

Maud S. Mandel, *In the Aftermath of Genocide: Armenians and Jews in Twentieth-Century France* (Duke University Press, 2003), 19-51.

1 Orphans of the Nation: Armenian Refugees in France

Writing in the late 1930s, Aram Turabian, an Ottoman-born Armenian who migrated to France in the 1890s and fought as an officer in the French army, thanked local authorities for opening the nation's doors to Armenian refugees in the aftermath of World War I. Assuring his readers that in their gratitude Armenians would "respect and submit willingly to the laws of this noble country," he asked only "that our French friends do not confuse us with all the other foreigners. Our situation is *special*, we have neither consulate nor ambassador to defend us, we do not even have a national homeland . . . where we could seek refuge if necessary; all our trust is placed in French Justice and we respectfully request that the competent authorities of this country take our grievances into serious consideration."¹

Although Turabian viewed the Armenian plight as "special," the situation he described in fact clearly illustrated the problem that most refugees posed to post-World War I European governments intent on consolidating along national lines. The war had led to the disintegration of the large multiethnic Romanov, Hapsburg, and Ottoman Empires. The small national states that replaced them and the violent conflict that accompanied their births produced large populations of stateless refugees. Having been stripped of citizenship and national allegiance, these new refugees posed particular problems for the international community. Unlike earlier generations of political exiles who had sought refuge in central and western Europe, these newcomers arrived in unprecedented numbers, straining the international community's abilities to care for them. In 1926, for example, approximately 9.5 million refugees were said to be wandering Europe. Moreover, twentieth-century European refugees often remained in exile for extraordinary lengths of time without being able to "regularize" their status, at times even

passing this refugee status on to a second generation. Perhaps most important, however, the exiles of the post–World War I era and after were a unique addition to the European landscape because of the particular nature of their homelessness, “which removed them so dramatically and so uniquely from civil society.” The consolidation of the modern nation-state in the war’s aftermath increasingly solidified the relationship between the citizen and the state. Presuming that citizens followed through on all national obligations, the state provided for their basic protection and welfare. International treaties provided some protection to those who migrated from one nation to another, but refugees, by virtue of having lost their citizenship, were not beneficiaries of such arrangements; they found themselves “deprived of legal protection, mutual support, the access to employment, and the measure of freedom of movement which happier mortals take as a matter of course.”² Although diplomats in Paris attempted to make some provisions for refugees in postwar peace treaties and the League of Nations created a High Commission for Refugees, “these efforts were like using bedroom sheets to block a hurricane.”³

Rendered stateless by the Ottoman genocidal attack against them, Armenian refugees who made their way to France were thus part of a larger problem facing European nations in the aftermath of World War I. If Armenians like Turabian saw their postgenocide plight as exceptional, French authorities were blind to the distinction. On a per capita basis, France ranked highest among western European nations to open its doors to World War I refugees.⁴ Eager to rebuild its war-devastated economy, the French government recruited foreign labor of all kinds. Immigration numbers had been steadily increasing since the mid-nineteenth century, especially from countries such as Belgium, Italy, and Poland, and liberal immigration policies accompanying the labor shortages of World War I transformed France into the leading “immigrant nation” in Europe. Newcomers from central and eastern Europe fleeing the First World War’s political and economic upheaval as well as those from former French colonies not only increased the number of foreigners in France but changed the makeup of the population as well.⁵ Then, after 1924, when the United States began tightening its own immigration policies, the numbers coming to France increased further. By 1931 a full 11 percent of France’s workforce was made up of foreigners, and for all but three years in the 1920s, between 150,000 and 200,000 foreigners arrived annually.⁶

For government officials interested in increasing the labor pool, distinctions between immigrants and refugees were irrelevant. As a result, when large numbers of Russian émigrés began to flee the Russian Revolution and the Bolshevik regime, France admitted nearly 120,000, basically opening the door to any who

were willing to work as industrial or day laborers.⁷ In the early 1920s approximately 65,000 Armenians (nearly 30 percent of all Armenian refugees in Europe and the Near East), driven from their homes first by the Young Turks in the genocide of 1915 and then by Kemal Atatürk's forces a few years later, sought shelter in France.⁸ These new populations, however, presented the French government with complex socioadministrative problems for which they had no ready solutions.⁹ Whereas most foreign immigrants settling in France at this time maintained an obvious national-political (and thus administrative) link to their country of origin, the apatride, or stateless person, fell "under no particular state's jurisdiction."¹⁰ These "orphans of the nation," as one sympathetic journalist referred to them, had no passports or visas to facilitate their movements, no consulates to represent them, nor any treaties to protect them. Nor could they return to the lands from which they had come.¹¹

As a result, the apatrides threw into question previous understandings of immigrant participation in the polity, defying previous immigration categorizations and befuddling administrators seeking to integrate them into the country's broader economic structure. As we will see, for French officials Russian apatrides posed less of a conundrum than Armenians because the League of Nations' High Commission for Refugees created an internationally recognized juridical category for them in 1922; it took until 1924, however, for this privilege to be extended to Armenians. Thus, in the initial years of their settlement in France, Armenians, lacking all international documentation, "often were unable to establish of what country they were citizens — who they *were* in a juridical sense."¹² For French authorities working within a national paradigm, Armenians — stripped of any national status by the World War I genocide — proved a challenge.

Although this lack of an internationally recognized "identity" was solved in 1924, the Armenians' anomalous position in the state had important consequences. In particular, some officials, wary of the vague loyalties of this ancient diaspora population with no identifiable national allegiance, actively sought to enact policies that would encourage their transformation into citizens. As such, Armenian integration into French society is part of a larger story. Indeed, if, as recent historiographical discussions have suggested, France's state-centered and assimilationist model of civic self-definition and governance shaped the incorporation of ethnic and religious minorities into the state, the eventual incorporation of Armenian genocide survivors followed a similar pattern, providing us with a clear example of conscious and directed attempts to extinguish foreign distinctiveness through the implementation of state policy.¹³ As this trend suggests, French authorities, even those aware of the genocidal attack against Ottoman Ar-

menians, saw no reason to implement policies to preserve “Armenianness.” If anything, local authorities distrusted the refugees’ “transnational” identity and sought to remove any sign of ethnic distinctiveness as rapidly as possible.

It is important to note, however, that such integrationist approaches to incorporating the foreign “other” were not uniformly implemented by French officials, particularly in the 1930s, when new waves of mostly Jewish and Spanish refugees began testing the boundaries of France’s tradition of political asylum. The growing antagonism directed at these most recent arrivals was not particularly aimed at those who had come in the 1920s. If anything, public sentiment was sympathetic to these first waves of apatrides and even positively distinguished them from the refugees fleeing fascism in the 1930s. Nevertheless, the new anti-refugee atmosphere of the 1930s reminded Armenians of the precariousness of their stateless status. Wary and insecure amid the growing hostility, the new refugees felt compelled, as Turabian would in 1938, to justify their inclusion into their surrounding society. Thus for them, having been rendered stateless meant more than being uprooted from the land that had once been theirs; it also shaped how they integrated into their new society.

Exile and Dispersion: The Development of an Armenian Refugee Problem

To understand the relationship between Armenian refugees and the French state, one must first consider the role of Western governments in the Armenian exile and dispersion during and after the genocide. The Armenian refugee problem arose both as a result of the brutal massacres of World War I and from the geopolitical settlements of the postwar years. One of numerous second-class Christian minorities in the multinational and multireligious Ottoman Empire, the Armenians had consistently been subjected to official discrimination throughout the centuries of living under Ottoman rule.¹⁴ Nevertheless, they were able to live in relative peace and even prospered as the Empire grew. In the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, however, as the Empire began to collapse under growing economic and administrative problems, intolerance and exploitation of the non-Muslim minorities began to increase. In response, Armenian communal leaders petitioned the sultan for protection from increasing taxation, administrative corruption, and sporadic violence. When promised reforms proved inadequate, Armenians began turning westward in the hopes that European powers to whom the Ottoman Empire was indebted would be able to enforce reforms to benefit local Christian minorities. Indeed, beginning with the Treaty of San Stefano following the Russo-Turkish war of 1877–78 and rearticulated in the Treaty of Ber-

lin, the Ottoman sultanate did agree to enact reforms for Armenian peasants and artisans living in the Empire's eastern provinces. Widespread massacres in 1894–99, however, as well as those at Adana in 1909, indicated that the government had no intention of carrying out such reforms, and the Armenian plight worsened. In response, Armenian intellectuals continued to turn to western European powers, now legally bound through the treaty to ensure that the sultan carried out the much-needed reforms. Despite the promises, however, such aid was never forthcoming.¹⁵

The success of the Young Turk revolution in 1908 initially gave Armenians renewed hope that their situation would improve, as the new leadership initially seemed interested in working to resolve the problem of minority relations in the Ottoman Empire. Within a few years, however, under the strain of increasing economic and political problems, the liberal and egalitarian government was transformed into one of extreme chauvinism determined to bring an end to the Armenian Question. In 1915, the Young Turks used the cover of war to initiate a genocide against the Empire's Armenian population, first by accusing local Armenian populations of aiding the Russian army's advance, then by eliminating the intellectual elite in Constantinople, and finally by deporting and slaughtering entire Armenian communities from the eastern provinces. Of those who managed to escape, many moved to the Russian Caucasus; others made their way to the Lebanese and Syrian provinces of the Ottoman Empire. Although Western relief workers attempted to help survivors, by the end of World War I, starvation and disease were prevalent throughout the refugee populations wherever they were located.¹⁶

Like Armenians from the Ottoman Empire, those living in the Caucasus under Russian dominion also experienced great upheaval during World War I. Both the refugees who settled there as well as the natives of the region were caught up in the Russian Revolution of 1917, and independence for the small Armenian Republic was thrust on its reluctant leadership shortly thereafter. After the new Soviet government signed the Brest-Litovsk Treaty in March 1918, ending Russian involvement in the war and, in exchange, handing over large areas of Transcaucasia to Turkey, Armenia—and Transcaucasia more generally—became vulnerable to Ottoman advances. After a minor attempt to coordinate a Transcaucasian federation, Georgia negotiated its own treaty with Germany and declared independence; the Azerbaijani Tartars rapidly followed suit. Armenian leaders had little choice but to declare independence for the tiny region of eastern Armenia that had not been conquered by the Turks.¹⁷

The end of the war brought some optimism to Armenian leaders attempting to build a state and solve the refugee problem. With the defeat and collapse of

the Ottoman Empire and the Allied victory, Armenian leaders hoped that Western powers would meet their previous obligations, protect Armenians from further harm, and even support their struggle for national independence. Indeed, every Allied power was initially pledged to support a separate autonomous or independent existence for the Armenians in their historic lands.¹⁸ In addition, the small republic in the Caucasus gradually expanded as the Turkish army withdrew from the area. In this atmosphere, many war refugees began returning to their ancestral lands. French forces, in particular, repatriated tens of thousands of Armenian refugees from Syria, Lebanon, and Egypt to the southeastern region of the former Ottoman Empire known as Cilicia, now under French control, and Armenians in Transcaucasia also began returning to the lands they had fled.

Armenian optimism, however, quickly dissipated. To be sure, throughout 1919 and 1920, the Western powers remained publicly committed to establishing a united Armenian state, which would combine the Russian and Turkish Armenian provinces under the mandatory leadership of the United States. If, however, all the Allies theoretically supported the idea of a free Armenia, none would commit sufficient financial resources to repatriate hundreds of thousands of refugees to the new state or to defend it properly. The United States, under its own domestic pressure and isolationism, ultimately refused the mandate, and Great Britain and France, despite the entreaties of Armenian delegates to the Paris Peace Conference, turned their energies to the Ottoman Empire's former Arab provinces, which were of far greater strategic value to them and where they fought over territorial control. Indeed, rivalries among the Allies in the Near East caused long delays in drafting a peace settlement. In addition, the formation of a Turkish nationalist movement under the leadership of Mustafa Kemal aimed at preserving the territorial integrity of the region began to gain momentum at the end of 1919. The occupation of the Cilician region of the former Ottoman Empire, for example, into which tens of thousands of Armenian refugees had streamed, proved unacceptable to Kemal and his nationalist forces, and throughout 1919 and 1920, he began attacking French-controlled areas. The isolated and weakly defended French forces often fled, providing little cover for Armenian repatriates who were, once again, deported or massacred by Turkish nationalist forces.

When the Treaty of Sèvres was finally signed and imposed on the Ottoman Empire in August 1920, nearly two years after the war's end, it recognized certain Armenian concerns. Most important, the Turkish government officially recognized the free and independent Armenian Republic and renounced rights to important regions of eastern Anatolia that would be included in the new state. The concessions of the treaty, however, were worthless without Allied enforce-

ment, and it soon became clear that no government was willing to accept that responsibility. Shortly thereafter, when Mustafa Kemal ordered his army to advance into the heart of the independent Armenian Republic, the Allied powers took no action to protect the fledgling state, thus forcing local leaders to turn to the Red Army for aid. By the beginning of 1921, hopes for a free, autonomous Armenia had been dashed as Soviet forces occupied the small republic. Kemal also turned against the small areas of western Cilicia that the Treaty of Sèvres had left under French mandate. In response, the French signed an independent accord with Kemal that allowed them to maintain their mandate in Syria as long as they pulled out of Cilicia. Panic seized the local Armenian populations, and when the French evacuated, most Armenians went with them. By January 1922, the final French contingent had left the region, and most of the sixty thousand Armenians—many who had been repatriated since the war under promises of French protection—had fled and were once again seeking homes as refugees.⁴⁹ In 1922, when Turkish forces attacked Greek troops and burned the city of Smyrna, Armenians were, with the exception of Istanbul, forever eliminated from Turkey.

In their attempts to normalize relations with Mustafa Kemal, the Allies continued to retreat on Armenian matters, finally signing the Treaty of Lausanne in 1923. Among other things, this treaty brought an end to the Armenian Question by ensuring that the Armenians from the eastern provinces of the Ottoman Empire would no longer be able to return to their ancestral homelands. As one scholar noted, “The absolute Turkish triumph was reflected in the fact that in the final versions of the Lausanne treaties neither the word *Armenia* nor the word *Armenian* was to be found. It was as if an Armenian Question or the Armenian people themselves had never existed.”²⁰ Stranded and without recourse, Armenian refugees made their way to whatever countries would admit them. Although most fled to the eastern Mediterranean—Lebanon, Syria, Iraq, and Greece—these countries were incapable of economically absorbing all of them. Others sought homes in Soviet Armenia. Still others made their way westward. Indeed, by 1925, more Armenians were living in scattered communities throughout the world than were living in Soviet Armenia.

Of all European countries, France accepted the greatest number of these refugees. A certain sense of responsibility concerning the Armenians’ plight after French forces had evacuated under Kemal’s attack may have encouraged officials to keep an open-door policy toward them, although open-labor policies were undoubtedly the more decisive factor. Certainly, local political rhetoric often cast Armenian refugees as the true victims of the war. As national orphans, pushed off their own land, massacred without mercy by one of France’s World War I rivals,

the Turks, Armenians were pitied for all they had suffered. In some cases, political commentators, journalists, and politicians argued that France, well-known for its humanitarian tradition, should provide shelter for these new refugees. Indeed, those who were aware of the Armenian plight were often quite sympathetic to the trials they had undergone. As early as the 1880s, after Sultan Abdul-Hamid unleashed the first wave of massacres against his Armenian subjects, certain well-known French writers and propagandists began agitating on their behalf. From 1895 to 1923, such French Armenophiles, as they were called, held demonstrations, wrote books, published journals, and petitioned their government to aid the Ottoman Armenians. Whereas the majority of French officials took no interest in Armenian concerns, this small but active group of pro-Armenian activists in Paris agitated for French intervention in the Ottoman Empire.²¹

With the outbreak of World War I, the pro-Armenian movement established a propaganda organization to continue bringing Armenian concerns to the larger public. This organization, known as the Société France-Arménie, was founded in 1916 as one section of the Amitiés Franco-Etrangères. Numbering prominent French officials among its members, this organization's self-proclaimed goal was neither political nor philanthropic.²² Rather, members vowed simply to build sympathy for the Armenians among the French population. Aware that most French citizens knew absolutely nothing about Armenians and that those who did viewed them merely in caricaturistic terms either as martyrs of Ottoman bloodshed or aggressors against Turks (some French newspapers initially reported that Armenian revolutionaries had brought the massacres upon themselves by provoking the government with their nationalism), French Armenophiles worked to counter this image.

Organizing a demonstration on 9 April 1916 in the Sorbonne amphitheater, the Société vowed to educate the French public about Armenia, "its historic role, the important part it has played for civilization." Speakers included Paul Deschanel, the president of the Chamber of Deputies, Paul Painlevé, the minister of public education, and Anatole France. Approximately fifteen hundred people attended to hear these speakers as well as to "condemn the enormous crime committed by the Turks and Germans in Armenia and to pay homage to the heroism of the Armenian people."²³ Likewise, the Society sponsored other efforts to bring news of the Turkish atrocities to the wider public. One member, for example, wrote a pamphlet to teach schoolchildren about the Armenian people.²⁴

After the war ended, the Société France-Arménie transformed itself into a new organization, the Association Franco-Arménienne. Unlike its predecessor, the new organization had expressly political goals, which included establishing

permanent contacts with the Armenian delegation to the peace conference, sending aid to the Armenian population in Turkey, and spreading information about Turkish atrocities. Believing that France had a moral responsibility to aid Armenians, the members argued that their country should endorse Armenian claims for the establishment of an independent homeland and should play an active role in caring for the displaced refugees. In addition, the Association sent a delegation to the minister of foreign affairs in November 1918 requesting that Armenians be recognized as wartime belligerents; by being counted among those who had been the war's primary actors and victims, Armenian leaders hoped to be given the right to participate in postwar peace negotiations. Association members also pushed French authorities to establish an autonomous Armenian region in Cilicia and insisted that the government take action against postwar massacres in the Caucasus.²⁵

The Association's activities were only marginally successful, and though its members often gained audiences with government officials they sought to convince, the results were never very satisfactory. Pronouncements of moral outrage could not withstand the pressure of France's larger political, economic, and strategic interests in the former Ottoman Empire.²⁶ Nevertheless, the Association was active into the early 1920s, keeping news of the Armenian plight before the French public. In 1922 alone, the Association Franco-Arménienne presented a petition to Poincaré concerning the status of Armenians in the Ottoman Empire, attended meetings on the evacuation of Cilicia, held conferences on the Armenian Question, organized a banquet to discuss the political situation of Armenians abroad, worked in the provinces to spread information outside of Paris, and collected photographic evidence of the deportations and massacres.²⁷

Although it is hard to determine the effect of such pro-Armenian efforts on French society at large, some intellectuals were undoubtedly moved by stories of the Armenian plight. Thus, when the refugees began migrating to France, they were met with some sympathy. As one film reviewer put it after attending a viewing of the Armenian film *Andranik*, "In modern history, there is no people who has suffered as much as the Armenian people." Some journalists called on France to aid the refugees as they settled in their new homes. After comparing Marseille's rich Armenian colony of seventeenth-century merchants with the poor postwar refugees, one journalist wrote, "It does not matter; the heart of Provence is open even more to misfortune than to success. If she has in the old days taken advantage of a few rich merchants, today she welcomes the poor exiles with tenderness."²⁸

Without exception, those journalists who showed pity for the Armenian

refugees reminded their readers that France was obliged to aid them for humanitarian reasons. Helping Armenians was the least France could do, it was argued, after having failed to protect them in Cilicia after World War I. Such humanitarian concern undoubtedly fueled the government's decision in 1920 to provide 100,000 francs to a Franco-Armenian committee working to aid refugees in Greece and the Caucasus. Similarly, in Syria and Lebanon, where nearly a hundred thousand Armenians settled and which were under French mandate, the government established orphanages, schools, and vocational training for the professional reeducation of refugee populations and contributed 3 million francs to aid in their settlement.²⁹

Far more important than humanitarian concerns in encouraging open-door policies toward the refugees, however, was the enormous national labor shortage. By the end of the war, 1.3 million French men were killed or missing and another 1.1 million had been severely wounded.³⁰ Immigrants, it was believed, could fill the labor gap created by these losses. Throughout the 1920s, contractors and industrialists toured Greece, Lebanon, and Syria in search of refugee laborers. Through the offices of the Haut-Commissariat français in Lebanon and intermediary Armenian recruiters, the practice of delivering work contracts to refugees became widespread. These contracts were valid for one year and directed those interested to mining and textile centers throughout France. Between 1922 and 1931, when the international economic crisis hit France, a significant number of Armenians came to France to take advantage of the open-door policy; some went immediately to the industrial centers, others headed for Paris, and a significant minority remained in the port of entrance, Marseille.³¹

The open immigration policies that had encouraged so many Armenians to come, however, soon proved ineffective in addressing the particular problems of their settlement. Indeed, although the refugees were encouraged to come as part of the wider immigrant labor force, it was soon clear that Armenians were not economic immigrants and that previous policies were inadequate for dealing with the new stateless refugees of the post-World War I era.

Refugee, Apatride, or Immigrant: Armenian Refugees in French Legislation

The problem of statelessness did not arise for the first time at the end of World War I. Indeed, the constitution of 24 June 1793 proclaimed that the French state would provide refuge to foreigners who had been exiled from their own country. Theoretically, the Republic was open to all; in practice, foreigners posed a problem for the new state seeking to define who was “of” the nation and who was

not. That said, the problem of statelessness *per se* emerged fairly infrequently throughout the first third of the century, when the number of political refugees counted in the hundreds. Even when that number jumped into the thousands as a result of the revolutionary fervor that swept Europe between 1830 and 1848, most officials did not view these newcomers as a permanent problem. Having instituted a variety of policies to both welcome and monitor the refugees, authorities simply assumed that most would return to their country of origin as soon as it was politically possible; others would blend into French society. For them, the “refugee problem” was thus a temporary and containable phenomenon.³²

Such views began to change, however, at the end of the nineteenth century, as homogenizing institutions such as the popular press, the educational system, and the military began to solidify what until then had been relatively fluid notions of national identity. As conceptions of “Frenchness” solidified, so too did conceptions of the “foreigner,” a shift that was quickly reflected in policies toward the latter. Backing away from the *laissez-faire* policies of previous decades, the Third Republic leadership began taking an ever growing interest in monitoring the relationship between citizens and immigrants. Naturalization policies are a case in point. Committed to instituting universal and equal military service throughout the country, the Third Republic’s governing elite soon realized that nonnationals, who were exempt from serving in the army, had a competitive advantage over French citizens in the labor market. As a result, they began broadening nationalization policies based on the principle of *jus soli*; citizenship would now be granted to immigrants on the basis of territorial ascription rather than descent.

Paradoxically, however, if such integrationist policies allowed authorities to broaden notions of French citizenship, they also allowed for the establishment of greater juridical distinctions between natives and foreigners. Thus, those who were not naturalized faced an ever growing administrative system designed to identify and control their movements. First by requiring all foreigners to register their residence in France and then by requiring foreign workers to obtain a license at their local town hall or police station (proving their identity with a birth certificate or an identity document validated by a consulate), officials began attempting to control a process that had been much more haphazard in the early decades of the nineteenth century. Subsequently, border dwellers or “nomads” were required to adopt a fixed identity by carrying a booklet that attested to their civil status and provided their physical description, fingerprints, and photograph.³³

Politics around immigrant issues intensified dramatically during and after World War I, when increasing numbers of ever more diverse and non-Western immigrants sought work or shelter in France. The suspension of the standard prac-

tices of democratic life during wartime paved the way for the adoption of greater policing mechanisms of such foreign populations, and soon all immigrants above the age of fifteen were required to carry identification cards. In a relatively short time, officials also outlined regulations to control borders, to issue passports, and to set public health standards. Yet, despite all this regulation to monitor foreign residents, France remained dependent on immigrant labor, meaning that it was in the state's interest to encourage their migration. As a result, the state established two foreign worker recruitment services in 1919, one in the Agricultural Ministry and one in the Ministry of Labor. Moreover, in July 1920, an interministerial commission on immigration was established to coordinate the activities of these two ministries as well as to prepare and regulate a series of treaties and conventions regarding immigration.³⁴ The treaties, made with all the countries of emigration, guaranteed the rights of foreign workers when in France and ensured the same rights for French workers abroad. One commentator of the day noted, "The state that had, until then, remained unconcerned or opposed to intervening in migratory movements at once became recruiter, importer, inspector, and employment agent for the foreign labor force."³⁵

From the first, the stateless Russian and Armenian refugees seeking shelter in France in the 1920s did not fit into this highly bureaucratized system. By the 1930s their status had improved considerably due to a number of international conferences; then, in the first years following World War I, when "having a nationality was as important for an individual as having a nose in the middle of his face," they faced numerous problems.³⁶ Most important, the newcomers had no passports or visas nor any documents attesting to their civil status.³⁷ These identity papers were crucial to the French system of registering and monitoring the activities of noncitizens. When the system functioned correctly, an immigrant worker would arrive with a work contract already in hand. The contract ensured transportation from the border to the place of employment. There, after registering with the police (within forty-eight hours of arriving), the immigrant would receive an identity card that specified occupation and civil status. The card, which had to be renewed every two or three years, gave the foreign worker the right to reside in a given region. Although valid anywhere in France, the slightest change in address or occupation required an entirely new document. Without it, no employer could legally hire the laborer, nor could the migrant obtain any state social services.³⁸

The system did not always work as well as intended. One immigration specialist lamented in his 1932 study, "All this control, however theoretically well organized, is unfortunately far from being effective as a result of the great number

of cards there are to distribute, the notorious inefficiencies of the administrative services, as well as the difficulty in adjusting such services that are by definition rigid to populations that are particularly mobile.” Commenting on the many foreigners who entered France illegally each year, he singled out “the 27,000 Greeks and Armenians entering between 1921 and 1926, only 1,100 [of whom] have been registered [contrôlés].”³⁹ As such a comment suggests, the apparatus put in place for welcoming immigrant laborers was not immediately able to adapt itself to the particular problems that these early waves of apatrides posed. With no special governmental office of refugee affairs to which they could turn for answers and few policies adopted to address their stateless position, the stateless refugees who migrated to France in the first half of the 1920s found themselves sunk in an administrative hole.⁴⁰

Time and again, immigration regulations proved to be inadequate for the first waves of incoming Armenians. Many had already obtained work contracts before migrating, relying on the aid of labor recruiters throughout the Middle East; others fell through the cracks.⁴¹ For example, those who arrived with travel documents issued by a French consulate but without a work contract were directed immediately to Marseille’s Office of Foreign Labor. In theory, the travel documents required refugees to accept any farm or industrial labor that the office had to offer, and many did so. Others, however, were unable to find work in Marseille. Seeking jobs elsewhere, these Armenians left for other towns in southern France, where they discovered that their right to work was invalid; their travel documents that named Marseille as their final destination could not be used elsewhere. Officials in these towns immediately sent them back to Marseille, where unemployment levels were higher and work opportunities more limited.⁴²

In truth, the apatrides’ lack of international documentation was not solely a French problem. In 1922, the League of Nations’ High Commissioner for Refugees, the Norwegian explorer, scientist, and diplomat Fridtjof Nansen, called an intergovernmental conference to consider the problem of Russian refugees attempting to move across borders without passports or visas. Nansen had been named head of the League’s High Commission in 1921 with some reluctance on the part of the member states, who viewed caring for refugees as a fairly low priority, particularly because they continued to understand the problem as temporary in nature. Although uprooted populations had been wandering throughout eastern and southeastern Europe since the beginning of World War I, their care had been left primarily to private charitable organizations such as the Red Cross. Russian refugees, however, caught the Allied nations’ attention in a different way. At first hoping that fleeing Russians would return to their homes to continue

the fight against the Soviet government, Western powers supported these refugees for political as much as humanitarian reasons. When it became clear that the anti-Bolshevik struggle was hopeless, the League turned to Nansen to help the uprooted population, eight hundred thousand of whom were living scattered throughout Europe, primarily in Constantinople and Poland, in desperate conditions and clamoring to enter other European countries. At the 1922 Geneva meeting, sixteen countries agreed to issue travel documents to facilitate their movement. Then, in May 1924, thirty-eight states agreed to grant the same right to Armenian refugees.

The new document, called a Nansen passport, was not a passport in the conventional sense. Rather, it served as an identity certificate that could be used as a travel document. Issued for one year, after which it could be renewed once, it gave the holder the right to return to the country that had issued it (after 1926). Although it did not guarantee the refugee's equal treatment in regard to labor permits, social security, or taxation, it did provide a certain measure of international protection. One commentator noted, "The refugee who is *de facto* stateless and has neither protection nor representation from his state is provided with both by the High Commissioner for Refugees."⁴³

France was one of the original countries to recognize and issue the Nansen passport, but prior to 1924 none of the Armenian apatrides had any legal travel documentation.⁴⁴ This did not, however, stop them from coming. Some made their way to France in the years immediately following World War I and the Russian Revolution; the largest waves did not arrive until after the Greco-Turkish war and the burning of Smyrna (where many genocide survivors had settled) in 1922. As these boatloads of refugees began arriving, they brought unique problems. Most important, no foreign government was sponsoring and financing their settlement. The French army donated several military camps in Marseille (previously used for German war prisoners) as temporary housing for the refugees and repatriates who arrived in September and October 1922, but it was expected that the consulates of the states from which these refugees had come would fund their settlement. Thus, in September 1922, the Ministry of the Interior provided 100,000 francs for the lodging of French repatriates. As for foreigners, it was up to the prefect in Marseille to arrange the costs of lodging and repatriation with the concerned consulates.⁴⁵

Armenian refugees lacked a state to care for their needs. The independent Armenian state had collapsed in 1920, and the Soviet Republic did not have the resources to care for those refugees abroad.⁴⁶ In addition, Turkey refused all responsibility for the refugees.⁴⁷ Despite this, French officials treated the refugees

as if they were immigrants. Indeed, although the Armenian Republic collapsed in 1920, because of the uncertainty over the long-term fate of the region French bureaucrats did not mark that fact on official documentation for several years. Thus, it was only in 1925 that the Ministry of the Interior finally informed various prefectures that “since the signing of the Treaty of Lausanne [1923], the provinces that once made up Armenia are now divided between Soviet Russia and Turkey. There is thus no Armenian state, and as such, no Armenian nationality.” Until then, however, many French officials operated as if these apatrides actually did have a national base.⁴⁸

When the first Armenian refugees arrived, they were immediately put in the care of the consul of the Armenian Republic in Marseille and the president of the *Comité de secours aux réfugiés arméniens*, Tigran S. Mirzayantz. He took charge of this small group by transferring them from the refugee camps to the Hotel du Levant. By November 1922, however, when four hundred Armenians arrived in Marseille on the ship *Tourville*, Mirzayantz’s resources were quickly overwhelmed. The French military was forced to intervene, establishing two refugee camps on the outskirts of Marseille, Camp Mirabeau and Camp Oddo, the latter of which remained a home for Armenian refugees for several years.⁴⁹

The establishment of Camp Oddo and the hands-on/hands-off approach of the authorities illustrates the problems the apatrides posed for French bureaucrats. On the one hand, the government’s active intervention on behalf of the apatrides was a necessary result of their stateless position.⁵⁰ Without a foreign government to protect them, the French administration was forced to intercede. Thus, the government turned over the camps to Armenian organizations and even provided 80,000 francs to aid their settlement, insisting that they were doing all they could “to respond in the most favorable manner possible to the requests of individual Armenians in France.”⁵¹ And yet, they did not want to become overly involved with Armenian settlement. Reluctant to absorb the full cost of settling these refugees, officials depended on Armenians to care for their own. Although the military provided camps, it was up to the refugees and their compatriot unions to run and maintain them, including all the costs of lodging, bedding, mail service, hygiene, discipline, and medical services.⁵²

The example of medical care well illustrates the degree to which Armenian apatrides were expected to care for themselves. As noted earlier, the interministerial immigration commission forged agreements with most foreign governments to protect their nationals abroad. These international treaties assured the immigrant equal taxation, equal pay for equal work, and equal access to social services. No such agreements protected the apatrides, making them particularly vulner-

able in areas where other immigrants remained protected. Access to medical care was one such area.⁵³ In the late 1920s, the French Armenian population was particularly susceptible to contagious diseases such as tuberculosis.⁵⁴ The standard French response to the disease was to house those afflicted in a sanitarium, but the government refused to subsidize the same care for foreigners. Fortunately, most of those infected with the disease could return to their own country, where they were eligible for medical care or at least could rely on their consulate for financial or medical assistance; Armenians could not. Tuberculosis posed such a threat to the local Armenian population that Dr. Eugène Prat-Flottes wrote a pamphlet encouraging Armenian benefactors around the world to raise money for a private sanitarium in France. "From the most distant corners of Europe," he wrote, "the sick Armenian will be admitted in a sanitarium where he will be at home and in which he will be certain to find air, sun, and hygiene as well as the most modern and dedicated care." In his pamphlet, Prat-Flottes implicitly argued that because French aid was not forthcoming, Armenians would have to depend on their own generosity and sense of group solidarity.⁵⁵ Without the protection of standard international treaties, Armenians fell between the cracks of French bureaucratic regulations. Thus, while liberal immigration policies brought large numbers of refugees to France, the immigration bureaucracy was unprepared for the particular problems they raised.

What many officials did not realize, however, was how poorly prepared Armenian organizations were for the task of caring for thousands of refugees. At first, the incoming refugees were cared for by the *Comité de secours aux réfugiés arméniens*, which raised money for its task from Armenians already settled in France and from those new refugees who found work quickly. As early as September 1923, however, the *Comité de secours*'s resources were extremely taxed, and local officials worried that additional arrivals would lead to its insolvency. The situation became difficult so quickly that the president of the *Délégation de la république arménienne* wrote to the League of Nations asking for help.⁵⁶

Despite their lack of resources, Armenian officials were forced to house many boatloads of Armenians in Camp Oddo. By October 1923 the camp was full to capacity with twelve hundred refugees. Nevertheless, no provision was made to house newcomers elsewhere. Although the *commandant de la base de Marseille* requested that measures be taken to direct the refugees at their disembarkation to some place other than Camp Oddo, no action was taken to ease the situation at the camp. By 1924 it housed over two thousand refugees, with several hundred sleeping without shelter in front of the barracks. Local leaders voiced complaints over the hygiene and poverty of the new refugees. Siméon Flaissières, the mayor

of Marseille, for example, worried that “this number, already troubling, will continue to grow . . . from day to day, and . . . is intolerable for the hygiene of our town.” In a letter published in *Le Petit Provençal*, he requested that the government refuse entrance to these “immigrants” and that they “repatriate without delay these lamentable human herds who pose such a grave public danger to the whole country.”⁵⁷

Marseille’s prefect, who shared the views of these local officials, informed the national government of the problems that Armenian settlement posed to his city. In numerous appeals to the Ministry of the Interior, he requested that further arrivals be curtailed and that the government intervene more actively in refugee settlement. In response, the Ministry finally gave permission for some of the newcomers to move to Paris. Likewise, the Foreign Affairs Office told its consulates in Constantinople, Salonica, and Athens to limit future Armenian migration and particularly to admit only those refugees who would accept employment immediately upon arriving. Nevertheless, the prefect complained that he was not getting enough support from the national government: “In spite of all my repeated requests for subsidies to aid Armenian refugees, never was any credit put at my disposition either by the Foreign Affairs Ministry or by the Sanitation Ministry.” Only private charity organizations and the Armenians themselves, he continued, “through pure self-sacrifice . . . and without any official aid,” had carried out the task of settlement.⁵⁸

Ironically, however, it was not a desire to solve such settlement problems that finally induced French authorities to shut Camp Oddo. Rather, having successfully relied on Armenian sources to fund and maintain the establishment of the refugee camp, authorities began to fear that a “véritable colonie” of Armenians had taken shape in the camp and surrounding area. As one French official remarked, “The Armenians have installed themselves freely in the camp without being subject to any control and under the direction of their compatriots have constituted a veritable colony with its own stores for provisions and its own schools.” By late 1924, officials feared that the colony would endanger French assimilationist policies and national security, and soon the Commission interministérielle permanente de l’immigration determined that the camp should be evacuated.⁵⁹

The details of the evacuation, which stretched over several years, are addressed more fully in chapter 5. It seems that the Armenians living in the camp had no interest in leaving—a fact that officials were reluctant to address. What is important here, however, is to note the contradictions in policy toward them. By the mid-1920s, fears about the establishment of an autonomous Armenian colony caused officials to evacuate Camp Oddo. Noting that the nature of the

camp had changed, the labor minister warned that “it has become a veritable administration in the hands of certain Armenians.”⁶⁰ Yet it was French authorities who had initially insisted that Armenians rely on themselves. New fears of Armenians’ “unassimilability,” however, quickly encouraged authorities to contradict their initial policies. Such fears were bolstered by the local press, which at times hinted that rather than integrating into French society the Armenians would take it over. The eminent journalist Ludovic Nadeau, for example, though not unsympathetic to the Armenian plight, warned readers that over time, “these men who played as children at Camp Oddo will be municipal officials or even deputies from Marseille; they will control the major newspapers and will rigorously work those few native Frenchmen who may still remain.”⁶¹

Although Camp Oddo was a source of particular concern for French officials, their worries over Armenian social cohesion spread to all areas where the refugees had concentrated. A local Valence official, for example, complained that the Armenians’ preference for living clustered together was preventing them from integrating into the wider population. Armenians, he claimed, were the only foreign group displaying a tendency to live outside the population and to preserve their original customs: “They are grouped, indeed, piled up, in the same spaces,” he noted, and “certain women are even still wearing their national garb.” Commenting on how slowly Armenians were assimilating to French customs, he implied that they remained too preoccupied with their own ancestral traditions. Interestingly, however, though quick to point out hygiene problems and poverty among the Armenian population, he also praised them for their work ethic, describing them as industrious, submissive, and fairly clever.⁶² As will become clear, Armenians often escaped the harshest criticisms that were later directed at Jewish refugees, particularly in the 1930s, when those fleeing Nazi Germany began pouring into France. Nevertheless, praise for their industriousness did not alleviate concerns over their ability to integrate into the wider society. As another official commented, “It is certain that for the most part Armenians are less assimilated than the Russians; many speak French poorly and their physical attributes are certainly less European than those of the Russians.”⁶³

Hardly a major journalistic concern of the day, Armenians—distinguishable by language, customs, and culture as well as for their trials during World War I—did surface occasionally in the French press. Inevitably such discussions commented on the Armenians’ preference for living close to one another. Rather than assuming that poverty drove the refugees into close quarters, an article in *Paris-Midi*, for example, attributed their tendency to house twelve in a three-room apartment to their “essentially sociable nature” and likened them to a primitive tribe.

Similarly, an article in *Paris-Soir* noted that Armenians in the Parisian suburbs had established a “veritable foreign enclave on French soil.” By living “unsociably withdrawn into itself,” continued the article, this “enclave” had “formed a perfectly homogeneous community” that held only “the strictest, most necessary and minimal dealings with official bodies. . . rarely does one find among a group of individuals a collective instinct that is so extreme.”⁶⁴

Concerns that Armenians would not integrate into the wider society if they remained clustered together began pushing policymakers in new directions. Indeed, the financial concerns and bureaucratic inefficiencies that had encouraged Armenians to rely on their own initiative during the first two or three years of their settlement began to give way to the more pressing interest of turning the newcomers into loyal and productive citizens. As Rogers Brubaker has demonstrated, twentieth-century French immigration policies were geared specifically to turning immigrants into Frenchmen.⁶⁵ Such aggressively assimilationist policies, though not directed toward the Armenian *apatrides* specifically, were expected to operate in the same manner for all foreign minorities. As the 1920s progressed, however, local authorities became increasingly concerned with helping that integration along. In fact, for some, the refugees’ statelessness, which signified their lack of citizenship anywhere and the impossibility of returning to their country of origin, worked well with assimilationist ideologies; the *apatride*’s fate was tied to his or her inclusion in the heart of the welcoming society.⁶⁶ As a result, officials began adopting policies to encourage Armenian workers to move away from their fellow refugees. When Camp Oddo was closed, for example, authorities provided employment incentives for residents to leave Marseille.

Interestingly, however, a renewed commitment to integrationist policies did not always bring an end to contradictory refugee policies. Indeed, from the granting of the Nansen passport to Armenian refugees in 1924 until the early 1930s, two conflicting strategies seemed to shape French policies for Armenians and for stateless refugees more generally. On the one hand, the granting of the passport seemed to signal policies of inclusion and a greater willingness to recognize these refugees’ distinct situation. Likewise, the government’s participation in various international endeavors to regulate the position of refugees signaled a growing willingness among French officials to take the specific nature of the *apatride*’s plight into consideration.⁶⁷ These endeavors included two intergovernmental conferences in 1926 and 1928 that discussed expanding travel rights for those holding Nansen passports, guaranteeing their right of residence, and encouraging the recognition of their legal status in such areas as the protection of acquired and matrimonial rights. To prepare for the 1926 conference, for ex-

ample, the government finally made a serious attempt to count its Armenian and Russian populations and to establish some system for regulating them.⁶⁸ As a result of this conference, the Ministry of the Interior issued official definitions for both populations, in which Armenians were defined as “all individuals of Armenian origin, formerly subjects of the Ottoman Empire, who do not enjoy or will no longer enjoy the protection of the Turkish government and who have not acquired some other nationality.” Those in a similar situation who came from the Soviet side of the border were considered Russian refugees.⁶⁹ Special offices were also established and legally recognized to facilitate the issuing of Nansen passports and to administer the affairs of each of these refugee groups, such as granting identity cards, permits, and the like.⁷⁰

Yet, although the French government seemed prepared to recognize the distinctive position of these initial apatrides, contradictory policies toward them did not immediately disappear. Such contradictions emerged particularly clearly around the issue of expulsion, where the government continued to apply standard mechanisms for settling and policing foreigners with the status of apatriide. Here too, the contradictions were not a specifically French problem. Most European nations resisted international attempts to restrict their rights to expel any foreigner, stateless or not. In the French case, however, expulsions of refugees proved a particularly vexing problem because of the large numbers involved.⁷¹ With a large foreign population of both immigrants and refugees, the state turned frequently to expulsion as a means to monitor and police their activities.

In the eyes of the state, all foreign residents were expected “to conform to the principles of law and order and to respect French authorities and institutions scrupulously.” The government would provide liberty, security, and the right to work freely, in exchange for which foreigners were obliged to avoid “disrupting the general peace by taking part in provocative demonstrations or by transporting the political struggles and conflicts of their country onto our territory.” In the eyes of French officials, refugees and apatrides were no different from other immigrants in terms of how they should behave: “To political refugees, [we offer] the asylum that our country has always been honored to give to victims of oppressive regimes provided that they observe our laws, do not disrupt public life, and do not compromise our interests.”⁷²

If the immigrant refused to follow these rules, the state reserved the right to expel him or her.⁷³ In the interwar years, French officials were particularly nervous about revolutionary activities. Thus, any immigrant accused of anarchist or communist activity could be expelled. Because the only existing Armenian national entity was based inside the Soviet Union, the refugees were assumed to

have strong pro-Soviet sympathies and as a result were watched closely by the police. In 1925, for example, four Armenian students were arrested and expelled for having founded a communist propaganda organization whose goal was “to promote communist ideas among Armenian workers in France.” In justifying the expulsions, government officials noted the importance of “ridding French territory of undesirable elements suspected of spreading propaganda or of offending common law [*droit commun*].”⁷⁴ In this case, the four suspects were well-known communists in whose homes the police found incriminating propaganda.

Many immigrants, however, were expelled for lesser crimes. Indeed, once having served time in prison for *any* reason, a foreigner could be expelled. Thus, vagabondage, minor theft, or disruption of the peace could—and often did—lead to expulsion.⁷⁵ In one case, for example, an Armenian woman was arrested for fighting with her Armenian neighbor and subsequently expelled. Similarly, in November 1926, Minas Keusseian, a laborer living in France since 1924, was arrested for vagabondage and subsequently imprisoned and ordered to be expelled. Others were sent on their way for as small a misdemeanor as having migrated to France under a false name or even for reasons they themselves did not understand.⁷⁶

In most cases, however, the apatride caused unexpected problems for a government committed to using expulsion as a central means of policing its foreign minorities. Generally, the authorities carried out expulsions by transporting the criminals in question to the border of their country of origin and handing them over to the border police there.⁷⁷ Immigrants who did *not* come from a surrounding state were transported to a bordering country, and officials there, theoretically at least, would give the immigrant safe passage to his or her country.⁷⁸ The apatride, however, had nowhere to go. Stateless and without resources, many apatrides pleaded for clemency. In cases where the government denied such appeals, the apatrides often went into hiding. In 1926, for example, Youghaper Kotchoglouian, a mother of two who had been living in a refugee camp for over three years, was caught stealing coal. Although she had no previous record and served six months in prison for her crime, the Ministry of the Interior ignored numerous pleas on her behalf and ordered her expulsion. Appeals and rejections of such appeals went back and forth for many years, but Kotchoglouian was unable to normalize her situation. Rather than leave the country as ordered, she left the refugee camp and went to live illegally with one of her sons in Paris. Although French authorities never gave her clemency, they also never pursued the case, allowing her to remain indefinitely. Similarly, authorities searched for Keusseian for three weeks but ultimately gave up.⁷⁹

In such cases, the *apatride* often remained in France, living in hiding without official working papers or access to social services. According to the law, any foreigner who refused to leave or who returned from an expulsion without authorization could be imprisoned for one to six months, after which he or she would be reexpelled. One newspaper article commented in response to such cases: “These guests that we have welcomed and lodged presently find themselves in a situation with no escape. Indeed, if they commit the slightest misdemeanor—even by accident—they are automatically expelled. But hardly have they put a foot on the soil of a neighboring country when the authorities of that country, after having left [the refugees] to rot in prison for some time just on principle, drive them back to France. There, as they are found in violation of the order that had [originally] expelled them, they are reconvicted, expelled, and so it goes until they have been driven to despair or suicide.”⁸⁰

Indeed, in certain cases, expelled *apatrides* resorted to drastic measures. In 1929, the Armenian paper *Le Foyer* reported that Antranik Krikorian drowned himself because of an expulsion order. Despite such reports, however, the numbers of expelled Armenians never rose higher than several hundred.⁸¹ French officials relied more heavily on expulsion as a means to police foreigners as the 1920s progressed, yet the number of Armenians expelled still remained small. From February 1925 until December 1929, approximately 34,300 foreigners were ordered to leave French territory. Of these, approximately 370 (or just over 1 percent) were Armenian.⁸² The figure is small, but the size should not discount the impact of expulsions on the individuals themselves and on their surrounding community. Having already survived numerous deportations and state-sponsored exiles, the Armenian refugees regarded the possibility of expulsion with great trepidation. As one newspaper editorialized, “Expulsion measures toward Russian and Armenian refugees are so tragic that those who are struck by one are lost forever.”⁸³ Anxious to build stable lives in their new homes, refugees viewed expulsions, no matter how few and far between, as a reminder of their precarious position in the state.

From the perspective of the state, however, expulsion policies for the *apatrides*, although almost impossible to enforce, remained the main punishment for transgressors of the law. Indeed, even after the French government began officially recognizing the special status of such foreigners in the aforementioned international conventions—the second of which included a recommendation that no expulsion should be ordered in the case of Russian and Armenian refugees—members of both populations were still occasionally expelled. In 1930, for example, an official at the Ministry of the Interior assured the prefect in Marseille

that the League of Nations' propositions were "only recommendations" and that Armenian refugees could still be expelled after a careful examination of the case against them.⁸⁴

Thus, throughout the 1920s, as incoming refugees raised new questions for national immigration officials seeking to settle the large foreign presence in their midst, the French government shifted between policies that recognized their distinctiveness and those that lumped them together with all other foreign migrants; between those that viewed their statelessness as a quality that would facilitate their integration and those that viewed their statelessness as a particularly dangerous threat. Such contradictory policies continued to dictate the state's response to incoming refugees in the crisis-ridden 1930s, as rising numbers of asylum seekers fled crises in Spain, Germany, and further east. Interestingly, however, while attitudes toward later waves of refugees—particularly Jews—fluctuated widely in the 1930s between those who favored more open-door policies and hard-liners who sought to protect France from foreign influence, policies toward earlier waves of apatrides stabilized considerably.⁸⁵ Indeed, by the end of the decade, those holding Nansen passports benefited from unabashedly assimilationist policies that sought to bind this initial wave of refugees all the more closely to their adopted land.

The Enemy from Within: Refugees in 1930s France

The 1930s was a traumatic decade for France. On a national level, a crippling economic crisis in the early part of the decade turned into the longest and deepest economic crisis in national history. In 1932, for example, production fell 27 percent and over a quarter of a million people were unemployed. This economic decline was coupled with internal political instability as ministries fell in rapid succession and as Nazism took root in neighboring Germany. In this tense atmosphere, France's large foreign population soon began bearing the brunt of national fears. Although some of these foreign workers left as the economic crisis developed, any decrease was offset by the arrival of new eastern and central European refugees, many of whom were Jewish. These new refugees were often viewed as a threat to national interests. Most obviously, they seemed to threaten the already unstable national labor market. In addition, rising xenophobic sentiment suggested that the newcomers would endanger French culture, already weakened by millions of immigrants. Moreover, the refugees were seen as a political threat, as, most often, they were fleeing countries that France hoped not to antagonize. In response to these fears, a virulent xenophobia began to develop, which linked

France's international weakness, its economic decline, and its political disorder to the involvement of foreigners, particularly Jews, in French society.⁸⁶

Refugee policies reflected these concerns. Fluctuating throughout the 1930s, such policies indicated officials' desire to reduce the numbers of incoming refugees while still bolstering the country economically and militarily. Thus, while still receiving more refugees than any other European country, the government's immigration bureaucracy began working to keep numbers down, particularly during the antirefugee crackdowns in 1934–35, when officials turned back some refugees, refused entry to others, and expelled those who entered illegally. Under the socialist-led Popular Front that came to power in 1936, the situation eased somewhat, leading to the overturning of some of the harshest antirefugee policies of the previous years. The collapse of the Popular Front in 1938, however, brought a new refugee crisis. As increasing numbers of Jews and Spaniards sought asylum, government officials, wedded to a policy of appeasement, grew to believe that "the refugees, together with their alleged communist allies, were seeking to drag France into war against Hitler merely to satisfy their personal lust for revenge."⁸⁷

In this environment, an increasingly vocal distrust of the *apatride* took shape. "It must be feared," warned the head of national security in 1938, "that some number among those foreigners claiming to have lost the diplomatic protection of the consulate of their country of origin [are] agents of foreign powers." Similarly, the Minister of the Interior reminded the various prefectures that because of the country's liberal refugee policies, foreigners from various countries would flock to France pretending to be *apatrides* or political refugees. In light of such threats, he stressed that every attempt should be made to find another nation willing to take those expelled from France.⁸⁸ Thus, as the nation moved toward war, the allegiances of any individual not linked with some recognized state became increasingly suspect, and fear of foreigners, particularly those with questionable loyalties, grew all the stronger.

Interestingly, however, if distrust of refugees' political loyalties was voiced repeatedly in official circles, governmental policies demonstrated an ever-growing willingness to actively incorporate into the polity those holding Nansen passports.⁸⁹ As early as 1933, as officials began narrowing the eligibility criteria for refugee status, they made exceptions for stateless persons who had already been granted the Nansen passport.⁹⁰ Expulsion policies provide another case in point: Russian and Armenian *apatrides* continued to face the threat of expulsion throughout the 1930s, and the numbers of those suffering such a punishment even grew considerably in the antirefugee atmosphere of late 1934, when the government sought to reduce the entire foreign population. By 1935 the new Min-

ister of the Interior, Joseph Paganon, began to realize the hopeless situation in which most refugees found themselves. Unable to return to their country of origin, many languished in prison, either unable to regularize their position or to attain visas to any other destination. As a result, Paganon issued two circulars that exempted apatrides and refugees from arbitrary expulsions, insisting that only his office could pronounce an expulsion of an apatriote and only in extremely serious criminal cases or when the accused had acted against national security or the interests of the state. Thus, at the very moment when foreign populations of all kinds, particularly Jewish refugees from eastern Europe, whom the *Sûreté Nationale* refused to recognize as stateless, saw their expulsion numbers increase for the most minor offenses, Armenians, Russians, and other formally recognized apatrides found themselves protected.

Even more important, however, was the government's decision in early 1936 to ratify the League of Nations' Convention of October 28, 1933 regarding Nansen refugees. The rights protected by this convention—including far-reaching social benefits, the right to attend French educational institutions, the provision of international travel documentation, and an agreement not to apply expulsion orders to refugees who were authorized to reside legally in the country (barring any action on their part against national security or the public order)—gave Nansen refugees a legal status almost equal to that of French citizens. Moreover, in 1937, desire to increase military recruitments led to new provisions designed to incorporate Nansen refugees into the French military. While other refugee groups—particularly Jews from Germany who had already been settled in France for several decades—also benefited from more inclusive policies that recognized their difficult situation, Jewish refugees continued to face conflicting and contradictory policies throughout the remainder of the decade. Those holding Nansen passports, in contrast, continued to benefit from the more inclusive policies that, from 1936 forward, sought to integrate them into the French polity militarily, economically, and educationally.⁹¹

Such policy shifts should not suggest that Armenians entirely escaped the anti-immigrant attitudes so prevalent during the period. Many lost their job during the depression as foreign workers were let go to protect the native-born. Indeed, for many French, Armenians were an indistinguishable addition to the mix of peoples they blamed for overcrowded cities, job competition, and the general degeneration of French culture.⁹² Others saw them as part of the larger refugee problem. In such cases, antiapatride sentiment became entangled with rising antisemitism, as commentators conflated Jews and Armenians. In an article labeling Armenians “dirtier and less adaptable than others,” for example, the right-

wing journalist Lucien Rebatet compared Armenians with Jews: “[They share] the same aptitudes, the same absence of an attachment to any territory (all left without any thought of returning), the same promiscuity in the ghettos, where they seem crushed, where the same pogroms decimated them, and from where they suddenly emerged just as cliquish and as congested as they had been previously. The Armenian is, with the Jew, the same type of foreigner [*métèque-type*]. The only differences are: [the Armenian] is more deceitful; he does not have the feverish vitality of the Semite. Further, having recently come to the West, he is not yet concerned with politics.” Blaming the Armenians for their own massacres, Rebatet accused them of being dirty beggars who polluted the streets of Paris.⁹³

More interesting, however, were the cases where commentators made special exceptions for Armenians. Indeed, as *apatrides* became increasingly suspect, some advocates for the Armenians stressed how their stateless nature made them a particularly *welcome* addition to the French polity. In 1930, prior to the new wave of antirefugee sentiment, there were already examples of such rhetoric. A three-part article on Armenians in Marseille, for example, described the local population in the following terms: “‘All men have two fatherlands: their own and France.’ The fifteen thousand Armenians who live in Marseille find that this aphorism is no longer true for them. They only have one fatherland, they say, France. Their own has ceased to exist for them.” The series concluded by arguing that France should not regret having granted asylum “to this hereditarily unhappy people. This heredity can fade away and open for the Armenians, future French citizens, an era of happiness and prosperity.”⁹⁴

Such a defense of France’s Armenian population may not seem particularly out of place in 1930, when the most virulent xenophobia had yet to take root. More interesting, however, are those defenses that came in the middle of the decade as unemployment and economic upheaval caused an increasing hostility toward foreign populations. A 1936 article in *Le Petit Journal*, for example, insisted that giving refuge to Armenians had been a correct and worthy decision. The Armenians, noted the article, “work quietly, without our having to take care of them. . . . far from giving way to despair, which would certainly be understandable when we know the sum of the misfortunes that have fallen upon them, [the Armenians of France] work and hope. In 1936, these are great virtues.” Similarly, Camille Mauclair, the well-known anti-immigrant art critic, defended Armenians to the French public: “It is with chagrin and indignation that I recently saw an Armenian colony in Valence—maintaining itself, just as perfectly as the Spanish Reds maintain themselves dishonestly—referred to as ‘unemployed foreigners.’ Unemployed? Perhaps out of necessity. But ‘foreigners’? They are *protégés*, and only

this name suits them. We should never confuse them with other suspect individuals, undesirables who invaded us and who with the sinister manipulations of the communists can become auxiliaries of social upheaval. Among the Armenian refugees in France, we will find in times of danger only loyal soldiers. And it is urgent to grant them a special status, for they are ours.”⁹⁵

Mauclair’s defense of Valence’s Armenian population is particularly interesting given his general disgust with foreigners and particularly Jews. As a contributor to the populist paper *L’Ami du peuple*, Mauclair regularly denounced the foreign influences eating away at French culture. “One really does not have to be xenophobic,” he wrote in an attack on German Jewish art dealers and critics in Paris, “to feel concern at the growing number of *métèques* who, brandishing a naturalization certificate whose ink is scarcely dry, install themselves in France to judge our artists without an intimate sense of our race.”⁹⁶ Armenians, however, were not really foreigners. Rather, Mauclair argued, they were in a special category and should be treated as such. In their case statelessness was an asset, because they would prove a dependable and loyal addition to the polity.

Such views are particularly striking on the eve of World War II, when Jewish refugees were often distrusted precisely because of what was perceived as their cross-national affiliations. Whereas Armenian refugees were viewed as stateless, Jewish refugees, particularly those from Germany, were distrusted as alien spies. Thus, French xenophobia was not monolithic. By the mid-1930s, Jews occupied a particular place both symbolically and materially in the surrounding society. Although most of the anti-Jewish campaigns were directed at the foreign-born, they often spread to include all Jews, French-born or not. Thus, campaigns against Jews were not merely expressions of general xenophobia.⁹⁷ One scholar has argued that by the late 1930s *Jews* and *refugees* had become synonymous (both sharing an entirely negative connotation) in the public imagination, yet it is clear that Armenian refugees who had arrived prior to the major antirefugee wave were, at times, able to escape such antagonism.⁹⁸

Certainly the xenophobia of the 1930s and the racial distinctions that eventually “justified” legal sanctions against Jews polluted the environment for other immigrant groups as well. Once war broke out, the policing of nonnatives increased tenfold as local prefectures watched noncitizens closely for the smallest signs of “disloyalty.” If immigrants participated in any anti-French propaganda, associated with the wrong types of people, traveled too often, or “did not observe the neutrality imposed on all foreigners,” they could be legally interned or deported.⁹⁹

Antiforeigner sentiment flourished even more after France’s collapse in May

and June 1940, when three-fifths of the country came under German occupation. As part of the armistice agreement, a new regime run by Marshal Pétain and temporarily located in the resort town of Vichy administered the unoccupied regions of the country. This new government's program—authoritarian, traditionalist, and pious in form—adopted an officially neutral position in regard to the war between Germany and the Allies. Its policies capitalized on the anti-Jewish and anti-immigrant sentiment of the 1930s, allowing for the active persecution of both over the next four years.¹⁰⁰ Thus, after the Pétainist government had fully established itself, articles condemning the impact of immigrants on French society appeared ever more frequently in the national press. In this environment it is not surprising that Armenians also came under attack. In October 1942 for example, *Le Matin*, a prominent daily newspaper, accused Armenians of actively participating in the black market along with Jews, Turks, and “bad Frenchmen.” Similarly, in August 1943, a diatribe against immigrants published in *Echo des étudiants* argued that government immigration policies should prevent newcomers and their descendants from living in dense collectivities; otherwise, “turbulent and sometimes irredentist minorities” could work against France's interests and in favor of their compatriots elsewhere. Cases where collective living had negatively influenced the population could be documented, the author continued, by looking at the example of Armenians: “Isolated, they are hard-working, capable artisans who do not exploit their clients, although they are after a profit. In contrast, concentrated in colonies of many hundreds or thousands . . . they stand out with their swindling and for their serious engagement in the black market.”¹⁰¹ In this and other articles, Armenians were portrayed as a perfect example of the foreign threat. Whether Armenian, Polish, or Jewish, the nonnative population posed a menace to the surrounding society.

In this atmosphere, the work of race scientists and immigration theorists began moving further into the mainstream. Immigrants were soon being viewed not simply as a drain on the national economy but as a threat to the French nation and “race.” In 1942, for example, an article entitled “Race et nation,” published in the journal *Illustration*, argued that interwar integrationist policies had failed and that large unassimilable foreign groups were seeking to dominate and transform French society. These millions of immigrants had been gallicized only superficially, argued the author, and were “incapable of feeling and thinking as those of the French race.” Refugees were particularly corrupting, having been chased from their own homes because of their distasteful ideas, religious practices, or racial makeup. Having come to France as antagonists and fanatics, they had swelled the ranks of social and revolutionary movements and provided an army of dis-

ruptive forces all too willing to participate in strikes or street demonstrations. Warning of the moral and physical contamination of “our race” by those of inferior makeup, signs of which were already evident in literature and the arts, the author suggested that immigrant populations be sent by small groups into the interior of the country, mixed in with the native-born, and kept as far as possible from their own kind.¹⁰²

Interestingly, however, despite criticism of refugees and worry over racial contamination, race scientists and immigration theorists tended to downplay Armenian racial distinctiveness. In the initial debates over blood purity in the late 1920s, just as French scientists and anthropologists began focusing attention on the question of racial types, Nicholas Kossowitch, one of the most prominent anthropologists of blood groups in France (himself a native Serb who moved to Paris after World War I and obtained a position at the Pasteur Institute), published a study of Armenian refugees in Paris. By examining 380 Parisian Armenian refugees from Turkey, Persia, and the Caucasus, he attempted to determine if blood groups could be related to other anthropometrical characteristics. His study provided basic information on the physical characteristics of the “Armenian race,” such as height, skin color, head size, and eye color, although from this information he concluded that Armenians did not constitute one homogeneous race.¹⁰³ Nevertheless, he categorized them in a biochemical index that his teacher, Ludwik Hirsztfeld, had created for categorizing and ranking the different blood groups. In the 1930s, as immigration theorists began seeking a more “rational” basis for selecting and controlling the influx of foreigners into France, they relied on Kossowitch’s work, with its biochemical index as proof that certain types of blood would lower France’s racial index.

It is significant for our understanding of the Armenian position in France in this period, however, to note that for two of the most important race and immigration theorists, René Martial and Georges Montandon, Armenians ranked much higher when compared to other non-French minorities. Martial, whose respected position as a specialist in public health provided him with a wide audience for his work, taught a course on immigration at the Institut d’hygiène of the École de médecine and wrote numerous books and articles in which he stressed the central role race should play in the selection process for new immigrants. Most interesting is the hard-line attitude that Martial adopted toward France’s apartheid population. Like other immigration theorists of the day, Martial questioned refugees’ loyalty and ability to assimilate and called for their immediate expulsion. Interestingly however, he made a special exception for Armenians. After some prominent Armenians took issue with Martial’s antiapartheid position, he

explained that he never meant to collapse Armenians into the category of *apatride*: “The Armenians have a homeland [*patrie*] — of which we all know the venerable antiquity — and are ardent patriots. Yet it seems that the League of Nations categorized them with those who have no state. The diplomats know nothing of the question of races; this is regrettable but this is not the case with me, and I would never confuse the Armenians with the man who does not have, or no longer has, or never had, or does not even want to have a homeland [i.e., the Jews].”¹⁰⁴

Like Martial, Georges Montandon, a professor of ethnology at the *École d'Anthropologie de Paris*, also believed that Armenian racial stock put them in a higher category than other groups. Montandon's work, in May 1943, won him the editorship of the journal *La Question juive*, the official journal of the *Commissariat général aux questions juives*, the agency established by the Vichy government to coordinate all anti-Jewish programs in France. In this position as well as through his directorship of the *Institut d'études des questions juives* (IEQJ), Montandon made it clear that he was no fan of racial mixing. Indeed, he believed that the ethnoracial makeup of France's foreign population was central to national interests, particularly when considering questions of intermarriage. He did not, however, believe in categorically rejecting all non-Europeans as non-Aryans. In particular, he focused on the Armenians, whose “Aryan” language, Christian heritage, and low level of “negrification” required a more complex assessment. Although not ready to label them all Aryans, Montandon encouraged the adoption of German racial hierarchies that assessed Armenians on a case-by-case basis.¹⁰⁵ For him, as for Martial, Armenians' Christianity as well as their Indo-European language placed some of them in a higher racial category.

This conflation of religion and culture with scientific discourses of biological properties characterized most of the discussions of late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century race scientists.¹⁰⁶ Similarly, economic status and political inclinations were often used to prove the racial superiority of one group over another. In a summer 1942 article, the newspaper *Appel*, for example, attacked Jews who had “baptized themselves Armenian” so as to reenter auction houses (*Hôtel des Ventes*) from which they had been banished. However, after receiving numerous letters complaining that the article treated France's Armenian population unfairly, *Appel's* editors published a formal apology: “We never meant to attack the Armenians, whose age-old friendship as well as their heroism under our flag is well known to us.” The paper then reminded its readers of the Armenians' love for French culture and of the thousands who had mobilized for the short-lived war against Germany, two thousand of whom remained in captivity. As further

evidence of the positive Armenian contributions to French society, *Appel* indicated that Marshal Pétain had accorded them his personal protection.¹⁰⁷

It is curious to a contemporary eye just how easily Armenians escaped the harsh criticisms to which Jews were subjected during the same period. Indeed, while antiforeign sentiment among the wider French population—unlikely to distinguish between one immigrant and another—certainly influenced how Armenians experienced the 1930s and early 1940s, we cannot dismiss the fact that the most influential racial theorists of the day, as well as the head of state, Marshal Pétain, sought to exclude Armenians from the general antiforeign bias they otherwise promoted. This is particularly curious given that, superficially at least, Armenians were the segment of the foreign population that most resembled Jews. As stateless refugees, they had no homeland to which to return, despite Martial's arguments to the contrary. Moreover, the "homeland" they did claim was located in the Soviet Union, hardly an ally to the German-friendly Vichy regime after 1941. Like Jewish immigrants, Armenians had congregated in cities and in artisanal trades, often rejecting attempts to move them away from their compatriots or into agricultural professions. Most ironically, they stood out physically, many exhibiting characteristics that had been ascribed to Jews by the prominent racial thinkers of the day.¹⁰⁸

Why, then, were Armenians exempted from the criticisms leveled at Jews? Did their Christianity make them less offensive to their French hosts? This is certainly possible, although the traditional Armenian religious rite, practiced in an ancient dialect and rich with customs that Western Christianity viewed as superstitious, would certainly have proven as foreign to the French as the traditional rites of the Jewish immigrants. Moreover, as has been well documented, the anti-semitic sentiment of the World War II era was considerably more complex than simply a rejection of Judaism. Is it possible that two decades of the argument put forth by Armenians themselves—that they were the most loyal of minorities, a trope they adopted to defend themselves against attacks of those fearful of their statelessness—had influenced French political and intellectual leaders? Such an explanation rings hollow when we remember the much longer tradition among acculturated French Jews of pledging loyalty to their native land.¹⁰⁹ Perhaps, then, Armenians were viewed less antagonistically by virtue of their statelessness—their lack of a national affiliation making them seem less threatening than later refugees, who often had lost diplomatic protection but were not necessarily stateless. Such an explanation is compelling, because there is no doubt that German Jews, many of whom still had passports, at times seemed to French national secu-

rity officials to pose a military threat. And yet, many eastern European Jews who came to France during the 1930s had also been rendered stateless, yet, if anything, faced harsher refugee policies than their German coreligionists.

The Armenian exemption from racial stereotyping can be explained by considering the nature of racism in Western societies itself. Beginning in the mid-nineteenth century, Jews became Europe's enemy from within. Having accepted the liberal promise that they could participate fully in their surrounding societies if they adopted the rules that defined those societies, Western Jews fought for and then took full advantage of the emancipation awarded them throughout the nineteenth century. The more they tried to integrate, however, the more they encountered hostility and rejection. In France, such hostility was evident in the Dreyfus Affair at the turn of the century and even more violently throughout the 1930s and during the Vichy regime. In his analysis of Jewish self-hatred, Sander Gilman has defined this relationship of western European Jews to the states in which they lived as one in which the "Other" negotiates a place within a society. "On the one hand," writes Gilman, "is the liberal fantasy that anyone is welcome to share in the power of the reference group if he abides by the rules that define that group. . . . On the other hand is the hidden qualification of the internalized reference group, the conservative curse: The more you are like me, the more I know the true value of my power, which you wish to share, and the more I am aware that you are but a shoddy counterfeit, an outsider."¹¹⁰

According to this model, a clear difference arises between the Jewish and Armenian populations in France. Whereas there had been a significant Jewish presence in France for well over a century, Armenians were truly outsiders. Or, to put it another way, Jews were France's internal outsider, the "other" against which society defined itself, whereas Armenians were clearly not part of the host society but an oppressed minority group from another society (in which they had been the internal "other") who deserved sympathy and aid. Although immigrant Jews were new arrivals in much the way Armenians were, perceptions of them were influenced by a longer tradition of French antisemitism that shaped discourses against all Jews, whether of native or immigrant origin. Indeed, what is particularly interesting about the antisemitism of the 1930s and 1940s was its tendency to blur the lines between native and immigrant Jew, hence marking the anti-Jewish rhetoric as distinct from other xenophobic movements of the day.¹¹¹

Yet if hindsight shows that Armenians had little to fear from the xenophobia of the 1930s, life "on the ground" was undoubtedly quite different. Facing little threat from policymakers, Armenian refugees were nevertheless surrounded by an antiforeign, antirefugee rhetoric. Such rhetoric was particularly discon-

certing because of Armenians' recent past of deportation and genocide, during which they had been viewed as pariahs in their own society. Thus, whatever the real threat, Armenians in France viewed the rising tide of xenophobia with great alarm. For them, antirefugee sentiment was an indictment of their position in society; hence, they believed they occupied a tenuous place in their adopted home. Throughout the first decades of their life in France, they thus came to understand their position as that of uprooted, stateless wanderers, and this understanding shaped how they integrated into the wider society.

The genocidal attack against Armenians during World War I was an attack on their juridical existence. By stripping survivors of residency rights, the Young Turks removed their victims not only from their regions of birth but from the international community, constituted increasingly around national lines. In migrating to France survivors sought, among other things, to regularize their anomalous status. Initially, however, French authorities proved unable to distinguish them from the mass of foreigners arriving during the same years. Indeed, policies toward them were rarely, if ever, based on humanitarian concerns over their recent past. Rather, such policies were shaped by two contradictory impulses: the first sought to integrate a population whose loyalties were potentially malleable; the second sought to police a group whose allegiances were unidentifiable. Over time, however, it was the former approach that prevailed, as international agreements provided Nansen passport holders with a juridically recognizable position and as French officials continued to pursue strategies designed to transform immigrant minorities into French nationals. Indeed, even in the 1930s, when hard-liners began backing exclusionist policies designed to marginalize the most recent immigrant and refugee populations to France, Nansen refugees were increasingly integrated into the state's welfare, military, and economic structures.

A similar stress on integration is evident in the post-World War II policies toward Jewish Holocaust survivors. Although the two populations had different relationships to the French state, Armenians as refugees from a foreign oppressor and Jews as victims of a previous French regime, both had been stripped of their juridical rights and cast outside the nation-state system. Although French authorities certainly did not have Armenians in mind as they created policies for the reintegration of Jewish survivors after World War II, once again France's long tradition of political and cultural integration influenced how authorities addressed the problems posed by Jewish reintegration. In both cases, such models profoundly influenced how survivors came to terms with their minority status in the aftermath of their respective genocides.