

SOME REMARKS ON THE HISTORY OF ARMENIAN REFUGEES IN SOUTHEAST AND EAST-CENTRAL EUROPE WITH A SPECIAL REGARD TO HUNGARY

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On the centenary of the Armenian Genocide we face great humanitarian challenges around the world – in Ukraine, Iraq or Syria – with tremendous flows of refugees and other horrific consequences of crimes against humanity. Humanitarian assistance of those in need by any state, organization or individual means a commitment to universal values – the introduction, development and practice of international rights of refugees of war, persecution or genocide in the past century had stood for such values. Refugee rights and internationally organized humanitarian efforts towards refugees point to a long history; however, their institutionalization and legislation on an international level took place during and after the First World War, most essentially in the frameworks of the League of Nations, unfolding the institution of the High Commissioner for Refugees, first, in the person of Fridtjof Nansen. Interwar Hungarian government, just like the rest of the Southeast and East-Central European countries took part in this process, however, only in a limited way.

In this article, first, I will briefly introduce the historical context of interwar Southeast- and East-Central European refugee affairs with a special regard to the question of Armenian refugees; then, I will highlight the different dimensions of manifestations of the Armenian question in Hungary; the prospects, potentials and limits of humanitarianism and refugee rights in interwar Hungary in the context of the Hungarian diplomacy of the 1920s; and I will present the most essential stages of the development of the Armenian refugee community in Hungary. The sources of the study were researched in the *National Archives of Hungary*, *National Archives of Armenia*, *Archives State Agency of Bulgaria* and *Budapest City Archives*.

I. Limits of humanitarianism in interwar Eastern Europe

As maintained by Khachig Tölölyan, the Armenian diaspora in Europe consists of some 400 000 people, out of whom approximately 300 000 are habitants of France.¹ The majority of these diaspora Armenians are descendants of survivors of the Armenian Genocide, refugees, who sought refuge in Europe, establishing modern Armenian diaspora – in Armenian, *spyurk* (սփյւռք). Although Eastern Europe is home to Armenian

¹ This is a longer version of a paper I presented in an International Conference entitled “Crossing the Centennial: The Historiography of the Armenian Genocide Re-Evaluated,” that took place at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln, March 19-20, 2015. I thank Prof. Dr. Sándor Óze for his countenance in the course of my studies and researches.

Tölölyan Khachig, “Armenian Diaspora,” In: *Encyclopedia of Diasporas*, ed. Ember Melvin, Ember Carol R., Skoggard Ian, New York: 2004, p. 38.

communities of a long history – e.g. in Bulgaria, Transylvania, Moldova, Ukraine, Poland –, the remaining 100 000 diaspora Armenians are partially descendants of refugees settled mostly in Southeast and East-Central Europe – hereinafter referred to only as Eastern Europe – and Germany. As for a narrower localization of our topic, although “Eastern Europe” as a territorial entity has numerous geographical, political and historical designations, regarding the history of the forced migration of Armenian refugees in the region, one can easily outline a strait region from Constantinople to Prague – including Thrace, Greece, Albania, Bulgaria, Romania, Hungary and Czechoslovakia –, that was affected by the flight of Armenian asylum seekers. Eastern Europe appeared as a transit region for refugees – both Armenian and Russian – in the early 1920s, and – partially – gave place to the last waves of the genocide itself in Eastern Thrace.² Although back in the day there was not a sophisticated international system for migration and asylum-seeking, the lack of travel- and identity documents of the refugees meant a great obstacle in the course of their forced migration, and for this reason, a considerable number of refugees decided, or had no other option but to permanently reside in one of the Eastern European states.

Notwithstanding that the exact number of Armenian refugees in these lands is as yet to be determined, to conclude some of the statistics I have encountered during my researches, it can be stated that in the early 1920s, there were some 6000 Armenian refugees in the thirteen refugee camps of Constantinople, and some 30 000 other Armenians dwelled in the city in 1923.³ In Thrace there were 7500 Armenian refugees in 1924;⁴ while to the whole of Greece, according to Richard Clogg, some 80 000 Armenian refugees arrived, most essentially after the Greco-Turkish war of 1919-1922, however, only some 55 000 remained in the country by August 1924.⁵ In Bulgaria, according to

² To provide with a specific example, in Rodosto (today Tekirdag, TR), the Inter-Allied Mission reported to the High Commissioner for Refugees on 22 November 1922, that after the Greek Administration left and the Allied troops were also about to desert the city, Turkish citizens and militarists prosecuted the Armenian population of the city: “The robberies in the churches and the wholesale requisitioning, however, is making the Armenian community begin to realize that poor as they are, they will not be left with even the clothes they stand up in after the Mission has left.” See: Extract from report from Inter-Allied Mission, Rodosto; Dated 22nd. November 1922. *Archives State Agency – Sofia*; KMF 24/891/2. p. 7.

³ In September 1923 an average of 6,206 were in total, 78 in the refugee camp of Ainaly-Tchechmé, 69 in the camp of the Andonian Convent, 1288 in Bechiktache, 212 in Kadikeuy, 962 in Koum-Kapou, 110 in Courou-Tchechmé, 481 in Galata, 439 in Hasskeuy, 114 in Makrikeuy, 1706 in Ortakeuy, 422 in Psamatia, 175 in Sakiz-Agatach and 150 in Scutari. See: Childs, Lawford: Report on the Armenian refugee situation in Constantinople. High Commission for refugees, Constantinople Office Pera, Hanal Bachi, Rue Serkis, 11. 25th October 1923. Annex: Number of the Armenian Refugees within the camps for the month of September 1923. *Armenian National Archives*, 430/1/1259. p. 576.

⁴ 25% were men, 35% women and 40% children. 25% were craftsmen (artisan), 30% tiller (cultivateurs), 25% workmen (ouvrier) and 20% handicraftsmen. The majority of women were also capable of work, with several skilled weavers, rug makers and craftsmen. See: Les réfugiés arméniens de Thrace. *Armenian National Archives*, 430/1/1314. p. 2362.

⁵ Clogg Richard, *Minorities in Greece: Aspects of a Plural Society*, London, 2002. p. 95. It should be noted, however, that in the 1920s, Greek authorities, aiming to draw more attention on the difficult

the official census of the 31st of December, 1920, there were 11,102 Armenians – together with the old Armenian community –,⁶ however, by 1926, the number of Armenian refugees expanded to approximately 20 000.⁷ There were, in Romania, as estimated by Carlile Aylmer Macartney and Enrico Aci Monfosca, some 12 000 Armenian refugees in the late 1920s,⁸ while only some 200 to 250 individuals both in Czechoslovakia and in Hungary.⁹

The two countries that had the largest influx of Armenian refugees in the region, Greece and Bulgaria, were also subjects to massive waves of refugees of ethnic Greeks and Bulgarians. Post-World War Greece, particularly during and after the Greco-Turkish war of 1919-1922, received over a million Greek refugees from Asia Minor;¹⁰ while over 200 000 Bulgarian refugees were compelled to migrate to Bulgaria after the Balkan Wars and the First World War, partially as a result of the population exchange with Greece.¹¹ Official Greek and Bulgarian approaches to the “refugee problem” regarding ethnic Armenian refugees were consilient, inasmuch as both states urged for years the relocation – or as it was referred to in the 1920s: repatriation, resettlement or evacuation – of Armenian refugees to other European countries or Soviet Armenia.

refugees situation in Greece, reported much higher numbers of Armenian refugees in the country. In 1924, Argiropoulos, Greek representative to the League of Nations, on the second meeting of the twenty-ninth session of the Council of the League, reported that “the number of Armenian refugees in Greece amounted to 120.000.” See: Council/29th Session/P.V.2 (1) League of Nations. Communicated to the Council and Members of the League. Minutes. Armenian refugees. *Armenian National Archives*, 430/1/1314. p. 2653. In 1929, Elliot Grinnell Mears estimated that some 30 000 Armenians remained in the country. See: GRINNELL MEARS, Elliot: *Greece today*. The aftermath of the refugee impact. Stanford, 1929. p. 302.

⁶ Enquiry into the economic situation in Bulgaria arising out of the influx of refugees of various nationalities, with certain conclusions and recommendations. Prepared by Colonel James Procter, International Labour Office. See: *Archives State Agency – Sofia*; KMF 24/891/3. p. 30.

⁷ Reply of the Bulgarian Government to the enquiry letter of the High Commissariat for Refugees of the League of Nations in connection with the Russian and Armenian refugees residing in the country, signed by later Prime Minister, that time Minister of Foreign Affairs Andrei Liaptcheff. See: *Archives State Agency – Sofia*; Fond 176/10/459. pp. 39-43.

⁸ Macartney Carlile Aylmer, *National States and National Minorities*, Oxford : Oxford University Press, 1934, Monfosca Enrico Aci, *Le Minoranze Nazionali contemplate dagli Atti internazionali*. Vallecchi, 1928.

⁹ Conférence Intergouvernementale du 10 mai 1926 pour la question des réfugiés russes et arméniens. Résumé des réponses des Gouvernements au Questionnaire du 24 décembre 1925 No. Rr401/001/1 du Dr. F. Nansen, Haut-Commissaire pour les Réfugiés. See: *Archives State Agency – Sofia*; KMF 176/10/459. pp. 69-96.

¹⁰ Clogg Richard: *A Concise History of Greece*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013.

¹¹ Between 1913 and 1935 some 221,191 individuals, or 51,931 families of ethnic Bulgarian refugees moved to Bulgaria. See: Enquiry into the economic situation in Bulgaria arising out of the influx of refugees of various nationalities, with certain conclusions and recommendations. Prepared by Colonel James Procter, International Labour Office. See: *Archives State Agency – Sofia*; KMF 24/891/3. p. 45. For more information see: Trifonov Staïko, “Bezhaniskiyat vüpros v bülgariya (1913-1915) [The problem of refugees in Bulgaria (1913-1915)]” In *Annuaire de l’Universite de Sofia „Kliment Ohridski” – Faculte D’Historie*. 1985/78. pp. 188-235.

Representatives of Greece and Bulgaria to the League of Nations affirmed that although the authorities of the two countries financially supported the Armenian refugees for years – Greece with some 70 000 000 Drachmas (or £ 280.000) by 1924;¹² Bulgaria and other international bodies with some 2,200 000 Levs by 1935¹³ –, they were in no position to continue their humanitarian efforts, since they had a large number of ethnic Greek and Bulgarian refugees to take care of. The idea of relocating a large number of ethnic Armenian refugees to Soviet Armenia was considered to be the most feasible and possibly the only solution to the so called Armenian “refugee problem” of the 1920s by the League of Nations too. A *Commission appointed to Study the Question of the Settlement of Armenian Refugees* led by Fridtjof Nansen was established, and further consisted of G. Carle, C. E. Dupuis, Pio Lo Savio and Vidkun Quisling, future fascist leader of Norway. The Commission, after field trips and a careful study of the question found and declared that out of the great mass of Armenian refugees spread throughout the Middle East and Europe, those residing in Constantinople and Greece “are in need of immediate repatriation.”¹⁴ In 1923, Fridtjof Nansen announced a plan of the relocation of 50 000 Armenian refugees in the Sardarabad region of Soviet Armenia, and commenced negotiations with the Soviet authorities.¹⁵ In 1924 the Albanian Government subscribed for a sum of 1000 Swiss francs to participate in the relocation of the Armenian refugees,¹⁶ and Bulgaria also declared its commitment to the “evacuation” of Armenian refugees residing in its territory. On 17 September 1925, Ivan Madjaroff, on behalf of the Bulgarian authorities in his declaration submitted to the Sixth Assembly of the League declared that Bulgaria in collaboration with the Refugee Service of the International Labour Office, will continue “the evacuation of foreign refugees residing in the country until it can be still implemented.”¹⁷

On the meetings of the Assembly and the Council of the League, Nansen repeatedly sought for, and called upon possible donor states to provide aid or a loan for the execution of the “repatriation scheme” of Armenian refugees. Although the scheme was modified

¹² Council/29th Session/P.V.2 (1) League of Nations. Communicated to the Council and Members of the League. Minutes. Armenian refugees. *Armenian National Archives, Fond 430/1/1314*. p. 2653.

¹³ Enquiry into the economic situation in Bulgaria arising out of the influx of refugees of various nationalities, with certain conclusions and recommendations. Prepared by Colonel James Procter, International Labour Office. See: *Archives State Agency – Sofia; KMF 24/891/3*. p. 54.

¹⁴ Report by Dr. Fridtjof Nansen. President of the Commission appointed to Study the Question of the Settlement of Armenian Refugees. Lysaker, 28 July 1926. League of Nations – International Labor Office. *Armenian National Archives, Fond 1168/1/362*. pp. 1-25.

¹⁵ League of Nations. Scheme for the Settlement of 50 000 Armenians in the Caucasus. Note by the Secretary-General. *Armenian National Archives, Fond 1168/1/337*. p. 10-13. [original reference number: C.643.1923.]

¹⁶ Scheme for the Permanent Settlement of 50 000 Armenian Refugees. Subscription from the Albanian Government. Note by the Secretary-General. Genève, le 7 Octobre 1924. See: *National Archives of Hungary, Fond K78/43/XIII-7*.

¹⁷ Déclaration de Monsieur M. Madjaroff faite à la V-me Commission de la VI-me Assemblée de la Société des Nations. See : *Archives State Agency – Sofia; Fond 176/10/459*, pp. 98-99.

several times – reducing the number of refugees to be “evacuated” to 15 000 –, due to the lack of interest by the member states of the League, eventually, the plan had not been implemented.¹⁸ However, *ad hoc* relocations of Armenian refugees had been carried out in Constantinople, Greece and Bulgaria. From Constantinople, due to the pressure of Turkish authorities, the *Armenian Orphan and Refugee Relief* – sponsored equally by the *Near East Relief of America* and *Lord Mayor’s Fund*, led by H. Khachaturian – was forced to deport 6000 elder Armenian refugees outside of Turkey, replacing them in France, Syria, Argentine, Greece, Italy and the U.S.A.¹⁹ In 1924, some 8000 Armenian refugees – approximately 1500 men, 2000 women and 4500 children – were evacuated from Bulgaria,²⁰ while from Greece, as stated above, several thousands of Armenians emigrated either voluntarily, or, in some cases, rather forcibly. In fact, although some 14 000 Armenian refugees registered voluntarily for transfer to Soviet Armenia,²¹ in late 1925, masses of Armenian refugees in Greece were protesting “against alleged forcible repatriation”²² and “their unwilling inclusion in repatriation lists. Many of those Refugees stated that their past political history would render their presence in Soviet Armenia unacceptable to the Soviet authorities.”²³ Thus, by July 1926, the number of Armenian refugees in European Turkey and Constantinople had been reduced to approximately 5000,²⁴ and their number decreased dramatically in Bulgaria and Greece too.

As for the manifestations of Czechoslovakia’s relations to the question of Armenian refugees, the first steps were taken by the National Armenian Delegation to the League of Nations in the summer of 1922, when, in a correspondence with President Tomas Garrigue Masaryk and that times Minister of Foreign Affairs Edward Benes, the Delegation declared its amity towards the East-Central European state, upholding their good relations.²⁵ This was followed by Czechoslovakia’s ratification of both intergovernmental

¹⁸ Only Nubar Pascha’s Benevolent Union and the German Government showed signs of commitment to the cause and proposed allocations.

¹⁹ Childs Lawford, *Report on the Armenian refugee situation in Constantinople. High Commission for refugees*, Constantinople: Office Pera, Hanal Bachi, Rue Serkis, 11. 25th October 1923. *Armenian National Archives, Fond 430/1/1259* [original reference number: 48/31869]

²⁰ Enquiry into the economic situation in Bulgaria arising out of the influx of refugees of various nationalities, with certain conclusions and recommendations. Prepared by Colonel James Procter, International Labour Office. See: *Archives State Agency – Sofia; KMF 24/891/3*. p. 53.

²¹ Letter of Major Thomas Frank Johnson to Fridtjof Nansen, 21 No. 1925. See: *Armenian National Archives, Fond 1168/1/344*. pp. 139-140.

²² Telegram from Major Thomas Frank Johnson to Fridtjof Nansen, 5 Nov. 1925. See: *Armenian National Archives, Fond 1168/1/344*. p. 137.

²³ Letter of Major Thomas Frank Johnson to Fridtjof Nansen, 21 No. 1925. See: *Armenian National Archives, Fond 1168/1/344*. pp. 139-140.

²⁴ Report by Dr. Fridtjof Nansen. President of the Commission appointed to Study the Question of the Settlement of Armenian Refugees. Lysaker, 28 July 1926. League of Nations – International Labor Office. *Armenian National Archives, 1168/1/362*. pp. 1-25.

²⁵ Lettre adressés au Président Massarik. Prague, le Juin 1922., Lettre adressés à M. Benés, Président du Conseil, Ministre des A. E. de la République Tcheco-Slovaque. Prague, le 9 Juin 1922., Letter of the

agreements on the identity certificates for Armenian refugees in 1924 and 1926.²⁶ A more accurate standpoint of the Czechoslovakian government was expressed at the Intergovernmental Conference on the Question of Russian and Armenian Refugees on 10 May 1926, declaring that, although the government took serious steps towards providing Identity Certificates (Nansen passports) for the approximately 30 000 Russian and 200 Armenian refugees residing in the country and spent some 283.000.000 Korunas between 1921 and 1925 on relief of the refugees, since the number of Armenian refugees in the country is so insignificant, it had “nothing to add” to the further negotiations on the status of the Armenian refugees.²⁷

Out of the Eastern European governments, it was probably the Romanian that had the most diversified and devoted diplomatic endeavors towards the so called “Armenian question.” On the 17th of December, 1920 Monsieur Jonnesco, the Romanian delegate to the Assembly of the League proposed the “formation of an International Expeditionary force [of 40 000 soldiers] to re-establish order and peace in Armenia” and declared Romania ready “to furnish for this purpose men, materials, money”,²⁸ which could have meant a final solution for the different aspects of the Armenian question, including the question of settlement of Armenian refugees, whereas the maintenance of the provisions of the Treaty of Sévres would have eventually resulted in the resettlement of the majority of the Armenian refugees on Armenian lands. However, a year later, M. Jonnesco, in his speech at the Sixth Commission of the Assembly of the League admitted that “we [member states of the League] do not possess an effective force” and “we can [only] give Armenia the support of our moral force.”²⁹

II. Perspectives in Hungary

The perspectives for the development of vivid humanitarian endeavors and asylum providing policy in Hungary, just like in the rest of the states in the region, had its serious limitations. First of all, by the Treaty of Trianon, Hungary was divided into five

Armenian Delegation, Prague, 8 July 1922., Letter of the Armenian Delegation, Prague, 11 July 1922., Find at: *Armenian National Archives*, 430/1/1245, pp. 11676-11679

²⁶ Russian, Armenian, Assyrian, Assyro-Chaldean, and Turkish Refugees. Report to the Tenth Assembly. Appendix. Progress Report on the Refugee Work by the High Commissioner for Refugees. *National Archives of Hungary*, Fond K78, 43/XIII-8. [original reference number: A.23.1929.VII.]

²⁷ Conférence Intergouvernementale du 10 mai 1926 pour la question des réfugiés russes et arméniens. Résumé des réponses des Gouvernements au Questionnaire du 24 décembre 1925 No. Rr401/001/1 du Dr. F. Nansen, Haut-Commissaire pour les Réfugiés. See : *Archives State Agency – Sofia*; KMF 176/10/459, pp. 69-96.

²⁸ League of Nations, Situation in Armenia. Motion proposed by M. Jonnesco on behalf of the Roumanian Government. Document de l'Assemblée 259. 17 décembre 1920. *Armenian National Archives*, 1168/1/362, [original reference number: 20/48/259]

²⁹ Sixieme Commission; Examen des Demandes d'Admission des Etats. Question Politiques; Troisieme Seance (Publique); tenue le jeudi 15 Septembre 1921, à 17 heures 15. M. le comte de Gimeno, Président. Voeu en faveur de la Constitution d'un Foyer National Arménien. *Armenian National Archives*, Fond 430/1/1233. pp.12278-12282.

parts, detaching two thirds of its population and territory, cutting in half its agricultural and industrial infrastructure, administration, transportation system, etc. Just like Greece and Bulgaria, it received a tremendous flow of refugees; more than 500 000 ethnic Hungarian forced migrants fled from Transylvania, Slovakia, and other parts of the Carpathian Basin, targeting Hungary.³⁰ However, this also meant that a diversified institutional network was put up to assist refugees in Hungary. In 1920, the State Refugee Bureau was established, and in the frameworks of the Council of Ministers, a State Refugee Affairs Council was also founded.³¹

In the early 1920s, the Hungarian state – as a former part of Austro-Hungary, and thus, the Central Powers too –, was highly isolated on a diplomatic level, and it was not until September 1922 that it was admitted as a member of the League of Nations.³² On the one hand it was a question of prestige to participate in the relief work of the League. In 1921 and 1922, Hungarian authorities decided to represent themselves on the course of conferences dedicated to the relief of the Russian refugees, mainly because news arrived to Budapest that the countries of the so called Little Entente – that was established to restrain any sign of endeavor to reestablish the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy –, Czechoslovakia, Romania and Yugoslavia also announced their intended participation. On the other hand, as a target country of Hungarian, Russian and Armenian asylum seekers, and having tens of thousands of prisoners of war mainly in Soviet Russia, refugee affairs and repatriation policies were discussed in the Hungarian political discourse as a matter of national interests.

The Hungarian government represented itself in the international diplomatic endeavors aimed at the protection and legal support of the Armenian refugees residing in Europe surprisingly deliberately. Interwar Hungarian political and public discourse gave the ideological base for such activities in the picture of a “similar fate” of Armenians and Hungarians. As János Bud, Minister of Finance in 1928 phrased it: “Probably no other nation but the Hungarian can understand the sufferings of the Armenian refugees banished from their country and deprived of all their properties.”³³ The Hungarian rep-

³⁰ TÓTH, Judit: When an emergency has come to stay – The birth of the refugee administration in 1988-1989. *Regio*, 2008/11. 96-145.

³¹ A magy. kir. minisztériumnak 8352/1920. M.E.sz. rendelete a megszállott területekről beutazók ellenőrzése tárgyában. [Decree No. 8352/1920 of the Hungarian Royal Ministry [of Interior] on the inspection of migrants from the occupied territories.]; *National Archives of Hungary, Fond K26/XLIII. 1299.cs.*; PETRICHEVICH HORVÁTH Emil: *Jelentés az Országos Menekültügyi Hivatal négy évi működéséről*. [Report on the four years of activities of the State Refugee Bureau.] Budapest, 1924.; SZÜTS ISTVÁN Gergely: „A szükséglakások felét menekültek kapják...” – Érdekonfliktusok és előítéletek az 1920-as évek első felének lakásügyeiben Miskolcon. [“Half of the emergency dormitories are granted to refugees...” – Conflicts of interests and prejudice concerning housing in the first half of the 1920s in Miskolc.] *Korall*, 11/40 (2010). pp. 114-133.

³² Watson Cameron, “Ethnic Conflict and the League of Nations: The Case of Transylvania, 1918-1940,” *Hungarian Studies*, 9/1-2 (1994). pp. 173-180.

³³ Letter from János Bud to Lajos Walko. Reference number: 147.863/1927. See: *National Archives of Hungary. Fond K107/43/2/a.*

representative to Turkey, in his report of 1927 on the remaining Armenian Catholic population of Turkey, expressed similar thoughts, as he stressed that “[a]lthough §§ 37–45 of the Treaty of Lausanne disposed of the minority rights in Turkey, us, Hungarians know best the value of the regulations of the League of Nations and the ways of their enforcement.”³⁴ The idea of a similar Hungarian and Armenian fate affected Prime Minister Pál Teleki too, who in his book published in New York in 1923, drawn a parallel to the contemporary situation of the two peoples.³⁵

The pursuit towards the relief of Armenian refugees, however, was somehow bogged down in between enthusiasm and realist prospects. The question of Armenian refugees, the extension of identity certificates already issued to Russian refugees to be accessible to Armenian refugees too, and further legal and financial support were discussed by the international community first in 1923 in the frameworks of the Assembly and Council of the League. Zoltán Baranyai, the Hungarian representative to the League of Nations, in his report to the Foreign Ministry of Hungary, promoted the plan of the extension of the Nansen-passport to the Armenian refugees, reaffirming the views of Thomas Frank Johnson, stating that even for countries with only a small community of Armenian refugees, it is a “precious and important” task to support them.³⁶ Baranyai’s remarks met with compliance, thus, by signing the agreement of 1924, Hungary became one of the first states to issue identity certificates for Armenian refugees, which made their further migration, settlement and integration feasible. Although the agreement did not dispose of any recommendations concerning travel discount for the refugees, according to the decree of Lajos Walko, Hungarian Minister of Foreign Affairs, refugees had 50% discounts on public transportation.³⁷

The next stage of the relief of Armenian refugees was realized by the *Arrangement Relating to the Issue of Identity Certificates to Russian and Armenian Refugees* in 1926. This additional arrangement, that was signed by the majority of the European member states of the League on the 12 of May, 1926, declared the necessity “1) Of regularizing the system of identity certificates for Russian and Armenian refugees; 2) Of determining in a more accurate and complete manner the number and situation of Russian and Armenian refugees in the various countries; [and] 3) Of creating a revolving fund to provide for

³⁴ Az örmény-katholikusok helyzete Törökországban. [The situation of the Armenian Catholics in Turkey.] Reference number: 28/pol.1927. Cf. *National Archives of Hungary, Fond K63/32*. Gyula Ambróczy, an expert on international law in 1926 in the journal titled *Hungarian Foreign Policy* (*Magyar Külpolitika*) also emphasized the similarities between the two cases, applying the Anatolian case also as a feedback to the Central European conflicts, stating that “our peace treaty doesn’t even give the amount of rights that the people of the territories detached from Turkey received...” Cf. Ambróczy Gyula, “A népek önrendelkezési joga és a békeszerződés [The right of peoples to self-determination and the peace treaty.]” *Magyar Külpolitika*, 7/2 (1926). pp. 1–2.

³⁵ Teleki Paul, *The Evolution of Hungary and its Place in European History*, New York: Macmillan, 1923, p. 240.

³⁶ No. 644/43. Cf. *National Archives of Hungary, Fond K107, 52/43/2/a*.

³⁷ Telegram of Lajos Walko, Zürich, 10.05.1926. *National Archives of Hungary, Fond K107, 52/43/2/c*.

the cost of the transportation and settlement of refugees.”³⁸ Hungarian diplomacy took part in the preparation of this arrangement actively. The principles of Foreign Minister Lajos Walko phrased in his instructions to Zoltán Baranyai had two main principles: on the one hand, the permission for refugees to re-enter the state issuing their identity certificates, and on the other, the possible lowest fares for refugees to apply for certificates. Among others, his instructions consisted of the followings:

“In respect of chapter III.9 it would be necessary for all the refugees, both Russian and Armenian, regardless of his/her arrival, to hold [these] passports. [...] I would consider reasonable an arrangement, which engages the states issuing “Nansen type” passports to re-enter the refugees receiving the certificates to its territory anytime. The facilitation of the relocation of the refugees could only be carried out this way. [...] A unified type / shape, colour, text/ of the passports is not only desirable, but necessary also, for if there are several types, inspecting them is undoubtedly harder. [...] Since most of the refugees are fortuneless, a minimal figure for the fare of the passports should be assessed. It should not transcend the costs of the printed matter and the issuing process.”³⁹

Complying with the instructions, Zoltán Baranyai in his speech at the conference in Geneva emphasized the difficult financial conditions of the refugees, which made them unable to pay the suggested contribution of 5 Golden Franks; however, since most of the participants had a different point of view, he abstained from the vote.⁴⁰ The question of financial contribution of the refugees in the following years appeared as a ground of confrontation between the League of Nations and the Hungarian diplomats. In 1928, a scheme was created, issuing the so-called “Nansen-stamps”, of which the price was to be paid by those who hold Nansen-passports, to contribute to the relief work of the League. The introduction of the Nansen-stamps was denied by the Hungarian authorities both in 1928, and later in 1936 too, stating the followings: “the Russian and Armenian refugees residing in Hungary are so fortuneless that most of them stand in need of aid...” in 1928,⁴¹ and in 1936 stating that “the costs that it means would debit the refugees, and due to their modest conditions they could not undertake this burden.”⁴²

³⁸ Russian, Armenian, Assyrian, Assyro-Chaldean, and Turkish Refugees. Report to the Tenth Assembly. Appendix. Progress Report on the Refugee Work by the High Commissioner for Refugees. *National Archives of Hungary, Fond K78, 43/XIII-8*. [original reference number: A.23.1929.VII.]

³⁹ Decree No. 54.454/4s/1926. *National Archives of Hungary, Fond K107, 52/43/2/c*.

⁴⁰ Letter of Baranyai to Walko, no. 59891/4. Geneva, 25. July 1926. *National Archives of Hungary, Fond K107, 52/43/2/c*.

⁴¹ Budapest, 31. March 1928. No. 20.5201-s.1928. *National Archives of Hungary, Fond K107, 52/43/2/a*.

⁴² 44.264/10.1936. *National Archives of Hungary, K78 XIII-8*.

On the grounds of the second principle of the agreement, a questionnaire was circulated among the member states clarifying the precise situation and number of the Russian and Armenian refugees in Europe. On August 15, 1929 a report that summarized the results of these questionnaires was submitted to the tenth assembly of the League, attached to which, a chart titled “Present State of the Refugee Problems” provides data on the conditions of 155.346 Armenian refugees living in sixteen European countries. Regarding the “number of refugees whose legal and personal status has to be regularised” the smallest figure can be found in Hungary’s bearings, with the number of fifteen.⁴³

Following the agreement of 1926, Hungarian authorities were in cooperation with several Armenian organizations and institutes, for example, the Hungarian envoy to Geneva negotiated with Ohannes Essayan, a representative of the Armenians of Greece to the League of Nations in connection with the preparation and support of a petition to the League of Nations on the indemnity of Armenian refugees on the grounds of their properties left in Turkey,⁴⁴ and later, in 1929, Hungarian authorities cooperated with Armenian institutions trying to track down the Armenian clients of Hungarian insurance companies who had fallen victim to the Armenian Genocide.⁴⁵

Besides all the above mentioned practices of relief in Hungary, major humanitarian efforts were impossible to realize. Different organizations of the League, such as the High Commissariat for Refugees, or the International Labour Organization repeatedly called upon the Hungarian government to transfer considerable amounts of aid for the relief work of Armenian refugees in the Middle East, Anatolia or the Balkans, Hungarian authorities, expressing their paramount sympathy, declined due to state budget limitations.

As for the Armenian refugees residing in Hungary between the two World Wars, there is no precise data available to define their exact numbers; however, there are several indicators for that matter. As it was recorded by Eghia Hovannesian, a member of the Armenian refugee community of Hungary in 1934 in his book titled *Armenia Népe* (The Folk of Armenia) at that time there were about two thousand Armenians living in Budapest and about five thousand in the country in total.⁴⁶ However, this figure is highly deceptive, since there was also a great number of Armenians moving to Hungary from the detached territory of Transylvania after the First World War. Another source presents the number of the identity certificates issued to Armenian refugees in Hungary, which was 31, however, only the heads of the families received it, “the wife and children under

⁴³ Russian, Armenian, Assyrian, Assyro-Chaldean, and Turkish Refugees. Report to the Tenth Assembly. Appendix. Progress Report on the Refugee Work by the High Commissioner for Refugees. p. 16. *National Archives of Hungary, Fond K78, 43/XIII-8*. [original reference number: A.23.1929.VII.]

⁴⁴ Communication no. 1388/1929. *National Archives of Hungary, Fond K107, 52/43/2/a*.

⁴⁵ However, the enquiry ended without any results, inculcating the former system of issuing debenture-bonds in Hungary, whereas, insurance companies were not allowed to note the nationality of the client. Cf. Communication of the Ministry of Finance No.53.850/1929. *National Archives of Hungary, Fond K107, 52/43/2/a*.

⁴⁶ Hovhannesian Eghia, *Armenia népe* [The Folk of Armenia.], Gödöllő, 1934, p. 272.

18 years have been recorded in the certificates of the head of the family.” Moreover, as a passport of the short-lived Armenian Republic admitted by Hungarian authorities proves, not every Armenian refugee was obliged to apply for certificates.

At any rate, between the two World Wars in Hungary, although there were only a small number of Armenian refugees in Hungary, they fostered a vivid economic and communal life together with the Armenians from Transylvania. In 1920, the two Armenian communities established the *Association of Hungarian Armenians*, which published books on Armenian culture and history, and held cultural events, where, among others, such prominent members of the “global Armenian transnation” – as Tölölyan phrased it – were invited as Aram Khachaturian, Sevak Paruyr or William Saroyan.⁴⁷ Even an Armenian newspaper titled *Nor Tar* was published in Armenian and Hungarian in Budapest, however, only for a short period of time. As the Armenian Catholic Church was one of the officially recognized churches of the former Hungarian Kingdom, their religious lives were organized in the frameworks of the Catholic congregation of Armenians in Hungary. In Budapest, in 1922 they established a parsonage, a chapel in 1924, and in 1932, by the Primate-Archbishop’s authorization the *Armenian Catholic Parish of Budapest* was established. At that time, 290 families applied for membership of the church in Budapest.⁴⁸

The most significant characteristic of the integration of Armenian refugees into the labour market was the comprehensive involvement of the Armenian carpet industry of Budapest. A couple of years after their first appearance, Armenian carpet makers and repairmen conquered this field of handicraft in the Hungarian capital, filling the gap that the destruction of the Great War left in the small-scale industry of the city. The Armenian refugees opened their shops in the busiest places of the downtown, on the Ferenciek Square, Cukor Street, Kossuth Street, Régiposta Street and Eskü Square, and even the official repairman of the antique carpets of the National Museum of Hungary, became an Armenian refugee, Serkis Hrant Rsduni. To secure the economic growth of the Armenian community in Hungary, the Transylvanian Armenians and the refugees in 1921 established the *Armenian-Hungarian Shareholding Company*, with a capital of two million Hungarian Crowns, which, by 1925 had already grown to one hundred million Hungarian Crowns. The company worked in collaboration with, for example, the weaving mill of Jászberény, and maintained a store on the Bécsi Street in the downtown of Budapest. The shareholding company also provided scholarships – in 1923, for example, a sum of two million Hungarian Crowns – for the education of the youth of

⁴⁷ A Magyarországi Örmények Egyesületének alapszabályai [Regulations of the Association of Hungarian Armenians], Budapest, 1920.

⁴⁸ A budapesti örmény katolikus egyházközség igazgatásának szabályzata. [Regulation of the Armenian Catholic Parish of Budapest.] Budapest, 1937, Bernád Rita, Kovács Bálint, *The Armenian Catholic Collective Archive of Armenopolis*, Budapest – Leipzig, 2011., Avedikian Viktóra, Piroska Krajcsir, *Magyarországi örmények* [Armenians in Hungary.] Budapest, 1998.

the Armenian community of Hungary in universities abroad, mainly in the Moorat-Ra-faelian Collège of the Mechitarist Congregation in Venice.⁴⁹

III. Conclusions

It should be noted that in Hungary, although there were serious limitations of the prospects of humanitarianism, a vivid discussion on the matter and internal regulations of relief encompassed the plight of the Armenian refugees. By standing up for the right of refugees to return to the state that issued his or her identity certificate, for the possible lowest fares of certificates, and by providing special benefits for the refugees, Hungarian authorities maintained a distinct policy towards refugees in the League of Nations, that was reasoned in the public and political discourse by the idea of a similar fate of the two people. In Greece, Bulgaria and Albania, although serious steps were taken towards the establishment of sustainable and decent living conditions of the Armenian refugees, due to the enormous impact of other refugee groups in these countries, the so called “repatriation” policies – replacement of Armenian refugees in other countries – dominated these states’ strategies towards the Armenian refugees. Although Romania had possibly the most radical standpoint on resolving the so called “Armenian question”, its implementations had no pragmatic grounds; while Czechoslovakia, although supported the establishment of identity certificates for Armenian refugees and maintained contact with the institutions of Armenian refugee communities, appeared as a somewhat passive observer of the matter. As for the small Armenian refugee community in Hungary between the two World Wars, one cannot but notice the scale of plenitude of the flourishing Armenian cultural life evolved in Hungary and maintained by the emergence of the economic strength of the community secured by such institutions as the Armenian-Hungarian Shareholding Company.

ՈՐՈՇ ՆԿԱՏԱՌՈՒՄՆԵՐ ՀԱՐԱՎԱՐԵՎԵԼՅԱՆ, ԱՐԵՎԵԼՅԱՆ ԵՎ
ԿԵՆՏՐՈՆԱԿԱՆ ԵՎՐՈՊԱՅԻ ԵՐԿՐՆԵՐՈՒՄ ՀԱՅ ՓԱԽՍՏԱԿԱՆՆԵՐԻ
ՊԱՏՄՈՒԹՅԱՆ ՎԵՐԱԲԵՐՅԱԼ

Պիպեր Պալ Կրանից

ԱՄՓՈՓՈՒՄ

Հոդվածում լուսաբանվում են Արևելյան Եվրոպայի երկրներում Հունաստանից մինչև Չեխոսլովակիա, ապաստան գտած Հայոց ցեղասպանությունը վերապրածների պատմությունը, ինչպես նաև հայ փախստականների նկատմամբ վերոնշյալ երկրների կողմից տարվող քաղաքականությունը: Որոշ դեպքերում իրականացվել է փախստականների տեղահանություն կամ այսպես կոչված «էվակուացում», ինչպես նաև լայն կիրառություն է ստացել «հայրենադարձության» և

⁴⁹ Örmény-Magyar Kereskedelmi Rt. Cégbíróági Irat. *Budapest City Archives*, HU_BFL_VII_2_e_0022702.

վերաբնակեցման քաղաքականությունը: Մանրամասն ներկայացվում է՝ ինչպիսի մասնակցություն են ունեցել հունգարական իշխանությունները հայ փախստականների իրավական և հումանիտար աջակցությանն ուղղված Ազգերի լիգայի գործունեության մեջ, ինչպես նաև վերլուծության են ենթարկվում Հունգարիայի հայ համայնքի սոցիալ-տնտեսական բնութագրիչներն Առաջին և Երկրորդ համաշխարհային պատերազմների միջև ընկած ժամանակահատվածում: Եզրակացվում է, որ փախստականների նկատմամբ Արևելյան Եվրոպայի քաղաքականության մեջ հումանիտար նկատառումներին տրվում էր երկրորդական նշանակություն, այն կապակցությամբ, որ էթնիկ բուլղար, հույն, հունգար և այլ ազգությունների փախստականների մեծ հոսքերի առկայությունը բացասաբար էր ազդում տնտեսության վրա:

Բանալի բառեր՝ հայ փախստականներ, հումանիտար օգնություն, հայրենադարձություն, Ազգերի լիգա, Արևելյան Եվրոպա, Հունգարիա:

SOME REMARKS ON THE HISTORY OF ARMENIAN REFUGEES IN SOUTHEAST AND EAST-CENTRAL EUROPE WITH A SPECIAL REGARD TO HUNGARY

Péter Pál Kránitz

ABSTRACT

The article sheds some light on the history of those survivors of the Armenian Genocide who sought refuge in Eastern European states – from Greece to Czechoslovakia –, and these states’ policies towards their attendance. It evidences that in some cases, deportation – or as it was referred to, “evacuation” – of refugees was carried out, resettlement policies and practices of “repatriation” were commonly implemented. The article further demonstrates in detail how Hungarian governments in power participated in the League of Nations’ actions towards legal and humanitarian support of Armenian refugees, and analyses the social and economic characteristics of interwar Armenian community in Hungary. It concludes that approaching refugee affairs in Eastern Europe, humanitarian concerns were marginalized as tremendous flows of refugees – ethnic Bulgarians, Greeks, Hungarians, etc. – and other consequences of the Great War exploited these exhausted economics.

Keywords: Armenian refugees, humanitarianism, repatriation, League of Nations, Eastern Europe, Hungary

НЕКОТОРЫЕ ЗАМЕЧАНИЯ К ИСТОРИИ АРМЯНСКИХ БЕЖЕНЦЕВ
В ЮГО-ВОСТОЧНОЙ, ВОСТОЧНОЙ И ЦЕНТРАЛЬНОЙ ЕВРОПЕ
(В ЧАСТНОСТИ В ВЕНГРИИ)

Питер Пал Краниц

РЕЗЮМЕ

В статье освещается история переживших Геноцид армян, которые нашли убежище в странах Восточной Европы - от Греции до Чехословакии, а также политика данных государств по отношению к армянским беженцам. В некоторых случаях была осуществлена депортация, или так называемая «эвакуация» беженцев, а также широко реализована политика «репатриации» и переселения. В статье детально представлено, какое участие принимали венгерские власти в действиях Лиги Наций по правовой и гуманитарной поддержке армянских беженцев, а также анализируется социально-экономические характеристики армянской общины в Венгрии в период между Первой и Второй мировыми войнами. Делается вывод о том, что в политике восточноевропейских государств по отношению к беженцам соображениям гуманитарного порядка придавалось второстепенное значение, в связи с тем, что наличие огромных потоков беженцев – этнических болгар, греков, венгров и т.д. – оказывало негативное воздействие на экономику страны.

Ключевые слова: армянские беженцы, гуманитарная помощь, репатриация, Лига Наций, Восточная Европа, Венгрия.