

Canada's Moral Mandate for Armenia:  
Sparkling Humanitarian and Political Interest, 1880-1923

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## **Abstract**

Canada's Moral Mandate for Armenia:  
Sparking Humanitarian and Political Interest, 1880-1923

Aram Adjemian

This thesis explores the efforts undertaken by Canadians in support of the Armenian people from 1880 to the 1920s. Canadian Protestant missionaries stationed in the Ottoman Empire wrote home about atrocities they witnessed, and some of their reports and their pleas for assistance were published in the Canadian media. Money for Armenian relief was collected and sent abroad on several occasions. Imperialist-minded Canadian intellectuals and politicians influenced by their Christian heritage and their work for social reform were especially involved in the Armenian relief efforts.

In early 1920, some Canadian Protestant groups lobbied the government to oppose the return of the Armenian provinces to Turkish rule. The Canadian government echoed these pleas, and subsequently demanded that the British government share with it timely and appropriate information about the negotiations of the Turkish peace treaty. Several prominent British and Canadian individuals suggested that Canada take on a daunting League of Nations mandate for Armenia should the United States fail to do so. However, the vigorous reaction was short lived, as interested parties became increasingly more preoccupied with domestic concerns.

The failure to prepare the Canadian public for more sustained protest activities on behalf of the Armenians and initiate a discussion of a more meaningful Canadian role offers a practical perspective to consider the reaction to more recent humanitarian crises. It illustrates how preparing the public to support profound sacrifices in personal and

public funds is vital if international humanitarian interventions are to prove truly effective. Most of the primary manuscript material cited in this thesis was consulted at the Library and Archives of Canada in Ottawa, Ontario.

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## Chapter 1: The Origins of Canadian Support for the Armenians

Between 1896 and 1921, Canada underwent several transformations under the successive governments of Prime Ministers Wilfrid Laurier and Robert Borden. Two new provinces and the northern regions of existing provinces were added to the country, foreign trade and investment rose to unprecedented levels, two new railways were chartered, and new highways and roads were built. The population increased by three million, two thirds of whom were immigrants. A significant number of the new arrivals either settled in the prairies as farmers or moved to the cities to work in the increasing number of factories. Canadian cities swelled as industrialism attracted employment from across the country, which profoundly affected the pastoral character of Canadian society.

Canadians were generally optimistic about the future of their country at the turn of the century. Vast resources could be exploited, providing an enviable standard of living. Huge empty tracts of land could accommodate millions of settlers, which would give Canada a population that some believed might potentially challenge the United States' and surpass Great Britain's. The country's potential seemed limitless, leading some theorists to predict that the twentieth century would "belong" to Canada. However, a minority of critics challenged this view by voicing their discontent regarding the many urban social problems of the period. The vices of city life and their effect on the urban proletariat disturbed many clerics who rued the demise of the family farm.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Robert Craig Brown and Ramsay Cook, *Canada 1896-1921: A Nation Transformed* (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1974) provides an excellent overall history of the period, and will be used for background information throughout this thesis.

The transformations in Canada at the end of the nineteenth century took place in an environment of global change. Several nations were jockeying for position in the world balance of power, notably Britain, Germany, France, and the United States. Citizens of these countries exhibited a new national confidence, often referred to as the “new imperialism.” Such tendencies reverberated in Canada as well, partly due to the intense involvement of Canadians in overseas missionary activity. This commitment combined many of the virtues of spiritual salvation and political progress and triggered an unprecedented upsurge of emotional and financial support for missionary efforts, especially among Protestant denominations. Many of these Canadians believed that the British Empire had the highest form of modern civilisation, and acted as a vehicle to pass on this divinely ordained process of governance to those less advanced. Rudyard Kipling’s popular poem “The White Man’s Burden” emphasised the link between the political and spiritual motivations to civilise the world, and gives an indication of the attachment many felt to this philosophy.<sup>2</sup>

This context provided an important backdrop for the Canadian reaction to atrocities perpetrated on the Armenian people, from the late nineteenth century to the 1920s. Although few Canadians were familiar with the Ottoman Armenian people before the late nineteenth century,<sup>3</sup> Canadians became better acquainted with the plight of Armenians after it received international coverage in 1878. Thereafter, three main developments in Canada

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<sup>2</sup> Robert Page, *The Boer War and Canadian Imperialism*, Historical Booklet No. 44 (Ottawa: Canadian Historical Association, 1987), pp. 4-5.

<sup>3</sup> There had however been Armenians in Canada even prior to Confederation. A census in Canada from 1851-52 indicates that 13 people identified their religion or ‘creed’ as Armenian. *Census of the Canadas, 1851-2*, Vol. 2 (Quebec: Lovell and Lamoureux, 1855), p. 44.

provided a basis for the support of Armenians: increased missionary activity abroad, the bolstering of imperialist sentiment, and the rise of the social gospel movement.

### Missionaries in the Ottoman Empire

Canadian missionaries were based in the Ottoman Empire with the American Protestant missionary organisation known as the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions (ABCFM) from at least 1879. The initial objective of the ABCFM was to draw closer to the lands of the Old and New Testaments. With evangelical fervour, the newly formed organisation sent its first missionaries to the Middle East in an attempt to convert Muslims and Jews in 1819. When the missions proved unsuccessful or were outlawed by the Ottoman government, the ABCFM's interest shifted instead to the Ottoman Christians. After 1828, the ABCFM concentrated much of its attention on the Christian Armenians, and continued to do so until the 1920s. The Protestant Board's missionaries eventually constructed hundreds of schools, seminaries, and orphanages, of which the Armenians took full advantage.<sup>4</sup>

The missionaries believed they were teaching the true gospel to the Armenians, and hoped that Muslims would be influenced by their example. American schools and colleges sprouted throughout the Empire, where a disproportionately large number of Armenian students enrolled. In 1863, Constantinople's Robert College became the first American post-secondary institution established outside the United States. The Armenian College for Girls was founded in the same city soon after, only ten years after the establishment of Vassar College in the United States. By the turn of the century, most of the teachers in

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<sup>4</sup> Suzanne Elizabeth Moranian, "The American Missionaries and the Armenian Question: 1915-1927" (Ph.D. diss., University of Wisconsin-Madison, 1994), pp. 84-86.



Armenian elementary schools were women graduates of American missionary institutions, and about 60,000 Ottoman Armenian students were enrolled in the Protestant-run schools.<sup>5</sup>

Some of the Armenians converted from their early Apostolic Christian faith to Protestantism, while others felt that the missionaries were driving a wedge in their community. The leader of the Armenian Church in Constantinople became increasingly concerned with the intrusive role of these outsiders.<sup>6</sup> The missionaries tried to reach the Armenians by emphasising educational, medical, and relief work, and gave invaluable assistance through their hospitals, orphanages, and schools.<sup>7</sup> The American missionary presence in the Ottoman Empire was significant, totalling a third of all ABCFM activity before the First World War. The vast real estate holdings of the missionaries were estimated to be worth tens of millions of dollars.<sup>8</sup>

Over thirty Canadian men and women, mostly Scottish Presbyterians, were among the earliest missionaries to be sent to Ottoman Armenia by the ABCFM,<sup>9</sup> and many others followed over the next few decades. When tensions gave way to massacres, the missionaries were among the first to offer credible accounts of the atrocities to Ontario-based newspapers and religious magazines, and some of them even saved Armenian lives.

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<sup>5</sup> Moranian, "The American Missionaries," pp. 78, 84.

<sup>6</sup> Moranian, "The American Missionaries," pp. 81-82. Historian Jeremy Salt also believes that missionaries demanding broader freedoms for Christians caused severe strains within the Ottoman Empire, which he discusses in his book *Imperialism, Evangelism and the Ottoman Armenians 1878-1896* (London: Frank Cass, 1993), p. 30.

<sup>7</sup> Isabel Kaprielian-Churchill, *Like Our Mountains: A History of Armenians in Canada* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2005), p. 37.

<sup>8</sup> Moranian, "The American Missionaries," pp. 143, 148-49. Regrettably, the investments and Turkey's strategic importance were among the reasons which eventually led some of the missionaries to support revisionist accounts of the Armenian genocide several years after the war. By 1923, many representatives of the American Near East Relief downplayed the slaughter of the Armenians to be able to remain in Turkey, to keep their schools and hospitals open, and to convert Muslims, as originally intended in their missions to the Ottoman Empire. See Moranian, "The American Missionaries," pp. 482-86.

<sup>9</sup> Kaprielian-Churchill, *Armenians in Canada*, p. 37.

The missionaries were integral to the distribution of relief among the Armenians donated through Canadian and other fundraising campaigns.

### Canadian Imperialism

For many Canadians, missionary involvement provided the great hope for the future of the world. It was believed that Canada needed to assume her share of the British Empire's civilising work in order for it to achieve nationhood. The spread of the gospel under the protective arm of the British Empire would open the way for a new golden age of peace and prosperity. The *Pax Britannica* would lead to the *Pax Christi*, since the Empire was believed to be the secular arm of Christian expansionism.<sup>10</sup>

In the context of Canadian history, imperialism entailed the movement for the closer union of the British Empire through economic and military cooperation and through political changes, which would give the dominions greater influence over imperial policy. The Canadian imperial movement began soon after Confederation with the establishment of "Canada First," an organisation which provided a forum in which Canadian imperial thought was able to flourish. Canadian imperialists and the movement they spawned concentrated on Canada's advancement through its imperial tie.<sup>11</sup>

Imperialism developed dramatically in the 1890s, when early spokesmen were joined by a wide following of urban middle-class supporters. By 1897, Canadians held massive imperial celebrations for Queen Victoria's Diamond Jubilee. A year later, the

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<sup>10</sup> The expression is used by historian Robert Page, *The Boer War*, p. 5.

<sup>11</sup> Carl Berger, *The Sense of Power: Studies in the Ideas of Canadian Imperialism, 1867-1914* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1970), pp. 3, 5, 49, 177, 260. The most fervent supporters of imperialism were from the older areas of Ontario and the Maritimes, particularly among the descendents of the United Empire Loyalists. Toronto was by all accounts the most imperialistic city in the country. The loyalist tradition provided one of the most powerful inducements for Canadian imperialist sentiment.

Spanish-American War caused even more enthusiasm for imperialists who sought a new status for Canada in the world through the country's involvement with the British Empire. Canadian imperialists were encouraged by these events to press for military participation in the 1899 Boer War, which provided an important step towards maturity and nationhood for Canada.<sup>12</sup>

There were similarities in the way imperialist sentiment provided a search for personal and political values in Britain, the United States, and Canada. The relationship between imperialism and social reform became intimate and direct in all three countries, where it was hoped that a strong and stable society based on imperialist values would help restrain the spirit of commercialisation and social atomisation. During the 1900s, Canadian imperialists presented the most sweeping indictment of their society to appear before the agrarian revolts in the Canadian West during the 1920s.<sup>13</sup>

Canadian imperialists believed that their country should play a leading role in world affairs during the twentieth century. However, by the first decade of the twentieth century, imperialism had subsided and only represented a small, if influential, segment of society. In Quebec, the Boer War created political divisions along cultural lines not witnessed since the 1837 Rebellions in Upper and Lower Canada. Other groups also became more interested in a Canadian brand of nationalism which did not necessarily welcome imperial sentiment. Imperialism regained prominence prior to and for the duration of the First World War in many parts of the country, but its influence declined dramatically after the war.<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>12</sup> Page, *The Boer War*, p. 6; Berger, *The Sense of Power*, pp. 172, 233.

<sup>13</sup> Berger, *The Sense of Power*, p. 177.

<sup>14</sup> Brown and Cook, *Canada 1896-1921*, pp. 147, 273.

Imperialist sentiment in Canada was thus approaching its zenith during the Armenian genocidal massacres of 1895-97. Many Canadians likely considered missionaries in the Ottoman Empire to be on the frontlines of a civilising impulse within the corrupt Muslim Empire. Moreover, because the Armenians were already part of an ancient Christian community, they may have constituted a special case for the missionary or the imperialist, and may even have been perceived as having already progressed halfway towards their salvation. Emancipation from their Muslim overlords may have been the only thing needed to “save” them. Otherwise put, the potential *Pax Christi* could not neglect the Christian Armenians. Canadians who sensed a greater international role for their country might have considered themselves possible saviours for the Armenian people. As we will see, prominent Canadian imperialists were among the earliest and most vocal advocates for the Armenians. Following the First World War, a new generation of imperial-minded individuals continued to be involved in relief efforts for the Armenians, most notably social gospellers.

#### Canadian Intellectuals and the Social Gospel Movement

While Canadian imperialist sentiment peaked in the 1890s, various other influential reform movements emerged which attempted to alter Canadian society to reflect a Christian utopian worldview. One of these movements, referred to as the “social gospel,” first appeared in Canada during the 1880s. Those involved in the movement worked towards applying Christianity to an industrialising society and became a major force in Canadian religious, social, and political life. Its proponents believed that God enjoined his people to work for moral order and social justice based on Gospel precepts. The movement

drew strength from the expansion of Protestant and particularly of evangelical churches during the late nineteenth century.<sup>15</sup>

As the social gospel movement became more influential during the following two decades, conservative, progressive, and radical branches could be identified. Conservatives emphasised ethical issues and were closest to traditional evangelism. Radicals believed evil was endemic and pervasive in the social order, and that there could be no personal salvation without social salvation. Between the two was the broad mainstream of progressives, containing the tension between the two extremes. Most radical and progressive social gospellers saw no fundamental inner conflict between imperialism and social reform, and many were able to link their imperial sentiment to their reformist programs.<sup>16</sup>

The Canadian social gospel movement ran parallel to similar movements in Britain and in the United States, although its influence on Canadian society may have been even more extensive. No major Canadian church could ignore the force of the movement in the formulation of social policy after the First World War. Several branches of the movement became prominent in winning legislation for the underprivileged and in working towards developing more adequate social programs on which the Canadian welfare state was later based.<sup>17</sup>

The movement had an extensive influence on the Canadian intellectual community as well. Religious and denominational forces had been major factors in shaping the direction of higher education in the nineteenth century. The central role of both the school

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<sup>15</sup> Richard Allen, *The Social Passion: Religion and Social Reform in Canada, 1914-1928* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1971), provides the best source on the history of the movement after the war.

<sup>16</sup> Allen, *The Social Passion*, pp. 17, 41.

<sup>17</sup> Allen, *The Social Passion*, p. 352.

and the church, considered to be the two guardians of higher culture, had been to provide intellectual and moral guidance for the nation. This was most evident in Canadian universities, where chief administrators of several institutions were members of the clergy.<sup>18</sup> George Munro Grant, the Principal at Presbyterian Queen's University, was by 1900 the elder statesman of a group of such clerics within university faculties. The moral clergyman was considered to be most qualified to encourage the development of the intellectual faculties of students toward the moral improvement of society.<sup>19</sup>

The massacre of Armenians provoked some of these reform minded individuals to expand their criticism of society's degeneration beyond Canada's borders. Principal George Grant, an imperialist and a founding father of the social gospel movement, became the most ardent supporter of Armenian relief during the late nineteenth century. Following the movement's most influential period after the war, Protestant churches influenced by the social gospel became much more active in fundraising activities. In early 1920, several radical and progressive social gospellers staunchly criticised the continuation of killings in the Ottoman Empire, and demanded that their government do more to help the Armenians.

The interaction of missionaries with other imperial-minded Canadians, especially Protestants and often those imbued with the social gospel, created a sense of urgency and responsibility when confronted with the massacre of Armenians. Such relations also provided the most important incentive for numerous Canadian relief efforts which took place over forty years, and motivated Canadians from a variety of political and ideological persuasions to contribute to relief efforts as well, especially after the First World War. By

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<sup>18</sup> Doug Owrarn, *The Government Generation: Canadian Intellectuals and the State, 1900-1945* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1986), pp. xii-xiii, 8.

<sup>19</sup> Owrarn, *The Government Generation*, p. 10.

1920, some of these Canadians believed that Britain's junior imperial partner was ready to take on greater international responsibility, and suggested that their country be more intimately involved with the establishment of an Armenian nation. The following chapters will examine the influence these Canadians had on relief, lobbying, and diplomatic efforts to help the Armenians, and will also discuss the reasons for the limited results they ultimately achieved.

## Chapter 2: Canadian Imperialism and Nineteenth Century Humanitarian Aid

Christian Armenians had endured a generally stable, though always subordinate, existence under Muslim Turkish rule until the mid-nineteenth century. However, the consequences resulting from the downfall of the once mighty Ottoman Empire altered the uneasy equilibrium between the two religious groups. Security for the Armenians became precarious, partly because some European powers sensed the imminent collapse of the decaying empire and vied for the resulting spoils.

The demise of the Empire was accelerated after the regime of the incoming Sultan, Abdul Hamid, ferociously repressed an uprising in Ottoman Bulgaria in 1876. Condemnation of the Bulgarian massacres was widespread, and the Ottoman Empire's Christian allies, including Britain, were criticised for their feeble response. Seeking increased influence, Russia reacted to such criticism by successfully waging war against the Ottomans a year later. The terms of peace were negotiated at San Stefano and a treaty was signed in April 1878, stripping the Ottoman Empire of much of its authority and a substantial piece of territory in the Balkans. Additionally, the treaty stipulated that Russian forces were to remain in the Armenian Provinces until the Ottomans implemented much needed reforms there.

The Turks appealed to the British to intervene. Foreign Minister Lord Salisbury believed that the Russian gains were a threat to European (and in particular to British) interests, and demanded that other European powers re-open the Russo-Turkish settlement. The Great Powers thus compelled the creation of a revised treaty, signed three months later in Berlin, in which Russian gains were reduced. Additionally, Article 61 of the Berlin



Treaty called for the Russians to withdraw from the Armenian areas, relying on assurances by an already hostile Sultan that he would implement reforms and protect the Armenians. This exposed and ultimately proved fatal to the Empire's vulnerable Armenian minority.

Following the signing of the new treaty, the enactment of progressively more discriminatory legislation and isolated killings of Christians in the Anatolian interior proved unbearable. Armenians became increasingly politicised, which further degraded the already strained relations with the Turks. Some Armenians living abroad and others in the Empire formed clandestine political associations, primarily aimed at protecting the interests of Armenians living in Ottoman territory.<sup>1</sup> These developments infuriated the Sultan, who increasingly perceived the Armenians as the worst threat to the Empire.

The tension was palpable by the early 1890s. Article 61 of the Berlin Treaty proved to be completely useless when 3,000 Armenians were massacred in Sassoun in 1894, ostensibly to crush political dissent. A year later in October 1895, thousands of Armenians boldly demonstrated at the Sultan's Yildiz palace and demanded better conditions for themselves. The response was swift and extremely violent. Many of the demonstrators were killed by armed Turkish mobs, who proceeded to butcher any Armenian they could find in the streets of Constantinople. The frenetic orgy of looting, pillaging and murder was repeated across the Anatolian countryside. An estimated 200,000 Armenians were massacred by 1897, mostly by Hamid's loyal Kurdish cavalry, the *Hamidieh*, in collaboration with the Turkish gendarmerie. Many surviving Armenians left the Empire,

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<sup>1</sup> The rise of Armenian political parties is examined by Louise Nalbandian in *The Armenian Revolutionary Movement: The Development of Armenian Political Parties through the Nineteenth Century* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1963). American missionaries within the Empire may also have encouraged Armenians to agitate for promised reforms. See Moranian, "The American Missionaries," p. 81.

while some converted to Islam. The killings were centrally planned and organised, as was their subsequent denial abroad.<sup>2</sup>

Nations throughout the world condemned the atrocities, notably the United States and Britain, where the situation referred to as the Armenian Question was well-known. American missionaries had been working in the Ottoman Empire for decades before the massacres, and Britain had long established strategic political ties with the Ottomans. The carnage prompted concerned citizens in both countries to spawn movements which offered humanitarian aid to survivors and to lobby their respective governments to do more to help.<sup>3</sup>

Canada's involvement with Armenia during the late nineteenth century paralleled those of its two closest neighbours in many ways. Canadian Protestant missionaries had close ties with their American coreligionists, and many were stationed alongside them in the Ottoman Empire. Imperial-minded Canadians were also well aware of British designs in the region. As mentioned, there was also a direct relationship between imperialism and social reform in all three countries, which is reflected in their respective humanitarian efforts as well.

During at least two separate occasions in the late nineteenth century, Canadian media published reports of famine and persecution in Armenia. A famine in 1880 introduced many Canadians to the plight of the Armenian people, while the massacres of

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<sup>2</sup> Details on the 1895-97 massacres are available in: Vahakn N. Dadrian, *The History of the Armenian Genocide* (New York: Bergahn Books, 1995), chapter 8; Taner Akçam, *A Shameful Act: The Armenian Genocide and the Question of Turkish Responsibility* (New York: Metropolitan Books, 2006), chapter 1. The number of Armenians killed is still a matter of some dispute, with most estimates ranging from about 85,000 to 300,000.

<sup>3</sup> Information on the American public response is available in Peter Balakian, *The Burning Tigris: The Armenian Genocide and America's Response* (New York: Harper Collins, 2003). For the British response, see Akaby Nassibian, *Britain and the Armenian Question 1915-1923* (London: Croom Helm, 1984).

the mid-1890s prompted a much greater response. Fundraising campaigns were held both times, and when imperialist sentiment was escalating in 1896, several Canadians additionally impelled their government to request that Britain respond more forcefully to the massacres.

### 1880 Famine

On December 17, 1879, Toronto's *The Globe* newspaper reported that there was a famine in the Armenian province of Van following a devastating earthquake. The report came from two brothers from Woodstock, Ontario who were among the first Canadian Protestant missionaries to be sent to the Ottoman Empire. William and Robert Chambers sailed to the province of Erzeroum a year after the Berlin Treaty was signed in July 1879, and worked in Ottoman Armenia for the remainder of their lives. When famine struck the region, Robert Chambers wrote to George M. Grant, the influential Principal of his *alma mater* Queen's University, asking him to inform Canadians about the situation and to send financial aid. Upon receiving Robert Chambers' letter, Grant sent the letter and an appeal to the editor of *The Globe* in which he specifically commented on the plight of the Armenians.

Grant exhorted faithful Canadians to donate to this faraway people by evoking images of their ancestral ties to Noah's Ark and the biblical lands of the Ararat plain: "[The Armenian] people and lands are linked to us by a thousand human, historical, and spiritual links." The only gleams of hope for the future of those lands were the mission churches, schools and colleges established by "those noble Christian men sent out by American Churches," whom Grant believed "proved themselves statesmen as well as missionaries."

Grant was very proud that Canadians were working alongside the Americans and in cooperation with the British.<sup>4</sup>

Agnes Maule Machar, secretary of the Kingston Women's Foreign Mission Society, became the first contributor to the 1880 fundraising effort in *The Canada Presbyterian*. Machar was another early proponent of Canadian imperialism and later a social gospeller. She had published a children's novel a few years earlier entitled *For King and Country: A Story of 1812*, in which she presented a romanticised version of the War of 1812.<sup>5</sup> She later became a prominent social activist who published novels, historical works, articles, reviews, and collections of prose and poetry.<sup>6</sup> Along with her ten dollar donation to the magazine, Machar suggested that others should also give to this worthy cause, "so urgently appealing to our Christian humanity."<sup>7</sup>

Grant requested that assistance be sent to the Treasurer of the ABCFM in Boston, Massachusetts, or to the editor of *The Canada Presbyterian*.<sup>8</sup> By August 1880, several hundred dollars were collected for relief efforts by both *The Globe* and *The Canada Presbyterian*, and both organs published additional information about the Armenians along with the fundraising.<sup>9</sup> Although both the media coverage and fundraising campaigns were

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<sup>4</sup> *The Globe*, April 14, 1880. Reprinted in *The Canada Presbyterian* on April 23, 1880.

<sup>5</sup> Berger, *The Sense of Power*, pp. 90-92, 95, 99. This was a time in which romantic history was very important in Canada, and especially in Ontario. Common was the belief that the founders of Canada were among God's chosen people.

<sup>6</sup> Brian S. Osbourne, "Agnes Maule Machar" (Kingston Historical Society, 2004) from <<http://www.heritagekingston.org/wok/machar.html>>, accessed August 21, 2006. Machar's father was a Presbyterian Minister, and the second Principal of Queen's University.

<sup>7</sup> *The Canada Presbyterian*, April 16, 1880.

<sup>8</sup> *The Globe*, May 12, 1880.

<sup>9</sup> However, articles were first published in *The Globe* much earlier, even before the San Stefano and Berlin Treaties, on January 13, 1877, July 10, September 16, and October 18, 1878, and July 7, 1880, which either discussed the inter-racial violence or were critical of the Anglo-Turkish alliance.

minor at this time, they helped to create an initial awareness in Canada of the deteriorating conditions faced by the Armenians.

The 1880 campaign offers a microcosm for future efforts, since several of the individuals involved were active years later as well. George Grant embodied all of the essential elements which motivated those who set in motion the Armenian relief movement in Canada, especially in 1896: he was a deeply religious man, an avid supporter of Canadian missionary activity, one of the most prominent early proponents of Canadian imperialism, and later one of the founders of the social gospel movement. The Chambers brothers became two of the most influential missionaries, Canadian or otherwise, throughout their period of residence among the Armenians. Members of the Chambers family wrote about the plight of Armenians, attempted to bring survivors to Canada, and were centrally involved with the distribution of relief from Britain, the United States, and Canada.<sup>10</sup>

#### Genocidal Massacres of 1895-97

The heightened Canadian imperialist sentiment during the 1890s affected the reaction many had to the mass killing of Armenians. From 1889 onward, *The Globe* under Presbyterian editor John Willison (1890-1902) published more details on the tense situation faced by the Ottoman Armenians. Just prior to the genocidal massacres in 1895, *The Globe* and the *Toronto Daily Star* initially gave credence to the Ottoman government's denial of the "unrest" and consequently blamed the Armenians for their own troubles, claimed that outsiders incited the Armenians to make trouble, and disbelieved reports of any large-scale

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<sup>10</sup> William Nesbitt Chambers details many of his experiences among the Armenians in his memoirs *Yoljuluk: Random Thoughts on a Life in Imperial Turkey* (London: Simpkin Marshall, 1928).

killings. However, Canadian missionaries such as the Chambers brothers and Frederick MacCallum from Kingston, Ontario, corroborated information concerning the organised massacres and gave eyewitness accounts of atrocities.<sup>11</sup> *The Globe's* writers no longer questioned the killings and coverage became particularly extensive thereafter. On average, one news item per daily edition discussed the situation of the Armenians between December 1895 and August 1896, or about two hundred articles during that period.

*The Globe* additionally provided readers with the opportunity to express their resentment and sympathy by publishing various opinions and contributions regarding the massacres, which included poetry.<sup>12</sup> One of the poems was written by J. W. Bengough, a prominent Canadian political cartoonist, editor, publisher, author, entertainer, politician and poet. Bengough was perhaps best-known for his caricatures of Sir John A. Macdonald which appeared in the *Toronto Daily Star* and his own magazine, *Grip* (1873-1894), which are credited with having provoked Macdonald's fall from power in 1891.<sup>13</sup> Bengough was a devout Presbyterian, and was later closely associated with the social gospel movement.

Coverage in certain religious publications was no less impressive. *The Canada Presbyterian* discussed the Armenians in almost every issue during 1896. In June of that year, the *Methodist Magazine and Review* published a ten-page article which offered detailed information on Canadian missionary involvement in Armenia.<sup>14</sup> The article was

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<sup>11</sup> For example, an article in *The Globe* reported on outrages perpetrated against Canadian Congregational missionaries, and assured readers that Frederick MacCallum, his sister Emily MacCallum and A. M. Barker, all well known in Toronto, were reported safe. *The Globe*, November 23, 1895. MacCallum had worked with the Armenians from 1887 onwards. As we will see, his contribution to the Armenians over the years was phenomenal.

<sup>12</sup> Three such poems were published in *The Globe* on January 30, February 15, and 22, 1896.

<sup>13</sup> J. W. Bengough, "Nothing New!" *The Globe*, February 1, 1896; Fraser Sutherland, *The Monthly Epic: A History of Canadian Magazines* (Markham: Fitzhenry & Whiteside, 1989), pp. 69-79.

<sup>14</sup> (Anonymous), "The Sorrows of Armenia," *Methodist Magazine and Review* 43 (1896), pp. 409-420. Interestingly, the following article in the magazine discussed Queen Victoria's upcoming Diamond Jubilee the following year, an event which had great ramifications for increased imperial sentiment in Canada.

based on an American book written by a thirteen-year resident of Constantinople, Edwin M. Bliss, and by Robert College's founder, Cyrus Hamlin, entitled *Turkey and the Armenian Atrocities*.<sup>15</sup>

A similar book was published in Canada entitled *The Sword of Islam, or, Suffering Armenia: Annals of Turkish Power and the Eastern Question*.<sup>16</sup> Author John Castell Hopkins had been secretary of the Imperial Federation League, an association which was dedicated to preventing the dissolution of the imperial tie to Britain.<sup>17</sup> He became assistant editor of the Toronto newspaper *Mail and Empire* and edited Canada's first encyclopedia in 1898.<sup>18</sup>

Publications in Canada reflected and encouraged a trend that was prevalent in Western and especially Protestant Christian media, associating Christian Armenians with suffering, starvation, and martyrdom, while Muslim Turks were referred to as sick, terrible, and murderous. Reports about Armenians, often repeated, deemed them virtuous because they preferred to die rather than convert to Islam. Many writers believed that the martyred Armenian race was fulfilling its destiny: they frequently stated that Armenians, who were in many cases referred to as the spiritual brethren of Canadians, were martyrs dying in the name of Christianity. Similar language was repeated in the media years later as well.

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<sup>15</sup> Edwin Munsell Bliss, *Turkey and the Armenian Atrocities* (Edgewood Publishing, 1896), available online at <<http://armenianhouse.org/bliss/edwin-munsell-bliss.html>>, accessed January 21, 2007. The book had a Canadian edition as well, published in Toronto in 1896 by William Briggs, the editor of the *Methodist Magazine and Review*.

<sup>16</sup> J. Castell Hopkins, *The Sword of Islam, or, Suffering Armenia: Annals of Turkish Power and the Eastern Question* (Brantford, Ont.: Bradley-Garretson, 1896).

<sup>17</sup> Berger, *The Sense of Power*, p. 21.

<sup>18</sup> J. Castell Hopkins, ed., *Canada: An Encyclopedia of the Country* (6 volumes, 1898-1900). More information on Hopkins is available at David Evans, "Hopkins, John Castell" in *The Canadian Encyclopedia*, <<http://www.thecanadianencyclopedia.com>>, accessed August 21, 2006.

The media images also reflected the heightened imperialistic sentiment in Canada during the 1890s. New telegraphic wire services brought news from around the world in minutes, and faraway continents were no longer so far removed. The urban press often exploited the exotic and the brutal in order to sell newspapers.<sup>19</sup> Stories of the Armenian massacres likely provided one of the hottest commodities on Canadian newsstands.

The extensive Canadian media coverage triggered a generous fundraising campaign. After American and British groups began fundraising activities for the Armenians in late 1895, several Canadians demanded that a Canadian Armenian Relief Fund be established as well, which was finally done in January 1896. Both *The Canada Presbyterian* and *The Globe* collected money for Armenian relief, as they had done in 1880.

Missionary Robert Chambers appealed to the Canadian public for help by writing once again to Queen's University Principal George Grant on January 2, 1896 (reprinted in *The Globe* on January 29). By this time, Queen's had become a hub from which many missionaries travelled to the biblical lands of Armenia. R. Chambers stated that students and graduates of Queen's who were stationed throughout the Empire related stories of terrible persecutions.

A pan-Canadian Relief Fund was established at the suggestion of Grant to coordinate fundraising efforts, with representative committees in Toronto, Montreal, the Maritimes, and the Northwest, each covering its own region. *The Globe* began tabulating the money collected soon after. By January 8, 1897, the relief fund had swelled to \$15,000,

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<sup>19</sup> Page, *The Boer War*, p. 7. Such articles were often imbued with the clichéd references that existed in Western European discourse about the Orient, a phenomenon examined by Edward W. Said in his immensely influential book *Orientalism* (New York: Vintage Books, 1979).



which was forwarded to the British relief association for distribution. *The Canada Presbyterian*, which had extensive coverage on the Armenians throughout 1896, collected about \$1,500 as well.<sup>20</sup> On March 4, 1896, by which time the massacres were well known and fundraising for the Armenians was more common, the magazine proudly boasted that it had been the first in the Dominion to accept donations.

George Grant had by then become the leading Canadian moral and intellectual figure of his time and one of the most outspoken Protestant commentators on public life in Canada. His personal involvement influenced the heads of other Canadian colleges and universities to become involved with the fundraising project. Principal William Caven of Presbyterian Knox College gave several addresses to the Council of the Evangelical Alliance, which formed a committee to spearhead the fundraising effort and also passed resolutions in January 1896 regarding the Armenians. Walter B. Geikie, dean of the Medical Faculty at Anglican Trinity College in Toronto, became Treasurer of the Armenian Relief Fund during 1896-97.<sup>21</sup>

Although fundraising was beneficial, Robert Chambers attempted a different aid strategy. He wrote to his brother J. N. Chambers, proposing that he gain governmental support for the establishment of an agricultural colony of Armenians in the Canadian Prairies. J. N. Chambers wrote to the Minister of Agriculture, Walter H. Montague, on January 30, 1896, suggesting that Canada should “make her name” by opening a way out of the merciless killing and untold suffering. The text of his letter was published in *The Globe*. Proponents of the plan believed the Canadian government should offer grants of land, and

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<sup>20</sup> *The Canada Presbyterian* wrote that *The Montreal Witness* also collected money for relief in 1896.

<sup>21</sup> Allan Hally, *Dean Geikie: An Outline* (Aurora, Ont.: Aurora and District Historical Society, 1995), p. 12. This fact was deemed important enough to be featured in Geikie’s obituary, which appeared in *The Globe* on January 13, 1917.

hoped that the British government and other individuals might be successfully appealed to for money.<sup>22</sup>

The Canadian government was uninspired by the appeal. On February 13, the assistant secretary of the Department of the Interior replied that the government would provide no money for the passage of settlers across the Atlantic. However, he believed that Armenians who made the passage on their own might qualify for settlement under the *Dominion Lands Act*.<sup>23</sup> Such a response was probably not surprising, given that Canadian immigration officials preferred settlement by Western or Northern Europeans.<sup>24</sup>

The media coverage and fundraising efforts triggered some religious organisations to protest their government's failure to intervene on behalf of the Armenians. In December 1895, several organisations held "Armenian indignation" meetings.<sup>25</sup> A month later, the Council of the Evangelical Alliance in Toronto proposed that Canada and other Western nations intervene to stop the carnage, and asked that other branches of the Alliance throughout Christendom "implore the Christian nations to intervene on behalf of a Christian population threatened with extinction."<sup>26</sup>

The movement for the Evangelical Alliance was headed in the United States by Josiah Strong, a Protestant clergyman who was strongly in favour of an imperialistic United States foreign policy and overseas expansion. Strong was a founder of the American

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<sup>22</sup> Harold J. Nahabedian, "A Brief Look at Relations between Canadians and Armenians: 1896-1920," *Polyphony: the Bulletin of the Multicultural History Society of Ontario* 4, No. 2 (Fall/Winter 1982), p. 28; Kaprielian-Churchill, *Armenians in Canada*, p. 53. J. N. Chambers' letter was reproduced in an article in *The Globe* in February 13, 1896. Armenian Relief Treasurer Principal Geikie suggested that a large provincial committee needed to be established in Toronto to encourage the immigration scheme.

<sup>23</sup> Nahabedian, "Relations between Canadians and Armenians," p. 28.

<sup>24</sup> Brown and Cook, *Canada 1896-1921*, chapter 4. Such immigrants were considered to be hardy and well-suited for pioneer rural life, and were among the preferred "racial stock" for settlement in the Canadian West.

<sup>25</sup> *The Globe*, December 12, 14, 1895.

<sup>26</sup> *The Globe*, December 16, 1895.

social gospel movement and a promoter of domestic missionary activity in the American West whose influence is comparable to George Grant's in Canada. A strongly worded resolution was passed during the annual meeting of the Alliance in Toronto in early January 1896, expressing sympathy with the Armenian victims, asking the Christian powers of the world to intervene, and urging the Canadian government to demand protection for the Armenians.<sup>27</sup>

A similar resolution was passed at a public meeting to discuss the Armenian Question in loyalist Kingston in January 1896. Principal Grant delivered an inspiring address in which he stated that it was the duty of Britain and the United States to agree on a common policy of intervention before Armenians were "completely extirpated." Conservative Member of Parliament and businessman Hiram A. Calvin then took the podium and seconded Grant's proposal. Calvin believed Canada needed to display more responsibility towards the Armenians: "We, as Canadians, are a part of the British Empire. We cannot forever remain in that position. England has work to do and we must assist. We cannot sit always at the feet of the mother country as an infant."<sup>28</sup> This kind of statement was typical of the language used by Canadian imperialists.<sup>29</sup>

Two Presbyterian publications were especially fervent in their condemnation of the atrocities. *The Canada Presbyterian*, which had collected money for Armenian relief in 1880, intensified its efforts in 1896 and called on Canadians to protest against the outrages throughout the new campaign. The *Presbyterian Review* was equally dismayed and exhorted its readers on several occasions to seek justice for their persecuted brethren of

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<sup>27</sup> *The Globe*, January 9 and 10, 1896.

<sup>28</sup> *The Globe*, January 14, 1896.

<sup>29</sup> Berger, *The Sense of Power*, pp. 9, 123.

Armenia. An interesting editorial even sternly criticised the British church for having only made “feeble remonstrances” regarding the Armenians, stating that it was the moral duty of the church to do more.<sup>30</sup> Criticism of the British church was consistent with Canadian imperialistic sentiment, especially when a perceived moral duty was at stake.

The lobbying generated discussion about the Armenian atrocities in the Canadian House of Commons in 1896. The Presbyterian Church petitioned Parliament to make an appeal to Britain on behalf of the Armenians. John Charlton, a religious and idealistic Liberal Member of Parliament, subsequently presented a motion on March 20, 1896. The first part of the motion was identical to one already passed in the British House of Commons: “That this House express its deep sympathy with the sufferings of the Christian population in Asiatic Turkey, but trusts that further endeavours will be made to ameliorate their lot,” to which was appended: “and that for this purpose, concurrent action by the Christian powers of the world, including the United States of America, may be secured.” The motion was seconded by House Leader Sir Charles Tupper and adopted on April 17, 1896. Tupper assured Charlton of the government’s deep sympathy on the matter, adding that he was glad reference was specifically made to the United States and its association with European nations.<sup>31</sup>

The quantity of media coverage, relief and lobbying efforts during the nineteenth century for the Armenians may seem surprising given that the Ottoman Empire was fairly

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<sup>30</sup> Kaprielian-Churchill, *Armenians in Canada*, pp. 146-47. Kaprielian-Churchill did not specify the denomination of the church.

<sup>31</sup> *Journals of the House of Commons of the Dominion of Canada*, 6th session, 7th Parliament, (Ottawa: S.E. Dawson, 1896), Government Publications, pp. 140, 176; *Official reports of the debates of the House of Commons of the Dominion of Canada*, 6th session, 7th Parliament (Ottawa: King’s Printer, 1896), p. 6594. However, the Canadian resolution did not secure any governmental action in the United States. Although both the United States Congress and the Senate passed a tame resolution calling for President Grover Cleveland to denounce the Sultan’s massacres, the resolution was ignored by the White House since no urgent political circumstance drew the United States into Turkish affairs. See Balakian, *The Burning Tigris*, pp. 71-73.

removed from Canadian interests. However, networks such as the Evangelical Alliance give an indication of the large number of people in Britain, the United States, and Canada who held similar values regarding the mistreatment of the Armenians. Canadian advocates believed that their burgeoning nation was participating in an important, internationally recognised effort, alongside their worldly neighbours Britain and the United States.

The genocidal massacres took place just as Canadian imperialistic sentiment was reaching its peak during the 1890s. The heightened sense of imperial fervour led many Canadians to believe that something more concrete needed to be done to help the Christian Armenians, which was consistent with the values they held for the attainment of a better society. Such participation led to one of the earliest instances of what is deemed to be a cornerstone of Canadian culture, a strong sense of global humanitarian involvement.

### Chapter 3: Canada's Response to the Armenian Genocide

The end of the genocidal massacres of 1895-97 provided little respite for the Ottoman Armenians. Without military support, activists from Christian nations who so vociferously condemned the killings were essentially powerless to do anything other than to offer much needed relief. The surviving Armenian population carried on as best it could, even though it was clearly vulnerable to more attacks.

There were moments of hope though. The rule of the Sultan effectively ended in 1908 as the more moderate Young Turks rose to power. The most popular Armenian revolutionary party within the Empire had supported the coup against the Sultan, and Armenians and Turks rejoiced together and embraced in the streets of major cities. However, the celebrations were short-lived: the inability of the new government to prevent or condemn the slaughter of 30,000 Armenians in the Cilician province of Adana less than a year later foretold an ominous future.<sup>1</sup>

Just prior to the First World War in 1913, the most virulent extremists of the Young Turk movement, the Committee of Union and Progress (CUP), usurped power. The CUP perceived the Armenian minority as a stumbling block in its pursuit of a vast Pan-Turkic Empire. Ideological racism within the movement and fear that Turkey would disappear led to the demonisation of the Armenian people as a convenient internal enemy, whose alleged disloyalty explained the downfall of the mighty Ottoman Empire. The outbreak of war and the Turkish alliance with Germany provided an opportunity to solve the Armenian problem.

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<sup>1</sup> See Dadrian, *History of the Armenian Genocide*, chapter 10, and Akçam, *A Shameful Act*, chapter 2, for further details on the Adana massacres.

The CUP falsely accused Armenians of having collaborated with the enemy and slated the entire Armenian population for deportation.<sup>2</sup> Meanwhile, the CUP surreptitiously created a parallel hierarchical administration that superseded the traditional government's structure in the provinces and carried out mass killings of deportees through this network. Up to a million Armenians were killed in 1915, and several hundred thousand more were massacred or died of starvation and exposure during the subsequent eight years. The genocide was widespread and systematic, and marks the first of several ideologically motivated genocides which occurred during the twentieth century.<sup>3</sup>

Reports of the organised massacres could be read in newspapers in the United States and in Canada almost as they were happening.<sup>4</sup> Such media reports were not easily obtained, since the CUP carefully controlled the flow of information from the interior of the Empire, especially regarding the deportations and killings. Nevertheless, information began to trickle out from the American and Canadian missionaries of the ABCFM and from American doctors and nurses among them. The American Ambassador to the Ottoman Empire, Henry Morgenthau, drew on these sources to create an informal information-gathering network to document the killings of the Armenians.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> A few thousand Armenians did indeed join Armenian units on the other side of the Russian border, but by and large Armenians chose to remain loyal to the Ottoman forces. Either way, this does not justify killing almost all adult males and deporting women, children, and the elderly. See Akçam, *A Shameful Act*, pp. 202-203.

<sup>3</sup> Dadrian, *History of the Armenian Genocide*, chapters 12 to 16; Akçam, *A Shameful Act*, chapters 4 and 5; Eric D. Weitz, *A Century of Genocide: Utopias of Race and Nation* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2003), pp. 1-15; Balakian, *The Burning Tigris*, p. 185, citing Vahakn N. Dadrian, "The Determinants of the Armenian Genocide," *Journal of Genocide Research*, 1:1 (March, 1999).

<sup>4</sup> Collections of American and Canadian newspaper accounts have been published by Richard D. Kloeian, Ed. *The Armenian Genocide: News Accounts from the American Press, 1915-1922* (Berkeley: Anto printing, 1985); and by A. R. F. Youth Organization of Canada *Le Genocide Arménien dans la Presse Canadienne - The Armenian Genocide in the Canadian Press* Volume I - 1915-1916 and Volume II - 1916-1923 (Montreal: Armenian National Committee of Canada, 1985).

<sup>5</sup> Henry Morgenthau, *Ambassador Morgenthau's Story* [book online] (New York: Doubleday, 1918), chapter 25, from <<http://www.cilicia.com/morgenthau/Morgen25.htm>> accessed August 21, 2006. Missionaries who

## Canadian Media Coverage and Fundraising Campaigns

The Armenian genocide shocked many Canadians. However, compared to previous Canadian aid efforts, their reaction was initially somewhat restrained since the war effort was a priority. The Allied victory, the ensuing Peace Conference, and subsequent discussions regarding the establishment of an ethnically separate Armenian state in parts of the crumbling Ottoman Empire reinvigorated the movement in Canada to help the Armenians. By early 1920, Canadian Protestant religious groups influenced by social gospel ideas devoted an extraordinary amount of energy towards relief efforts.

During the Adana massacres and especially after the 1915 genocide, the Canadian media published several reports on the killing of Armenians. As had been done in previous years, missionaries detailed what they witnessed and interested Canadians donated to fundraising campaigns, particularly after 1919. Massive protests led by reform-minded Canadians from across the country accompanied the post-war campaigns.

### *The Massacres in Adana, Cilicia*

Several Canadian missionaries who had been in the Ottoman Empire during the genocidal massacres of the 1890s were still working there during the 1909 Adana massacres. *The Globe* under editor and Presbyterian minister James A. Macdonald (1903-1916) published reports which focused on the experiences of these Canadian missionaries, including the Chambers and MacCallum families, as well as other missionaries such as Mrs. Irving, the daughter of the Moderator of the Presbyterian General Assembly in Winnipeg, Frederick B. DuVal. One of *The Globe's* stories recounted the heroic acts of missionaries William N. Chambers and his nephew Lawson P., who were in charge of a

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visited Morgenthau in his Constantinople office recounted what they witnessed, often with tears streaming down their faces.



school for Armenian girls and saved many of their lives. Eyewitness testimony and the experiences of the missionaries were conveyed throughout the coverage, and influenced some Canadians to volunteer as ABCFM missionaries.<sup>6</sup>

A new campaign was launched by *The Globe* two weeks after the first reports were published. Contributors were acknowledged in the newspaper, and donations were sent to Chairman D. A. Cameron of the Canadian Bank of Commerce in Toronto.<sup>7</sup> The campaign appeared in *The Globe* daily between May 5 and May 31, 1909 and continued sporadically thereafter until September 23, 1909, by which time over \$6,000 had been contributed. The Canadian House of Commons discussed the massacres as well, and on October 23, 1909, *The Globe* announced that Parliament had voted to provide money for relief work.<sup>8</sup>

#### *The Genocide*

During the First World War, the United States was not officially at war with the Ottoman Empire. Many American missionaries stationed with the ABCFM remained among the Armenians while the insidious campaign to eradicate them began in 1915. Canadian missionaries on the other hand were either expelled from the Empire or imprisoned. In one interesting case, American Ambassador Henry Morgenthau used whatever influence he could muster with the Ottoman Minister of the Interior (and architect of the genocide) Talaat Pasha, to secure the release of Canadian missionary J. P. McNaughton, who had been working in the Ottoman Empire for decades.<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> *The Globe*, April 19-20, September 23, and December 4, 1909. Many other articles appear in *The Globe* alongside the 1909 fundraising campaign. Historian Hilmar Kaiser is currently preparing the memoirs of Mrs. Irving, née DuVal, for publication (*The Globe* mistakenly printed the name Irwin instead of Irving).

<sup>7</sup> D. A. Cameron also took charge of the contributions from fundraising campaigns in 1916 and in 1920.

<sup>8</sup> *The Globe*, October 23, 1909. Although the need was considered great, no specific amount had been set.

<sup>9</sup> Morgenthau, *Ambassador Morgenthau's Story*, chapter 25. The exchange between Talaat and Morgenthau is chilling in its dark humour: "I first spoke to [Talaat] about a Canadian missionary, Dr. McNaughton, who was receiving harsh treatment in Asia Minor. 'The man is an English agent,' he replied, 'and we have the evidence for it.' 'Let me see it,' I asked. 'We'll do nothing for any Englishman or any Canadian,' he replied,

Some of the missionaries went on speaking tours following their return to Canada, where they detailed eyewitness accounts to horrified audiences.<sup>10</sup> Missionary William N. Chambers, who had been a classmate of President Woodrow Wilson at Princeton years earlier, wrote a letter to him in 1915 urging him to try to do something to help the Armenian people.<sup>11</sup> Some of the Canadian missionaries returned to help the survivors as soon as the war was over, including W. N. Chambers and Frederick MacCallum.

Canadians were able to read extensive newspaper coverage of the annihilation of the Armenian people, part of which was based on the personal experiences of the ousted Canadian missionaries.<sup>12</sup> Other reports placed the major onus of the killings on the Ottoman Empire's wartime ally Germany, and lamented the fact that the United States had not yet joined the Allies.<sup>13</sup> The heightened imperialistic sentiment in Canada was evident in the way many articles about the Armenian genocide were tied to the war effort.<sup>14</sup>

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'until they release Ayoub and Zinnoun.' 'But you promised to treat English in the employ of Americans as Americans,' I replied. 'That may be,' rejoined the Minister, 'but a promise is not made to be kept forever. I withdraw that promise now. There is a time limit on a promise.' [...] Despite this I made another plea for Dr. McNaughton. 'He's not American,' said Talaat, 'he's a Canadian.' 'It's almost the same thing,' I said. 'Well,' replied Talaat, 'if I let him go, will you promise that the United States will annex Canada?' 'I promise,' said I, and we both laughed at this little joke." As we will see, a few years later McNaughton became one of four Canadian missionary doctors who were central in the distribution of Canadian relief collected by *The Globe* for Armenians.

<sup>10</sup> For example, an ad headlined "The Tragedy of Armenia" appeared in *The Globe* on January 17, 1920, and invited readers to attend an upcoming lecture by missionary Ira Pierce, an "eye-witness of Armenia's Martyrdom."

<sup>11</sup> Chambers reproduces the letter and Wilson's response in his memoirs, *Yoljuluk*.

<sup>12</sup> A two-volume collection of Canadian newspaper articles detailing the genocide and its aftermath has been published by the A. R. F. Youth Organization of Canada: *Le Genocide Arménien dans la Presse Canadienne - The Armenian Genocide in the Canadian Press* Volume I - 1915-1916 and Volume II - 1916-1923 (Montreal: Armenian National Committee of Canada, 1985). Although only offering a sampling of published reports, the volumes nevertheless offer a general indication of the reaction in several Canadian newspapers. For a more detailed treatment of articles available in one Canadian newspaper, see Katia M. Peltekian, *Heralding of the Armenian Genocide: Reports in The Halifax Herald, 1894-1922* (Halifax: Armenian Cultural Association of the Atlantic Provinces, 2000).

<sup>13</sup> Regrettably, one book which specifically examines propaganda during the First World War does not discuss the influence of the Armenians at all: Jeffrey A. Keshen, *Propaganda and Censorship During Canada's Great War* (Edmonton: University of Alberta Press, 1996). It would be revealing for future scholars to examine which Canadian media outlets intentionally used the genocide for war propaganda.

<sup>14</sup> Several examples are available in the two-volume collection of newspapers articles cited above.

Wartime fundraising efforts for Armenian relief started relatively late in Canada.<sup>15</sup> Money was collected in June 1916, almost a year after the genocide had largely been carried out, by *The Toronto Daily Star*, endorsed as usual by *The Globe*. Almost identical quarter-page announcements for the new campaign appeared in the *Star* on June 20 and in *The Globe* on June 21. Prominent Canadians such as Ontario Premier William H. Hearst, Canadian Bank of Commerce President Sir Edmund Walker, former Postmaster General Sir William Mulock, and Toronto magnate Sir Henry Pellatt became patrons of the campaign, as did the Catholic Archbishop of Toronto, Neil McNeil, and Anglican Archdeacon Henry J. Cody, both of whom were influenced by the social gospel movement. The announcement included eyewitness testimony by Ambassador Morgenthau, and again connected German complicity to the genocide, described as the “diabolical attempt to wipe out the Armenians.” Every dollar contributed was slated to go directly to pay for doctors, medicines, food, and clothing to aid Armenian refugees. The campaign raised \$15,000 over one year.<sup>16</sup>

#### *The Armenian Relief Association of Canada*

Almost a year into the *Star*'s campaign, in May 1917, various churchmen, businessmen and politicians established the Armenian Relief Fund to better coordinate fundraising for the Armenians. It was renamed the Armenian Relief Association of Canada (ARAC) in 1920.<sup>17</sup> The ensuing fundraising campaigns were well organised and more

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<sup>15</sup> Possible reasons for this are that the war effort was considered more important, or that relief could not get through to the Armenians, especially with Canadian missionaries ousted from the Empire. The American Near East Relief was, however, collecting money at this time, and Canadians may have contributed there.

<sup>16</sup> *The Toronto Daily Star*, June 20 1916; *The Globe*, June 21, 1916. *The Globe* additionally called on the clergy of all denominations to participate in the campaign. The head of the Armenian National Committee, Richard Amirkhanian, thanked the editor of the *Toronto Daily Star* for his help on the occasion of the one year anniversary of the campaign on June 21, 1917.

<sup>17</sup> Kaprielian-Churchill, *Armenians in Canada*, pp. 144-45.

productive than the earlier efforts, with results periodically announced in the two aforementioned Toronto newspapers. During the first campaign, \$14,000 was collected through a “Tag Day,” where teams collected money for the relief fund.<sup>18</sup> A pageant with over 1,000 participants was held at Toronto’s Massey Hall in 1918, the contributions from which went directly to Armenian relief.<sup>19</sup> Soon after the war, the Non-resisters Relief Organisation of Ontario (including Mennonites) contributed another \$30,000 toward Armenian relief.<sup>20</sup>

Most impressive were the efforts of Sunday school children across Canada. Anglican, Methodist, Baptist, Congregationalist, and Presbyterian Sunday school boards, the Canadian Council of the Provincial Sunday School Association, the YMCA, the YWCA, and the Religious Education Council of Canada all participated. Samuel T. Bartlett, the General Secretary of Canadian Sunday schools and of the Young People’s Society of the Methodist Church, managed the fundraising.<sup>21</sup> During three fundraising drives between 1918 and 1920, the children collected roughly \$300,000.<sup>22</sup> Such broad involvement may explain why many Canadian (and American) parents prompted their children to finish the food on their plates during the 1920s and 1930s by referring to the starving Armenians.<sup>23</sup>

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<sup>18</sup> *The Toronto Daily Star*, May 16, 1917.

<sup>19</sup> *The Toronto Daily Star*, February 7, 1918. The article headline read “Do Your Bit for the Armenian Relief: British Empire Pageant.” It is unclear how much money was raised that evening.

<sup>20</sup> *The Globe*, March 25 and April 5, 1919.

<sup>21</sup> *The Toronto Daily Star*, March 18, 1919. Bartlett was the Canadian representative on the King-Crane Commission, one of two American fact-finding missions that were sent to investigate conditions and report on the feasibility of a mandate in Armenia and Syria in early 1919, and to ensure the continuance of relief.

<sup>22</sup> *The Globe*, December 17, 1917, January 12, 1918, January 27, 1920. The idea originated in the United States, where fundraising drives achieved proportionally similar results during their three campaigns.

<sup>23</sup> Two examples should suffice to help illustrate this. Novelist Margaret Atwood refers to the Armenian genocide in several of her novels. In the somewhat biographical short story “Significant Moments in the Life of My Mother,” Atwood specifically refers to how her grandmother would prompt her own mother to finish her plate: “In this house you had to stay at the table until you had eaten everything on your plate. ‘Think of the starving Armenians’, Mother used to say,” says my mother. “I didn’t see how eating my bread crusts was

During the 1919 Paris Peace Conference, the desire to punish Germany and its allies created an atmosphere in which retributive justice was prominent. Many of the delegates offered the Armenians expressions of universal sympathy, which Armenian leaders took seriously.<sup>24</sup> Conference delegates and Armenian leaders likely deemed the creation of a large Armenian state from the ruins of the Anatolian interior as a justly deserved reward. The Ottoman “Armenian Provinces” were slated to be joined with the existing independent Armenian state under foreign mandate. This was an extremely delicate and difficult prospect, considering that Turkish and Kurdish people still lived in those areas.

Canadian newspaper coverage of the potential Armenian state became even more significant in this environment. That summer, the *Toronto Daily Star* advertised the screening of a film that would be playing at the Strand Theatre in Toronto as “the world’s most sensational screen drama.” The new motion picture called “Ravished Armenia” was based on a book written by Aurora Mardigian, the “Armenian beauty” who lived as a captive of slave dealers and Turkish harems for two years before escaping to the United States.<sup>25</sup> Canadian missionary Frederick MacCallum rescued Mardigian from her ordeal. Near the end of the war, MacCallum became one of the first missionaries to return to the areas from which Armenians had been deported, travelling with the advancing Russian

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going to help them out one jot.” *Bluebeard’s Egg* (Toronto: McClelland & Stewart, 1983; Seal Books, 1984), p. 4. Also, historian James B. Gidney relates a story in his book *A Mandate for Armenia* (Oberlin: Kent State University Press, 1967) of how, when discussing his research with an acquaintance, she remembered hearing often about the starving Armenian children. Gidney, p. 41.

<sup>24</sup> Gidney, *A Mandate for Armenia*, pp. 74-77.

<sup>25</sup> A quarter-page advertisement was taken out on August 23, 1919 with the caption: “True to Facts Pictures Should Rouse Your Sympathies to Generously Aid the Fund.” Several shorter advertisements followed. The British and Canadian version of both the book and the film was called “Auction of Souls.”

army in 1918 to offer his services. In her book, Mardiganian credits the tall, kindly-looking man with saving her life, and for providing her with passage to the United States:

Dr. MacCallum, who now is in New York and was the first good friend I found after my arrival in this country, bought thousands of Armenian girls out of slavery in those days when the Russians were pushing into Turkey from the Caucasus. With money supplied from the American Committee for Armenian and Syrian Relief he purchased these girls from their Turkish captors for \$1 apiece. The Turks, knowing the Russians would liberate these captive Christian girls if they found them, were glad to sell them at this price rather than risk losing them without collecting anything.<sup>26</sup>

In November 1919, *The Globe* published a series of informative articles in the space of two weeks entitled “Shall Armenia Perish?” The articles were written by missionary Ira W. Pierce, who had been stationed in the province of Kharput and was then interned with his family for three years in Beirut during the war. He gained notoriety by lecturing on the genocide to horror-stricken audiences in Toronto and elsewhere in Canada.<sup>27</sup> During the next few years, *The Globe* printed information about Pierce’s fundraising efforts, his speaking tours, and his personal story on many occasions, treating him as a *de facto* expert on Armenia. Pierce also became personally involved with a plan to bring Armenian orphans to Canada, which will be discussed later.

Pierce’s first four articles discussed the history of the Armenian people, what he termed their racial distinction from the Turks, his eyewitness accounts of atrocities, and the political future of the new Armenian state.<sup>28</sup> His fifth article dealt specifically with Canada’s distinct contributions. In it he highlighted the efforts of the Canadian Armenian

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<sup>26</sup> Aurora Mardiganian, *The Auction of Souls: The Story of Aurora Mardiganian, the Christian Girl Who Survived the Great Massacres*, interpreted by H. L. Gates (London: Phoenix Press, [1919]; formerly printed in America for private distribution only as *Ravished Armenia*), pp. 238-46. Canadian donations were likely sent to the American Committee for Syrian Relief as well at this time.

<sup>27</sup> For example, Pierce shocked his audience at a Toronto Methodist Church by relating how he had personally seen streams run red with Armenian blood, and a 150 mile lane of Armenian bodies strewn from Kharput all the way to Aleppo. See *The Globe*, March 12, 1919.

<sup>28</sup> *The Globe*, November 4, 5, 6, and 9, 1919.

Relief Association and the British Lord Mayor's Fund in an effort to rebut claims that the Americans were the only people helping the Armenians.<sup>29</sup> Pierce cited Samuel T. Bartlett, the head of fundraising drives in Canadian Sunday schools and representative of the King-Crane commission, who had just returned from Armenia, and paid high tribute to the Canadian Relief Administration there.<sup>30</sup> The screening of "Auction of Souls" and Pierce's articles were probably integral to the success some months later of the greatest fundraising effort for Armenian relief ever held in Canada.

*"The Call from Armenia"*

On January 9, 1920, *The Globe* launched its latest campaign, naming it "The Call from Armenia." The newspaper denounced the awful tragedy "in which thousands of helpless, homeless, hopeless women and children are perishing." Language that had by then become common was used to describe the situation: "[t]he Unspeakable Turk has done his hideous work well. There are few husbands or big brothers. The males are chiefly old men and children." *The Globe* signalled its own profound commitment with an initial contribution of \$1,000.<sup>31</sup> The "Call" became a powerful inducement for humanitarian action. Over \$5,000 was donated the next day, a sum which was matched or surpassed every day during the first month of the campaign. *The Globe* provided a highlighted space on its front page in addition to a more detailed article, generally appearing on page four or five, every day during the first three months of the campaign. Additionally, donors and their gifts were acknowledged, occasionally filling two entire pages in the newspaper.

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<sup>29</sup> *The Globe*, November 15, 1919.

<sup>30</sup> A July 19, 1919 article in *The Globe* indicated that Bartlett was able to authenticate horror stories as the Canadian representative of the King-Crane commission. He estimated that one and a half million Armenians had been killed, leaving 250,000 orphans in need of relief. Pictures taken by Canadian missionaries were shown to the public on many occasions during lecture tours by Bartlett and Pierce, and were supplied to *The Globe* on January 13, 1920 to furnish absolute proof of the unbelievable atrocities.

<sup>31</sup> *The Globe*, January 9, 1920.

Donations ranging from ten cents to ten thousand dollars flooded in from across the country, and even from the United States. As of January 15, newspapers throughout Ontario<sup>32</sup> held their own fundraising campaigns, whose proceeds were forwarded to *The Globe*.<sup>33</sup> The municipal councils of several communities and towns from Nova Scotia, Prince Edward Island, Quebec, Manitoba, Saskatchewan, Alberta, British Columbia, and the Yukon also collected and sent donations from their constituents.

Individuals and organisations across the country such as chapters of the patriotic Imperial Order of the Daughters of the Empire (IODE) held various events to raise money for the Armenian Fund.<sup>34</sup> Contributions deemed particularly interesting were highlighted daily, including a \$100 donation by the Toronto Evangelical Church for the Deaf, or the donation of proceeds from hockey and baseball games.<sup>35</sup> *The Globe* detailed first-hand information about the experiences of Canadian missionaries in Armenia,<sup>36</sup> which led many Canadians to “hear the call” and sign up for missionary duty there.<sup>37</sup> On March 13, a

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<sup>32</sup> At least one newspaper outside of Ontario, *The Halifax Chronicle*, also took part, accompanied by a \$10,000 donation.

<sup>33</sup> The following participated in the fundraising: *The Brantford Expositor*, *The Woodstock Sentinel-Review*, *The Guelph Mercury*, *The St. Catharines Standard*, *The Lindsay Warder*, *The Peterboro Examiner*, *The Collingwood Bulletin*, *The Acton Free Press*, *The Whitby Gazette and Chronicle*, *The St. Thomas Times Journal*, *The Stratford Beacon*, *The Arnprior Chronicle*, *The Exeter Times*, *The Markdale Standard*, *The Evening Post* (Lindsay), *The Maple Leaf* (Port Dover), *The Recorder and Times* (Brockville), *The Daily Telegraph* (Kitchener), *Record News* (Smith’s Falls), *The Transcript* (Glencoe), *The Kingston Whig*, *The Sarnia Canadian Observer*, *The Toronto Telegram*, *the British Whig*, and *The Wallaceburg News*.

<sup>34</sup> The IODE was an organisation founded during the Boer War of prominent Canadian women whose main aim was the promotion of Canadian patriotism. Brown and Cook, *Canada 1896-1921*, pp. 42-43.

<sup>35</sup> February 12, 20, March 10, 1920.

<sup>36</sup> Nurse Christie MacLean from Pine Grove, Ontario, had been through and witnessed many heartrending experiences of the women and children of Armenia. *The Globe*, July 14, 1920. Mr. and Mrs. D. B. Eby wrote about their eyewitness accounts from Hadjin. *The Globe*, July 8, 1920. Eby published a book about his experiences several years later. D. B. Eby, *At the Mercy of Turkish Brigands* (New Carlisle: Ohio, 1922).

<sup>37</sup> For example, Miss Emma M. Wood from Sarnia, Ontario “answered the call” by heroically offering her services for “this exacting and dangerous field,” where she worked with Dr. Frederick MacCallum. Two others were Miss Girling-Clark from Toronto, who had been in charge of an orphanage in Cyprus, and Margaret MacLennan of Kempt Road, Nova Scotia, who arrived in New York after over two years of service in Armenia. Both missionaries sent information of their experiences to *The Globe* on March 10, 1922 and June 27, 1922 respectively.



Toronto businessman contributed \$100 accompanied by a letter which thanked *The Globe* and all Canadians for their part in the fundraising efforts, remembering its 1909 fundraising efforts as well.<sup>38</sup>

The money collected, about \$300,000 in a few months, was wired to four Canadian doctors who were working in collaboration with the British Lord Mayor's Fund and the American Near East Relief. Missionary doctors William N. Chambers in Cilicia, Frederick MacCallum in Constantinople, James P. McNaughton in Smyrna, and Alex MacLachlan, President of the International College, also in Smyrna, periodically relayed reports about how the money they received was being spent.<sup>39</sup> Much of the money was used to buy food and agricultural tools and implements to grow food with which the Armenians could feed themselves.<sup>40</sup>

Part of the money was also used to construct a children's hospital in Constantinople.<sup>41</sup> The building was designated the "Canadian Hospital" and was inaugurated on Dominion (now Canada) Day, with representatives of Turkish royalty attending the ceremony. The hospital was built for Armenian children with incipient tuberculosis and doubled as an orphanage. On December 30, 1920, a picture of the hospital was printed in *The Globe* with the title "Succor for the Stricken Armenians," and an appeal was made by Canadian Member of Parliament and ARAC Chairman John G. Kent for the

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<sup>38</sup> The merchant may have been Levon Babayan, an Armenian community leader whose rug store advert was printed on the same page. Years later, Babayan was on the committee which oversaw the welfare of the Georgetown Boys, Armenian orphans who were brought to Canada and raised as farm-hands.

<sup>39</sup> *The Globe*, February 7, 1920. Brief biographies for each of the medical missionaries were published on the following days: F. W. MacCallum on February 19, Alex MacLachlan on February 25, J. P. McNaughton on June 5, and W. N. Chambers on June 12, 1920.

<sup>40</sup> April 17, 1920. The same editorial lamented the fact that the Canadian government, like the United States government, confined its help to resolutions of sympathy instead of offering concrete help. The editorial concluded with the following statement: "Has Ottawa decided that is all the Dominion can afford to give?"

<sup>41</sup> Information about the orphanage/hospital was printed on July 31, November 12, and December 30, 1920.

continuing maintenance of the building. It is possible, though difficult to confirm, that the hospital still stands today.<sup>42</sup>

### SUCCOR FOR THE STRICKEN ARMENIANS

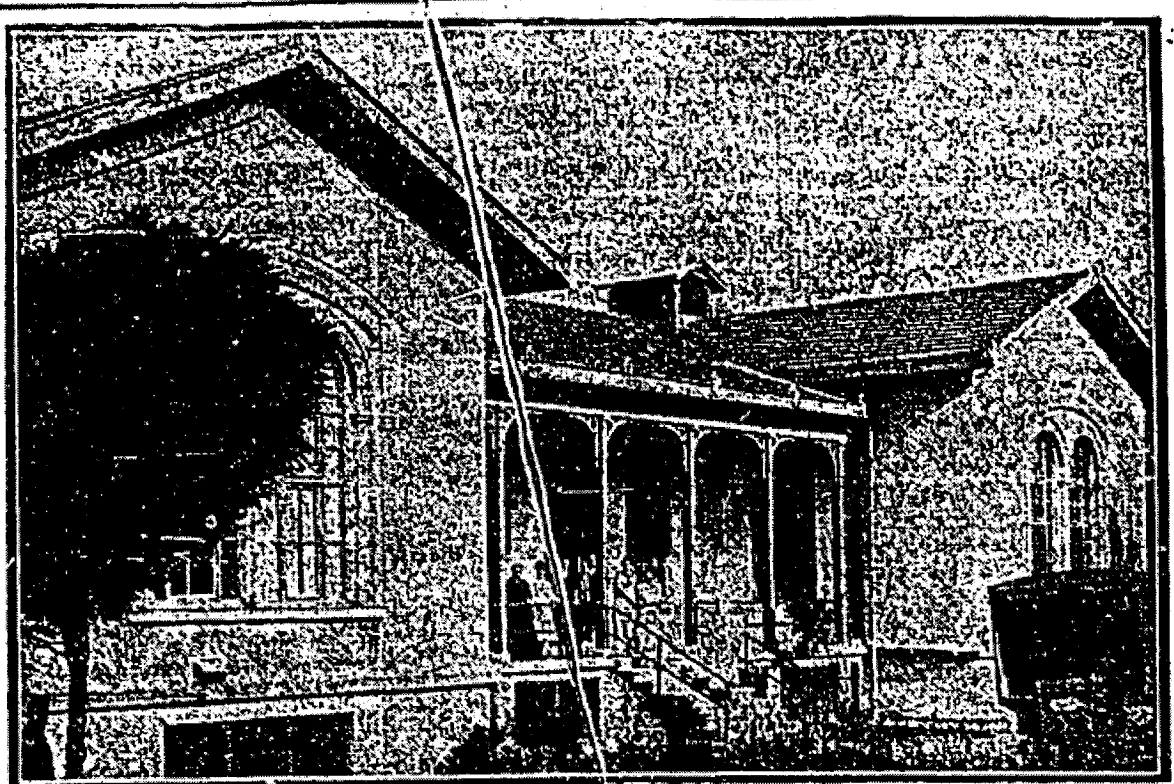


Figure 1: *The Globe*, December 30, 1920, p. 8.

On March 15, the American Near East Relief's Secretary Charles V. Vickery detailed how the Canadian Fund boosted existing American relief efforts:

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<sup>42</sup> The building's endowment was unfortunately forgotten when Canadian contributions dropped off a few years later, and over time the institution may have been incorrectly relabelled as having been built with American aid. Although it is difficult to be absolutely certain, the orphanage/hospital in question may be one which is currently called the American Hospital in Istanbul (Amerikan Hastanesi), commonly referred to as the Admiral Bristol Hospital. The American Hospital was also built in 1920, and is located in roughly the same area as the Canadian one would have been. If this is the case, a large portion of the money collected by *The Globe* in Canada's most important fundraising campaign for Armenians has been falsely attributed as originating from the United States. Perhaps more disturbing is the reference to Bristol's name. Admiral Bristol was one of the more ardent American apologists for the massacres after 1923. Bristol later became a standard fixture in campaigns of genocide denial by the Turkish government.

It may possibly be of interest to your Canadian contributors to have the clear-cut and emphatic assurance from us that this \$225,000 (the amount cabled as liable to draft) is placed at the command of Dr. MacCallum in Constantinople, wholly in addition to the regular monthly appropriation that we are making, and does not directly or indirectly in any way take one dollar or responsibility from American contributors, nor does it at any time pass through American banking channels. It is from the Canadians, through Canadians, to Armenian beneficiaries, and is a full \$225,000 more than these Armenian beneficiaries would otherwise receive.<sup>43</sup>

Vickery had been responsible for the distribution of tens of millions of dollars pledged through the American Near East Relief.<sup>44</sup> Nevertheless, he wrote on March 27 that *The Globe's* support was unparalleled:

We have never known any philanthropic campaign to be conducted through a newspaper as successfully as this one in *The Globe*. I have been making some inquiries, but do not know of any benevolent fund raised by any daily paper that has equalled in size the contributions that you have received and forwarded for Near East Relief. The response is a tribute to the high standing and high standards of *The Globe*, to the recognized generosity of the Canadian people, and to the growing sense of world brotherhood.

In an official report for the Near East Relief which was reprinted in *The Globe* on November 12, Vickery stated that 500,000 people in Armenia alone were kept alive owing to the money donated by Canadians. More importantly, the most strategic work according to Vickery was the ongoing relief being offered among 110,000 orphaned children who he believed “constitute the hope of the future and the leaders of the new Near East.”

*The Globe* continued to collect contributions for Armenian relief during the next few years, but never with the same concerted effort as in 1920. What is perhaps most remarkable about the more prominent post-War fundraising efforts for the Armenians is that they coincided with rapid inflation in Canada. The increased cost of living was at the

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<sup>43</sup> *The Globe*, March 15, 1920.

<sup>44</sup> From 1915 to 1930, the American Committee for Armenian and Syrian Relief, renamed Near East Relief after 1919, collected and distributed an impressive 116 million dollars. James L. Barton, *Story of Near East Relief (1915-1930): An Interpretation* (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1930), p. ix.

root of much public discontent and became one of the Canadian government's most persistent and difficult problems after mid-1919.<sup>45</sup>

"The Call from Armenia" outdid any campaign which preceded it. The campaign provided a focal point in which Canadians of all political and social stripes were able to voice their frustration over the predicament of the Armenians. The extensive newspaper coverage which accompanied the campaign additionally provides historians with an invaluable repository with which to study the humanitarian reaction to the Armenians in early 1920.

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<sup>45</sup> Brown and Cook, pp. 323-24. A select committee of the House of Commons was established by mid-1919 to investigate conditions.

## Chapter 4: The Canadian Religious Lobby for Armenia in Early 1920

Alongside *The Globe's* influential 1920 campaign for Armenian relief, protests were sent to government by several religious institutions influenced by the more progressive and radical wing of the social gospel movement. These lobbyists ultimately received their government's support, through which they condemned the imminent return to Turkish rule of the Armenian villayets. The Canadian government conveyed its dissatisfaction to Britain and the Supreme Council.

In late 1917, the increased sense of British-Canadian nationalism led to a change in the Canadian political landscape. A new party was forged between Conservatives and pro-war Liberals to counteract minority dissent and facilitate the enactment of wartime measures, such as the divisive conscription bill. The Union Party was swept to power during a bitterly fought election in December 1917. Colonel George Taylor Denison, a major spokesman for Canadian imperialism, stated that the new Union government was essentially a triumph for his party, referring to the old imperialist "Canada First" movement of the 1870s.<sup>1</sup>

Apart from imperialist sentiment, the new coalition government gave expression to many other ideas and impulses that had been at work since the 1890s, notably those of the social gospel. The widely publicised Social Service Congress of March 1914, sponsored by the Social Service Council of Canada, representatives of Protestant churches and the Woman's Christian Temperance Union, and some farm and labour organisations, gave expression to these impulses. The Congress concluded that there was a pressing need for

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<sup>1</sup> Berger, *The Sense of Power*, p. 146.

righteousness to prevail and evil to be purged from the world. In 1917, influential social gospeller Salem Bland believed that the war was accelerating the forces of regeneration and organised his “New Canada Movement” to help hasten the process. Such individuals and institutions marked the beginnings of a new, more profound sense of “Canadianism.”<sup>2</sup>

Protestant Churches were increasingly influenced by social gospel doctrines during the war, providing a seedbed for social reform in some cases. In 1916, the Board of Home Missions and Social Services of the Presbyterian Church concluded that a social revolution was at hand. Two years later, attending the Methodist Church’s General Conference, General Superintendent Samuel Dwight Chown described the war as “a contest between an insane desire for personal power and the aspirations of a society towards perfection.” He then called on his fellow Methodists to rise and sing “The Battle Hymn of the Republic.” Such infectious patriotism reflected a militant brand of Canadian nationalism, which advocated the reconstruction of society on Christian socialist principles.<sup>3</sup> By 1918, increasing radicalism and a leftward bent marked all sectors of the social gospel. Radicals, in large part Methodists, were winning victories in the formulation of social policies, and connecting themselves to the agrarian and labour constituencies throughout 1918-19.<sup>4</sup>

Several of these reformers also criticised their government for not doing enough for the Armenian people, especially when relief activities peaked in early 1920. When faced with the probability that territories slated to be Armenian would revert to Turkish authority, these Canadian reformers sent several protests to their government. However, the reformers

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<sup>2</sup> Allen, *The Social Passion*, pp. 17, 41; Brown and Cook, *Canada 1896-1921*, pp. 294-95.

<sup>3</sup> Brown and Cook, *Canada 1896-1921*, p. 296. However, it should be noted that many influential social gospellers, such as J. S. Woodsworth, were pacifists.

<sup>4</sup> Allen, *The Social Passion*, pp. 61-62, 89-93.

ultimately failed to sustain the interest of Canadians for very long, and never educated them about the importance of sending Canadian troops to defend the Armenians.

### Lobbying Efforts by Protestant Churches

The first of the resolutions which protested the continuance of Turkish rule over Armenia was passed in January 1920, under Presbyterian Church General Superintendent Samuel D. Chown's chairmanship. The Toronto Methodist Ministerial Association protested against the possible repetition of bloody persecutions if Turkish autonomy was permitted by the Allies. The resolution asserted that 55,000 Canadian lives had been lost during the war to prevent just such a possibility. It was hoped that other institutions would join the protest as well: "We urge on other religious bodies, our Universities, our Empire and Canadian Clubs, Boards of Trade, the Daughters of the Empire, and all similar organisations to unite in a similar protest." Most of them did. The resolution was sent to government and published in *The Globe*, only five days after the launch of their "Call from Armenia" campaign.<sup>5</sup>

The Toronto General Ministerial Association joined the burgeoning movement soon after. *The Globe* reported on January 29 that the Association had recently passed a similar resolution, expressing "profound distress at the sufferings of the Armenian people" and that it "would most strongly commend to public sympathy the fund for this relief now being

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<sup>5</sup> *Disposition of Armenia*, Library and Archives Canada (hereafter LAC), RG25 A-3-a, vol. 1259, file 1920-143, January 17, 1920. On January 19, the resolution was forwarded to the President of the Privy Council and Acting Secretary of State for External Affairs Newton Rowell, and to the Acting Prime Minister Sir George Foster. That same day, Foster received a communication from Albert E. Scanlon, a lawyer from Bradford, Ontario, who asked if government could ensure that the substantial fundraising from Bradford would be followed up on by a reputable organisation, such as the Red Cross Society, and would have the approval of the government of Canada. *Sir Robert Borden fonds*, LAC, MG26-H, microfilm, reel C-4419, pp. 140050-51, sent January 17, 1920.

raised by *The Globe*.” The resolution called upon the Canadian government to make representations to Britain in protest of the restitution of Turkish autonomy. The Association believed it was speaking not only for its constituency, but for the entire city of Toronto, and “the whole people of the Dominion regardless of race or creed.” The letter was sent to the press and to Acting Prime Minister George Foster, who replied that the matter would receive consideration.<sup>6</sup>

The largest church organisation in Canada forwarded a similar resolution, as well. The Social Service Council of Canada (SSCC) was an umbrella group representing thirty churches and their affiliated organisations, whose leadership consisted mainly of progressive social gossellers. The SSCC normally addressed domestic concerns about children, health, housing, and urban reform, and consequently won praise from young radicals in the social gospel movement.<sup>7</sup> On January 28, 1920, Secretary J. G. Shearer of the SSCC sent the following resolution to Acting Prime Minister George Foster:

In view of the inhumanities which have been suffered by the Armenian people under the Turkish rule, and in view of the fortitude of spirit and solidarity of nationality which they have exhibited in spite of indescribable suffering -

Be it RESOLVED: That this Social Service Council of Canada place on record (1) its deep sense of human and Christian brotherhood with the Armenian people; (2) its earnest hope that they may never again be placed in any way under any sort of Turkish authority or overrule; (3) its urgent request to the Canadian Government that it make such representations to the Prime Minister of Great Britain as are consistent with humanity, justice and Canadian service in the recent war to the end that Armenian interests may be safeguarded on the basis of Armenian nationality and the flagrant inhumanities which have characterized Turkish domination may cease forever.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> *Borden fonds*, reel C-4419, pp. 140102-03, February 2, 1920.

<sup>7</sup> Allen, *The Social Passion*, p. 13.

<sup>8</sup> *Borden fonds*, reel C-4419, pp. 140078-79, January 28, 1920. The SSCC was the forerunner of the present-day Canadian Council of Churches.



Individual congregations engaged in their own letter writing campaigns, sending hundreds of protest letters to the government between February 7 and March 23. Various churches across Canada involved their congregations by inviting them to pray and protest on behalf of Armenians. S. D. Chown and other Protestant leaders called on Canadians to express their dismay by setting aside February 15 as a “day of indignation,” during which money would also be collected and sent to *The Globe*’s campaign.<sup>9</sup> The spirit of the campaign was well summarised by the rector of the Parochial Missionary Committee and Armenian Relief Society, patron Henry J. Cody, who stated that the churches must help since governments were unwilling to do so.<sup>10</sup> The government took the matter seriously enough to have the Undersecretary of State for External Affairs respond to each of the protest letters received. Sir Joseph Pope cordially assured the protesters of the government’s consideration of the matter.<sup>11</sup>

By March 1, 1920, *The Globe* reported that complaints were arriving in Ottawa from all over the country and becoming increasingly insistent.<sup>12</sup> Four days later, *The Globe*’s managing editor, Stewart Lyon, personally asked Ontario’s new Premier, Ernest C.

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<sup>9</sup> However, one church did not participate. Referring to the February 15 “day of indignation,” the Primate of the Church of England in Canada asked that the government quell any protests critical of the Imperial government, perhaps worried about the recurrence of social unrest after the relatively recent Winnipeg General Strike in the summer of 1919. *Borden fonds*, reel C-4413, pp. 133161-62, February 11, 1920.

<sup>10</sup> Cody’s statement appeared in an article devoted to the Parochial Missionary Committee of St. Paul, published in *The Globe* on January 27, 1920. The Committee donated \$1,000 to the Armenian Relief Fund.

<sup>11</sup> *Disposition of Armenia*, February to April 1920. Pope had helped create the Department of External Affairs and worked there from the time it was founded in an inadequately small office above a barbershop on Ottawa’s Bank Street in 1909. However, he embodied the image of a stereotypical civil servant: he was disturbed by the merest hint of innovation, was meticulous and old-fashioned, kept every chit of paper in place, and watched over typists’ shoulders, before “pedaling sedately home on his bicycle in the evening.” Regrettably, Pope was generally unsympathetic to advancing Canada’s external status, which ultimately did little to advance the cause of the Armenians. Gaddis Smith, “Canadian External Affairs During World War I,” in Hugh L. Keenleyside et al., *The Growth of Canadian Policies in External Affairs* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1960), p. 34; D. M. L. Farr, “Pope, Sir Joseph” from *The Canadian Encyclopedia*, <<http://www.thecanadianencyclopedia.com>>, accessed September 1, 2006.

<sup>12</sup> *The Globe*, March 1, 1920.

Drury, for his support. Drury had become Premier of Ontario following the unexpected victory of the United Farmers of Ontario (UFO) in October 1919.<sup>13</sup> Lyon requested that Drury ask the federal government to protest to the Supreme Council in opposition of the proposed retention of Turkish sovereignty over Armenia.<sup>14</sup>

Drury did so, writing that it was the heartfelt desire of Ontarians to prevent the repetition of the horrors towards Armenians, for whose freedom and security so many Canadian lives had been sacrificed. He asked that his government be associated, in the strongest possible way, with representations made to the Supreme Council “in order that the people of Armenia may escape the danger of persecution and extermination by which they are threatened.”<sup>15</sup> Foster responded to Drury favourably and optimistically on March 9:

The Government of Canada believes that it has properly interpreted the desire, not only of the people of Ontario, but of the Canadian people generally, in its representations made to the Supreme Council of the Allies and it confidently expects that in the Treaty arrangements which are ultimately made efficient steps will be taken to assure the freedom and security of the Armenian people hitherto under Turkish rule.<sup>16</sup>

### The Social Gospel Factor

The fundraising campaign and lobbying efforts in Canada on behalf of the Armenians captured much more attention in early 1920 than they did during the mass killings in 1915. During the genocide itself, Canadians were occupied with the war effort,

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<sup>13</sup> Allen, *The Social Passion*, p. 212. The UFO had found a responsive chord in the editors of the Canadian religious magazines *Guardian*, *Presbyterian and Westminster*, and *Social Welfare*, all representatives in varying degrees of the social gospel.

<sup>14</sup> *Armenian Relief*, Archives of Ontario, RG 3-4, microfilm, reel MS 1657, Managing Editor of *The Globe* Stewart Lyon to Ontario Premier E. C. Drury, March 4, 1920; Drury to Lyon, March 8, 1920; *Borden fonds*, reel C-4344, p. 64604.

<sup>15</sup> *Confidential Cabinet Papers*, March 6, 1920; *Borden fonds*, reel C-4344, p. 64604, March 6, 1920.

<sup>16</sup> *Borden fonds*, reel C-4344, p. 64605, March 9, 1920.

which was believed to provide the best way to offer a measure of protection to the Armenians. After the war, the 1919 Paris Peace Conference, the establishment of the League of Nations, and subsequent discussions about the establishment of an Armenian territory caused quite a bit of excitement in Canada, which was participating in such international events for the first time in its young history.

More importantly, radical social gospel doctrines insisted that the war would provide the foundations for a new society built on Christian democratic principles. Radical social gossellers must have been outraged by Armenia's predicament. The genocide gave these Canadians fuel to wage their campaign for the attainment of their "Kingdom of God on Earth," but only after the war had been won. The promised Christian Armenian nation, now at risk, may have been considered a fulfillment of the prophecy that a new world order would emerge, which was one of the reasons the public supported the war. Proponents of the social gospel not only condemned the failure to create an Armenian nation, but also criticised the inaction of all Christian governments, while simultaneously fighting for the attainment of a highly moral society in Canada.

Methodist, Presbyterian and other Protestant churches as well as the SSCC under Secretary J. G. Shearer which sent protest letters to their government regarding Armenia in early 1920. Social gossellers Henry J. Cody and Neil McNeil became patrons of the ARAC in 1916. The heads of several Canadian colleges and universities associated with the social gospel movement voiced their concerns regarding Armenia in early 1920. Among them were Principal Maurice Hutton of Toronto's University College, Robert Falconer of University of Toronto, and D. L. Ritchie of Montreal's Congregational College.<sup>17</sup> Rev.

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<sup>17</sup> *The Globe*, March 8, 1920; *The Gazette*, March 22, 1920.

Salem Bland, possibly the most influential of the social gospellers, lent his voice as well in 1922.<sup>18</sup> J. W. Bengough and Agnes Maule Machar, who contributed their writings during the earlier campaigns, wrote poems about the Armenians in 1920 as well.<sup>19</sup>

Two Methodist politicians influenced by the social gospel movement became especially involved with Armenian issues on the international scene. Ontario Premier E. C. Drury placed Ontario's support behind the federal government's letter of protest to the Supreme Council about Armenia in March 1920. As we will see below, the main advocate in federal politics of securing the liberation of the Armenian provinces from Turkish rule was Newton W. Rowell, the Acting Secretary of State for External Affairs and President of the Privy Council, acting near the end of his political career in early 1920.

Protest campaigns by religious groups all but disappeared after April 1920, only about two months after they started. It is possible that the campaigns were deemed successful when the Canadian government sent protests to Britain, and religious groups saw no reason to pursue similar tactics. Additionally, the Union government was in the midst of its own crisis in mid-1920, and it is possible that lobbying would have been less effective at this time. However, even if this were the case, it is nevertheless surprising that effective, concerted lobbying efforts stopped so suddenly, especially when no Armenian nation emerged, and Russian Armenia was being torn apart in December 1920.

It is, however, more likely that those most involved were unable to sustain the interest of their congregations for too long. Proponents of the social gospel movement

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<sup>18</sup> *The Globe*, March 30, April 5, 1922.

<sup>19</sup> As he had in 1896, Bengough published three more poems in *The Globe*, where he was an occasional contributor: "December, 1919," December 24, 1919; "Armenia," January 12, 1920; and "Armenia's Martyrdom," March 8, 1920. The 83 years old Agnes M. Machar wrote a poem devoted to the Armenians under her pseudonym *Fidelis* entitled "The Call of Armenia 1886---1920," published in the *Presbyterian and Westminster* (Toronto, March 4, 1920, p. 239.)

based their approach on the fulfillment of love rather than the attainment of justice.

Canadian social gospel historian Richard Allen refers to their approach as “religious wish-fulfillment”. Educating, campaigning, and even politicking for good will replaced any long term investment in the attainment of real political goals; absolute ethical values and political tactics became confused by the leaders of the social gospel movement.<sup>20</sup> Social gossellers were neither particularly savvy lobbyists, nor did they implement any safeguards to ensure continuity in the movement for the Armenians in Canada. Similar problems have regrettably plagued humanitarian efforts during more recent genocides as well.

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<sup>20</sup> Allen, p. 354.

## Chapter 5: Canadian Diplomatic Reactions Regarding Armenia

Though short lived, the lobbying campaigns undertaken by these Canadian religious groups influenced by the social gospel received the support of the Canadian government, which began a series of communications with Britain on the matter. Those most interested in the fate of the Armenians were still part of the main base of support for the increasingly unpopular Union government, which responded sympathetically to their protests. Under the lead of Newton Rowell, the Canadian government forwarded the protests it received to Britain, specified its own condemnation of a return to Turkish autonomy, and demanded that its views be adequately represented at Supreme Council meetings. The Armenian matter was additionally used to highlight an important issue for the Canadian government regarding its wish to be consulted by Britain on matters of international importance, especially when Canadian interests were involved.

The Canadian External Affairs Department communicated the government's stance on Armenia to the British Colonial Office. External Affairs had been established in 1909, but only became involved in the making of external policies after 1917. The official Secretary of the Department was the Prime Minister, though Borden depended heavily on the counsel of a Harvard trained, Nova Scotia lawyer, Loring C. Christie, who became the Department's legal adviser in 1913. Christie played a vital role in Canadian external affairs throughout his posting and accompanied Borden wherever he went.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Smith, "Canadian External Affairs," in Keenleyside, p. 47-49; Philip G. Wigley, *Canada and the Transition to Commonwealth: British-Canadian Relations, 1917-1926* (London: Cambridge University Press, 1977), p. 14.

The most impressive figure in the External Affairs Department was Newton Wesley Rowell, the leading Liberal Cabinet member in the coalition government. His interest in Canada's international position was comparable to Borden's, although Rowell was more likely to speak in terms of ideals and morality. Rowell took over the portfolio of External Affairs and was Clerk of the Privy Council while Borden was away. Together, Rowell and Borden made external policy more pertinent than ever before in Canada.<sup>2</sup> Under Rowell's watch, the Canadian government dealt with various issues relating to Armenia's fate in 1920, including an official protest sent to the Supreme Council regarding the probable return of the Armenian Provinces to Ottoman rule.

Rowell probably developed his sympathy towards the Armenians early in his political career. He had been supported in 1894 by several Protestant leaders of independent politics during his run as a Liberal candidate. Among them was Principal Grant of Queen's University, as well as the members of the editorial board of *The Globe*.<sup>3</sup> He was a devout Methodist who was keenly interested in missionary activity, believing that Canada needed to recapture the spirit of the crusades through a militant commitment to the gospel.<sup>4</sup>

Several members of the Union government were imperialists or saw their political coalition as a culmination of the drive for reform in Canada. Such individuals were an influential force during the war, notably regarding the problematic issue of conscription in 1917. Both Rowell and Borden believed that resorting to conscription was not an

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<sup>2</sup> Smith, "Canadian External Affairs," in Keenleyside, p. 54.

<sup>3</sup> Margaret Prang, *N. W. Rowell: Ontario Nationalist* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1975), p. 26. Rowell also served on the 1937 Rowell-Sirois commission for relations between the Dominion and the Provinces. Coincidentally, Henry F. Angus, who wrote an article on Canada's suitability to undertake the League of Nations mandate for Armenia in 1920, was on the same commission.

<sup>4</sup> Page, *The Boer War*, p. 4.

abandonment of reform ideals, but a crisis situation in which the views of the anti-conscription French Canadian minority could be set aside for the greater good. As men like Rowell and Borden saw the situation, first the war needed to be won, and *then* reform would follow.<sup>5</sup> The Protestant churches all supported conscription in 1917.<sup>6</sup>

There was a growing sense that Canada was no longer a passive adjunct to Britain in world affairs. On December 1, 1918, Borden entered a note in his diary about the need for Canada to assume full sovereignty, through which it could better serve Britain and the United States, and indeed the world. Rowell played a major role in the dissociation of Canada's government from British policy.<sup>7</sup>

However, imperialist sentiment in Canada collapsed shortly after the war, as did support for the Union government. The treatment of Canadians by British officers during the war was deemed unacceptable, and the Canadian government was embarrassed to learn first about military activities and policy decisions in the censored daily press. Canadians faced a tiresome, uphill fight for separate dominion recognition from the British and their other allies.<sup>8</sup> When patriotic emotions began to waver after the armistice, various ethnic, regional, and class discontents fractured the country's superficial unity.<sup>9</sup>

These developments, as well as growing distrust of Europeans and their wars, added to the increasing isolationist sentiment in parts of English Canada.<sup>10</sup> Newton Rowell put the sentiment rather succinctly during his time as one of three Canadian delegates to the First

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<sup>5</sup> Owram, *The Government Generation*, p. 98-99.

<sup>6</sup> Allen, *The Social Passion*, p. 42.

<sup>7</sup> Smith, "Canadian External Affairs," in Keenleyside, pp. 57-58.

<sup>8</sup> Brown and Cook, *Canada 1896-1921*, pp. 280-82, 287.

<sup>9</sup> Brown and Cook, *Canada 1896-1921*, p. 322.

<sup>10</sup> French Canada had long had isolationist leanings. See C. P. Stacey, *Canada and the Age of Conflict: A History of Canadian External Policies* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press), 1984. Vol. 1, 1867-1921. (First Published in 1977 by The Macmillan Company of Canada), pp. 300-301.



Assembly of the League of Nations in Geneva: “Fifty thousand Canadians under the soil of France and Flanders is what Canada had paid for European statesmanship trying to settle European problems.” More potent than the zeal of the missionary was the desire that the New World should escape the contamination that had been plaguing Europe, which threatened to invade the healthy body politic of North America.<sup>11</sup> According to one Canadian historian, isolationism also undermined Canada’s interest in undertaking the mandate for Armenia in February, 1920.<sup>12</sup>

The Union government had outlived its usefulness as a government of wartime necessity. By mid-1919, the mishandling of several issues by Conservative Ontario Premier William Hearst ushered in Drury’s United Farmer’s of Ontario (UFO) government. Soon afterwards, federal Cabinet members began bolting from party ranks, beginning with the prominent Manitoba agricultural leader Thomas A. Crerar in June 1919, and followed by several western Unionists a few weeks later.<sup>13</sup> Government had lost favour with significant segments of society, including those disenfranchised by the Wartime Elections Act, French Canadians, farmers, and organised labour. By 1920, the government had lost about one

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<sup>11</sup> For more information on Canadian isolationism, see Stacey, *Canada and the Age of Conflict*, pp. 284, 292-93; Jean-François Rioux and Robin Hay, “Canadian Foreign Policy: From Internationalism to Isolationism? A Discussion Paper,” *The Norman Patterson School of International Affairs*, No. 16 (1997), pp. 4-5; James Eayrs, “‘A Low Dishonest Decade’: Aspects of Canadian External Policy, 1931-1939,” in Keenleyside, pp. 61-63, citing the Records of the First Assembly (1920), p. 379; Smith, “Canadian External Affairs,” in Keenleyside, p. 54; Wigley, *Canada and the Transition to Commonwealth*, p. 106; J. L. Granatstein, ed., *Canadian Foreign Policy: Historical Readings* (Toronto: Copp Clark Pitman Ltd., 1986), p. 2. Isolationist sentiment, and a mistrust of militarism, had been evident in Canada from at least 1888. Historian Carl Berger discusses the congruence between liberal anti-imperialism and isolationism, pacifism, and anti-materialism. Imperialists tried to dispel the illusion of security and shatter the feeling of immunity in Canada to convince them of the need for the country to militarise. See Berger, *The Sense of Power*, pp. 240-43.

<sup>12</sup> James Eayrs, “A Low Dishonest Decade,” in Keenleyside, p. 64. Eayrs cites Opposition Liberal party leader William Lyon Mackenzie King, who believed that any such mandate for Armenia would create protests across Canada. This will be discussed in more detail below.

<sup>13</sup> Brown and Cook, *Canada 1896-1921*, pp. 317-320. Crerar and ten other former Parliamentarians formed the “National Progressive Party” in January 1920, which received the second largest number of seats during the 1921 election.

Cabinet member a month and was on the verge of collapse. Prime Minister Robert Borden was away for much of his last year in office because of ill health, and finally retired in July 1920, although the Union government remained in power under Arthur Meighen's leadership until December 1921.<sup>14</sup>

### Anglo-Canadian Communications Regarding Armenia

As the Union government was in the process of faltering politically, it responded to the protests generated by the fundraising campaigns by intensifying communication with Britain regarding the creation of an independent Armenian nation. The first such communication was sent soon after the launch of *The Globe's* "Call from Armenia," on January 19, 1920. Canada's Governor General, the Duke of Devonshire, asked the British Colonial Secretary, the imperialist Lord Alfred Milner, to clarify Britain's position regarding Armenia, stating that "much concern exists in Canada over the fate of this country and that there would be a strong feeling against any proposal to subject it again to Turkish rule."<sup>15</sup> The letter was re-sent on February 11 and a second missive containing the same argument was sent the following week, but Britain was slow to respond.<sup>16</sup>

Part of the reason for the delayed response was the lack of a proper channel for British-Dominion communications after 1919, following the dissolution of links agreed upon during the war.<sup>17</sup> The delay was not at all appreciated by the Canadian government,

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<sup>14</sup> Brown and Cook, *Canada 1896-1921*, pp. 326-29.

<sup>15</sup> *Disposition of Armenia*, January 19, 1920.

<sup>16</sup> *Disposition of Armenia*, February 17, 1920. Copies of the telegram were forwarded to the Canadian delegates who had attended the Peace Conference the previous year.

<sup>17</sup> Wigley, *Canada and the Transition to Commonwealth*, pp. 89, 97-98. In theory, the Imperial War Cabinet had given the dominion premiers direct telegraphic contact with British Prime Minister Lloyd George in 1918, a right demanded as an explicit means of restricting Colonial Office authority over dominion dealings with the British government. Nevertheless, communication between the two countries became even more difficult and cumbersome after 1919, and the principal channel remained the Colonial Office.

and was especially resented by Newton Rowell, who had been forwarded the Methodist Ministerial Association's scathing rebuke of the possible return of the Armenian Provinces to Turkish rule, which launched the lobbying campaign by religious groups in January 1920. Rowell's new office allowed him to translate the condemnation into governmental action. When the Governor General did not seem to be getting through, Rowell detailed his government's position in a telegram to the Colonial Office on February 20, 1920.

The five-page communication was quite thorough. It reiterated Britain's own recent chastisement by Secretary of War Arthur Balfour, who claimed that Turks attacked the Entente Powers without provocation and fanatically massacred Armenians by direct order of their government. Rowell also noted that the British Empire Delegation at the Paris Peace Conference had suggested that Turkey should be placed under international tutelage, and that Germany also conspired in the massacres. Rowell added that statesmen of the Allied and Associated Powers had repeatedly declared that provisions must be made for the liberation of Armenia from Turkish rule, and added Canada's own powerful condemnation:

[T]he Canadian people and the Canadian Government have justifiably assumed that in the negotiations of the Turkish Treaty Turkish rule over European territory would cease and that the Armenian provinces in Turkey would be completely removed from Turkish rule [...] Broadly speaking, Canadian opinion is firmly convinced that the Turk has proved himself unfit either to rule over other people or to be trusted with any power that might seriously menace the destinies of other states and that Canadian opinion would be clearly and justifiably shocked by any proposal to again subject any portion of Armenia to Turkish rule. Although the Canadian Government has already drawn the attention of His Majesty's Government to the public opinion in Canada on this question, the undersigned suggests that the Canadian Government should place itself on record as absolutely opposed to the return of any of the Armenian provinces of Turkey to Turkish rule and that this view should be communicated at once to His Majesty's Government.

Rowell stated that although few Canadians took part in the campaign against "the Turk" as compared to Germany, "no campaign made such an appeal to the Canadian people as that

to liberate the oppressed nationalities from the Dominion of the Turk.” Therefore, his government believed that Constantinople should continue to remain under Allied control:

[T]he Canadian Government should place itself on record as in favor of the removal of Turkish Government from Constantinople and complete liberation of European peoples from Turkish rule. Such a decision would be regarded by Canadian opinion as intelligible and in accordance with the objects for which the war was fought and the repeated declarations of the statesmen of the Allied and Associated Powers.

Rowell attached to the communication the many resolutions sent to the government by Canadian religious associations.<sup>18</sup> *The Globe* referred to Rowell’s communication in a highlighted section on its front page on the following day.<sup>19</sup>

In early March, Governor General Devonshire sent copies of the hundreds of protest letters received from congregations across Canada to the Colonial Office to document Canadian public opinion on the issue. Devonshire stated that the campaign by Canadian religious groups prompted a strong domestic desire for the Canadian government to be better advised about the Supreme Council meetings regarding the Turkish Peace process.

A great deal of interest in the Turkish Treaty negotiations is being manifested in Canada, and since the treaty must be submitted to Parliament for approval my Ministers feel they should be kept advised on the general outline of the proposed conditions of peace, especially those relating to territorial readjustments, to the Armenians and to the control of the Straits. At present they have little knowledge beyond what appears in the press, notwithstanding my telegrams of January 19th and February 11th. They should be glad to have a full report of the present position and of the proposals now under consideration.<sup>20</sup>

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<sup>18</sup> *Confidential Cabinet Papers Relating to the Turkish Treaty*, LAC, RG25 A-3-a, vol. 1265, file 1920-463, February 20, 1920. The resolutions attached included the ones from the Methodist Ministerial and the General Ministerial Associations in Toronto detailed above, as well as a February 3 letter from the Presbytery of Toronto and a February 9 letter from the Congregation of Brantford Ave Methodist Church.

<sup>19</sup> *The Globe*, February 21, 1920. The headline was striking: “Canada’s Protest Against Allowing Any More Turkish rule in Armenia. All Influence in Ottawa in Favor of Armenia.”

<sup>20</sup> *Confidential Cabinet Papers*, March 3 and 5, 1920. The second communication is available in *Documents relatifs au relations extérieures du Canada- Documents on Canadian External Relations*, ed. Lovell C. Clark (Ottawa: Department of External Affairs, 1970), vol. 3, 1919-1925 (hereafter *DCER*), no. 91, p. 69. On March 6, the Undersecretary for External Affairs Joseph Pope also sent a coded telegram to London referring to the communication from Rowell, adding “Great public interest being shown in Turkish Treaty, particularly position of Armenia and continuance of Turk in Constantinople. See cable to Colonial Secretary yesterday and urge immediate reply.”

The Canadian government pressed the issue for several more weeks and Britain finally responded in more detail, though only in April 1920. Discussions became quite strained since the Canadian government believed the Colonial Office was responding slowly and inaccurately. Rowell became especially concerned when he realised that Canada was not being suitably updated by Britain regarding the course of the Supreme Council negotiations.

*Requests for Proper Information from Ottawa*

The British Colonial Office responded over a month after the first communication was sent from Ottawa, and did not answer any specific questions. In a telegram sent on February 21, 1920, Milner stated that it was not yet possible to give any definite reply to Devonshire's initial query since the question of how best to secure the protection of the Armenian population in the Turkish Empire had not yet been considered by the Supreme Council. Several weeks followed without any new information whatsoever.

When the Colonial Secretary finally responded in more detail on March 23, much had already changed in the Ottoman Empire. Milner stated that the conduct of the Turks might at any time compel a drastic revision of the terms of withdrawal. The constitution of an independent Armenia was far from assured, and was in fact extremely problematic:

The question of actual frontiers to be assigned to this State is partly dependent upon arrangements that still have to be made between Armenia and her neighbours on Caucasian side and as regards the Turkish side might if accidentally disclosed now provoke the very massacres and reprisals which we desire to avoid.

I hope to send you additional information when further progress has been made.<sup>21</sup>

Milner was referring to events which had taken place a few weeks earlier. French troops who had been stationed in Cilicia to protect the recently returned Armenians there retreated

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<sup>21</sup> *Confidential Cabinet Papers*, March 23, 1920. Available in *DCER*, no. 92, pp. 69-70. The External Affairs Undersecretary Joseph Pope was sent a copy of the letter a week later.

following the military advance of Mustapha Kemal Atatürk's Turkish Nationalist forces. Thousands of Armenians were massacred as a result.<sup>22</sup>

Before receiving this justification however, Rowell had been growing increasingly impatient. On March 27, he sent a telegram to Borden's personal secretary, Loring C. Christie, who was in London at the time, asking him to represent, in the strongest possible terms, the importance of keeping the Canadian government informed in this matter.<sup>23</sup>

Rowell had convened a meeting at the Privy Council Office to discuss the need to receive better information regarding the liberation of Armenia. Joseph Pope sent a minute from the Privy Council Office meeting to Milner on March 29, which referred to Rowell's scathing February 20 report and requested that Canada be kept fully informed of the negotiations:

[Since the Treaty] will be made by His Majesty on behalf of the whole British Empire, of which Canada is one of the constituent nations, and the representatives of the Government of Canada will be requested to sign the Treaty on behalf of Canada and the assent of Canada to the terms of the Peace will eventually be required, it is important that the Canadian Government should be kept fully informed as to the negotiations now pending in reference to the terms of the Treaty of Peace with Turkey.<sup>24</sup>

The Canadian government was clearly upset that it was absent from the Turkish negotiations and demanded that Britain represent them suitably. Additionally, the Canadian government believed that Britain was giving better information to other countries. This opinion was validated after a despatch from the Canadian War Mission in Washington<sup>25</sup> confirmed such suspicions. The French Ambassador to the United States had invited the

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<sup>22</sup> *Documents on British Foreign Policy 1919-1939*, eds. E.L. Woodward and R. Butler (1st S. Lnd., HMSO, 1947-1972, Hereafter *DBFP*), vol. 7, pp. 291-306.

<sup>23</sup> *Confidential Cabinet Papers*, March 27, 1920.

<sup>24</sup> *Confidential Cabinet Papers*, March 29, 1920. Canada's desire for the liberation of Armenia from Turkish rule was reiterated, as was Rowell's suggestion that the Canadian Government formally place itself on record as absolutely opposed to the return of any of the Armenian provinces to Turkish rule.

<sup>25</sup> The institution of Canadian diplomatic representation in the United States had been an irritant to Britain, but plans had nevertheless been made to extend the assignment of the Canadian War Mission in Washington after the war.

Acting United States Secretary of State to participate in negotiations regarding the Turkish Treaty. On March 15, the British chargé d'affaires at the newly reassigned Canadian War Mission, R. C. Lindsay, communicated this fact to the Foreign Office. His message was also copied to Canada, possibly due to a mix up in the War Mission's new procedures. An irritated Rowell wrote the following to Christie on April 1:

Referring your cable March 30th Turkish Treaty. Judged by American Note published to-day apparently much fuller information furnished Washington than contained in Colonial Office despatch March 23rd and furnished two weeks earlier. Please find out if this assumption is correct and if so why this information not given Canadian Government at the same time as Washington.<sup>26</sup>

The diplomatic *faux pas* was hastily dealt with by Christie, who forwarded the letter to Milner's Assistant Secretary, Sir Henry Lambert, and to his friend and Lloyd George's personal secretary, Philip H. Kerr. Christie communicated Ottawa's irritation over the lack of proper information, and added:

You can understand the feeling in Ottawa if it appears that the Americans, who are withdrawing from the whole show, are given full information, while the Canadian Government who are doing their best to co-operate, are given next to nothing. It seems to me there are only two alternatives to the present position. One is to say to Ottawa in so many words that H. M. Government here cannot give any information to the Dominion Government until after decisions are reached. But I do not think that is a real alternative; I do not think you can really say that to Ottawa. The other is to send all the information without reservation.<sup>27</sup>

Astonishingly, the tone of this communication suggests that the Canadian government believed it was more concerned with the fate of the Armenians than the Americans were. Following Christie's intervention, Milner finally sent a more detailed telegram to the Duke of Devonshire on April 10, 1920, stating that the interest in Canada was fully appreciated and that equally strong sympathy was felt in London for the

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<sup>26</sup> *Confidential Cabinet Papers*, April 1, 1920, also available in *DCER*, no. 93, p. 70; Gidney, *A Mandate for Armenia*, p. 215.

<sup>27</sup> *Confidential Cabinet Papers*. Both letters were sent on April 5, 1920.

Armenians. Practical difficulties were great, however, since the Allies were not in control of the areas which were meant to be part of the new state. Milner also wrote that every effort would be made to keep Canada fully informed.<sup>28</sup>

The Supreme Council discussed the Turkish Treaty at the San Remo Conference between April 18 and 26, 1920, very soon after which detailed information was finally sent to Canada. The April 28 letter was addressed directly from Prime Minister to Prime Minister, and discussed the most important points that were negotiated at the conference. Unlike communication during the previous few months, the five-page letter included much more detailed information regarding the Turkish Treaty and especially the fate of Armenia.<sup>29</sup> The Canadian government seemed satisfied with the attention they received on this issue, and refrained from sending any new communication regarding Armenia.

The communications regarding the settlement of Ottoman Armenian affairs are part of an interesting, if largely neglected, chapter in the history of Canadian foreign affairs.<sup>30</sup> Part of the reason for such an energetic reaction on the part of Canada's government was likely due to the fact that many Canadians who were interested in the fate of the Armenians belonged to the Union government's main base of support. This constituency was especially important at a time when the Union party had become extremely unpopular. Perhaps because the government was on the verge of collapse, Rowell felt more

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<sup>28</sup> *Confidential Cabinet Papers*, April 10, 1920; available in *DCER*, no. 94, pp. 70-71.

<sup>29</sup> *Confidential Cabinet Papers*, April 28, 1920.

<sup>30</sup> Among the books on Canadian External Affairs that I have consulted, historians who allude to Armenia at all refer to a brief exchange between Opposition Leader William Lyon Mackenzie King and British Member of Parliament Aneurin Williams in early 1920 (discussed in the following chapter). This discussion was first cited by King's biographer R. MacGregor Dawson in *William Lyon Mackenzie King: A Political Biography*, Vol. I, 1874-1923 (Toronto: 1958), p. 404. Philip Wigley in *Canada and the Transition to Commonwealth* and James Eayrs' article in Hugh L. Keenleyside's *The Growth of Canadian Policies in External Affairs* subsequently refer to Dawson's citation. Few of the other books on Canadian foreign policy convey any information about the government's stance or the communication referring to the Armenians in 1920.



comfortable in pushing for a favourable Armenia policy, and thereby appealing this important base of supporters, comprised of highly religious, imperialist minded Canadians.

Simultaneously, the Canadian government, which had attained greater international respect after the war, felt it should have had more influence on the Turkish Treaty negotiations. Although the Treaty did not figure prominently in Canadian foreign policy during the year 1919-20, it interested the government more than any other international issue, except the treaty with Germany.<sup>31</sup> This significant point stands in direct contrast to the Canadian Immigration Department limiting the entry of Armenians to Canada at around the same time.<sup>32</sup> A lack of information regarding Armenia's fate thus became amalgamated with issues of Canadian representation and sovereignty.

By April 1920, there were hardly any protests or lobbying regarding Armenia. Rising post-war isolationist sentiment, greater concern with domestic issues in Canada, and the collapse of the Union government are the likely causes for the diminished support. With declining support in Canada, the sympathetic though faltering Union government was satisfied with the more detailed response from Britain, and ceased to request any more information about Armenia. A few months later, in July 1920, Robert Borden stepped down as Prime Minister, after which Newton Rowell also left government. Thereafter, the Armenia file in Canada was essentially laid to rest. Nevertheless, the British government had taken note of Canada's earlier significant interest, and, in April 1920, it referred to a possible Armenian mandate for Canada at the San Remo conference.

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<sup>31</sup> G. P. de T. Glazebrook, *Canada at the Paris Peace Conference* (London: Oxford University Press, 1942), pp. 28-29, 95-96, 108.

<sup>32</sup> Kaprielian-Churchill, chapter 8. At the height of fundraising and lobbying efforts in 1920-21, only 85 Armenians were allowed entry into Canada. Kaprielian-Churchill discusses how immigration to Canada during the massacres in 1894-6, in 1909 and during the genocide in 1915-16 actually dropped as a result of a pervasively discriminatory attitude towards certain refugees, including the Armenians.

## Chapter 6: An Armenian Mandate for Canada?

At the 1919 Paris Peace Conference, a mandate system was established to ensure that the colonial territories of the defeated Central power nations would be administrated by one of the Allied Powers. It was clear to most delegates at the Conference that no mandate was considered more urgent or desirable than that for Armenia.<sup>1</sup> Parts of the Ottoman territories where Armenians lived before the genocide would have been merged with the Caucasian Armenian Republic, already independent since 1918, and mandated to a strong and preferably impartial nation. At the time, nobody could have expected that a year and a half later, there would be no Armenian nation whatsoever.

The establishment of a greater Armenian state would have been an extremely challenging undertaking for any country. Many Armenians fled their ancestral homelands because of massacres and forced expulsions during the late nineteenth century, and only the survivors who returned to their old homes after the war remained in the Armenian Provinces following the genocide and deportations of 1915. However, many at the Conference believed that punitive measures needed to be taken against the Central Powers, and there was certainly a strong feeling that justice was long overdue for the Armenians.

France and Italy were initially considered as possible mandatories, but many Armenians feared that both countries might dominate and exploit Armenia rather than guide it to self-reliant statehood.<sup>2</sup> A United States mandate was almost unanimously preferred. An idealistic and religious president, the legacy of nearly a century of missionary

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<sup>1</sup> Gidney, *A Mandate for Armenia*, pp. 74, 98.

<sup>2</sup> Gidney, *A Mandate for Armenia*, pp. 67, 98-100.

involvement and vast landholdings in the Ottoman Empire, and strong public pressure persuaded many that the country should take on the task.<sup>3</sup>

The United States government decided to send fact-finding missions to the Near East to determine the feasibility of an American mandate over the Turkish Anatolia, Armenia and Constantinople. The first one, the King-Crane Commission, strongly urged American involvement. The report had been presented at the Peace Conference, but then it essentially disappeared until it resurfaced three years later in a series of *New York Times* articles on the Peace Conference. The second commission, headed by General James G. Harbord, also recommended acceptance of the mandate, though cautiously. The Harbord Report estimated that a mandate over both Constantinople and Armenia would require 59,000 American soldiers and cost 750 million dollars over five years, estimates which confirmed fears of a costly intervention for isolationist anti-mandate campaigners. The report gave thirteen reasons for and against the mandate, adding one final recommendation to take on the responsibility on moral grounds.<sup>4</sup>

However, Congress rejected membership in the League of Nations, both in November 1919 and March 1920, and increasing post-war isolationism indicated that

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<sup>3</sup> Several dissertations and books have been written about the American mandate for Armenia. James B. Gidney completed his dissertation in 1964 and published it as a book, *A Mandate for Armenia*, in 1967, which continues to be the standard text on the subject. In 1969, Barbara Keller Jean wrote "The United States and Armenia, 1914 to 1920: The Armenian Mandate" (M.A. diss., California State College at Fullerton, 1969), which curiously omits any reference to Gidney's book. Chapter 26 of Peter Balakian's 2003 book *The Burning Tigris* discusses the mandate in some detail. More recently, Keith Pomakoy wrote "Helping Humanity in the Real World: America and the Urge to Rescue, 1895-1945" (Ph.D. diss., State University of New York at Albany, 2004) in which he devotes one chapter to the Armenians. Pomakoy essentially believes the United States carefully balanced policy considerations and generally (and smartly) avoided getting embroiled in difficult situations, as it almost did with the Armenian mandate.

<sup>4</sup> See Gidney, *A Mandate for Armenia*, chapters 7 and 8. The Harbord report was filed in late 1919, but was only circulated to the media and read by members of the United States Senate just before a vote on the mandate, in May 1920. According to Moranian, there were over a dozen American reports available for consultation on Armenia at this time, though few of them were read. See Moranian, "The American Missionaries," p. 353.

public advocacy for the mandate was waning. When the United States was officially asked by the Supreme Council to accept the mandate, Congress rejected the offer, as many expected. President Woodrow Wilson nevertheless accepted the daunting task of drawing territorial boundaries for Armenia, which was completed in November 1920.<sup>5</sup>

The Supreme Council hastened to find other potential mandatories when it became increasingly less likely that the United States would take the Armenian mandate in early 1920. The newly established League of Nations was also considered, but with neither money nor manpower, it could offer nothing more than the authority of its office to any willing nation. Norway, Greece, Brazil, Holland, Sweden, Spain, and perhaps most energetically Canada, were all considered as potential mandatories by the Supreme Council.

The Canadian government was certainly enthusiastic about the international status it achieved during the war, and a highly motivated, though narrow, segment of Canadian society displayed interest in Armenia's welfare throughout and after the war. However, even if a wider swath of the Canadian public was interested in a mandate, the unpopular Union government did not want to be embroiled in an expensive and dangerous military venture to administer Armenia, or any other country. Nevertheless, some individuals in Canada and several more in Britain found the idea tantalising.

#### Deliberating the Canadian Mandate

Rumours began circulating in some influential circles about the possibility of a Canadian mandate over Armenia in late 1919. Though it is difficult to assess the reaction to this across Canada, there was certainly much interest in Toronto. The editorial board of *The*

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<sup>5</sup> See Gidney, *A Mandate for Armenia*, chapter 10, for more details.

*Globe* supported the mandate on several occasions during their 1920 fundraising effort, and at least one article was published in the academic *University Magazine* which stimulated discussion of the mandate in the Canadian and British media.

*The Globe* published several articles which discussed the Canadian mandate for Armenia. The first article appeared on October 22, 1919, and detailed how the London Club and other prestigious organisations had recently been discussing such a possibility:

In the event of the United States declining the mandate for Constantinople, Anatolia and Armenia, will Canada be asked to accept it, and if so, will she consent in virtue of her status as the senior Dominion in the chain of nations called the British Empire? [...] This question is discussed in the clubs, but so far as can be ascertained it is still in the region of irresponsible club gossip.

The correspondent, however, doubted that Canada would accept such a mandate since Armenia was too far away, contrasting that with the example of Papua's proximity to Australia and its acceptance of a mandate.<sup>6</sup>

A month later, missionary Ira Pierce discussed the possibility of a Canadian mandate in a series of articles published in *The Globe* entitled "Shall Armenia Perish?" Recalling that rumours were circulating in London's official circles, Pierce believed that Canada should consider the mandate, but only if all other possibilities failed and the United States refused the task. Pierce wrote that the dominions of Australia and South Africa were set to take mandates, and that it would possibly be a blessing for Canada, as a thriving nation, to be given a similar opportunity.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> Sir Herbert Ames, a Canadian Member of Parliament who was at the time the Financial Director to the Secretariat of the League of Nations, stated that he had heard of no such proposal when approached on the subject. The following day on October 23, an editorial note in *The Globe* referred to the article with scepticism: "The offer of a mandate over Armenia will not be received with enthusiasm by Canada."

<sup>7</sup> *The Globe*, November 15, 1919.

Very soon after the launch of “The Call from Armenia,” there began to be more discussion of a Canadian mandate for Armenia. On January 13, 1920, President Edmund P. Brown of the Canadian Club of Toronto wrote to External Affairs Undersecretary Joseph Pope about the issue. Brown asked Pope to send any relevant information on the subject since the Club was very interested in assessing the feasibility of a Canadian mandate for Armenia. Pope enclosed the only item he had on file about the Armenians, which was a pamphlet advocating the recognition of the Armenian Republic.<sup>8</sup>

A Canadian mandate was contemplated on other occasions throughout 1920 in *The Globe*. One of the more interesting examples was information about a Canadian officer who had been in Armenia for several years. A suggestion for a Canadian mandate had been made by well known British classical scholar and archaeologist Sir William Ramsay.<sup>9</sup> In an article on Canadian aid, Lieutenant O. D. A. Stevenson reported that the editor of a Constantinople newspaper, *The Armenian Voice of the People*, believed that Armenians would be eager to have Canada as a mandatory.<sup>10</sup>

Most revealing of *The Globe*'s advocacy was a front page illustration on February 25 with the title, “Perhaps this boy is needed along with the relief.” Depicted was a Canadian soldier protecting an Armenian woman, her two children, and relief supplies from two Turkish men, one of whom was holding a bloody knife and had the words

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<sup>8</sup> *Memorandum by Armenian Mission to United States Re. Recognition of Government of Armenia*, LAC, RG25 A-3-a, vol. 1250, file 1919-30381. The pamphlet was a United States Senate document (151) from November 10, 1919. It is unclear whether the London Club's interest precipitated that of the Toronto Canadian Club.

<sup>9</sup> *The Globe*, February 17, 1920. Ramsay was the foremost authority of his day on the topography, antiquities, and history of Asia Minor, and had written several books on the history of the Ottoman Empire. I have regrettably found no other information about Ramsay's suggestion for a Canadian mandate.

<sup>10</sup> *The Globe*, February 14, 1920. Stevenson wrote part of the article which was published in the newspaper in which he argued that liberating Armenia would provide a strong bulwark against Bolshevism.

“Nationalist Turk” emblazoned across his waist.<sup>11</sup> The suggestion that the Canadian military should accompany relief efforts was a powerful endorsement of greater Canadian involvement by *The Globe*.

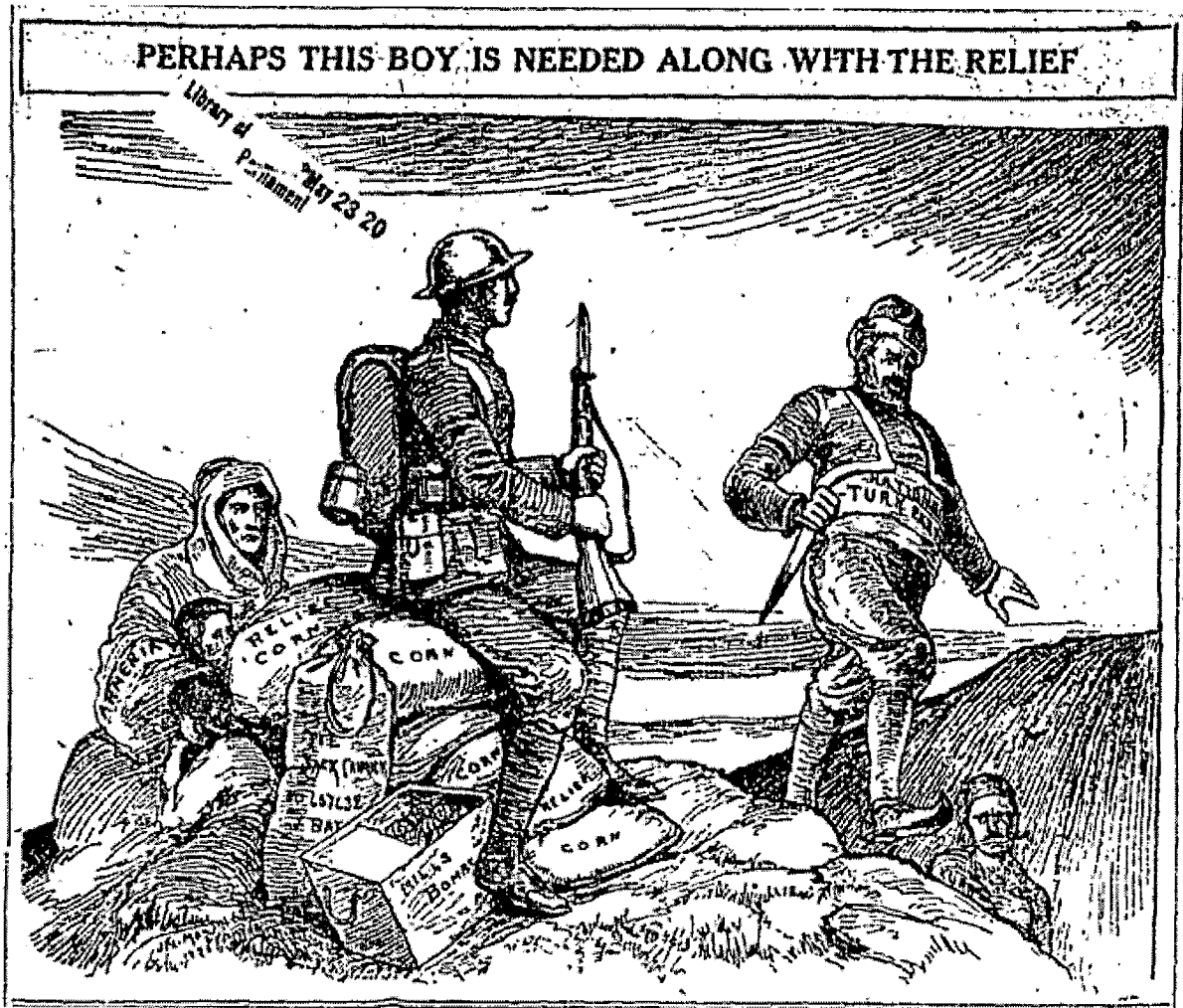


Figure 2: *The Globe*, February 25, 1920, p. 1.

*“Next For Duty”*

Perhaps most indicative of the interest regarding the Canadian mandate is an article written by budding Canadian scholar Henry Forbes Angus, advocating that Canada take the

<sup>11</sup> *The Globe*, February 25, 1920. Although there is no inscription of the artist, it is conceivable that it was John Wilson Bengough, as he contributed artwork to *The Globe* during that time.

Armenian mandate. The article, "Next for Duty," was published in February 1920 in the reputable *University Magazine*, whose editor, Stephen Leacock, was one of the more prominent Canadian imperialists of his generation.<sup>12</sup> Angus became one of Canada's most important intellectuals several years later.<sup>13</sup>

In his article, Angus suggested that Canada was eminently suitable to undertake the proposed Armenian mandate. He outlined six qualities for a satisfactory mandatory power: strength adequate to the task, disinterestedness, enterprise, responsibility, idealism, and reasonableness. In his opinion, the United States possessed the first three qualities in abundance, but lagged on the last three. Interestingly, he believed that Canada satisfied all six characteristics, with its weakest point being the lack of adequate military strength. Additionally, he thought Canada's international status and position in the British Empire would surely improve. However, Angus cautioned that the burden should only be undertaken if a more suitable mandatory could not be found. He concluded the article with an appeal to consider the mandate as an important duty and a sacred heritage for the many fallen Canadians during the war.<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>12</sup> Along with George M. Grant, Leacock was one of the five main proponents of imperialism whose ideas were examined by Carl Berger in his book on Canadian imperialism, referred to earlier.

<sup>13</sup> Angus was originally from Victoria, British Columbia and served in India and Mesopotamia during the war. After demobilisation, he became Assistant Professor and eventually Head of the Department of Economics at the University of British Columbia, where he also became the first Dean of the Faculty of Graduate Studies in 1948. His many publications examine Canadian relations with the United States and the Far East, Asian immigration to Canada, and Canada's economy. Angus served as a key member of the Rowell-Sirois Commission on Dominion-Provincial Relations (1937-40) and was Special Assistant to the Minister of External Affairs during the Second World War. See Senate Tributes Committee Memorial Minutes, UBC Archives, October 1991, <<http://www.library.ubc.ca/archives/tributes/triba.html>>, accessed January 26, 2007; Norman Hillmer, "Angus, Henry Forbes," in *The Canadian Encyclopedia* (Historica, 2006), from <[www.thecanadianencyclopedia.com](http://www.thecanadianencyclopedia.com)>, accessed August 21, 2006; *The Balliol College Register*, ed. Sir Ivo Elliott, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed., 1833-1933 (Oxford: 1934), p. 324; *The Balliol College Register*, ed. Sir Ivo Elliott, 3<sup>rd</sup> ed., 1900-1950 (Oxford: 1953), p. 148; *The Ubysey*, Number 65, March 22, 1956.

<sup>14</sup> H. F. Angus, "Next for Duty," *The University Magazine* 19, no. 1 (February 1920), pp. 24-30. *The University Magazine* was issued in February, April, October, and December by a committee consisting of academics from McGill University, the University of Toronto, and Dalhousie College. The article in question appeared in the penultimate issue of the magazine.



Angus' article was referred to at least twice in the *Montreal Gazette*. The first reference was in a lamentation by D. L. Ritchie of the Congregational College in Montreal, who referred to the title of Angus' article in a letter he wrote to the editor on March 22, 1920. Ritchie, a staunch defender of the social gospel,<sup>15</sup> alluded to the familiar imperialistic "white man's burden" refrain while challenging Canada to be more involved:

Cannot Canada do something brave and bold, yet wise? It claims to have reached nationhood and found its soul through the agony of World War One. Will it let that soul stand up in chivalry once again, and claim, after the United States' refusal, the right to be the *next for duty* in helping to bear the white man's burden— rapidly coming to be Britain's burden— of defending the defenceless and liberating the enslaved? Why should not this young nation undertake to protect Armenia? It would be worthier of the breeds, French and British, that gave us being than the soulless amassing of dollars while an ancient and heroic Christian people are being butchered by the Turk.<sup>16</sup>

The second reference came from across the Atlantic, and alluded to growing interest in Britain regarding a Canadian mandate. The *Montreal Gazette's* London reporter John MacCormac referred to Angus' article on April 7 in a report which examined the finances of the League of Nations. One paragraph discussed the possibility of Canada assuming the mandate: "A suggestion to this effect, recently made in a Canadian magazine, has been received here with very great interest. If Canada offered to accept such a responsibility there is no doubt the proposal would receive favourable consideration here."<sup>17</sup> Ten days later, MacCormac reported that enthusiasm in Britain was now even greater:

The suggestion that Canada might take the mandate for Armenia referred to by your correspondent recently, has now been discussed by the *Evening News*, which considers that the Dominion might undertake responsibility if financial and military guarantees were given by other nations of the League. Canada would simply be

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<sup>15</sup> Ritchie published a vigorous defence of the social gospel as Principal of the United Theological College in Montreal in 1926. See Allen, *The Social Passion*, p. 301.

<sup>16</sup> *The Montreal Gazette*, March 22, 1920. The italics are mine.

<sup>17</sup> *The Montreal Gazette*, April 7, 1920.

required to set up a governing body, similar to the Saar Valley commission, to administer Armenian affairs.<sup>18</sup>

The Supreme Council began their deliberations on the still unresolved Turkish settlement on the following day. The conference was held in San Remo, Italy, from April 18 to 26, 1920, and included discussions on the creation of a greater Armenian state and the necessary mandate.<sup>19</sup> During the April 20 session, Council members complained that the United States did not back its pious statements with any responsible action. A suggestion was made to officially ask the United States to take the mandate, thereby putting it in a position where it would be forced either to accept or reject the mandate. This would also enable the Council to see if it could find other interested nations. British Prime Minister Lloyd George said he knew that Canada was very interested in Armenia's fate and believed it might be approached to take the responsibility if other powers or the League would also help, but would only do so following an official rejection by the United States. Lloyd George believed that the whole Armenian case should be given the fullest publicity to exert pressure on the United States.<sup>20</sup>

It is significant that the San Remo request was thus crafted to elicit an explicit acceptance of the mandate by the United States, an unlikely best-case scenario, or a rejection in order to open the door to other options, especially a Canadian mandate. However, although the Canadian government sympathised with the Armenians and was interested in its newfound international status, it was not ready to endorse an expensive mandate in hostile territory. The Canadian government's extensive communication with

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<sup>18</sup> *The Montreal Gazette*, April 17, 1920, also available in *The Armenian Genocide in the Canadian Press* Volume II, p. 87. The title of the article is "Suggests Canada Govern Armenia."

<sup>19</sup> Minutes of the meeting are available in *DBFP*, vol. 8, pp. 1-252.

<sup>20</sup> *DBFP*, vol. 8, pp. 61-63.

Britain about the Armenian case was no doubt the main reason for Lloyd George's misplaced optimism.

According to the minutes of the San Remo Conference published by the British Foreign Office, Lloyd George's April 20 suggestion was the only time a Canadian mandate was mentioned at the Conference. However, the minutes fail to tell the whole story. Three days later on April 23, an article suggesting a possible Canadian mandate became front page news in both the *Montreal Gazette* and *The New York Times*:

SAN REMO, April 22.- Canada may receive the mandate for Armenia. America having failed to ratify the treaty and accept the mandate burden and the League of Nations having refused on the ground of inadequate resources, the decision was that it should be offered to a neutral nation, and that the members of the League should guarantee the cost.

In accord with that plan the Council of Premiers yesterday decided to offer the mandate to Norway. The general opinion, however, is that Norway will not accept, as it would be called on to provide a police force of 40,000 as well as to make a financial sacrifice.

When that possibility was laid before the Council, Lord Curzon, the British Foreign Minister, rose and stated that he was in a position to state that Canada would accept the mandate if Norway refused.

The offer of the mandate to Canada would be very important to the United States. It very much strengthens the claim which each British Dominion has established to a separate seat and a vote in the League of Nations, and makes the position of these Dominions clear as self-governing nations. The assumption by Canada of her burden will undoubtedly appear as a reproach to her big neighbour on the south, who has so far declined the responsibility.

England may be expected to see to it that the financial burden for the unprofitable task does not rest too heavily on the Dominion. Students of the international situation think the award of the Armenian mandate to Canada would be a very clever victory for British diplomacy.<sup>21</sup>

Since Canada had never been approached on this issue, the article was met in Ottawa with confusion, if not with outright annoyance and dismay. Yet again, it seemed as though

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<sup>21</sup> Edwin L. James, "Canada May be Given the Mandate for Armenia: Curzon Tells Premiers' Council Dominion is Willing," *The Montreal Gazette*, April 23, 1920. The same article was published in the *New York Times* under the headline "Canada Offers to Take Mandate for Armenia."

Britain, and notably Foreign Minister Lord Curzon, were not very considerate in Britain's new relationship with Canada.

### Reaction in Canadian Political Circles

Two months before the San Remo Conference in February 1920, high-profile, British pro-Armenian activists Aneurin Williams and Lord Bryce asked William Lyon Mackenzie King, the newly elected opposition Liberal party leader in Canada, about the feasibility of a Canadian mandate for Armenia. British Member of Parliament Aneurin Williams, the Chairman for both the British Armenia Committee and the Lord Mayor of London's Relief Fund, had recently been approached by a prominent Canadian who suggested that Canada might be willing to accept such a mandate. Williams asked King whether he thought public reaction to a Canadian mandate would be favourable, but King curtly dismissed the idea. King believed that although Canadians were sympathetic to the plight of the Armenians, such a proposal "would provoke general protest from one end of the Dominion to the other" due to negative public reaction towards European affairs.<sup>22</sup>

As Liberal leader, King may have been approached by Williams because the British Liberal Party had generally been friendlier towards Armenians. In Canada, however, greater sympathy lay with the more Conservative elements, and especially, the Union Government. Three days after King's letter was sent to Williams, King's political rival, the former provincial Liberal leader of Ontario, Newton Rowell, offered a very different impression of Canadian public opinion in his official communication with the Colonial

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<sup>22</sup> *William Lyon Mackenzie King fonds*, LAC, MG26-J, microfilm, reel C-1944, pp. 49086-92. The prominent Canadian was not identified. Lord Bryce also wrote to King about the mandate on February 5, 1920. However, only the first page of Bryce's much longer communication was sent. Bryce had long believed that one of the Middle Powers might undertake a mandate, with the help and assistance of the Great Powers.

Office, writing that Canadians “would be clearly and justifiably shocked by any proposal to again subject any portion of Armenia to Turkish rule.”<sup>23</sup>

Nevertheless, neither Rowell, nor anyone else in government, ever mentioned or sought Canadian military or financial responsibility for the region in the form of a mandate. Two months later, the day after John MacCormac was assessing the positive reaction to a Canadian mandate in Britain, the *Toronto Daily Star* authoritatively stated that the Canadian government never considered undertaking the Armenian mandate. The *Star* wrote that another Toronto newspaper erroneously claimed that a cable despatch had been sent to the government regarding the mandate. It characterised the mistake as a “misfire.”<sup>24</sup>

The mandate was only briefly referred to in the Canadian House of Commons. On April 21, 1920, Quebec Liberal Henri Beland asked whether there was any truth in the report that Canada has been invited to take over the Armenian mandate. Acting Prime Minister George Foster replied that there had been no such invitation.<sup>25</sup> The *Toronto Daily Star* reported on the discussion in Parliament on the following day, pointing out that the government could have had no knowledge of such reports since it had no representatives at the San Remo conference.

Discussion in the Canadian Senate about the mandate was much more colourful. On April 23, 1920, an anxious Quebec Liberal, Pierre Casgrain, read Edwin L. James’ article about the Canadian mandate aloud on the floor of the Senate, amid a cacophony of hoots and jeers. Casgrain believed that this was a matter of urgency and needed to receive the

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<sup>23</sup> *Confidential Cabinet Papers*, February 20, 1920.

<sup>24</sup> *The Toronto Daily Star*, April 8, 1920. It is unclear which Toronto newspaper was being referred to.

<sup>25</sup> *Debates of the House of Commons of the Dominion of Canada*, 4<sup>th</sup> session, 13<sup>th</sup> Parliament (Ottawa: King’s printer, 1920), p. 1465. The House of Commons discussed the Armenian mandate again on June 22, though again no suggestion was made that Canada would have been involved as mandatory. *Ibid.*, p. 3979.

immediate attention of the government and a formal reply. Upset at Lord Curzon's interference in Canadian affairs, he refuted the belief that Canada would accept the mandate:

Now, I would like to [...] tell the Government that this country is in no mood to police Armenia. I know it is out of order to make a speech at this time; but I think the country should be reassured at once that no one ever authorized Lord Curzon, British Foreign Minister, to speak in the name of Canada. In any case, the days of Orders in Council are past, and the Parliament of Canada would be the only authority that could authorize anybody to speak for Canada.

James Lougheed, Conservative Leader of the Senate, replied by asking Casgrain not to take the reports of newspapers too seriously, adding: "It seems to me that this is a flattering tribute to Canada, that Canada should be mentioned as assuming a responsibility so grave, so important, and of such magnitude as that referred to in the report."<sup>26</sup> However, whether Curzon made any such suggestion or not is a moot point, since Canada's government was wary of the growing isolationist sentiment in the country. It would certainly not be interested in undertaking any further military adventures, whether for Armenia or for any other reason. Charitable donations were much easier to mobilise than troops.

Curzon's "meddling" in Canadian external affairs had just recently been a cause for concern as well. A few weeks earlier, during the League of Nations' first council meeting in Geneva, Curzon attended the meeting as a representative of the "British Empire," and the Foreign Office only informed the Dominions about the meeting after it took place. The Dominions were neither asked to ratify Curzon's appointment nor told what business was

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<sup>26</sup> *Debates of the Senate of the Dominion of Canada*, 4<sup>th</sup> session, 13<sup>th</sup> Parliament (Ottawa: King's printer, 1920), pp. 271-72.

on the agenda.<sup>27</sup> The Canadian government was certainly interested in League affairs at this time, especially in reference to the Armenians.

Unaware of any such controversy in Canada, speculation continued in Europe. On April 24, an Associated Press cable from San Remo published in the *Montreal Gazette* continued to contemplate the possibility of a Canadian mandate: “Armenia is to be created an independent state. This decision was reached by the Supreme Council of the Allies today because neither the United States nor any other power was willing to accept a mandate over the country.” The boundaries would probably be smaller than expected, making it easier for some neutral nation to exercise the mandate under supervision of the League. Among the smaller nations mentioned were Sweden, Spain, and notably, Canada.<sup>28</sup>

Ironically however, appearing in an adjacent column of the article in the *Gazette* was a contradictory report, suggesting that the Canadian mandate was in fact a tool to push for American involvement:

Recently, cable reports have credited the League of Nations with a desire to place Armenia under a Canadian mandatory. The latest has gone so far as to attribute to Lord Curzon the statement that Canada was willing to assume this responsibility. So far there has been no information to Canada, either from Great Britain or the League of Nations, that this country should become a mandatory for Armenia. It is believed that the persistent reports are being circulated to influence sentiment in the United States, and to have that country assume some part of the burden of reconstruction in Europe and Asia. Canada, even if requested to do so, would not become a mandatory for a country so distant and fraught with so many difficulties.

The article stated that reports about Canada being offered the mandate were without foundation. Ottawa had informed the Canadian Press that the “Government has received no such offer [...] and has certainly not intimated its willingness to accept any such

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<sup>27</sup> Wigley, *Canada and the Transition to Commonwealth*, p. 113. Curzon notoriously deplored the dominions’ increasing international status.

<sup>28</sup> *The Montreal Gazette*, April 24, 1920. Similar articles written by Edwin L. James were published in *The New York Times* and in *The Globe* on the same day.

mandate.”<sup>29</sup> The *Toronto Daily Star* additionally quoted Newton Rowell, who believed Curzon could never have made such a statement since Canada had not been offered the mandate, adding “Armenia is somewhat remote from Canada’s sphere of influence.”<sup>30</sup> The strong language used some months earlier by Rowell in his communication with Britain concerning Canada’s interest in Armenia’s welfare would evidently not be repeated concerning any mandate.

Lord Curzon issued a statement which appeared in *The New York Times* the following day, in which he claimed that he had never said Canada wanted a mandate over Armenia. As far as he knew, Canada had neither requested nor was asked to take the mandate. Private persons, he added casually, might have suggested that Canada should take the mandate, among whom were some Canadians.<sup>31</sup> Curzon’s clarification effectively marked an end to discussions of the mandate in Canadian political circles.

In general, the idea of a Canadian mandate for Armenia caused a flurry of excitement among some Canadian and British imperialists, a rapidly diminishing minority in both countries. Canadians who believed that their nation was ready to take on greater responsibility as an international entity believed they could offer a helping hand while creating a strong military presence in the world. In Britain, the idea that a Dominion would take on the burden of the Armenian mandate offered a strategic benefit for the Empire, at no additional cost to the British Treasury. Although the mandate was not on the Canadian government’s agenda, there is little doubt that Newton Rowell and others in the Union government felt that something needed to be done to ensure the security of Armenia.

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<sup>29</sup> Again, both the *New York Times* and *The Globe* had similar reports appearing on the same page.

<sup>30</sup> *The Toronto Daily Star* and *The Globe*, April 24, 1920.

<sup>31</sup> *The New York Times*, April 25, 1920.



However, such feelings were never widespread enough to spur financial or military involvement by a war-weary country, which ultimately believed it should disassociate itself from further European entanglements.

## Chapter 7: Shelving the Armenia Project

In the end, no nation took the Armenian mandate. The Caucasian Armenian Republic, independent since 1918, was forced to side with Bolshevik forces and was absorbed by the Soviet Union in late 1920. The Ottoman Armenian Provinces ceased to exist by treaty in 1923, officially becoming part of the new Turkish State.

Although the Canadian government never really came close to undertaking the mandate, the fact that it was even considered gives an indication of the sympathy Canadians felt towards Armenians, especially in early 1920. However, interested groups such as radical social gospellers did not sustain their lobbying efforts over time, nor did they engage enough support from their constituents to address the Armenian political situation. When a Canadian mandate was suggested in April 1920, there was hardly any political base of support for the Union government to take the Canadian mandate, or even for renewed protests.

There were however various Canadian individuals and associations that continued to support the Armenians. As part of the Canadian delegation to the League of Nations' First Assembly in December 1920, Newton Rowell voted to accept Armenia as a League member, unlike the British delegation. The Armenian Relief Association of Canada (ARAC) continued to raise money in fundraising campaigns for almost a decade, and was also involved with bringing over one hundred Armenian orphans to Canada after 1923. Popular social gospeller Salem Bland criticised his government's failure to secure more for the Armenians in 1922, launching renewed protests by Canadian religious groups.

However, with no foreseeable future for an Armenian nation and with surviving refugees already settled in various countries, the efforts subsided after a few years.

### The Canadian Delegation at Geneva

The situation in Armenia was considered to be in need of immediate attention by the first Assembly of the League of Nations, convened at Geneva between November 15 and December 18, 1920. However, discussion on the issue was often delayed since no country had accepted a mandate for Turkish Armenia, and the Caucasian Republic had accepted Bolshevik protection from the advancing Kemalist forces. Armenian representatives wanted their country to be admitted as a League of Nations member, but with no mandatory power, an economic blockade, a dwindling infrastructure, and with bordering countries attacking it on all sides, its chances of being accepted were quite slim.<sup>1</sup>

The coming into force of the Versailles Treaty on January 10, 1920 and the subsequent establishment of the League of Nations were of major importance to Canadian foreign policy. For the first time Canada found itself in regular diplomatic contact with non-Empire governments, entering into international discussions and negotiations as a full and equal participant rather than as a subordinate member of the British Empire. As a new actor on the international scene, Canada's foreign policy developed largely in the context of its participation in League of Nations affairs.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Richard G. Hovannisian, *The Republic of Armenia*, vol. 3, *From London to Sevres, February-August, 1920* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1996), pp. 315-16.

<sup>2</sup> Richard Veatch, *Canada and the League of Nations* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1975), p. 3.

When Canada sent its delegation to the League's first Assembly, isolationism and distrust of European politics had become commonplace in North America.<sup>3</sup> The delegation, which consisted of George Foster, Charles Joseph Doherty, and Newton Rowell, believed that the League could be a vehicle for establishing Canadian sovereignty internationally. However, it did not want to submit to any new regulation or control in areas already within the Canadian government's jurisdiction, nor was the delegation generally interested in the main purposes of the League of Nations as an agency to prevent war. An exception to this last point among Canadian politicians was Rowell, whose activism and favourable view of the effects of Article 10, which was meant to protect League members from outside aggression, was opposed to the prevailing isolationist attitude in Ottawa.<sup>4</sup>

Rowell attempted to distance Canada's stand from Britain's at the League Assembly on several occasions.<sup>5</sup> One of these dealt with Armenia's admission to the League. The Supreme Council had been divided on the issue of accepting the Caucasian Armenian Republic to the League of Nations, with France and South Africa supporting admission and Britain vigorously opposed to it. Basing its decision on legal difficulties under the Turkish Treaty, the Supreme Council eventually agreed to postpone Armenia's admission and sent directives to Geneva to oppose the vote for admission.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> James Eayrs, "A Low Dishonest Decade': Aspects of Canadian External Policy, 1931-1939," in Keenleyside, p. 61. Nevertheless, the League still had strong friends in the English-language press in Canada, notably the still influential *The Globe*. The *Manitoba Free Press* was also beginning its long career as the foremost Canadian journalistic supporter of the League. See Stacey, *Canada and the Age of Conflict*, p. 298.

<sup>4</sup> Veatch, pp. 10, 68.

<sup>5</sup> Prang, *N. W. Rowell*, pp. 338-40. In the opinion of historian Phillip Wigley, Rowell's remarks at the League constitute a significant point of reference in British-Canadian relations, recalling how he deliberately cast his vote in opposition to Britain in favour of a motion to allow Albania to join the league. Wigley, *Canada and the Transition to Commonwealth*, pp. 114-15.

<sup>6</sup> *DBFP*, Vol. 13, pp. 841-857.

In Geneva, Newton Rowell, along with Norway's Fritjof Nansen and Britain's Lord Robert Cecil, who was representing South Africa, disparaged press reports which stated that the Supreme Council had already determined that Armenia would be denied admission. During a meeting of the Assembly's Fifth Committee on the Admission of new states on December 6, Rowell insisted that only the Assembly of the League was authorised to act on applications: "the question of admission of States must be settled at Geneva, and not in London or Paris or Rome."<sup>7</sup>

Ten days later, when a vote was about to be called to put off the admission of the Republic of Armenia to the League, Rowell felt the need to offer a definite statement of sympathy and submitted the following resolution:

The Assembly earnestly hopes that the efforts of the President of the United States, energetically supported by the Governments of Spain and Brazil and by the Council of the League, will result in the preservation of the Armenian race, and in securing for Armenia a stable government exercising authority throughout the whole of the Armenian State and the boundaries thereof may be finally settled under the Treaty of Sèvres, so that the Assembly may be able to admit Armenia into full membership of the League at its next Session.<sup>8</sup>

In the ensuing vote, twenty-one states, including Britain, supported the motion to postpone Armenia's acceptance, while Canada was among eight nations to oppose it. France and South Africa, earlier proponents of Armenia's acceptance, abstained from the vote. The Assembly eventually adopted Rowell's resolution reproduced above, with the hope that conditions would eventually allow Armenia to be admitted to full membership.<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> Hovannisian, vol. 3, pp. 333-34.

<sup>8</sup> *The Records of the First Assembly: Plenary Meetings*, p. 588; FO 371/4966, E16014/134/58, December 16, 1920, cited in Hovannisian, vol. 3, pp. 334-35; also available in Walter A. Riddell, *Documents on Canadian Foreign Policy 1917-1939* (Toronto: Oxford University Press, 1962), pp. 329-30.

<sup>9</sup> Hovannisian, vol. 3, pp. 333-36.

In the case of this divisive vote, the Canadian delegation at the Assembly exercised its right to vote against the British and the other Empire delegations. This was the only time in the League's recorded Assembly that Canada's vote conflicted with Britain's, even though differences of position before the League had been numerous.<sup>10</sup> Although the Canadian government's position regarding Armenia had generally changed, Rowell's opposition was based on principle. No other Canadian political figure so energetically defended Armenia's interests as Newton Rowell did throughout 1920.<sup>11</sup>

Notwithstanding the Canadian delegation's support for Armenia's admission to the League, the Canadian government was generally apathetic towards Armenia. On October 25, 1920, the Lord Mayor of London, James Roll, sent a request to the new Prime Minister, Arthur Meighen, for the appropriation of at least £250,000 of the one million pounds needed for Armenian relief, but there was no response to the request.<sup>12</sup> Responding to another request for a relief loan, Meighen declared: "I am strongly opposed to committing this country to participate in any international guarantee of any loan, whether for Armenia or for any other countries."<sup>13</sup>

In late November 1920, the League Council asked whether Canada would be willing to negotiate a cessation of the hostilities taking place between Armenia and the Turkish Nationalist forces. Meighen's reply was curt: "Canadian Government could not undertake the responsibility therein referred to."<sup>14</sup> On December 2 another communiqué

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<sup>10</sup> Veatch, pp. 65-69.

<sup>11</sup> It is surprising that Rowell's biography, written by Margaret Prang, offers no information on his communications with Britain, his stance at the League, or his general views regarding Armenians.

<sup>12</sup> *Privy Council Office – Appeals – Armenia and China Famine*, LAC, RG25 B-1-b, vol. 296, file p-10-18. October 25, 1920.

<sup>13</sup> *Armenia, Future Status of*, LAC, RG25 A-3-a, vol. 1278, file 1920-1347, February 4, 1921.

<sup>14</sup> *Privy Council Office – Armenian Question – Appeal to Settle*, LAC, RG25 B-1-b, vol. 296, file p-10-13, November 29, December 1, 1920; *DCER*, nos. 98-99, pp. 73-74.

from the League simply asked Canada for an expression of moral aid or sympathy with Armenia, as had been offered by the United States, Spain, and Brazil, but even this was refused.<sup>15</sup> Meighen's interest in international affairs remained minimal throughout his political career.<sup>16</sup>

### Post-1920 Canadian Support for Armenia

Canadian fundraising efforts at home continued well into the 1920s. The Armenian Relief Association of Canada (ARAC) and several interested Canadian groups continued their operations, including a proposal to bring orphaned Armenian children to Canada to be raised as farmers. Some sporadic efforts were made to send renewed protests to the Canadian government by some imperial-minded Canadians and religious groups, and a few suggestions were made to reconsider the Canadian mandate for Armenia.

*The Globe* continued to solicit donations for the Armenians, even after public support for its fundraising campaign in 1920 showed dwindling results. On January 15, 1921, *The Globe* reported that the ARAC had expanded its network to raise money in various districts in Canada. Provincial Premiers George H. Murray, Walter Forster, John Bell, and John Oliver became Chairmen for fundraising in various regions across Canada, as did Members of Parliament John G. Kent and T. A. Crerar, the latter being the prominent Union Cabinet Minister who left the Union government in 1919 to form the

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<sup>15</sup> *Privy Council Office – Armenian Question – Appeal to Settle*, LAC, RG25 B-1-b, vol. 296, file p-10-13, December 2, 1920. Canadian League delegate Charles Doherty believed in the importance of offering moral aid, even if material solutions were difficult to come by. See Hovannisian, vol. 3, pp. 318-320.

<sup>16</sup> Veatch, p. 13.

National Progressive Party.<sup>17</sup> The names of contributors, the sums collected, and reports on Armenian affairs appeared sporadically for several more years.

A Canadian mandate for Armenia continued to percolate at the margins of Canadian public consciousness after April 1920. In June 1920, Baptist social gospeller Henry Moyle wrote a letter to *The Globe* stating that the country should “perform that service for humanity” if no other nations would do so.<sup>18</sup> Like E. C. Drury, Moyle was on the board of the Dominion Grange and Farmers’ Association, the rural wing of the Social Service Council.<sup>19</sup> About a month later and a few days prior to Borden’s resignation in July, he received a letter from Anglican Bishop James Toronto, urging that Canada take the mandate. Toronto wrote from the Lambeth Conference of Anglican Bishops in London, where various international topics were being deliberated. He believed that Canada, this “child among nations,” would thus show the world her willingness and ability to cope with the responsibility, adding that it would surely do the “young virile country good.”<sup>20</sup>

Most interesting was a half page article published in *The Globe* on February 19, 1921 by missionary Lawson P. Chambers, now Professor of Philosophy at Constantinople College, urging that Canada take the Armenian mandate, even at this late date. In a letter to Professor W. C. Baker at Queen’s University, Chambers called on Canada to take greater responsibility. He believed that America’s “do-nothing” policy had wreaked havoc on the

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<sup>17</sup> *The Globe*, January 15, 1921.

<sup>18</sup> *The Toronto Daily Star*, June 2, 1920.

<sup>19</sup> Allen, *The Social Passion*, p. 202.

<sup>20</sup> *Borden fonds*, reel C-4345, pp. 65398-99, July 7, 1920. The tone of the letter suggests that Toronto and Borden may have been well acquainted. The Lambeth Conference passed a resolution expressing sympathy regarding the persecution of the Armenian, Assyrian, and Syrian Jacobite Christians. “Lambeth Conference Resolutions Archive,” (Anglican Communion Office, 2005), from <<http://www.lambethconference.org/resolutions/1920/1920-20.cfm>>, accessed September 23, 2006.



Armenians. Chambers argued that the mandate would be beneficial to Canada and advanced a strong case for acceptance:

What would Canada get out of this? As I have already said, she would get a new sense of nationhood, international recognition, an opportunity for enterprise and energy, with the possibility of building up a splendid trade with Armenia, for the country is rich in natural resources, and the people are frugal and industrious: finally, she would have the consciousness of having tackled a job which humanitarian considerations make imperative, and of having thus helped to restore order in the Near East; to safeguard the interests of the British Commonwealth of nations, and to assure the existence of a plucky but unlucky race which would not be slow to express its gratitude in substantial form.  
[...] Let us not be satisfied merely to back Britain in her good deeds, but undertake some definite task in our own responsibility. And here is a task worthy of our best brain and brawn and urgently calling upon someone to take it up.

However, by the time Chambers sent this plea to *The Globe*, discussion of a mandate had practically ceased in Canada, the United States, or anywhere else. Bolshevik forces and Turkish Nationalists had already partitioned the territory awarded to the Armenian state by President Wilson. These developments negated the Turkish Treaty, signed at Sèvres in August, 1920. The establishment of an Armenian state was forgotten altogether in Canada and elsewhere, the victim of hostile neighbours, bad timing and international apathy.

As late as 1922, the most prominent religious intellectual associated with the social gospel movement, Salem G. Bland, condemned government inaction regarding the Armenians. Bland was educated at Queen's University and influenced by Principal Grant. He became an admired Methodist (later United Church) minister who helped establish the Cooperative Commonwealth Federation (CCF) in Ontario in the 1930s. In a letter to the editor of *The Globe* entitled "The Betrayal of Armenia," Bland insisted that in view of the 55,000 Canadian lives that had been given to free the world against tyranny, Canadian churches should let their government know that they would never be party to the infamous

betrayal of Armenians, especially since Canada was no longer a subject colony, but a member of the sisterhood of the British Empire. Bland cherished a coin picked out of the ashes of a church in December 1895 in Ourfa, where 600 Armenian men, women, and children had been burned alive. He chastised Canadians for being short-sighted, asking “Are we to be responsible for new Ourfas in years to come?”<sup>21</sup>

Influential among Canadian youth, Bland’s condemnation may have provided the main spark which once again spurred the ecclesiastical community to action. With Bland’s backing, the Toronto General Ministerial Association passed a resolution on behalf of Armenia a week later, stating that “the [Association] record their deep sense of shame and indignation that it is proposed, even under the oversight of the League of Nations, to restore Armenia to Turkish Sovereignty [and] request[s] the Government of Canada to do the utmost in its power to see that justice is done to that long-suffering people.”<sup>22</sup>

A few months later, protest letters continued to be sent to the Canadian government<sup>23</sup> just as Turkish Nationalists and the British were heading towards a confrontation at Chanak on the Dardanelles in September 1922. The threat led to the signing of the revised Turkish Treaty at Lausanne, establishing the new Turkish Republic while making no reference whatsoever to an independent Armenian Republic. The “Chanak Affair” also marked a crucial turning point in Canadian foreign policy, since it was the first time in its history that Canada refused to help Britain militarily.

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<sup>21</sup> *The Globe*, March 30, 1922.

<sup>22</sup> *The Globe*, April 5, 1922

<sup>23</sup> Kaprielian-Churchill, *Armenians in Canada*, p. 149. Protest letters were sent by the Christian Science Society of Western Toronto to the Secretary of State on August 23, 1922 and by the First Church of Christian Scientist, Edmonton, Alberta, to HRH the King, September 15, 1922 (LAC, RG25 G1, vol. 1325, file 999).

Britain sent a telegram on September 15, 1922, calling upon the Dominions to demonstrate the Empire's solidarity by dispatching soldiers to confront the Turkish forces. However, communication problems with Canada lingered, and Prime Minister King heard about the developing danger from a reporter for the *Toronto Daily Star* before receiving the despatch from the British. Moreover, French-Canadian newspapers were united against sending troops, and there remained little desire in the rest of the country to fight yet another war. Public opinion thus became a cause for anxiety for the King government, which decided to abstain from sending its troops to support the British.<sup>24</sup>

One week before the showdown at Chanak, several thousand Greeks and Armenians had been massacred in the port city of Smyrna while the rest of the non-Turkish population was expelled, all in full view of a flotilla of Allied warships.<sup>25</sup> The ethnically diverse city of Smyrna had been one of the few areas in the former Ottoman Empire where Armenians had remained unmolested. It became one of the final sites of forced expulsions in the drive by Turkish Nationalists to homogenise their nation. Following the Smyrna incident, the Nationalists advanced towards Constantinople to reclaim it, as well, from Allied control. It was the withdrawal of French troops from the area which prompted Britain to ask the Dominions to send reinforcements.

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<sup>24</sup> John Hilliker, *Canada's Department of External Affairs* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1990), Vol. 1, *The Early Years, 1909-1946*, pp. 90-92; Wigley, *Canada and the Transition to Commonwealth*, p. 164; James Eayrs, *The Art of the Possible: Government and Foreign Policy in Canada* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1961), pp. 131-32.; J. L. Granatstein, ed., *Canadian Foreign Policy: Historical Readings* (Toronto: Copp Clark Pitman Ltd, 1986), p. 2; Norman Hillmer, "Chanak Affair," in *The Canadian Encyclopedia* (Historica, 2006), from <[www.thecanadianencyclopedia.com](http://www.thecanadianencyclopedia.com)>, accessed August 1, 2006.

<sup>25</sup> A young Ernest Hemingway, then a correspondent with *The Toronto Daily Star*, was shocked by the Turkish brutality at Smyrna. A section of his first book entitled "On the Quay at Smyrna" referred to Greek women and children being killed. See Balakian, *The Burning Tigris*, p. 368.



SHADE OF GLADSTONE—HE HAS NOT CHANGED.

Figure 3: *The Globe*, September 22, 1922, p. 1.

Although Canadians generally supported King on the Chanak issue, activists favouring Armenian relief lamented Canada's stance regarding Turkey.<sup>26</sup> *The Globe*

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<sup>26</sup> King's biographer R. MacGregor Dawson points out that *The Globe* attacked the attitude of the Canadian government towards "the butchers of Armenia," and praised Australia for its swift, affirmative response to Chanak. See Dawson, *William Lyon Mackenzie King*, pp. 412-13.

published several articles between September 16 and early October 1922 discussing Chanak and concurrently referring to the desperate situation of the Armenians. A front-page illustration appeared on September 22, 1922, in *The Globe* titled “The Unspeakable Turk” with the caption “Shade of Gladstone-He has not changed,” which championed Britain’s protection of Armenians. By this time however, the influence of such imperial-minded internationalists who continued to support the Armenians was quite minimal.

The standoff at Chanak led to an armistice and peace talks were held at Lausanne in 1923. Prime Minister King wanted no part of the revised Lausanne Turkish Treaty, since Canada had not participated in the negotiations. He told the British that Canada would not be bound by the treaty unless it had representation at all peace conferences with full powers, a Canadian had signed the agreement, Parliament had approved it, and the King had ratified it at the request of the government of Ottawa. To make his point, Prime Minister King refused to sign the Lausanne Treaty, which reversed the country’s pro-Armenian stand at Sèvres.<sup>27</sup>

The final reference to a Canadian mandate for Armenia in the Canadian media appeared immediately following the Chanak incident. Correspondent John MacCormac of the *Montreal Gazette*, who had covered Canada’s involvement with the League of Nations since 1920, reported on September 21, 1922 that the Canadian delegation to the League now, formally, rejected the mandate for Canada.<sup>28</sup> By this time, Turkish Armenia had officially ceased to exist by treaty, making any further discussion advocating the creation of an Armenian State in Anatolia fairly pointless.

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<sup>27</sup> Hilliker, *Canada’s Department of External Affairs*, pp. 90-92.

<sup>28</sup> A similar article was published in the *Halifax Herald* on the same day. See Peltekian, p. 340.

The Treaty of Lausanne made no mention of an Armenian state, nor even of the Armenian people, as a result of intensive lobbying undertaken by the Turkish delegation, which showed hostility even to cursory discussions of the Armenians by other conference delegates.<sup>29</sup> Even the missionaries of the Near East Relief followed a revisionist policy regarding the Armenians by 1923, since many of its members thought it better to accommodate the new and powerful Turkish State to keep their long-time institutions open.<sup>30</sup> The Nationalists issued short departure deadlines for all non-Turkish persons left within the borders claimed in the name of the new Turkish Nation.<sup>31</sup> The few Armenians and Greeks who remained within eastern Anatolia or those who had returned to their homes were now banished for good, often stripped of everything they owned.

#### The Georgetown Boys

Following the Chanak experience, Prime Minister King permitted a scheme for the ARAC to sponsor the immigration of a certain number of Armenian orphans to Canada. The ARAC initially requested that the Government of Canada allow passage for 2,000 orphans, but only received authorisation to bring a total of about 110 boys and 30 girls in the ensuing years. Referred to as “the noble experiment,” the orphan boys were settled on a farm purchased by the ARAC in Georgetown, Ontario, where they were schooled and taught farming skills in an attempt to assimilate them as proper Canadians. The school/farm

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<sup>29</sup> See Moranian, “The American Missionaries,” pp. 512-14. Moranian’s description of the reaction of the Turkish delegation reminds me of United Nations Force Commander Roméo Dallaire’s accounts of meetings he had with representatives of the genocide-perpetrating Interhamwe, fresh from their own killings during the Rwandan genocide. Roméo Dallaire, *Shake Hands With the Devil: The Failure of Humanity in Rwanda* (Toronto: Random House Canada, 2003), pp. 347-49.

<sup>30</sup> Moranian, “The American Missionaries,” p. 154.

<sup>31</sup> Gidney, *A Mandate for Armenia*, p. 249. Excluded was Constantinople, where there had long been an international presence.

at Georgetown remained open until 1932, by which time the United Church had taken over the building and the care of the boys.<sup>32</sup>

This attempt at “Canadianisation” included dissuading the orphans from learning the Armenian language or Armenian history and culture, and encouraging the orphans to change their names to English sounding ones. However, it also offered the stateless refugees a better life and a safe home.<sup>33</sup> The government even provided the ARAC with \$25,000 towards the care of the orphans.<sup>34</sup> Unlike the unsuccessful 1896 attempt by R. Chambers to settle Armenians in the Canadian Prairies, this plan became a far more acceptable venture for all the groups that were involved.

By approving the plan, the King government was most likely seeking to appease pro-Armenian activists, as well as to counter dissent by critics of the government’s refusal to reinforce British troops at Chanak or to send representatives to the ensuing Lausanne Conference. The plan must have appealed to imperialists who believed that agriculturism provided a healthy and moral foundation for national life, and who would have approved of attempts to Canadianise the boys.<sup>35</sup> Finally, the settling of immigrant young farmers who represented the well-known Armenian people would be looked at favourably by Ontarians under a United Farmers of Ontario government and by increasingly politicised western Canadians. The story of the Georgetown Boys represents the final chapter in a fairly

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<sup>32</sup> One of the orphans detailed his experiences years later. J. Apramian, *The Georgetown Boys* (Winona, Ontario: The Georgetown Boys’ Association, 1976), pp. 15-16; Kaprielian-Churchill, *Armenians in Canada*, p. 176.

<sup>33</sup> Apramian, p. 14. Apramian, a former Georgetown orphan, characterised the plan as perhaps the most imaginative scheme of international good-will ever witnessed. A documentary film with the same title by filmmaker Dorothy Craig Manoukian (Montreal: 1987) documents a 1976 reunion of the “Boys” and their families. (Renowned Canadian filmmaker Atom Egoyan was the cameraman for the documentary).

<sup>34</sup> Kaprielian-Churchill, p. 176; Apramian, p. 19.

<sup>35</sup> Berger, p. 172.

continuous attempt by Canadians to help the Armenian people, in modest, non-violent ways that prioritised humanitarian assistance.



## Conclusion

Canadians first heard about the deplorable conditions of life for the Armenian people soon after Confederation. By the late nineteenth century, many people in burgeoning Canadian social and religious movements believed that urbanisation and industrialisation was contributing to the degeneration in their cities. As circumstances became progressively worse for the Armenians, the Canadian reform movements that were critical of their own society tended to be most involved with relief efforts. Criticism of society's evils was exported outside of Canada's borders.

Missionaries and Protestant, imperial-minded Canadians were most disposed to offer a helping hand from the 1880s to the 1920s. The reports of death and destruction which were sent to Canada by missionaries in the Ottoman Empire were well received by religious groups in the country, sparking a series of fundraising events to help the Armenians. Canadian missionaries worked with their British and American counterparts to distribute the donations from Canada. Some of them, such as the Chambers brothers and Frederick MacCallum, were continually involved over several decades and even risked their lives to try and save the Armenians. Many Canadians learned about the atrocities through the media as a result of this network of religious associations and individuals.

Canadians were highly active in fundraising activities during the genocidal massacres of the mid-1890s. Influential individuals such as George Munro Grant and various other Canadian academic leaders became central to the relief efforts. It is especially interesting that several of these individuals were imperialists, when considering that Britain was closely allied to the Ottoman Empire at this time. The Canadian media coverage in

various newspapers and magazines was massive, with about two hundred articles devoted to the Armenians in *The Globe* in 1896 alone. Fundraising efforts to help the surviving Ottoman Armenians were considerable as well, and religious networks such as the Evangelical Alliance ensured that the Canadian government was encouraged to help the Armenians. The Armenian relief efforts may have constituted one of Canada's first large-scale international philanthropic campaigns, and established a strong sense of global humanitarian involvement in the country. However, these efforts ultimately failed to do more than heighten the sensitivity of Canadians to the deplorable situation of the Armenians for the next round of killings a few years later.

The word genocide had not yet been coined when the ultimate destruction of the Ottoman Armenian population took place in 1915. As details of the horrific crime became clearer and the killings were headlined in several Canadian newspapers, Canadians were shocked, but otherwise preoccupied with the overseas campaigns of their own soldiers. When relief efforts finally got underway the following year, they were accompanied by reports of German complicity in the genocide published in *The Globe*, which may have increased sympathy in Canada for the Armenians.

Near the end of the war, the establishment of the Armenian Relief Association of Canada brought about a dramatic increase in fundraising efforts. Within the span of two years, hundreds of thousands of dollars were collected and sent overseas. Sunday school children who collected \$300,000 between 1918 and 1920 were probably affected by reports of starving Armenian children of the same age. Such efforts preceded the establishment of

the Canadian Save the Children Fund in 1922, and probably gave impetus to the organisation.<sup>1</sup>

Although several Canadian newspapers and magazines covered the Armenian situation, *The Globe* provided the most extensive Canadian coverage of the Ottoman Armenians, usually accompanied by well-coordinated fundraising efforts, from the 1878 Treaty of Berlin to the 1920s. Overall, the reports published in the two Toronto newspapers consulted revealed that over one million dollars was collected and sent abroad for Armenian relief after 1916, much of it through the singular efforts of *The Globe*.<sup>2</sup> The dollar value of the Canadian donations was probably even higher, considering that some individuals and organisations would have sent money directly to American and British funds as well. The coverage in *The Globe* provides the most complete record of Canadian humanitarian involvement with the Armenians, and is thus an important repository of information.

Alongside *The Globe*'s "The Call from Armenia" campaign in early 1920, the influential social gospel movement, and especially its radical wing, became instrumental in undertaking a lobbying campaign to influence the Canadian government to do more to help the Armenians. The radical elements of the social gospel movement believed that participation in the war would bring the Kingdom of God on Earth, which was necessary for domestic reform. Such individuals became distraught over Armenia's predicament, since the war was considered to have been fought to create conditions in which people such

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<sup>1</sup> Meghan Elizabeth Cameron, "'How the Dominion Heard the Cry': the Early History of the Canadian Save the Children Fund, 1922-46" (M. A. thesis, The University of Guelph, 2001), details the early years of the organisation.

<sup>2</sup> On September 29, 1922, the *Toronto Daily Star* announced that the ARAC had already raised \$851,715 since 1916, not including shipments of grain and clothing, and was being restructured to collect an additional \$200,000 for Armenian relief.

as the Armenians could live in harmony. They lobbied for the establishment of an Armenian nation to fulfill the necessary conditions for this to occur. The intellectual justification for individuals involved in fundraising and lobbying efforts for the Armenians in Canada, as outlined here, offers a microcosm of the forces which were at play in Britain and the United States as well, since imperialist sentiment and the social gospel converged in all three countries. It will no doubt be interesting for future scholars to establish to what degree the social gospel movement contributed to fundraising and lobbying activities for the Armenians in Britain and especially in the United States.

However, the Canadian movement's lobbying activities only lasted a few months, and only when interest in Canada was at its height in early 1920. The attainment of justice for the Armenians was a goal that was difficult to fulfill with mere "religious wish-fulfillment," which is ultimately all the social gossellers were ready to invest in. Lobbying fell far short of its potential, which could have included finding more realisable solutions to help the Armenians or sustaining more successful relief efforts in Canada. Such problems have occurred with disturbing regularity during the twentieth century. The humanitarian effort and the degree of intervention that a country will mobilise have unfortunately been proportionally determined by the perceived benefit to that country's narrow self-interests.

The administrators of several Canadian universities contributed their credibility and reputation for integrity to efforts to help the Armenians. Such intellectuals encouraged extensive fundraising for individuals few had ever met, and compelled Canadian political attention, especially in 1920. The Canadian government responded to the public reaction that year by pursuing more advantageous conditions for the Armenians in the international

arena, while simultaneously securing a more prominent and independent role for their own country on the international stage.

Canada came out of the war with an increased sense of nationhood and the ability to apply greater international leverage. In this environment, some Canadians believed their country could undertake to administer Armenia through a League of Nations mandate. The coalition Union government was filled with imperialists and was attuned to the message of the social gospel, which made it particularly sympathetic to the Armenians. Similar in their outlook to American President Woodrow Wilson, Canadian politicians such as Newton Rowell merged their moral and political philosophies when considering solutions to the problems facing the Armenian people, and were clearly sympathetic to their plight.

The Union government sent extensive communications to London demanding to be properly informed by the British concerning the Turkish Treaty and calling for the establishment of an Armenian nation. The Union government's main objective was twofold: to confirm the autonomous status in foreign relations which Canada achieved after the war and to satisfy a sympathetic Canadian electorate. However, as interest waned in Canada, so did the requests for information. By early 1920, a sense of exhaustion with European problems had settled over Ottawa. Isolationist sentiment was growing throughout Canada after the war. Thereafter, relief efforts continued in Canada, but never with the same enthusiasm as in early 1920. Sporadic efforts were made to lobby the Canadian government after 1920 as well, but were not nearly as successful. The history of the stillborn Canadian mandate and the Anglo-Canadian communication regarding Armenia's future offers an interesting and forgotten chapter in Canadian foreign affairs.

The massive Canadian post-war interest in the Armenians was a short lived phenomenon. By the summer of 1920, *The Globe's* campaign received only limited support, religious groups no longer pursued their lobbying campaign, and the Canadian government had ceased its communication with Britain regarding Armenia's predicament. Nevertheless, there continued to be various associations and individuals in Canada who were still interested in the fate of the Armenians.

Humanitarian assistance offered for genocide victims is a relatively modern phenomenon. A regrettable statistic which accompanies this is that those who offer humanitarian aid have never successfully stemmed the tide of killing or prevented the repetition of cruelty before the commission of mass atrocity crimes. The Canadian response towards the Armenian atrocities in the 1890s and towards the genocide in 1915 offers an illustration of this failure by Canada to protect humanity, no matter how well-intentioned the relief efforts may have been.

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