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## **THE PATRIOTIC ASSOCIATIONS AND THEIR ACTIVITY AFTER THE AGREEMENT OF MUDROS**

### ***Abstract***

After the Armistice of Mudros was signed between the Ottoman State and the Allied Powers on October 30, 1918, Constantinople was filled with Armenian orphans, widows, and deportees. The Armenian community established or revived various aid associations and institutions to heal their wounds.

Such were the patriotic associations whose success would be helped by all community classes. The mentioned associations had branches both in the province and abroad. They would morally and materially support their compatriots and work to restore their province by repairing buildings. Patriotic associations continued their activity until 1922. When, due to new political conditions, Armenians began to migrate from Constantinople, the patriotic associations' activity ended.

**Keywords:** *Patriotic Associations of Constantinople, Central Body of Patriotic Associations, Branches of patriotic associations, Armenian Patriarchate of Constantinople, Armenian Community of Constantinople, Armistice of Mudros, Outcast.*

### ***Introduction***

After the Armistice of Mudros signed between the Ottoman State and the Allied Powers on October 30, 1918, the remnants of the nation that survived the terrible Armenian deportations in 1915–1916 arrived in Constantinople. The city was filled with orphans, widows, and the outcast.

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Before relying on foreign aid for help, national forces should be exhausted to have the right to the benevolence of others. Various associations, companies, and institutions were re-opened or newly established in the course of work done for that purpose. Among the community structures were the patriotic associations, prepared for all moral sacrifices and committed to make every effort for this noble goal.

#### ***Benevolent Armenian Institutions of Constantinople***

The Armenian Patriarchate and the Armenian community, being the natural protectors of the memories of their martyred brothers, widows, orphans, and those in need, had a heavy burden on their shoulders. The benevolent Armenian institutions of Constantinople, the press, and gracious persons helped the patriotic associations<sup>1</sup> not only materially but also by providing information about the deportees of the province. Encouraged by their support, numerous patriotic associations successfully collected substantial funds from abroad, especially from American compatriots. The activity of the patriots was not limited only to Constantinople. Still, at the same time, Armenian colonies in faraway places abroad also started forming patriotic unions and/or the main branches of the Constantinople unions in their places.<sup>2</sup>

The priority task of the Patriotic Unions of Constantinople was to search for their relatives, bring them material and moral help, repair and revive the ruins of the province belonging to those families, and help the returnees to resettle in their native lands. Most of the unions counted in building the Armenian Union in the Bera district.

The work was initiated by the residents of Shapin Garahisar and by the Cilician Union, the first of which established the "Razmig" Patriotic Union in December, 1918 with more than 65 fellow citizens. The number of union members increased to 300 in a short time.<sup>3</sup> And the Cilician Union started its activities with 36 members who, first of all, collected a tidy amount through fundraising to take a practical step.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> See "Jamanak", 18.6–7.7.1919, № 60 (3559).

<sup>2</sup> The Administration of the Patriotic Union of Vanets has been calling all Vanets to start construction work in their province since Ekaterinodar. See Call to Vanets Compatriots, May 1919.

<sup>3</sup> See "Chakatamart", 7.1.1919, № 44 (1858).

<sup>4</sup> See same. See "Nor Kyank", 12.1.1919, № 86.

Caesareans and Everekians followed them. Caesareans gave 11 people a power of attorney to do the work, and also telegraphed to their compatriots in Izmir telling them about the formation of a branch there and a fundraiser to follow. Later the collected money provided the freedom of widows left in Caesarea, especially women who had converted to Islam. It was also decided that a churchman would be sent there immediately to organize the memorial works. They covered most of the expenses for the church.<sup>5</sup>

As for the people of Everek, to better understand the need for help, they published a letter from their province, describing the situation of the day: "... there are only 150 women and boys left, the streets are deserted and ..., houses and churches have been destroyed, the school has also been razed to the ground...".<sup>6</sup>

The Compatriots of Akna Kamarakap village also started a movement to repair their town's church and co-ed schools.<sup>7</sup> Also, the people of Yozkat were present at the meeting held on December 6<sup>8</sup> in Gamanto Han of Constantinople to discuss such issues. Compatriots from the Curtpelen, Kinchilar, Mijagiugh, and Eshme villages invited their fellow villagers living in Constantinople to inform them about the survivors.<sup>9</sup> The Union of Small Armenians invited the compatriots of Eudokia, Amasia, Marzvan, Erpaa, Niksar, Zile, Gyumushhane, Vezirkeopru, Hayvaz, Latik to participate in the general assembly without discrimination of religion or gender. The Senekerimyan Union of Sebastia<sup>10</sup> and the surrounding area, the Vaspurakan Union,<sup>11</sup> the Partizaks<sup>12</sup> and Qghetsi's Unions,<sup>13</sup> the Talas',<sup>14</sup> the Rotostos,<sup>15</sup> Mshetsi and Bitlis<sup>16</sup> took responsibility for the work.

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<sup>5</sup> See "Jamanak", 04/17.12.1918, № 3387.

<sup>6</sup> See "Jamanak", 01/14.12.1918, № 3384. See "Jamanak", 18/31.12.1918, № 3401.

<sup>7</sup> See "Jamanak", 14.12.1918, № 3384.

<sup>8</sup> See "Jamanak", 06/19.12.1918, № 3389.

<sup>9</sup> See "Jamanak", 01/14.12.1918, № 3384.

<sup>10</sup> See "Jamanak", 15/28.12.1918, № 3389.

<sup>11</sup> See "Jamanak", 08/21.01.1919, № 3421.

<sup>12</sup> See "Jamanak", 09/22.03.1919, № 3476.

<sup>13</sup> See "Jamanak", 13/26.01.1919, № 3426.

<sup>14</sup> See "Jamanak", 30.12.1918–12.01.1919, № 3413.

<sup>15</sup> See "Verchin Lur", 01.02.1919, № 68 (1889).

<sup>16</sup> See "Jamanak", 29/30.12.1918, № 3383.

***Joint Partnership of Patriotic Unions and the Call of the Patriarchate***

A Central Assembly was established to create a connection between the Patriotic Unions and ensure a uniform direction of activity. The Consultative Meeting of the administrative members of the Unions invited everyone to appoint representatives from their organizational members. Unions formed by the division of states such as High Hayk, Vaspurakan, Pokr Hayk, Taron, Euphrates, and Cilicia sent five representatives, and those created by city or province division (Nicaea, Bythania, Caesarea, Tigranakert, Thrace, and Pontus) – two representatives each.<sup>17</sup>

At its first session, the Central Assembly of the Patriotic Union elected a permanent council, whose chairmanship was entrusted to Prof. Hovhannes Hakobyan, successor to secretary Vahe-Hayk.<sup>18</sup>

The number of unions increased day by day, reaching 20 in July 1920. Some of them had already published their regulations by that time.<sup>19</sup> By the decision of the Political Assembly of the Patriarchate of Constantinople, the unions were invited to present their statutes and keep their addresses. It was also ordered that donations not be collected separately.<sup>20</sup> This decision of the Political Assembly was sent to the districts of Constantinople in a circular with a request to approve the unions or companies established in their communities.<sup>21</sup>

The Central Administration fulfilled its goal in the program regulation,<sup>22</sup> which was approved at the session of the Political Assembly on October 2, 1920. It was ready for application after receiving the license. According to the code, the Patriotic Unions were formed according to the Ottoman administrative division from both genders of residents of a province or city and a village in Constantinople. A union comprised approximately 25 members, and a branch had

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<sup>17</sup> See "Chakatamart", 07.02.1919, № 74 (1895).

<sup>18</sup> See "Jamanak", 06/19.02.1919, № 3449.

<sup>19</sup> Amasia, Babgen Syuni-Binkyan, Bagratunyats, Kasmagyugh, High Hayk Karin, Euphrates, Daranaghyats, Ekeghyats, Enkyuru Keskin, Kirasonsh Kyurin, Mndzur, Chmshkatsag, Bolu, Razmik, Senekerimyan, Vaspurakan, Hayk, Taron Salno Dzor, Divrik, Qghi. See "Yerkir", 08.06.1921, № 497.

<sup>20</sup> See "Joghovurdi dzayn", 20.03–02.04.1919, № 63 (143).

<sup>21</sup> See "Chakatamart", 31.07.1920, № 516 (2337).

<sup>22</sup> "Program-Regulation of Patriotic Unions and Central Council", M. Hovakimyan, 1921, Constantinople, 1–14.

17 members. They could have branches and auxiliary bodies in the provinces and abroad. The sources of their income would be the members' entrance fees, membership fees, donations, raffles<sup>23</sup> and events.<sup>24</sup> But before all these activities, the Patriotic Associations should have received the national government's approval.

In December 1920, the number of Patriotic Associations approved by the Central Administration reached 10, and 11 associations<sup>25</sup> were in the process of approval. The approved ones were Bagratunyats (Kasma), Daranaghyats, Ekeghyats, Efrat, Kuryun, Mndzur, Chmshktsag, Senekerimyan, Taron Salnots Dzor, Divrik unions, some of which had published the relevant regulations.<sup>26</sup> It should be remembered that during that process, there were associations that still needed to be approved. Near the end of the year, the Central Administration once again directed them to organize and prepare to help their compatriots a day in advance.<sup>27</sup> Unfortunately, all compatriots did not submit to the Central Administration. Many avoided this submission and did not recognize its authority. So much so that one part was still only approved in April 1921, but operated before then as well. Unions had another shortcoming. More than one patriotic union was formed in the name of the same province. For example, apart from the Small Armenian Union operating for the Armenians of Eudokia, there was also the Patriotic Union of Armenians living in Constantinople of Eudokia Diocese.<sup>28</sup>

### ***Activities of Patriotic Unions***

The patriotic associations were looking for their compatriots; on the other hand, they were reconstructing the churches and schools of their provinces. They worked not only for physical existence but also for cultural development.

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<sup>23</sup> See "Chakatamart", 22.02.1919, 88 (1909). See "Verchin Lur", 04.04.1919, № 1537.

<sup>24</sup> Program-Regulation, same, 7.

<sup>25</sup> Program-Regulation, same, 2.

<sup>26</sup> The Euphrates Patriotic Association and the Butena Patriotic Association are among the publishers of their charters. See Program-Regulations of "Ephrat" Patriotic Union of Kharberd Province, V. and H. Der Nersesian, Constantinople, 1919. See Program-Regulations, Byutanese Patriotic Union, Levon Tataryan, 1919, Constantinople. See Program-Regulations, Senekerimyan Union of the Armenians of Sebastia, Yervand Acemyan, Printing house, 1919, Constantinople, 1-8.

<sup>27</sup> See "Verchin Lur", 03.10.1921, № 2298.

<sup>28</sup> See "Verchin Lur", 01.10.1919, № 1663.

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The Patriotic Union of Eudokia, intending to establish a library in Adana, appealed to all authors, publishers, and lovers of Cilicia to support their initiative with books in every language.<sup>29</sup> Some union departments sent people to the provinces<sup>30</sup> for the purpose of campaigning. The activity of sending a person to the province was fully valid in that a person from Constantinople was much more influential than any other group during the crisis experienced by the Armenians. This is because, at that time, people lacked a national spiritual organization and needed a guide. Unions were helpful to their compatriots with advertisements given to newspapers, as well as solving inheritance or marriage problems. They often searched for and found subordinate villagers, trailing them to find out the truth.

The Patriotic Associations, in addition to the work carried out at their provinces, made an effort to find jobs for the compatriots who remained in Constantinople. Among them was the Gyurin Union. Gyurin was a province engaged in copper production before the First World War, but that craft was lost during the deportation. The Gyurin people decided to resume shawl making in Constantinople.<sup>31</sup>

The Central Department of Patriotic Associations not only dealt with the issues of compatriots but also took care of the solidarity of the Constantinople community. A circular titled "Hearty Call" was sent to the newspapers, asking them for an end to party disputes and the personal attacks of the party members against each other in the newspapers. The moment was crucial, and the nation needed solidarity more than ever.<sup>32</sup>

Some of the unions, forming branches in the province and abroad, expanded the field of their work outside of Constantinople, intending to prepare statistics and fulfill the objectives set by the associations. The Byutanese Patriotic Union (Bursa and Izmit province and state)<sup>33</sup> was one of the first to spread its field of work outside of Constantinople. The unions operating abroad supported their old provinces materially and morally in every possible way. Working abroad, the

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<sup>29</sup> See "Verchin Lur", 01.02.1919, № 68 (1889).

<sup>30</sup> See "Jamanak", 03/16.04.1919, № 3497.

<sup>31</sup> See "Yerkir", 10.06.1920, № 227.

<sup>32</sup> See "Verchin Lur", 08.10.1921, № 2303.

<sup>33</sup> Program-Regulator of the Bhutanese Patriotic Association, Levon Tatarian. Constantinople, 1919.

Patriotic Union of Tigranakert achieved a significant result with fundraising and successfully sent the proceeds to Tigranakert and Aleppo.<sup>34</sup> Unions also tried to reach the newly established Republic of Armenia with help from multitudes of sources. Three hundred seventy-two gold coins worth 15 kilos were sent to multiple numbers through the Central Administration. For Milk Week, 100 gold was provided to the Armenian Relief Society (H.O.M) to buy milk and send it to Armenia.<sup>35</sup> Several compatriots, who no longer saw the possibility of returning to the province, built villages and cities in Armenia and named them after their birthplaces. Their compatriots who remained in Greece and Syria settled there.<sup>36</sup> For example, the New Arabkir was built in the Soviet Republic of Armenia in 1925 on the initiative of the Patriotic Union of Arabkir people living in America.<sup>37</sup> The unions continued their work in the future, published books on the history of their provinces, and saved historical memories and social customs from loss.

***The concern of the Department of Patriotic Unions in Constantinople***

There was no provision for interfering in political affairs in the charter approved by the Political Assembly. However, contrary to its authority, the Central Administration of Patriotic Unions addressed the Assembly in writing and submitted a proposal to elect a delegation to Paris. Apart from the Political Assembly, that practice also created discontent among neighboring unions because in this way it acted beyond its jurisdiction's limits. The central administration was accused of being a puppet in the hands of a party. For that reason, it presented the dictates of that party as a wish of patriotic unions without touching the ideas of the members of those unions.<sup>38</sup>

Voices of verbal and written protest were raised. The alarm reached such a level that many members of the patriotic associations demanded the administration's resignation. Still, the administration published that the rights continued through the newspaper, and that there was no party influence in the

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<sup>34</sup> See "Jamanak", 13/26.10.1919, № 3659.

<sup>35</sup> See "Verchin Lur", September 3, 1921, № 2272.

<sup>36</sup> See "Arev", 12.08.1925, № 1967.

<sup>37</sup> Masis Petrosyan, Biography of Apah Petrosyan and Examining History of Zeytoun's Historical Great Uprising of 1895, Prepared for Publication by Tigran Gevorgyan and Hayk Avagyan, Jahakir Shabatatert Havelvadz, Cairo, 2020, 46.

<sup>38</sup> See "Jamanak", 26.01–08.02.1921, № 708 (4004).

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movement.<sup>39</sup> The Department of Patriotic Unions went through another crisis. This time, a problem arose when the Patriarchate refused to accept the inheritance certificates issued by the unions.<sup>40</sup>

In the initial period, the Patriarchate appealed to the Patriotic Unions to issue certificates regarding the hereditary, property, marriage, and other applications of the residents of the provinces. This would give a possibility to avoid a series of serious inconveniences. But later, the Patriarchate itself reduced the authority granted to the unions.<sup>41</sup> At the session of the Transitional Assembly, the members of the Political Assembly claimed that issuing certificates is the national government's job. The Patriarchate did not need them because there were district councils, and they could give an official certificate with the testimonies of several well-known persons. Remarks from foreign authorities about wrong credentials became a matter of concern. In the end, the Political Assembly pointed out that the inheritance problems would pass to the Patriarchate and the heirs would also be required to pay a guarantee fee.

The administration responded to all these accusations through newspapers. According to them, those explanations were not very convincing because the Central Administration was founded almost a year after the formation of the unions – and that was quite a long time – intending to establish relations between the unions. All of them followed the same plan and served the same goal. Their main goal was to create a body responsible to the National Authority. They were very successful because, according to their newsletter, they collected and distributed 50–60 thousand gold pieces in approximately one and a half years. They considered the certificate ordinance completely unreasonable because the Constantinople district councils could not issue a certificate about the widowhood or celibacy of a provincial resident.<sup>42</sup>

Despite all the problems, the Central Administration of the Patriotic Union continued its activity until 1922. At the end of that year, the community was put in such a state that the signing of the Mudros Pact could be seen without significant changes. The goals or initiatives that were in force during the days of

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<sup>39</sup> See "Jamanak", 28.01–10.02.1921, № 710 (4006).

<sup>40</sup> See "Jamanak", 30.01–12.02.1921, № 712 (4008).

<sup>41</sup> See "Yerkir", 10.07.1922, № 814.

<sup>42</sup> See "Yerkir", 23.8.1922, № 852.



the armistice were upset by that circumstance, and many of the patriotic associations remained against the obligation to end their activities.

### **Conclusion**

Thus, the Patriotic Associations were the true representatives of the fragments of Armenians in the province. They acted immediately after the Armistice of Mudros when the provincial bodies and prefects had not been re-established. The Armenians of Constantinople and the province lacked national power.

We can get an idea about the programs of patriotic associations and the utility of their work from the Central Administration's bulletin published in December 1920. By then, they had collected quite a lot of money, according to the active organizations in the same region. Many of them also had a nationwide situation. The Patriotic Unions, with their branches established abroad, also had an essential and irrevocable part in the activities carried out for the survival of the Armenian nation and culture.

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## ՀԱՅՐԵՆԱԿՑԱԿԱՆ ՄԻՈՒԹԻՒՆՆԵՐ ԵՒ ԱՆՈՆՑ ԳՈՐԾՈՒՆԵՈՒԹԻՒՆԸ ՄՈՒՏՐՈՍԻ ՊԱՅՄԱՆԱԳՐԷՆ ԵՏՔ

### ՍԻԼՎԱՐԹ ՄԱԼԽԱՍԵԱՆ

#### Ամփոփում

Օսմանեան Պետության եւ Դաշնակից պետություններու միջեւ 30 Հոկտեմբեր 1918-ին ստորագրուած Մուտրոսի պայմանագրէն ետք Կ. Պոլիս լե-

### **The Patriotic Associations and Their Activity after the Agreement of Mudros**

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ցուած էր հայ որբերով, այրիներով եւ տարագիրներով: Հայ համայնքը անոնց վերքերը դարմանելու համար հիմնեց կամ վերակենդանացուց օգնութեան զանազան միութիւններ եւ հաստատութիւններ:

Այդպիսիք էին հայրենակցական միութիւնները, որոնց գործունէութեան յաջողութեան համար օգնական կ'ըլլան համայնքի բոլոր խաւերը: Յիշեալ միութիւնները թէ՛ գաւառի եւ թէ՛ արտասահմանի մէջ կ'ունենան մասնաճիւղեր: Իրենց հայրենակիցներուն օգնական կ'ըլլան թէ՛ բարոյականով, թէ՛ նիւթականով եւ կ'աշխատին վերակենդանացնելու համար նաեւ իրենց գաւառը՝ կատարելով շէնքերու նորոգութիւններ: Հայրենակցական միութիւններ կը շարունակէն իրենց գործունէութիւնը մինչեւ 1922 թուական: Երբ նոր քաղաքական պայմաններու պատճառաւ հայեր կը սկսին գաղթել Պոլսէն, իրերայաջորդ կերպով վերջ կը գտնէ նաեւ հայրենակցական միութիւններուն գործունէութիւնը:

**Բանալի բառեր:** *Կ. Պոլսի հայրենակցական միութիւններ, Հայրենակցական միութիւնների կեդրոնական մարմին, հայրենակցական միութիւնների մասնաճիւղեր, Կ. Պոլսի հայոց պատրիարքարան, Կ. Պոլսի հայ համայնք, Մուրրոսի պայմանագիր, արքայ:*

## **ЗЕМЛЯЧЕСКИЕ СОЮЗЫ И ИХ ДЕЯТЕЛЬНОСТЬ ПОСЛЕ ПОДПИСАНИЯ МУДРОССКОГО ДОГОВОРА**

СИЛВАРД МАЛХАСЯН

### **Резюме**

После Мудросского перемирия, подписанного 30 октября 1918 года между Османским государством и союзными державами, Константинополь был переполнен армянскими беженцами. Для оказания им посильной помощи и содействия армянская община основала либо возродила различные организации и союзы, каковыми являлись земляческие союзы, поддерживаемые членами общины. Эти союзы имели филиалы как в провинциях, так и за рубежом, которые оказывали как моральную, так и материальную помощь, пытались возродить жизнь общины и восстановить разрушенные здания. Земляческие союзы действовали до 1922 года. Ког-

да в связи с новой политической ситуацией началась миграция армян из Константинополя, земляческие союзы прекратили свою деятельность.

**Ключевые слова:** *земляческие союзы Константинополя, центральный орган земляческих союзов, филиалы земляческих союзов, Армянский Патриархат Константинополя, константинопольская армянская община, Мудросское перемирие, ссылка.*