

# THE US AMBASSADOR HENRY MORGENTHAU AND THE PUBLIC-POLITICAL EFFORTS OF THE ARMENIAN-AMERICAN COMMUNITY DURING THE YEARS OF THE ARMENIAN GENOCIDE

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**Henry Morgenthau**

## ***The US Ambassador Henry Morgenthau and the American Missionaries in the Ottoman Empire***

Henry Morgenthau (November, 1913 - Spring, 1916) was the Ambassador of the United States of America in the Ottoman Empire during the most tragic period of the Armenian history, in the years of World War I. As a diplomat and lawyer, he has devoted his professional and human abilities in favor of the Christians' elementary rights for life, the defense of their interests and for the mitigation of their sufferings. H. Morgenthau never betrayed the humanistic principles of philanthropy and compassion; continuing the educational and enlightening task of the American Protestant Missionaries started a century before in the Ottoman Empire, he made his valuable contribution by converting it, under the new historico-political circumstances, into a tutorial pro-Armenian Mission.

As early as 1819, the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions, which had the object of "spreading the Bible throughout the world,"<sup>1</sup> had found in the Armenians a reliable stronghold amid the centuries' old obscure backwardness of the Ottoman Empire for realizing their Christian-reformatory ideas and developing their enlightening activities. As far back as 1831, with the help of the Armenian Mission established in the quarter of Bebek in Constantinople, several Evangelical churches, schools and colleges had been founded, where teaching courses and sermons on European and American educational levels were organized. These institutions, which have been characterized by H. Morgenthau as "means of peaceful penetration"<sup>2</sup> of American ideas, have greatly favored also the spiritual and mental awakening of the Armenians and the formation of the pro-western outlook, giving rise to the temporary emigration of the Armenians to the USA, in the beginning for educational purposes and afterwards for economic ones. Many of these Armenian emigrants, finding economic, political, cultural and religious freedom and prosperity in the USA, have settled in the New World, reducing the number of people returning to the Motherland and preparing

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<sup>1</sup> Jizmejian 1955: 103.

<sup>2</sup> American Ambassador 1990: 55

conditions for the material and moral assistance to thousands of compatriots who emigrated in the following decades owing to pressing historico-political circumstances, as well as for assembling and organizing them as a community.<sup>3</sup>

By 1914, the following institutions were functioning thanks to the humanitarian efforts of the American Board and under the patronage of the USA Embassy almost in every Armenian-inhabited locality of the Ottoman Empire:

- ❖ 369 elementary schools with 22.700 pupils and 850 teachers,
- ❖ 137 churches with 50.900 adherents, 13.891 communicant members, and 179 native ministers,
- ❖ 46 boarding schools and secondary schools with 4.090 pupils,
- ❖ 19 hospitals with 39.503 patients,
- ❖ 15 missionary centers with 146 ministers,
- ❖ 10 colleges with 1.748 students,
- ❖ 8 industrial schools,
- ❖ 5 nurse-training schools,
- ❖ 5 orphanages,
- ❖ 4 theological seminaries with 24 students,
- ❖ 3 schools for defective (blind, deaf, and dumb) children,
- ❖ 2 old people's homes and others.<sup>4</sup>

During already 100 years of its existence in the Ottoman Empire, the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions, had invested about 20 million dollars, had endured indescribable moral hardships and had suffered numerous human losses. In the years of First World War, the American missionaries (about 400 in number), faithful to their mission, stayed till the end at their institutions in the Ottoman Empire, served Christianity and testified the whole world to the sufferings of the Armenians.<sup>5</sup>

"The Missionary Review of the World" (November, 1915) in its article "The American Missionary Interests" has substantiated the centennial interests of Americans towards Armenians as follows: "America has more interests in Turkey than any other country, or possibility than all Europe together. That interest is not political, but humanitarian. In 1819 the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions began work in the Ottoman Empire, and has now for nearly a century prosecuted that work with vigor and statesman-like foresight and breadth. The missionaries have introduced into the country the printing press and a periodical, literature, modern medicine and sanitation, the modern hospital, new industries and commercial enterprises, and western education, culminating in the well-organized colleges and graduate schools. ...The Armenians as a people have been the most responsive to the appeals of modern education. The majority of the 25.000 students in the schools north

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<sup>3</sup> Avakian 2000: 17-46.

<sup>4</sup> Chopourian 1962: 100, 101. Armenian Evangelical Church 1986: 39. Tootikian 1982: 27-28, 272-273. Papajian 1985: 89.

<sup>5</sup> Kloian 1985: "The Independent," September 27, 1915, p. 40; "The Outlook," September 29, 1915, p. 44.

of Syria have been from this historic and virile race. Thousands have taken graduate courses in the United States. It can be said that America discovered the Armenian race and introduced it to the Western World. It is therefore, eminently fitting that at this time of death-struggle America should be the first to lift its voice in protest, and the most ready to offer its help to save this nation from annihilation.”<sup>6</sup>

Although the American Ambassador in the Ottoman Empire Henry Morgenthau was called for “...merely to represent his government as worthily as possible, to protect American interests and particularly to watch over the American educational institutions which had accomplished such great things for the Christian populations,”<sup>7</sup> nevertheless he wholly devoted all his diplomatic skills for somehow extenuating the sufferings of Christian populations, especially of the Armenians, and for checking the extermination plans of Young-Turk leaders.

Here is what H. Morgenthau has told Tala’at, the Minister of Internal Affairs of the Ottoman Empire, to stop the persecutions against Armenians and in favor of the American missionaries’ interests: “...Americans are outraged by your persecutions of the Armenians. You must base your principles on humanitarianism, not racial discrimination, or the United States will not regard you as a friend and an equal. And you should understand the great changes that are taking place among Christians all over the world. They are forgetting their differences and all sects are coming together as one. You look down on American missionaries, but don’t forget that it is the best element in America that supports their work, especially their educational institutions. Americans are not mere materialists, always chasing money - they are broadly humanitarian, and interested in the spreading of the justice and civilization throughout the world. After this war is over you will face a new situation. You say that, if victorious, you can defy the world, but you are wrong. You will have to meet public opinion everywhere, especially in the United States. Our people will never forget these massacres. They will always resent the wholesale destruction of Christians in Turkey. They will look upon it as nothing but willful murder and will seriously condemn all the men who are responsible for it. You will not be able to protect yourself under your political status and say that you acted as Minister of Interior and not as Talaat. You are defying all ideas of justice as we understand the term in our country.”<sup>8</sup>

Being born at Mannheim (Baden), Germany, of Jewish origin, H. Morgenthau’s (1856-1946) humanitarian views were exceeding to narrow, nationalistic or local limitations. Opposing to Turkish racist mentality, he admonished to the Turk leaders, that “...above all considerations of race and religion, there are such things as humanity and civilization....”<sup>9</sup> Then he added about his origin and his political views: “...I am not here as a Jew but as American Ambassador. My country contains something more than

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<sup>6</sup> Ibid, “The Missionary Review of the World,” November, 1915, pp. 102, 103.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid, “The World’s Work,” November, 1918, p. 232.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid, p. 266.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid, pp. 232, 266.

97.000.000 Christians and something less than 3.000.000 Jews. So, at least in my ambassadorial capacity, I am 97 per cent Christian. But after all that is not the point. I do not appeal to you in the name of any race or any religion, but merely as a human being. You have told me many times that you want to make Turkey a part of the modern progressive world. The way you are treating the Armenians will not help you to realize that ambition; it puts you in the class of backward, reactionary people.”<sup>10</sup> Backwardness, about which H. Morgenthau has expressed himself in his historical memoirs as follows: “I have no intention of describing the terrible vassalage and oppression that went on for a five centuries; my purpose is merely to emphasize this innate attitude of the Muslim Turk to people not of his own race and religion \_ that they are not human beings with rights, but merely chattels, which may be permitted to live when they promote the interest of their masters, but which may be pitilessly destroyed when they have ceased to be useful. This attitude is intensified by a total disregard for human life and an intense delight in physical human suffering, which are the not unusual qualities of primitive peoples.”<sup>11</sup>

During the years of war in the Ottoman Empire and under strengthened censorship conditions, H. Morgenthau received detailed information about the deportations, massacres and slaughters occurring in the eastern provinces through the American missionaries, who overcoming road difficulties and risking their lives came to the Embassy to witness to what they had seen and heard. H. Morgenthau has written in his memoirs: “For hours they (missionaries - K. A.) would sit in my office and, with tears streaming down their faces, they would tell me of the horrors through which they had passed. Many of these, both men and women, were almost broken in health from the scenes, which they had witnessed. In many cases they brought me letters from American consuls, confirming the most dreadful of their narrations and adding many unprintable details. The general purport of all these first-hand reports was that the utter depravity and fiendishness of the Turkish nature, already sufficiently celebrated through the centuries, had now surpassed themselves. There was only one hope of saving nearly 2.000.000 people from massacre, starvation, and even worse, I was told that was the moral power of the United States. These spokesmen of a condemned nation declared that, unless the American Ambassador could persuade the Turk to stay his destroying arm, the whole Armenian nation would disappear.”<sup>12</sup> The European powers were also of this opinion.

The American Embassy in the Ottoman Empire used all its diplomatic potential to stop the mad plans of the Young Turk leaders, “...for which civilization will hold the Turks responsible.”<sup>13</sup> H. Morgenthau demanded from the Young Turk leaders a guarantee of safety and security for the Americans, Englishmen, Frenchmen and for the Armenians. But the Ottoman Empire did not give a guarantee for the security of

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<sup>10</sup> Ibid, p. 266.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid, p. 242.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid, p. 263.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid, p. 260.

Armenians and had no intention to give up its plans of extermination of a whole nation. On the contrary, the Young Turk leaders announced that the case of their attitude towards Armenians was of no concern to the USA and that the Armenians would mostly gain, if they were freed from the tutorial assistance of the USA, something, which would urge them to rely only upon the good nature of the Turkish government.<sup>14</sup>

Nevertheless, H. Morgenthau did not miss the opportunity to use his authority in favor of the Armenians. Thus, on the occasion of the greatest religious holiday, Bayram, he interceded with Enver and obtained the liberation of seven Armenians condemned to death by the Ismir military tribunal. The Ambassador H. Morgenthau, realistically evaluating the situation created in the Ottoman Empire for the Armenians and persuaded that it was necessary to take measure "to rescue permanently the remnants of these fine, old, civilized, Christian people from the fangs of the Turks," he applied to the American Government for moving to the USA 550.000 Armenians miraculously saved from the Genocide and succeeded in charging the Young Turk leaders 1.000.000 dollars as part of the transportation expenses. With the help of its councils and missionaries, the American Embassy organized the distribution of foodstuff, clothing, medicines and other important aids supplied by the humanitarian institutions of USA to the rescued Armenians of Anatolia.<sup>15</sup>

In the hardest years of First World War, the American Ambassador in the Ottoman Empire, H. Morgenthau, not satisfied with the efficiency of his activities, resigned from that post, and has written about it in his memoirs: "My failure to stop the destruction of the Armenians had made Turkey for me a place of horror, and I found intolerable my further daily association with men, who, however gracious and accommodating and good-natured they might have been to the American Ambassador, were still reeking with the blood of nearly a million human beings. Could I have done anything more, either for Americans, enemy aliens, or the persecuted peoples of the empire, I would willingly have stayed. The position of Americans and Europeans, however, had now become secure and, so far as the subject peoples were concerned, I had reached the end of my resources."<sup>16</sup>

H. Morgenthau, who after his resignation, had the intention to make the people of the USA know about the sufferings of the Armenians, and to engage them as much as possible in supporting the Armenians in need, has expressed himself as follows: "If I dared repeat the tales I have heard, shown to and signed, they would make men and women weep and every one would see the need of sympathy and help. I wish I had the power to picture an Armenian refugee encampment and to tell how an American missionary hospital fed from its back door a thousand starving persons a day on an average of 3 cents a person with the \$30 a day we gave it.... What this great country should do to show its appreciation of the wonderful blessings that have been showered upon us is for each one of us to make up his mind to do his share. Picture that you are

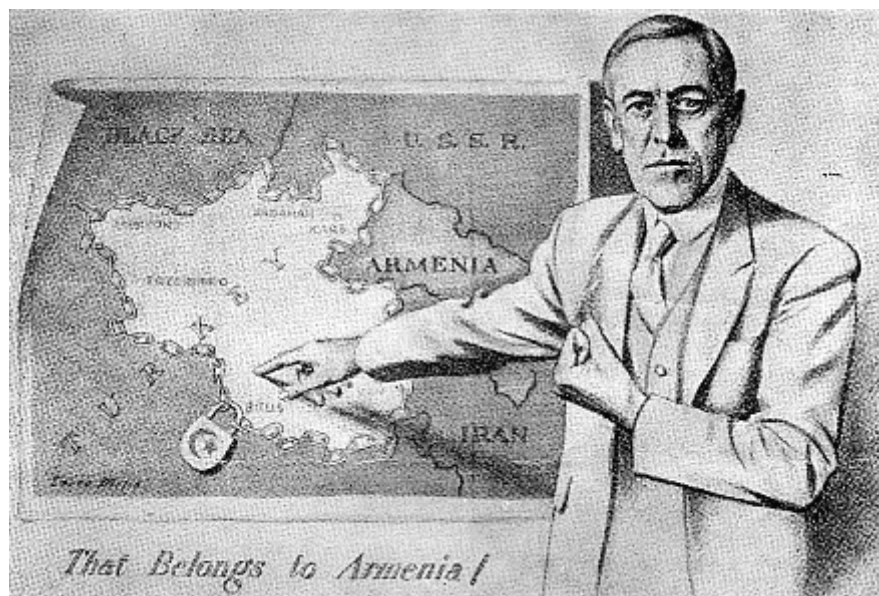
<sup>14</sup> American Ambassador 1990: 119, 275, 281, 291.

<sup>15</sup> Morgenthau 1918: 16. Kloian 1985: "The New York Times," October 2, 1915, p. 50; "The Literary Digest," October 2, 1915, p. 52.

<sup>16</sup> Kloian 1985: "The World's Work," November, 1918, p. 244.

personally responsible for the starvation of one or two persons if you do not give funds to save them. Twenty-five dollars will enable an Armenian family to be established in comparative comfort. I believe every person would be happier to sacrifice something and give \$25 for the Armenians. ...We have been hearing of the brotherhood of men. If we are all brothers, and we are, have we a right to live on in comfort and luxury and allow these people to starve? I do not think we have. I believe that it is our duty, it is our privilege, for each of us to assume the guardianship of as many of the Armenian people as we can. ...I believe the moral force of America will be doubled and trebled, if the rest of the world understands that we are ready and willing and anxious to help the suffering masses.”<sup>17</sup>

Meanwhile, in the USA H. Morgenthau resumed his humanitarian mission with a new impetus. He had an active participation in the re-election of President Woodrow Wilson, considering it an important enterprise both for the USA and for the whole world. Together with President W. Wilson, H. Morgenthau has taken part in post-war peace negotiations, in military missions and in other important international enterprises.<sup>18</sup>



US President Woodrow Wilson with the Map of Armenia

### ***The Public-Political Efforts of the Armenian-American Community and the American Assistance***

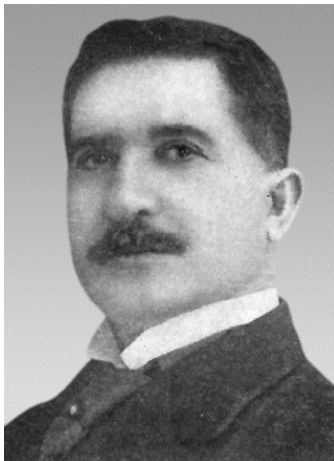
From the very beginning of the First World War, the Armenians, who had increased in number in the USA due to various historical circumstances, assembled the entire intercommunal public, intellectual, material, party and other resources to succor the native land and its people in distress for defensive and reconstructive purposes in collaboration with the American diplomatic, political, military, benevolent and other organizations.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid, "The Literary Digest," June 17, 1916, p. 149.

<sup>18</sup> Ibid, "The World's Work," November, 1918, p. 244. Hovannisian 1974: 338.

The Armenian-Americans have participated both in volunteer movements in the native land in helping the enormous number of needy compatriots and emigrants and in the various political, diplomatic and military enterprises in Europe and the USA suing the Armenian Action. Among such kind of Armenian-American nation-supporting institutions were initially the pro-educational organizations, then, during the First World War and in the period following it, the widow-helping, orphan-helping, poor-helping and rehabilitation organizations, the compatriotic unions, the political parties (the Hnchakian Party in 1890, the Dashnaktsakan Party in 1895, the Ramgavar-Azatakan Party in 1921), the American headquarter of the Armenian General Benevolent Union (in 1908, Boston), the Armenian Red Cross of America (in 1910, New York), the Armenian Missionary Association of America (in 1918, Worcester) and other similar organizations.<sup>19</sup>

Among the active political Armenian-American institutions were the Interparty Council (in November, 1914, Boston), subsequently renamed the National Defense Armenian-American Council (NDAC) and the Society for the Defense of National Interests (SDNI) (in 1915, New York) these two being later amalgamated into the Society for National Defense, the Armenian National Union of America (ANUA) (in March, 1917, Boston), the plenipotentiary representative of the National Paris Delegation in the USA, which had established the Armenian National Union Publicity Office (in 1918, New York), subsequently renamed Press Office and still later, Publicity Committee.<sup>20</sup>



**Founder of the Armenian  
National Union of America  
Mihran Svazlian**

Owing to the high consciousness manifested by the Armenian-Americans with regard to the unity, it had become possible to hold in Boston, from 16-26 March, 1917, seven sessions of solidarity negotiations, during which the Armenian National Union of America (ANUA, founder - Mihran Svazlian) had been organized. The Union was composed of the representatives of the four parties (Social-Democratic Hunchak, Reorganized Hunchak, Armenian Revolutionary Federation – Dashnak, Armenian Constitutional Democrats), of the two national churches (Apostolic, Evangelical) and of the Armenian General Benevolent Union. A central body for the Union consisting of 18 members had been elected (Chairman: Mihran Svazlian).<sup>21</sup> After a short time 187 branches of the Union had already been created. The Union was recognized by the American official circles as the representative of the Armenian-American Community, becoming thus the first Armenian lobbyist organization in USA. The object of the Armenian National Union of America was to unite the material

<sup>19</sup> Avakian 2000: 89-111.

<sup>20</sup> Herald of Armenian National Union of America 1922: 8-12, 30, 31.

<sup>21</sup> Ibid: pp. 11-12. Constitution and Regulations 1917: 2, 19, 20. Teodik 1922: 286.

and moral forces of the Armenian-Americans and to put them in the service of the liberation and reconstruction of Cilicia and the immediate assistance of the needy people, as well as to realize Armenian-supporting propaganda and diplomatic enterprises in USA.<sup>22</sup> The ANUA has had its active participation, together with the entire Armenian community, in nation-supporting enterprises aimed at presenting Armenia and the Armenian Action to the American and European communities, in printing and diffusing political, historical and literary publications.<sup>23</sup>

Thanks to the pro-Armenian lobbying activity developed by the Armenian National Union in America among the US political leaders and the Congressmen, as well as by the proposal of H. Morgenthau, the USA President W. Wilson sent an investigatory commission to the First Republic of Armenia (1918-1920) under the leadership of General James Harbord, with the purpose of inquiring on the spot into the deportations and the massacres of the Armenians and of discussing the most important problems for providing economical aid to the newly-created state; moreover, the sub-commission of the Foreign Relations Commission (Chairman - Warren Harding) put to hearing in the Congress the reports of the Armenian representatives and of the pro-Armenian Americans concerning the Armenian Question on the 29<sup>th</sup> of September, on the 2<sup>nd</sup> and the 10<sup>th</sup> of October, 1918.<sup>24</sup>

Through the efforts of the Armenian-American community and the Armenian National Union, the American Committee for the Independence of Armenia (Chairman - James Gerard) was created in January, 1919, by the union of 60 pro-Armenian Americans, having the object of forming an atmosphere of sympathy toward Armenians in the public and political circles of the country and inducing the USA to recognize the right of Armenia for complete independence. In March, 1919, 15.300 representatives of the American progressive circles (clergymen, statesmen, presidents of colleges and universities) presented a petition to the USA President to accelerate his enterprises in the Paris Peace Conference for the establishment of a free Armenian State, and to transform them into active steps.<sup>25</sup> In this matter, H. Morgenthau was of the opinion that a mandate under foreign protection should be established in Armenia and that "the Armenians should be freed from the yoke of Turkish domination." He believed in the installation of a tripartite joint mandate over Constantinople, Anatolia and Armenia for a period of 30 years as a guarantee for the separate national existence of the Armenians, though this project met with opposition both in foreign and in some Armenian political circles.<sup>26</sup>

Besides that, the Chairman of the USA Central Committee of the Armenian General Benevolent Union, Mihran Karageuzian, has realized a pro-Armenian

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<sup>22</sup> Avakian 2003: 98-104. Jizmejian 1955: 353.

<sup>23</sup> Avakian 2000: 115-120.

<sup>24</sup> Ibid: 119. Hovannisian 1982: 334.

<sup>25</sup> Avakian 2000: 119.

<sup>26</sup> Morgenthau 1918: 15. Hovannisian 1982: 392-396.



cooperation with the General Secretary of the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions, Rev. Dr. James Barton. The latter, in reply to Ambassador H. Morgenthau's telegram from Constantinople in September, 1915, informing that “the destruction of the Armenian race in Turkey is rapidly progressing,” therefore it is important to save the rest, founded the American Committee for the Examination of Armenian Persecutions with the help of the Armenian Home of Cleveland. This committee, consisting of American missionaries, humanists, industrialists and professors gave birth to the American Committee for Armenian Relief. Its chairman, Rev. Dr. James Barton has said on the occasion of its creation: “The Armenians have no one to speak for them and it is without question a time when the voice of Christianity should be raised.” The American Committee for Armenian Relief collected 100.000 dollars and sent it to the USA Ambassador in the Ottoman Empire H. Morgenthau for the needs of Armenians.<sup>27</sup>



**“They Shall Not Perish”**

**The Contribution Poster of the American Committee for Relief in the Near East (1918)**

Soon, when it became obvious that the Armenian tragedy had acquired enormous dimensions and when H. Morgenthau announced in November, 1915, that “the shocking reports of the eye-witnesses pointed out that a genocidal course was in progress,” the American Committee for Armenian Relief spread its activities and became incorporated with the corresponding groups from Syria and Palestine, and was renamed the American Committee for Armenian and Syrian Relief. This organization has continued its benevolent mission even in 1917, when the diplomatic relations between the USA and the Ottoman Empire were deteriorated.<sup>28</sup> The American press of that time had written on this occasion: “The settling of the “Armenian Question” is a task for statesmen, but the feeding and rehabilitation of Armenia, which is being carried on by the American Committee for Armenian

and Syrian Relief, is a task for every man and woman in America.”<sup>29</sup>

Starting from April 24, 1919, the American Committee for Armenian and Syrian Relief was named the American Committee for the Relief of Near East and by the decision of the Congress, it was renamed in August Near East Relief (Chairman - Rev. Dr. James Barton; Vice-Chairman, member of the Board of Trustees - H. Morgenthau).

<sup>27</sup> Memoriam of the Great Genocide 1965: 934. Barton 1930: 4-6.

<sup>28</sup> Memoriam of the Great Genocide 1965: 935. Barton 1930: 4-5. Hovannisian 1974: 133.

<sup>29</sup> Kloian 1985: “The Independent,” June 23, 1917, p. 205.

The mentioned Relief Committee was a national structure, since it got approval from the whole American people, the Congress and the President of the country; it collaborated with the national benevolent organizations, the American Red Cross and the other charitable institutions. The Near East Relief supplied 116 million dollars, including 25 million dollars' worth of food and clothing of the US government, as well as 1 million dollars collected by the Armenian-Americans. The Near East Relief with its hospitals, orphanages, schools and workshops established in 11 countries of three continents, has cured, sheltered, fed and inspired new hope to tens of thousands needy people, without distinction of religion, has educated 132.000 orphans becoming "...the symbol of humanity and compassion ... on the bloodstained land of the Middle East."<sup>30</sup>

As a responsible person in the Near East Relief, in 1920, H. Morgenthau called to save, at any price, the survivors of the Armenian Genocide: 1.200.000 naked and hungry adults, 250.000 orphans, 250.000 women enslaved in Turkish harems, 100.000 of which had already been saved by the efforts of the Committee. "If they were good enough to fight and die for us when we needed their help so sorely, are they not good enough to be given some crumbs from our plenty? ...Let the American slogan now become - Serve Armenians for a little while longer with life's necessities that they may be preserved for the day of national freedom and rebirth, which no people more truly and greatly deserves." As an eye-witness H. Morgenthau has given his arguments: "The deportations and massacres during the war were not spontaneous uprising of unorganized mobs, but were the working out of a well-plotted plan of wholesale extermination, in which regular Turkish officers and troops took part as if in a campaign against an enemy in the field." Hence, he has concluded: "If America is going to condone these offenses, if she is going to permit to continue conditions that threaten and permit their repetition, she is party to the crime. These peoples must be freed from the agony and danger of such horrors. They must not only be saved for the present, but either through governmental action or protection under the League of Nations they must be given assurance that they will be free in peace and that no harm can come to them."<sup>31</sup>

On the 7<sup>th</sup> of December, 1924, the Near East Relief, in collaboration with the Armenian General Benevolent Union, had organized the International Golden Rule Sunday enterprise. In their joint declaration there was written: "INTERNATIONAL GOLDEN RULE SUNDAY will be observed in twenty or more countries by those who have not forgotten that the Golden Rule is the only principle by which people may dwell in amity together. The observance of the day will test our sincerity. It will prove a spiritual exercise for the prosperous. It will provide a vital food supply for the homeless and the starving. It will be an expression of international fellowship and good will.

The Golden Rule is a universal creed, the common denominator of all religions. International Golden Rule Sunday, December 7, is intended to be a day of plain living

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<sup>30</sup> Memoriam of the Great Genocide 1965: 935, 944. Kloian 1985: "The Independent," February 28, 1920, p. 341. Hovannisian 1982: 398. Barton 1930: 6, VIII, X, XI.

<sup>31</sup> Kloian 1985: "The Independent," February 28, 1920, p. 341.

and high thinking; a day for personal stock-taking, for comparison of our deeds with our creeds, for measurement of our lives by a universally accepted standard to ascertain how nearly we have attained an ideal...

Why observe International Golden Rule Sunday?

For the sake of our own souls and our own children. Luxurious living may be as injurious to the prosperous as is starvation to the less fortunate.

For the sake of the children of the Near East. They perish if we fail.

For the sake of international brotherhood and world peace. There will be no permanent world peace until the Near East question is settled. What greater influence for peace could be set free in the world than a generation of children given life through international generosity and taught love by international example...



**"Lest We Perish"**

**The Contribution Poster of the American Committee for Relief in the Near East (1918)**

Tens of thousands of innocent children in the Near East are without father, mother or country. They have no responsible relative to provide support. They are practically all under sixteen years of age. ...There are 95.000 children in refugee camps who should have the benefit of at least a brief period of orphanage training. They have no legal claim upon the over-populated, over-burdened, refugee-ridden territories to which they have been exiled.

These children are wholly dependent upon outside philanthropy...

These orphan children, deprived of homes, parents and country, are, if properly trained, the hope of the Near East. The fulfillment of this hope is within our power and within our purses, and it is within our hearts if we believe in the Golden Rule.

Enlarge, enrich your family circle. Invite one of these little children as an invisible guest to your family table for the coming year...

"Whatsoever ye would that others should do unto you (or unto your children left desolate), do ye even so unto them".<sup>32</sup>

The essence of the project was the following: "...All persons who believe in the Golden Rule are asked to provide for their Sunday dinner approximately the same simple menu provided for the tens of thousands of children in Near East Relief orphanages, and then make a substantial contribution to the Near East Relief for the purchase of food for one or more orphan child for the coming year." The Armenian-Americans were called to collect 100.000 dollars. The total collected amount was to be equally shared between two organizations. At least 32.000 Armenian orphans would be

<sup>32</sup> International Golden Rule 1924: 1-4.

saved thanks to this benevolent measure. The Armenian Committee in the International Golden Rule Sunday enterprise was represented by 90 notables from the Armenian-American community, including ministers of the Armenian Evangelical and Apostolic Churches, intellectuals, military-men, etc.<sup>33</sup>

According to the estimation of the Chairman of the Near East Relief, Rev. Dr. James Barton, "the work of the Committee has demonstrated practical Christianity without sectarianism, and without ecclesiastical form, recognizing the rights of each and all to their ancestral faith while expressing religion in terms of sacrifice and service that others might live and be benefited. Its creed was the Golden Rule and its ritual the devotion of life and treasure to the healing of wounds caused by war. ...It is the story of the ideals of America translated into disinterested service. ...This is a narrative of American philanthropy."<sup>34</sup>

American philanthropy towards the Armenians has also been manifested in the person of the President of the USA of that time, Woodrow Wilson, who was well informed about the Armenian massacres and torments from the reports of H. Morgenthau. The political policy of the President of the USA towards the Armenians was based on his principle, expressed in 1918: "We will not put our arms down until the nations oppressed by Turkey find their freedom. ...The systematic slaughters accomplished against Armenian population compel us to sweep off this ignorant and sick gang from Europe. Armenia must be given its historical right."<sup>35</sup>

By the active efforts of the Armenian-Americans and by decision of the USA President and the Congress, the "Armenian Day" was declared throughout the country on October 21-22, 1916; meetings, protest demonstrations and speeches were organized in about 400 American towns condemning the violence perpetrated in the Ottoman Empire against the Armenians, special pro-Armenian ceremonies and contribution programs were arranged. The American people have expressed its cordiality to the Christian nations pursued and persecuted under Turkish tyranny and has donated more than 30 million dollars. The Armenia-America Society of American Friends of Armenia was soon organized (Chairman - the pro-Armenian lawyer Walter George Smith), which, in consultation with the Armenian Commission, undertook enterprises in favor of the Armenian Action in American public and governmental circles until the Lausanne Congress.<sup>36</sup>

Thus, within the most tragic years of the First World War, Henry Morgenthau, the American Ambassador in the Ottoman Empire, where the land was soaked in Armenian blood and sufferings, not only expressed and defended the governmental-diplomatic interests of his country, but also, as an eye-witness, he impartially estimated and condemned the historical facts.

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<sup>33</sup> Ibid.

<sup>34</sup> Barton 1930: IX, XI.

<sup>35</sup> Kloian 1985: "The New York Times," March 10, 1916, p. 146. Lazian 1946: 284.

<sup>36</sup> Avakian 2000: 115-120.

During the years of the First World War and the following years, which were disastrous for the Armenian people, the Armenian community of the US, assembling its entire intra-communal intellectual, financial, public and political resources, has assisted the Motherland and its people by all the possible diplomatic, political, military and human means and has taken part in the enterprises aiming at the defense of the Armenian Case, particularly in the USA.

The calamitous political situation created in the Ottoman Empire following the First World War and in Czarist Russia, as well as the loss of confidence in the Allied States destroyed in the soul of thousands of emigrants the sacred dream of returning to their Homeland and they definitively established in the New Land of their adoption.

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