



Asala and “Children of Talat”

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French journalist and author, Jean-Pierre Richardot, interviewed hundreds of Armenians living in France when the ASALA activities broke out one after the other in the beginning of the 1980s in Europe. Richardot wrote his impressions based on these interviews, which lasted for one-and-a-half-years, and prepared a book titled “*Arméniens: Quoi Qu’il En Coûte* (Armenians: Whatever the Cost Is). The interviews made in different towns were sometimes short, sometimes long; sometimes on the street, at cafes, and sometimes at home. The French journalist also attended the cases where the ASALA militants were tried.

Jean-Pierre Richardot’s book, which clearly defended Armenian theses, includes very obvious historical mistakes. However, the purpose of this article is not to correct these mistakes. Handling the approach of French Armenians to Turks and ASALA, though, this book is striking in terms of showing the stage where the racist and aggressive characteristic of Armenian nationalism came in the period of time starting from the Dashnaks until today.

Wrong Address Description

Richardot goes to the house of an Armenian family as a guest. The father of the house, who was born in Sasun in 1913, knows Turkish quite well. However, he states that he never wants to talk to Turks or hear anything about them and that Turks are over for him. When it comes to his children, it is a different issue.

To the question that if he has any communication with Turks or not, this dialogue takes place between the 36-year old son and the journalist:

“– Yes, of course, we often come across in the city. They ask address. We always reply. And we always send them to the opposite direction.

– So, it is a little revenge.

– No, they are asking for information from us, and we give it, but as a human being, we can always be mistaken.”

(Richardot, 1982, p. 40)

“Ugly Kurds”

The remarks of a 40 years old Armenian woman from the Saintes region on her impressions of Yerevan that she went to for 24 April being the anniversary of the so-called genocide are also striking. They saw ugly people when they landed at the airport of the city they had come to for the first time, and they were disappointed a little bit. However, when they learnt later on that they were not Armenians but Kurds, they felt relieved. After all, in Yerevan it is also Kurdish women who work in unprofessional jobs which do not require expertise (Richardot, 1982, p. 114-115).

It is also remarkable that Richardot interviewed two Armenian youths who were citizens of Turkey in a café in Paris and they complained that people treated them in France just as they treated the Turks (Richardot, 1982, p. 150-151).

“We don’t Want Apology, We Want Land”

The French journalist visits the genocide memorial in the city Decines with an Armenian named Jules Mardirossian. Mardirossian tells that the authorities rejected writing on the monument that the genocide was carried out by the Turks when he and his friends applied to erect the monument. In the interview, it is asked why the word “Turks” was so important for them. They state that they wanted to emphasize that the genocide was done in Turkey (Richardot, 1982, p. 35-36).

The following lines are attention-grabbing from the conversation with Mardirossian in his house:

“– We want that Turks also recognize the genocide and apologize, just like Federal German Chancellor Willy Brandt apologised to the Polish and the Jews.

– No, this doesn’t give anything to us. We do not want words, we want our lands. We want to have a country like others.

– And if you return, will you allow Turks and Kurds to live in Armenia?

– Why not? The French are living with foreigners in their own countries. We can also live with Turks and Arabs in independent Armenia”

(Richardot, 1982, p. 56).

“Sometimes you need to be a Murderer”

The answer of Mardirossian, who see Turks and Kurds not as elements of the same geography, but as immigrant workers coming to France, to the question "Is killing Turkish diplomats normal?" is as following:

"Armenians are not murderers but sometimes to show the world what Armenians are, you need to be a murderer. Armenians are a glorious nation. They have a great place in the history of the world. Armenians are not barbaric. We don't want to kill counsels and ambassadors, but nobody hears us"

(Richardot, 1982, p. 57)

Jean-Pierre Richardot talks with a group of Armenians about the terrorist activities by ASALA in the club of an Armenian culture house in Decines in the summer of 1982. Most of them are against such activities. But they also don't avoid telling these words:

"Okay, if you are doing this against Turks, the French and their properties should never be the target"

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Turks should Say That "Our Ancestors were Butchers"

Armenui, who was a young girl from the Saintes region, says, "I am on the side of dialogue, but if Turks will not listen to us by singing, they will understand us when they have to scream." The same day, ASALA occupies the Turkish Consulate. Richardot points out that he looked for people who condemned this activity, but he came across very few people as such. According to them, Turkish diplomats are the "children of Talat." They expressed that the less their chances to return to Armenia, by which they mean Turkish lands, get, the more their cruelties will get against the people who reject to say such a simple sentence as "Yes, our ancestors were butchers. We apologise!" (Richardot, 1982, p. 236-237).

Girls Who Support ASALA

Richardot meets two girls who support ASALA in Paris in March of 1982. N. who is 25 years old is the daughter of a wealthy Armenian who is an international trader. 19 years old O. is coming from a small bourgeois background.

Both of the girls say that there is no result from the peaceful ways implemented for 60 years and Armenians are heard only when they apply force. According to them, the activities like the occupation of the Turkish consulate in Paris by ASALA on 24 September 1981 should multiply. Even if people die in such activities, it is the best way to bring the "Armenian genocide" into question.

The French journalist evaluates this situation with his words "unfortunately or fortunately Armenian terrorism is just starting." The activities of ASALA gather great sympathy among Armenian youths in France and Western Europe. Even if the youths approach these activities with caution, this does not mean they don't support them. The discussion is about if the activity is appropriate for the purpose or not; otherwise nobody objects them principally (Richardot, 1982, p. 194-195).

"We are Proud of the Assassinations"

N. says that youths in Armenia also believe that they will see Mount Ararat included in their lands in the near future. No historical or spiritual demand will any longer satisfy them. They want their lands back.

N. is also proud of all members of ASALA and sees all of them as heroes. She even visits ASALA militants arrested for the occupation of the consulate every day in the prison. According to N. the activity on 24 September proved the necessity of an armed struggle. Their last hope is ASALA (Richardot, 1982, p. 198-199, 204).

When Richardot asks why they support ASALA which killed young Turkish diplomats, Armenian girl O. replies: "They killed us for 1.5 million times." O. states that she felt great pride when she first heard about the assassinations and continues as:

"This is not inconsiderateness. I know that people died each time. It is a serious thing. But I was happy. I told myself: 'We are Armenians, we are living, we are moving. Not only Armenian manuscripts and Charles Aznavour are there, we have a people!'"

Even the fact that people say, "Ah, yes Armenians, you put bombs everywhere" gives a great pleasure to O. People are aware of Armenians now (Richardot, 1982, p. 204-207).

The Murderer of Turkish Diplomats a National Hero

Richardot followed the case in Geneva of 22-year-old Mardiros Jankodjian, who killed Turkish diplomat Mehmet Yergüz in Switzerland. In the building where the court was held on 17 December 1981, Armenian organizations had blasted bombs before. The activities of Armenians in Switzerland in the last 20 years were up to 20 in number.

In the court, Jankodjian tells how he prepared the action in details. Either by bombing or with arms, as many a Turkish officers would be killed. He shoots Yergüz with three bullets in his back even though he had bomb with him as well. When he is caught he surrenders without any resistance as the organization ordered.

Jankodjian states that he was never regretful of what he did and that he performed the action for his people. The experts state that there was no problem in the mental condition of Mardiros and that he acted quite consciously.

In the court on the following day, Patrick Devedjian, the lawyer of the youth, shows the pictures of the monument of Talat Pasha in Turkey and the schools and streets named after him.

As Richardot states, according to Armenians gathered in the court hall, Jankodjian is a national hero. Jankodjian's grandmother who didn't know the Armenian language is also in the court. She hugs him by saying, "oh my child" in Turkish. She is proud of her grandson.

“The Representatives of the Butcher State”

French Armenian Ara Toranian, who was listened to as a witness, also states that he came to the court to express on behalf of millions of Armenians that Mardiros Jankodjian was a national hero. According to Toranian, bombing activities harming the Swiss and the assassination of Turkish diplomats in Europe should be regarded separately. The first is a nihilist and a wrong style.

However, Turkish Consulates in Europe are real military bases and police organizations which pull the strings of Turkish society. The silence on the Armenian problem, the rejection of Armenian genocide, and the occupation of Armenian lands drove Armenian youths into an armed struggle. Whoever displayed the courage of killing the Turkish diplomat is the hero of 1981. Toranian greeted the glorious spirit of Mardiros Jankodjian as the continuation of these words of him.

On 19 December, the lawyer Devedjian holds the floor again:

“One of the accusational arguments is that Mehmet Yergüz was killed only for being a Turk. I told you before, if the person is the representative of a butcher country, he is not an ordinary Turk anymore. These diplomats do everything

possible to cover the positions of their governments and to hide their disasters (...) Mehmet Yergüz was a soldier, a soldier of a dirty war. And he was killed by a soldier fighting for a rightful cause”

(Richardot, 1982, p. 107-108).

“It is not enough for Revenge”

The French journalist attends the case of Max Kilndjian on 22 April 1982. Kilndjian attempted to assassinate the Turkish ambassador in Switzerland. However, as the suspect is a French citizen, the case is held in France.

76-year-old Gazaros Markosyan says that he was among those deported to Aleppo from Amasya and they walked for 4.5 months and ate grass. He lastly says that killing a few diplomats is not enough for the revenge.

After this statement of Markosyan, the chair of the court asks him, “Do you think that more should be killed?” He replies that, “This is not enough! The Turkish government does not recognize the genocide. There is a telegraph of Talat that he wanted to destroy us all.” It should be stated that the falsity of these telegraphs known as the “Andonyan documents” is scientifically proven (Orel – Yuca, 1983; Gauin, 2011).

Witnesses such as Henri Noger and Gerard Chalinian, who held the floor in the court, emphasize on the legality of Armenian terror.

Consequently, the court gives a punishment of only two years of imprisonment to Max Kilndjian.

The Danger Waiting for the Turks in Europe

We can maybe not reach a general judgment about all Armenians in France based on the book of Jean-Pierre Richardot. However, it is apparent that the laws put into force and decisions taken one-after-the-other about the so-called Armenian genocide in Western parliaments will provoke the racism and racist assaults against Turkish citizens in Europe. The racism in Europe today is done by producing public opinion with lies and fake documents against Turkey; its roots and history by imperialist powers.

As it is pointed out in Richardot’s book, by presenting Armenians as representatives of European culture in the East and Turks as barbarians who destroy it, Turks are made to be the target of racism rising in the West. The examples we gave from Richardot’s book should be examined from this perspective.

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