounded part of the town. Inside that wall, I learned from this author - not from my family, for they did not know - was the orchard of one Antranig Antaramian, my great-grandfather. In 1915, the town had 219 inhabitants, all Armenians, including Antaramians (35 members), Hovsepian (30), and Zurnajians (25), plus 11 other families.

In 1915 Hoshe had 28 houses, but today there are only twenty modern homes. Still standing are a similar number of Armenian homes, but they are all abandoned and, truth be told, barely vestiges, for their roofs, windows and doors have disappeared, though their walls still watch over the evidence of a criminal episode. Today's Alevi residents decided to conserve those ruins as a sign of respect, though, as they said, "*Those houses are accursed, so we don't live in them*". Instead, they built new dwellings. One resident, Kaya, invited us to talk in his garden. While this sixtyish farmer set tea and fruit on the table, he began to tell me his story... his livelihood, the weather, and the bridge that once connected the town with Perri but vanished in 1926. We could not see its ruins because the government had later constructed a dam (the Keban Dam, 1975)<sup>13</sup> to control the river's course. Today, it looks more like a small lake.

I asked Kaya if he knew whether any of those houses, abandoned before 1915, belonged to Armenians. After listening closely to Lisa's Turkish translation, he answered in a melodic, almost poetic, voice: "*Not just the*

*houses... but also the trees, rocks, the river, everything there was Armenian. We arrived long after, my father and family. We were Alevis. The town had been abandoned for a long time; we knew they had been killed, and that's why we don't live in their homes, [rather] we built new ones, but we did occupy and cultivate their fields".* He explained that the Turkish government had moved his family to this town from the east, near Van,<sup>14</sup> to re-populate these devastated lands. In the 1920s and, especially the 1930s, which brought the resettlement law of 1934, the Kemalist regime effectuated large-scale movements of whole population groups - Turks, Kurds, Circassians - to occupy the homes left behind by massacred Armenians, Greeks and Assyrians. The goals were not only to wipe out all traces of their presence and reactivate local economies, but also to 'Turkify'<sup>15</sup> the recently-arrived immigrants. Relocation, it was hoped, would weaken their attachment to their places of origin, while intermixing with other Muslim ethnicities would force them to use the Turkish language to communicate, leading to the elimination of their "foreign tongues" which, by then, had been prohibited. In that year, a famous phrase was coined: "*Ne mutlu Türküm diyene*"<sup>16</sup>, which meant that the Kurds ceased to be Kurds and became "mountain Turks". All references to Kurdistan were prohibited.

Kaya recounted how his father had succeeded in reactivating the fields, even reviving the old "Armenian" vineyards that he still cultivates. This comment by our host provided the opportunity to tell him that my grandfather had been born in that town. As if he had anticipated what was coming, he opened his eyes, nodded his head, and then spoke slowly. His sincere words came to me through our translator. At first, I felt consternation ... then felt petrified, for he said: "*I was expecting... well... maybe not you specifically, but I knew that someday a descendant of the Armenians who lived in those houses would return... Welcome!*" He arose from the small bench where he was sitting, shuffled forward and embraced me...

Everyone gasped, and exclamations charged with emotion and surprise rang out to accompany that incredible instant, a tiny universe with an Armenian-Mexican whose forefathers were from that very place, a Zaza, an Alevi, a Turk, and an elderly crypto-Armenian... together... sharing a spellbinding moment of trans-generational reconciliation.

• But the chat/interview proceeded in ever more unexpected directions: "*Come back*" - Kaya said - "*We'll see the mayor and have the house put in your name. If your grandfather was from Dersim, then you, too, are from Dersim; come back to Kurdistan*". His words and the moment I was living left me in shock; had I in truth received a genuine invitation to return to my family's place of origin, the one I had for so long imagined through family

narrations, reinforced by a collective memory that idealized that place? This was the *yerkir*, the usurped Motherland whose recovery was, and still is, impossible, for it is occupied by an uncompromising government. Suddenly, unexpectedly, Kaya's voice had opened the window to a return long dreamt of by two generations of Armenians, a remote possibility to be sure, but one nevertheless real; at least, that was what went through my stunned mind at that moment. For this was no small thing; somehow, the possibility of an actual return had emerged in the form of an invitation from the man who held the land that my grandfather had called "home".

That instant changed many of my ideas and reflections on what "return" means deep down, for the idea of going back, standing again in one's place of origin, is one of the most important elements in the mindset of all human groups that have lived as diasporas.

Perhaps the most widely-studied of these phenomena, due to the enormous number of people and different historical periods involved, is the *Aliya*; that is, the return of the Jewish people from diaspora to the State of Israel. This term captures a voluntary migration motivated by emotional, practical or ideological factors. Without doubt, it is also closely intertwined with the concept of pilgrimage. For many religious Jews, the return to Zion is an obligation with which they must comply, and even when that obligation is not fulfilled completely, there exists a real commitment to supporting those Jews who need to return because of harsh economic conditions or imminent peril. In fact, almost all such waves of immigration responded to periods in which distinct diaspora communities faced serious hardships, for example, the Holocaust, anti-Semitism in many Arab countries and Iran or France, and the disintegration of the Soviet Union, which generated large flows of returnees. For certain Jewish thinkers, *Aliya* means the end of the diaspora, especially among some ultraorthodox Jews, who consider that the diaspora must continue until the reappearance of the Messiah.<sup>17</sup> Despite this, over three million diaspora Jews have returned since 1948 with the material aid of Jewish diaspora organizations and the State of Israel.

Other groups, including descendants of displaced Africans, have elaborated a similar political idea of return, or repatriation, to the African continent in distinct periods and with differing ideological constructions. This began with the forced returns organized by colonial powers - as in Sierra Leone in 1787 - whose underlying goal was to "get rid of" the "Negroes" that England no longer wanted on its island territory. Later, voluntary returns and other actions organized by pan-African movements took place: one to Liberia led by Marcus Garvey, and the messianic movement built around (and supported by) the figure of Haile Selassie, which aimed to bring the Rastafari home to Shashamane (Zion) in Ethiopia.<sup>18</sup>



But in contrast to those returns, the Armenians had been expelled from their ancestral home, some of the survivors carrying Ottoman passports bearing the legend: "*With no possible return*". But we must also emphasize the fact that Turkey has never recognized any right for Armenians to return to their hometowns, though the ten percent of historical Armenians that escaped extermination and destruction to witness the birth of the Republic of Armenia - originally independent (1918-20) and autonomous, later part of the Soviet Union (1920-91) - did succeed in generating among the victims of diaspora the idea that a return was feasible, an idea nourished in certain moments by the Soviet State and some diaspora organizations. The *Nerkakht* movement, as this great repatriation is known, arose between 1946 and 1949 to promote the "return" of Armenians to Soviet Armenia from the diaspora. I use quotation marks because all those Armenians were born in the Armenian provinces of the Ottoman Empire, or in Cilicia on the Mediterranean coast, for as we saw in the cases of the Jews and descendants of dispersed Africans, constructing the idea of return may center on a mythical place, not necessarily the site where one's direct ancestors were born. Clearly, places like Jerusalem and Africa became vague, diffuse ideas 1500 or 300 years after being abandoned, but the concept of them is still a key element in the discourse among people who live such dispersions. The case of the Armenian return in the 1940s is distinct, for only 30 years had passed since their exile, so images of the *yerkir*, the homeland from which they had been forcibly expelled, were still very much alive. But at that time Eastern - Soviet - Armenia was the only place they could call Armenia, and it opened its doors wide.

Although *Nerkakht* was in many regards misleading and proved to be a great disappointment for the "westernized" returnees,<sup>19</sup> the dream of returning to Armenia lived on, though diluted, little by little, because Armenia was on the other side of the "Iron Curtain". But after 1991 and the re-emergence of an independent Armenia, the idea of returning was revived,<sup>20</sup> and the resulting waves of migrants increasingly came to resemble those of *Aliya*, as people reacted to crises in nations with Armenian communities, to the war with Azerbaijan and the flow of Armenians from Baku (1988) and other parts of Azerbaijan, and to the war in Syria and the influx of Armenians from Aleppo (2014). Unfortunately, the harsh economic and political conditions in Armenia have caused people to emigrate rather than immigrate, including newcomers.

But many Armenians, not only exiles and their children but also the third generation, especially in the 1960s and 70s, held that the "true return" would be to "Western Armenia", the territories from which their forebears had been expelled. To a degree, this return was a kind of myth that would

have to await some type of liberating event, perhaps the disintegration of the Turkish State and the recovery of the Armenian territories. Others believed in the emergence of some sort of federation that would succeed in transforming the Turkish government's policies towards its minorities, offer Armenians some type of compensation, and free them to pursue repatriation. Both scenarios were remote possibilities given the political posture of Turkish governments, both then and now, but the myth remains latent. Today, few believe it would be possible to abandon their lives in the West and go to live in a place in central Anatolia; thus, I understood that Kaya's offer was symbolic in nature, as if he were saying: 'I know it would be hard for you to return, but you can do it'. At that moment he reached for a bottle of wine, *"This comes from the vineyards here; perhaps they belonged to your family; take it to your father"*. I drank of that wine to his health, our health, to this space we shared.

Our chat came to an end, and as darkness descended upon the landscape, I walked towards the river. My companions had left me alone, for it was clear that I wanted a moment of solitude in this place. The view of Perri and the slopes of Mount Arkaj were illuminated by the faint glow of electric lights, while the clouds, in contrast, reflected the last rays of sunlight.

Yerevanian's history, mentioned earlier, says that 150 of the 219 inhabitants of Hoshe in 1915 were exterminated in that year, many of them drowned in that very river; *68 per cent of the population murdered in just a few days!* Many others died when deported or in subsequent years. According to Yerevanian, only 35 (15%) survived, mostly boys and girls who took refuge with Kurdish families in northern Dersim. One of the few stories I heard about my grandfather recounted how his mother, unable to bear the slaughter of her family, chose to kill herself in that river, taking her small children with her. My grandfather was left behind... an orphan. Of the 35 Antaramians living in Hoshe in 1915, maybe five survived; of the 30 Hovsepian, perhaps three, though others might have been assimilated and now consider themselves Kurds or Zazas. I have tried to follow the path of the Armenian survivors of Hoshe in a kind of micro-history of the townsfolk who were deported. After living temporarily as Kurds, some managed to reach Aleppo, and we have photos - documents of primary importance for arranging reencounters - sent to let others know that some family members or friends had somehow survived. In a sort of solidarity among countrymen, some of the 35 survivors of Hoshe undertook trajectories together. We know that 10 came to Mexico, most with the intention of migrating to the US once quotas increased. But a few remained in Mexico City, where they established a small Armenian community.

Places of memory are fundamentally communitarian, often sites of massacres, like Majdanek, Auschwitz, Birkenau, or Deir Ez-Zor, and, in the case of Charsanjak Armenians, the cliffs near Hozat. But there are also more intimate places of memory, sites where a people or several families were exterminated. As I neared the river, I tried to understand the moment that the Armenians of the town had lived in 1915, the end of a world... their world, probably unaware that this same catastrophe was occurring in all Armenian towns and villages in the Empire. For 100 years these million-and-a-half Armenians have been remembered as martyrs, but just a few days before April 24<sup>th</sup>, 2015, the Catholicos Karekin II, and Aram Vehapar, leaders of the Apostolic Armenian Church, canonized them to make them Saints. At that moment, I found myself standing before not only a site of martyrdom, but now also one of pilgrimage where people would come to remember the - perhaps - 184 Saints of Hoshe, including some "Saints" from my own family.

The sound of the stream that fed the Perri River accompanied the noise of a bird squawking as it fished. I drank from the river... all the while recalling my grandfather, his silence, remembering that the word nostalgia comes from *nostos-return* and *álgos-pain*; though in Armenian people say *karot*, a profound *saudade*. My tears fell softly into the torrent, and I came to understand what my grandfather must have felt for this place, to which he could never return.

## ENDNOTES

- <sup>1</sup> Kevorg S. Yerevanian, *A History of the Armenians of Charsanjak*, Beirut, G. Donigian Printers, published by Pan-Charsandjak Union Central Board, Fresno, 1956.
- <sup>2</sup> Arnold Toynbee, "A Summary of Armenian History up to and Including the Year 1915," in Great Britain, Parliament, *Treatment of Armenians in the Ottoman Empire: Documents Presented to Viscount Bryce*, Sir Joseph Causton & Sons, London, 1916.
- <sup>3</sup> Ugur Ümit Üngör, "Huérfanos, conversos y prostitutas: Consecuencias sociales de la guerra y persecución en el Imperio Otomano, 1914-1923", *Istor. Revista de Historia Internacional*, Year XV, no. 62, autumn 2015.
- <sup>4</sup> For an account of this moment and its consequences, see Fethiye Çetin, *My Grandmother. An Armenian-Turkish Memoir*, Verso, London, 2008.
- <sup>5</sup> These memoirs include, Aram Haigaz (1972), *Four Years in the Mountains of Kurdistan* (1915-1919), Maiden Lane Press, New York, 2014, and, especially, Hampartoum Mardiros Chitjian, *A hair's Breadth from Death: The Memoirs of Hampartoum Mardiros Chitjian. Memoirs of a Survivor of the Armenian Genocide*, Taderon Press, London, 2004. For testimonies on Dersim, see Stepan Zakar Stepanian or Hakob Manouk Holobikian in Verjiné Svazlian, *The Armenian Genocide. Testimonies of the Eyewitness Survivors*, Gitoutyoun Publishing House, Yerevan, 2011, and Yerevanian (1956), who wrote, "If the people of Dersim could not play the role of redeemers or fight to defend ourselves during the Armenian massacres, at



least during and after [them], they gave food and shelter to the Armenians that escaped from the Armenian provinces and took refuge in Dersim. From 1915 to 1918, over 20,000 Armenians from Dersim were saved".

<sup>6</sup> In that election, the Peoples' Democratic Party (HDP), known as the pro-Kurdish party, surpassed, for the first time in its history the 10 per cent threshold by receiving 13.07 per cent of the vote, which translated into 79 seats, 75 of them occupied by Kurds (70 Alevis, 2 Yezidis and 1 Romas). Also, the HDP, CHP and the governing party, AKP, proposed representatives from the Armenian community. Since the assassination of the 13 Armenian members of the Ottoman Parliament in 1915, there have been very few Armenian representatives in Turkey, and they were totally excluded from 1961 until this election. Because the governing party failed to win an absolute majority, and could not establish alliances quickly, the election had to be repeated on November 1<sup>st</sup>, 2015. The HDP lost ground – gaining 10.76 per cent of the vote, 59 seats – and the AKP recouped its majority.

<sup>7</sup> Selahattin Demirtaş "Open call to the Chair of the AKP" in:

<http://www.hdp.org.tr/in/english/news/news-from-hdp/open-call-to-the-chair-of-the-akp/10609>.

<sup>8</sup> It is important to note that, despite the Turkish State's denials, this genocide is widely recalled by Kurds, Turks and Zazas, especially in the eastern provinces (*cf.* Üngör 2014 *apud* Annika Törne "On the Grounds Where They Will Talk in a Hundred Years' Time"- Struggling with the Heritage of Violent Past in Post-Genocidal Tunceli", *European Journal of Turkish Studies*, 20, 2015).

<sup>9</sup> James Minahan, *Encyclopedia of the Stateless Nations: S-Z*, Greenwood Publishing Group, Westport, 2002. Beginning in 1980, a large migration of Zazas to Europe occurred and, as with the Kurds, the role of diaspora has generated a rebirth of their identity consciousness. Some Zaza intellectuals have even proposed a separatist movement to form Zazaistan, apart from Kurdistan. Indeed, this region has seen a small movement that seeks an independent Alevi-Zaza State that would be called, precisely, "Dersim".

<sup>10</sup> "Any person who publicly denigrates the Turkish nation, the State of the Turkish Republic or the Grand National Assembly of Turkey and the State's judicial institutions, shall be condemned to prison for six months to two years" (*cf.* <https://cpj.org/reports/2006/03/turkey-3-06.php>).

<sup>11</sup> Targets for destruction during the bombardments to eliminate all vestiges of Armenia's architectural past in Dersim included the Surp Garabed Monastery in the town of Vank, which was hit by Gökçen (Törne, 2015, p. 4).

<sup>12</sup> David McDowall, *A Modern History of Kurds*, I.B. Tauris, 2002. The Turkish government says the number was around 13,000.

<sup>13</sup> On the repercussions of dam construction for submerged Armenian ruins, and the government's disinterest in preserving them, in contrast to mosques that were moved and meticulously reconstructed, and on later discussions, see Törne.

<sup>14</sup> In the summer of 1930, a revolt broke out in the Kurdish province around Van and Mount Ararat and other regions. The "pacification" process was brutal. The Kurdish population was exterminated or displaced. Some said the events were part of an

Armenian-Kurdish plot that sought full implementation of the Treaty of Sèvres (1920), which proposed the annexation of some Western Armenian provinces to independent Armenia and the creation of an independent Kurdistan. That treaty was never ratified, but the Treaty of Lausanne (1923), which delimited the Turkish borders pretty much as we know them today, was.

- <sup>15</sup> In August 1930, while inaugurating the Sivas railroad, Turkish Prime Minister, Ismet Inonu, pronounced words that reflect this policy: "The Revolution, revived by foreign intrigues in our eastern provinces, has gone on for five years, but today has lost strength. Only the Turkish nation has the right to vindicate ethnic and national rights in this country. No other element has this right" (*Milliyet*, no. 1655, August 31, 1930, cited by Kendal "Kurdistan in Turkey", in Gerard Chaliand (ed.), *A People Without a Country. The Kurds and Kurdistan*, Zed Press, London, 1993).
- <sup>16</sup> "How happy is one who can say I am Turkish"; slogan of the Turkish Republic first pronounced on the 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Republic (October 1933) by Kemal Atatürk.
- <sup>17</sup> Described by Santiago Kovadloff in, *La Extinción de la Diáspora Judía*, Emecé, Buenos Aires, 2013, p. 40.
- <sup>18</sup> Horace Campbell, *Rasta and Resistance: From Marcus Garvey to Walter Rodney*, Africa World Press, Inc., Trenton, NJ, 1987.
- <sup>19</sup> Hazel Antaramian Hoffman, "Repatriación y Engaño. Armenia Soviética Después de la Segunda Guerra", *Istor. Revista de Historia Internacional*, XV, no. 62, autumn 2015.
- <sup>20</sup> For an analysis of the transformations that this return has brought about, see Vartán Matiossián, *Pasado sin retorno, futuro que espera. Los Armenios en la Argentina, Ayer y Hoy*, Ediciones ASCUA, Montevideo, 2011.

**ԺԱՄԱՆԱԿԻՆ ՏԵՐՄԻՄԻ ՄԵՋ.  
ՀԱՅԱՍՏԱՆԵՆ ԴՈՒՐՄ՝ ՎԵՐԱԴԱՐՁ ՔԻՒՐՏԻՍՏԱՆ  
(Ամփոփում)**

**ՔԱՐԼՈՍ ԱՆԹԱՌԱՄԵԱՆ**

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Հայոց Յեղասպանութենէն 100 տարի ետք, արեւմտահայ 'վերացարկուած' գիւղեր եւ քաղաքներ կը վերափոխուին: Վերապրողին յիշողութեան մէջ ծննդավայրը անփոփոխ մնացած է եւ այդպէս փոխանցուած սերունդներուն: Այսօր, վերապրողներու յետնորդ սերունդներ յաճախ տենչանքը կը զգան պատկանելու գիւղի մը զոր երբեք չեն տեսած:

Ես ասոնցմէ եմ: Միայն փշրանքներ լսած ըլլալով մեծօրմէն՝ մանկութեան իր գիւղին՝ Բերրիի մասին, ինծի կը մնար մնացեալը յայտնաբերել: 2015ին կրցայ մեկնիլ Տերրիմի մայրաքաղաքը՝ Թփուշի, ուր զազայի մը հանդիպեցայ որ մեր վարորդն ու առաջնորդը եղաւ յաջորդ երեք օրերուն: Ճամբան հանդիպեցանք Միհրանին՝ նախկին 'թաքուն հայ'ուն, որ վերջերս քրիստոնէութիւն եւ հայ ինքնութիւն ընդունել էր: Ճամբորդեցինք Բերրի, խօսեցանք մարդոց հետ եւ զտալ մեծօրս տունը: Այդպէսով երեսակայածս տունը շօշափելիացաւ: Խօսեցայ, խնդացի Քայայիին հետ, որ յայտնեց թէ մեր խմած գինին մեծօրս այգիէն էր:

Այս յօդուածը այդ ճամբորդութեան պատումն է: Խօսակցութիւններ ունեցանք մեր չծնած ժամանակներու եւ յիշողութիւններու մասին, վայրի մը մասին, զոր երկուքս ալ ՏՈՒՆ կը կոչենք: Միասին նոր իրականութիւն մը յառաջացուցինք: