

UCLA Interview of ARTIN KITABJIAN (AK)

Interview by Garo Mardirossian (GM) in Los Angeles, CA.

Language: Armenian

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Translated by Gregory Ketabgian, on July 9, 2009.

Part I of two tapes. Portions of this interview was prerecorded and later added to this tape.

GM: What is your name?

AK: Artin Kitabjian.

GM: Which city and when were you born?

AK: Gesaria, I am a native Gesaratzi, I was born in 1896.

GM: How many members in your family? How many brothers and sisters?

AK: Four brothers and one sister.

GM: What was your father's name?

AK: Krikor Kitabjian.

GM: What kind of work did your father do?

AK: Goldsmith.

GM: In your family home, besides your family did you have uncles also living in the same house?

AK: We had paternal uncles, but they all lived in their individual homes. In the past they used to live together, but as the number of children increased to twelve, due to the noise, they separated to other residences.

GM: What was the house built with?

AK: From stone. Yes, from solid rock and the thickness of the wall was more than half meter.

GM: In your home did you have other grandmothers or grandfathers?

AK: No.

GM: And in the family life, was it the father that made the decisions.

AK: Yes.

GM: When you sat down for dinner, did the children and all sat down together or ate separately?

AK: We all sat together. When the food was ready, we all sat together to eat at one table.

GM: It made no difference, male or female?

AK: It made no difference.

GM: Coming to marriage issues. What were the ages at which one would get married?

AK: For the men, they would not get married until age 28 to 30. One had to have earned money to be married. Otherwise, there was no such thing to be married by just giving a ring.

GM: And the girls?

AK: Of course, the girls waited for their luck (fate) past age 18.

GM: Could it be 28?

AK: It could be.

GM: But the men would not get married at age 18 to 20, to earn some money.

AK: No! Without having earned any money one would not have the temerity to knock on one's door to ask for the hand of their daughter. It would be impossible.

GM: Would the parent function as go between for the marriage proposal?

AK: Yes, and it would always be the decision of the parents. At that time there was no such thing as "to love or not to love". They would ask "This boy is good; do you want to marry him?" If she adamantly refused, that was different. But usually they would facilitate it.

GM: It was not whether one wanted it or not, but it was essentially that.

AK: Just about that. Here they say, "I love him or her", there at that time there was nothing like that.

GM: A 28-year-old man, would be living with the family until he got married?

AK: Yes, and after he got married too. He would bring his bride to his parent's home and they would have a separate bedroom in the house, since the homes had multiple rooms. But for meals they would come down to the dining room to sit with the father to eat dinner.

GM: Did the bride have the right to speak to her father and mother in laws?

AK: Yes, in our region they had the right, but in other regions it was different.

GM: What were the forks and spoons made of that you used to eat with?

AK: From iron (steel).

GM: Iron, not from wood.

AK: Yes, from iron, although they also had some wooden ones. Later in Aleppo where I lived 36 years, because we were goldsmiths, our utensils were all solid silver.

GM: Your family was well to do, wealthy?

AK: Yes, not very wealthy, but we were artisans, and we were wealthy among the artisans.

GM: The Armenians in your village were all artisans?

AK: Yes, all. Working on rugs and basterma; those were the major areas.

GM: Basterma? Meal?

AK: No, no, basterma from cow meat. No, it is not a meal. It is a cured meat. Basterma. Gesaria was like a factory for basterma.

GM: You used to manufacture it and sent it outside?

AK: Oh yes. They used to send it all the way to Bolis (Istanbul) and Egypt.

GM: The basterma that you made?

AK: Yes, every house used to slaughter a cow once a year. They would make basterma from it and the fat would be melted down, because where we lived, it was a very cold place. It would be very cold for six months and would snow. The basterma and from it also Erishkig (Armenian sausage) as we say, that would feed a family for one year. In the summer nothing would happen to the basterma since it was salted to preserve it. It would not spoil.

GM: In your village...

AK: Ours was a **city**.

GM: In your city, were more than half of the populations or the large percentage Armenians or they were the minority?

AK: I do not know that well, but I know that there were 35 to 40 thousand Armenians in Gesaria.

GM: Did you see Turks everyday in the streets?

AK: Yes, but the Armenian section was separate. The Turkish section was on another part of the city. Do you understand? The sections were separate. During the day you could pass through their sections but at night we would be scared and would not pass through that part of town. We did not have great need to do so. Our Armenian sections were all self-reliant.

GM: Did they pass through your section? Did they have fears also?

AK: No, they had no fear at all. Actually, I can say that if some Armenian women were sitting and talking in front of their house and 3 to 4 Turks were passing by, they would stand up until they passed.

GM: For reverence?

AK: Yes, for respect.

GM: In your village did they have certain regulations between Armenians and Turks. For instance, for a misunderstanding could they go to court to resolve it?

AK: Yes, everything was orderly. An Armenian could bring a case against a Turk and bring his attorney to speak and able to win, but behind it all it was the money that spoke. You know.

GM: Just because some one is Christian that he could not sue a Turk?

AK: No, there was no such thing, even before 1915.

GM: How many of churches were there in your village?

AK: There were three churches, three Lusavorchagan churches. Shall I tell you the names?

GM: Yes.

AK: There was Sts. Sarkis, Astvatzatin and Lusavorich Churches. The first two were close to our homes. Lusavorich was closer to the cemetery area and the people in that region went to that church. The ones closer to the first two went to either one.

GM: Did the people attend church daily or once a week.

AK: No. They went on Sundays for sure.

GM: During the week?

AK: During the week women and at times men went for saint's days, mainly older people, since all other people were busy with their work.

GM: Were the people very religious?

AK: They were very religious. My father and mother did not know any Armenian words although they knew the letters. But my father knew all the hymns in the church and he used to sing it. He used to know the words although he did not know the meaning; he had learned it by heart.

GM: Learned it by heart. He could not speak Armenian with someone else?

AK: No. He would only greet them; "Parev."

GM: He spoke in Turkish.

AK: Spoke in Turkish but used to write letters in Turkish with Armenian characters [alphabet.] He also knew to write in Turkish to the Turks. Now, I can also write in Turkish.

GM: With Arabic letters?

AK: Yes, with Arabic letters.

GM: The old Ottoman language.

AK: Yes, old Ottoman language, I read it well. If a telegram came to a neighbor, I always used to read it. On the road to Der Zor, there were deportees from Izmir with us, do you understand, they wanted to request money from Izmir by telegram, they had finished their

money. I wrote their telegram in Turkish in 1915. The new alphabet was changed after Mustafa Kemal came to power.

GM: After 1921-23.

AK: Yes. It was 1920; Mustafa Kemal was coming to Sivas. There in our town a famous government person knew me, I wanted to know from him what the political situation there was. He asked whether I came to stay or leave. It was the middle of 1919. I told him I had some work to do that's why I came. That man told me to leave as soon as possible, since in five days it was their holy day (Ramazan) and at the last day of the feast day they would collect men for the draft. "You will not be able to be saved since you are a Turkish citizen" he said. I had shown him my identification card (Nufus kaardi) to get the keys for our homes. They gave me the keys in three days.

GM: The French?

AK: No, the Turks. There were no French forces there. They gave the keys for the homes in three days. We had two homes and the store. To see if there were any hidden things left to take. I was unsuccessful. Because our home walls were made of stone and in between there are small pieces to keep the stones straight. When I went to the basement, I saw that those small stones were spilled on the floor. After we had left Gesaria, they had rented the homes and throughout all the walls they had pushed metal rods, and they heard some metal sound or emptiness, and taken out all the hidden valuables.

GM: Those were people who had occupied the homes.

AK: Yes. They surrendered the homes. Leaving, I wanted to return the keys, I could not find anyone. My grandmother was there, they were able to stay because they were Catholic. When my Grandfather died at a young age, she remarried and had two children, and those two children were thrown into a gorge in Talas. They had collected 800 children 8-15 ages and all were killed and thrown there.

GM: What year was this?

AK: This was in 1916. They were my uncles. I was told this by my Grandmother.

GM: Didn't they adopt the young ones?

AK: No. They wanted to kill them. They would adopt 1-2-year old.

GM: Below 5-year old.

AK: They did not want to adopt the older ones since they could not alter them. It was hard.

GM: Once you learn the Armenian language it is too late.

AK: Yes. That is right.

GM: Before 1915 would you hear or see any revolutionary activity in your region?

AK: Yes. In 1908, independence proclaimed. In 1909, the Adana Massacre took place. On the same day that took place, they were going to massacre in Gesaria also. Two to three days before that day, a Hunchakian party member had come to Gesaria with a big bag hanging on his side. He had rented a room from our relatives, Kitabjians, and was living there. The party member was staying there. In the afternoon of that day of the Adana massacre, a group of soldiers came and surrounded that building. This man did a brave act; he got up to the roof and shouted that let the Armenian separate to one side. Only the soldiers were left, all the Armenians went to their homes. He told the soldiers that if they did not leave, he was going to throw a bomb at them. That's what took place. The police were afraid of him. He had long hair down to his neck. They were afraid and slowly receded. Our Archbishop, Dirtad Balian, a very brave priest, was called by the

government, was told that if this person does not leave by tonight, the whole population will be massacred. Do you understand? After hearing that, the priest came back to arrange for the person's transfer to save the city. And they sent him out.

GM: Without shooting him?

AK: Yes. Two other persons from the revolutionaries with him in a carriage left the city, I do not know in what direction.

GM: The people with him were Tashnak of Hnchaks?

AK: Both were represented.

GM: In your city both parties were present.

AK: Both parties were there. But the Hnchakian party worker gave them (the Turks) the list of the names to the government (in 1915). All the names, the money and the whereabouts of the guns. After intense amount of beating he had given up. But the Tashnak head, Kevork Vishabian, I knew them all, he said he was the only one and he was hanged.

GM: He did not give the names of the members.

AK: No. Not the names or where the guns were. They kept him for a few days. They told him that if you do not give the information you will hang. Whether he talked or did not, he was hanged.

GM: The Hnchakian who divulged the information, did they hang him?

AK: They hanged him too. He was one of the twelve that were hanged.

GM: He was in the twelve that were hanged

AK: Do you want the names of the ones hanged? I know a few of them. Der Aristakes Demirjian, a priest, he was a very famous priest and used to give good sermons.

GM: What was the reason why they hanged the priest?

AK: They had questioned him, blaming him to be revolutionary. They blamed him for having guns. They hanged him. This was at the beginning, in 1915. It was to discourage the population so that they will not rebel against the government. They had already collected all the guns.

GM: Who else were among the hanged?

AK: Among them there was Garabed Jamjian, a very famous rich person, who also worked in the government. They found a Martin rifle in his home.

GM: Is Martin a type of gun?

AK: Martin is a big rifle.

GM: Not a Mauser?

AK: No, it is called a Martin. You put in 2-3 bullets and it fires it one after another.

GM: They hanged him because they found a gun in his house.

AK: They hanged him also for being very rich. There is also Ohannes Eff. Boyajian. He was the principal of my school. He was also hanged. I used to know all the names, but I have forgotten.

GM: Is it still in front of your eyes?

AK: They had hanged them at night, but we were returning from collecting the locust early in the morning, they made us pass in front of them. They were there hanging. We passed in front of them. We went crazy. We were young people. All the fathers were taken away already, do you understand? We were 14, 15, 16, year old boys; we had gone to collect the locust. We saw all that and we went home. After that what misery we experienced.

GM: You were about 19 years old at that time.

AK: Yes, about 19.

GM: You did not join any revolutionary activities?

AK: My father had a friend in the revolutionary party. He had come to him to write him in as a member. My father had told him that; "I do not understand from any revolution. Since you tell me that you need money, let me give you some money but do not write my name in your book." Because they used to be afraid from the government if something like that surfaces. Later it came out. In 1894-95 my father was single, 43 people were collected from Gesaria, three of which were revolutionary Hnchakian members. They took them to Ankara, which was our vilayet. Gesaria was a Mutasarif, later became Mustakil Mutasarif, which gave them the authority to take a lot of action. The more important decisions had to come from Ankara. Well, with my father 43 men were tied together five each and sent in carriages to Ankara. If one had to go to the toilet, all five of them had to go together. Then five of them had to come together to enter in the carriage. Forty of them were questioned and not one of them knew or admitted to know about the revolutionary activities. Do you understand? The other three admitted that they formed these groups to defend themselves. They sent the forty back to Gesaria, the other three were hanged in Ankara. The forty were told that if their names came up in other lists that they will be hanged. My father says that on Easter day they got home.

GM: Your father was in that group?

AK: Yes, since he gave money, the man wrote his name down.

GM: He had written his name down since he gave money but considered a revolutionary.

AK: Forty of them have answered like my father; "we do not know anything." They donated money, no other interests.

GM: This was during Sultan Hamid's time.

AK: Yes, During Sultan Hamid's time.

GM: During 1915, did you help at all?

AK: No, I did not get involved at all. My father told me that he did not want his name written but the man had done it. "Never join any revolutionary parties." And I never joined any parties. But no one asked me either. Since I was only 19, and at those times you were still considered a child.

GM: In 1915 did the revolutionary parties were able to help in any way?

AK: Help? Not at all. They were all arrested, sent away and killed. They used to send them in all directions, mountainous regions of Gesaria, and used to kill them in deserted areas.

GM: So when the massacres came they were not able to do any thing?

AK: No, No. It did not help anything. Hadjin fought but since they were surrounded and ran out of food, they came, and everyone was killed. There was a lot of killing in Hadjin.

GM: Next I am going to ask 1915 deportation and when you first heard about it.

[Previously taped section was inserted here next. This section is printed in the memoir "Leaving Kayseri, A Journey of One Hundred Years."]

GM: Mr. Kitabjian, you left Gesaria in 1915 and you got to Der Zor in 1916.

AK: Not in 1916, later in 1917.

GM: How did you stay in Der Zor?

AK: We stayed in Der Zor for 19 months, I think. At that time, you know, the British were coming from the direction of Bagdad, and after they got there, after a while we left.

GM: Did you leave with them?

AK: No, we could go free in Der Zor after the British troops started coming from Bagdad.

GM: In Der Zor or on the way did you see killed bodies or skeletons.

AK: We saw a lot of bodies of dead people who had died from disease or starvation.

They did not kill everywhere, only in Marquade and Sheddadiye. When you go from Der Zor towards the desert that is where the massacres took place. But there were not any big cities there. This side of Der Zor nobody was killed. They all had died from natural causes rather than being slaughtered. Arabs also died a lot also from disease. The Turks did not like the Arabs, and they sent us to where the Arabs were so they would get exposed to illness and die.

GM: The Turks specially wanted to kill the Armenians and the Arabs?

AK: Right! Earlier the Turks had executed (hanged) large numbers of Arabs in Damascus and Lebanon.

GM: You remained in Der Zor from 1917 to 1919?

AK: Yes.

GM: Did you go to Gesaria or Aleppo from there?

AK: No, from there they left us free, since there was no government at that time, within 10 days we came to Aleppo. We went from Der Zor to Aleppo in a carriage. That way we came to Aleppo, and there we met with goldsmiths to look for work. I became a money changer. Let me say that when we went to Der Zor we only had 2 Osmanian [Ottoman] gold pieces. That was the last amount of money left with us. And that was used when we got sick and had to get broth to treat us with. Do you understand? In 7 months, working with my father and myself in DerZor, they took in 12 families as artisans; we earned 150 Ottoman gold pieces. One hundred fifty Ottoman gold pieces!

GM: As a goldsmith?

AK: As goldsmiths we worked hard since we were making good money. For all the women we made Hejools, round bracelets or anklets were made from silver. All the goldsmiths in Der Zor were working on gold but they would not allow us to work on gold. So we thought we should work on silver. That way we made 150 gold pieces. My father said that we should not stay here. We went to Aleppo.

GM: With that money you went to Aleppo.

AK: Not just that, but with whatever we had. In Aleppo the British were there and the French arrived. We rented a store. I used to do money changing in front of the store and my father did goldsmith work in the back with my middle and small brother.

GM: How long did you stay in Aleppo?

AK: We arrived in the 1920s and left November 10, 1956.

GM: Did you go back to Gesaria?

AK: I went to Gesaria in mid 1919. We had hidden a large amount of gold and antiques since my father and his two brothers were goldsmiths. I hid these in the middle of the walls with my own hands since there were empty spaces, but I may have made mistakes. I went back to claim those things so we could have some ready cash, but it failed. But on top of it, also spending 25 gold pieces I came back empty handed.

GM: You went to Gesaria to find those things and came back to Aleppo until 1956.

What type of work did you do in Aleppo?

AK: First I was a moneychanger.

GM: A money changer then you came to US in 1956.

AK: No, wait. For five years I did money changing then there was not enough work and I changed the work. It was not worth waiting, I changed my job. I opened a Mobil oil gas station to sell gas and motor oil. The agency that gave the oil held on to me to sell the gas for their brand. The government gave license to 21 individuals to sell gas. There were other brands coming to compete like Shell. Sixteen of those 21 individuals were Arabs Muslims, 4 were Christian Arabs and I was the only Armenian. Our business was very successful for the 30 years, do you understand? And their money was always guaranteed, they did not want another individual to take over the business. This way until the day I left I worked in the gas station.

GM: After you came here did you work in this area?

AK: After coming to America, the CEO of that company wrote me a letter of reference.

GM: What did the letter say?

AK: The letter said that this is our best customer and if possible to give him a station in Southern California. The letter was directed to the director of the company branch here. When I came here, I found out how difficult things were here, besides I did not know the language, English. For those reasons I did not attempt to do that work. My brother in laws had a rug cleaning plant. Do you understand? I worked near them. Had you heard of Matossian brothers? They had come in 1939, before the start of World War II. And that way I could get enough wages to get Social Security in the future. With the money I was able to bring with me, I bought real estate on San Pedro Street and a warehouse was built on it for a tenant for lease of 15 years. Every month they would pay \$500 monthly. I had bought the place for \$60 thousand, both for land and improvement. After 15 years the contract ended. It was leased to another person who turned out to be a bad person who after losing 3-4 months rent had him evicted through legal route. Then it was leased by another person and it was written in the contract that within 3 years if their business was successful, they had the right to buy the place. They said to me to set the price. I told them the price of that time; do you understand? Plus, the interest and it was that way, after 3 years we received a letter that they intended to buy the place. The price had gone up but the lawyer said there is nothing you could do. Now the place is sold.

GM: What kind of work are they doing?

AK: They made machine to lift the cars for servicing. Now they are making truck trailer bodies.

GM: Let us go back some to 1915, any one from your family perished during the massacre? Or did they die of starvation?

AK: Yes, from starvation and sickness. I had a sister younger than me, she died and my youngest brother.

GM: How old was your sister when she died?

AK: My sister was 2 years younger than me, 17 years old.

GM: And in which village and from what did she die?

AK: In Abu Harara.

GM: And from what?

AK: She was brave but you know no matter what, she was a girl and she used to get some anxiety and depression and she used to fall and get sick and that's how, there were no doctors or help, where would you take her? You are in the desert; Abu Harrara is in the

desert, that's how she died. Besides her, in Gesaria before the deportation, from our family, my two uncles from my father's side were taken towards Tomarza which was about one day's journey, about 30 men were taken there and all 30 of them were slaughtered. We heard that while we were still in Gesaria.

GM: Your youngest brother, what did he die from and how old was he?

AK: Three and half years old. He was not hungry, but he was sick. He used to drink waters from different places, and he was sick from early childhood. The doctors told us that he should drink goat's milk since the mother's milk was too heavy for him. When he was one to one and half years old, we got a goat at our house to feed him its milk. He was a very smart boy, smarter than me.

GM: He was with you then during the deportation.

AK: Yes.

GM: Did he walk or was he being carried?

AK: I had rented 7 donkeys, I tried to rent a carriage, but the previous deportees from 6 streets on August 15 and 16 had taken all the available carriages. There were no carriages; we were forced to rent donkeys. We had rented the donkeys to take us all the way to Adana. When we got to Bozanti the donkey drivers took off the supplies and refused to go further. When we complained to the gendarmes that we had paid them until Adana and now they refused, he said; "I do not know, they cannot go any further, they were only supposed to go to Bozanti, having promised Adana was a mistake." They took the donkeys and left. There we rented oxcarts and we went to Adana in them. From Adana to Osmaniye we took the train to get there faster. At Osmaniye we stayed one to one and half months. After that Katma and so on we continued our way.

GM: When you went all the way to Osmaniye on the train, where did they put you on the way?

AK: In the animal barns, cattle cars. Where else would they put us? On chairs? Wherever they took us, since they wanted to control us, they put us in barns. There were a lot of barns on the way to Der Zor. We could not enter some of them because of the bad smell that is why we got sick a lot. We were 1800 persons and 1000 died on the way. Full families were wiped out, but thanks to God, after our two losses earlier, we were 5 and all of us survived. My mother was also half dead. Later, when 14 families were going to be taken into Der Zor, the commissar on the bridge that we were walking to cross over the river, my father was carrying my mother, he asked my father; what was that thing he was carrying? Because she had lice and we had cut her hair short, she did not look like a woman or a man, the man wanted to know if it was a monkey or what, he asked. "No," my father said, "it is my wife." He said, "Where are you taking her." "To Der Zor" my father said. "Throw her in the water and I will give you a beautiful girl" he said. My father said, "In our religion that is not allowed," he said. "We have to take care of her until death the best way we can."

GM: The man said, "Throw her over and I will get you another wife?"

AK: Yes, we are right on the bridge, if we throw her over, she goes. And the Euphrates River there was narrow, very deep and was flowing with great force.

GM: So, at that time your mother survived?

AK: My mother survived until age 93. My father was 57 years old when we came from there, from Der Zor, 9 to 10 years he worked in Aleppo, then he had a cerebral hemorrhage and three days later he died. My mother lived another 50 years on top of that.

GM: Fifty years.

AK: Yes, yes. It has been 4 or 5 years since she passed away. She was 93 years old.

GM: It is a sad story.

AK: Oh. Wherever you turn it is a sad story.

GM: But in front of your eyes you did see the Turks kill and hang Armenians.

AK: I saw it in the city. We did not see that much on the way. Only one instance, in Sebka, there was a goldsmith from Marash, they were with us in Sebka, the wife had 41-42 degrees fever, and you know our degrees? The wife did not know what she was doing. The husband was holding her from the arm. While walking, to get outside, the wife fell, where the ground was irregular. When she fell, the gendarme, riding a mule said; "Why did you block the way," he came and hit the man with a whip and walked the mule over the woman. He came and went 2 to 3 times so that she would be crushed. The wife died on the spot. We saw that death there and we were sent on our way. The husband is walking with us but unable to walk, and I tell you the truth, within 3 to 4 hours this man became deep yellow. On his face and in his eyes he became instantly yellow. His extremities also became yellow. He was unable to walk. He wanted to drink water and we were giving it to him. He had two boys and two girls. He was Marashli Kevork Sapsezian. We supported him to walk after the wife was killed. It happened, what can you say, how could you console a person in that situation? On the way the man said to my father; "Friend, I have something to say to you, I am not able to walk, here" he said where there are places where water is coming down the hills, "here I am going to hide when the gendarme is not looking, if I feel better until the morning, I will follow you, if I do not come, you will know that I am dead." We left him there, now we are on the road. But he told my father that; "Do what you can for my kids."

GM: To compensate him later?

AK: No, as an Armenian do whatever you can. We cared for them but what could we do. We had no one looking after us. There was a place across Der Zor, Nahiye mudurlik, when we went there, from those four kids only one girl survived, the others died. Later that girl had come to Aleppo from Der Zor and she had married someone from the US and had come to America.

GM: We assume she is still alive now.

AK: Later we came to Aleppo, there is a street called Khandek where all the goldsmiths were there. There was an Armenian goldsmith named Selim Vartan, where we went to talk to him about possibilities for work for us. I saw that a man was sitting down and working. When I saw that man, he looked exactly like the man we left on the road. An amazing thing. I went close to the man and asked if he was Sapsezian. He said yes. I said, "Is your name Kevork?" He said, "No, Kevork is my brother." The man was sitting there working with a small hammer, he stood up and he said; "Tell me." I started telling about his brother's condition and death. He knew about the brother's daughter coming to Aleppo and getting married.

GM: He had seen his brother?

AK: No. That one had died. We talked about it. And later he would help us with whatever he could in our business, since he was already working.

GM: It is possible because you looked after the kids.

AK: Yes, about the daughter. He was a good man. What can you say? And that is the way that story went. But how could it be that two brothers look so alike.

GM: The second time that you went to Gesaria, did the Turks give your homes back?

AK: We did not need papers to claim the homes. I had Turkish citizenship papers with me. They opened the books of the deeds in the city hall. I told them that I was the son Kirkor, Artin Kitabjian. (Iben Karkour Artin Kitabjian). He said go get a request written out and to bring it here and we will take care of it. I went to a person who is a scribe; he was distantly related to us. When we met him, he was willing to do it right away. They attached the stamps. After giving back to the officials, within three days the homes and our store were released to us. There were people living in the houses, you know. They took them out and put them somewhere else. Saying: "The previous owner wants it back."

GM: At that time the Turks had lost the war and were accommodating.

AK: Yes. And also they were hearing that in the Adana district the French and Armenians were actively occupying the area. The Armenians were very belligerent. If they found any Muslims in their region, they would kill them and throw them in the wells. Many of the wells of the homes in that region were full, since all the water there comes from the wells.

GM: Why would they be killing the Muslims?

AK: They were always enemies. Whatever they could kill would be a gain.

GM: Because the Muslims had killed the Armenians, saying it was in vengeance?

AK: In vengeance, of course.

GM: Is there anything else that you want to bring up? Was there something in writing from the Turks to kill the Armenians?

AK: Yes. In Der Zor, I came into possession of a pamphlet, since the population of Der Zor is Arab, to get those people against the Armenians, from every city whatever bombs or guns confiscated, they had collected them and displayed them with men in Fezzes, and they had written underneath, the guns found in Gesaria, The book contained all of the region. The government wanted the people to become our enemies. That way they would not keep us in their homes or help us. Do you understand? But it was around that time when it did not become necessary. A year later when the British were coming from Bagdad, they brought an Arab Sheikh with them, who told the Arabs that everything has ended and we have independence, and told them that they will take care all the needs of the people. But there, there was a municipal official named Fadel, who got up and said throughout the street (while there was no government for one month); "These Armenians are people who have been handed to us, they are good people, it is forbidden to harm them in any way," And they did not touch us. But they cleaned out about 20 Arab women who had relations with the occupying troops. This was done at night. But they did not touch the Armenians. That man was highly respected. If he had said to harm the Armenians, they would have done it. We came across a lot of bad people. Nothing happened and we lived there freely.

GM: What was the name of the short person in the railroad station who killed a lot of Armenians?

AK: Rahmeddin Onbashi.

GM: Can you tell me about him?

AK: He was a military officer; an inspector at this railroad station. He had gotten powerful at the time of the deportations. He was brutal, I can say that several people that he killed by crushing them with his boots. We were trying to make a living; I was selling

soap imported from Aleppo. I used to get a bag of them and arrange it in front of me to sell to the women, mostly Armenians and some Arabs; they used to cross the river and come to buy them. By selling the soap, I used to make a few gurushes (cents) each day. One day he came and hit an Armenian and killed him with his boots. But from us, by taking money from us, 500 tents, he kept us in a cleared field. If we he had not kept us there, we would have been in Mehdette (Masqadeh) and Sheddadiye.

GM: In the massacres?

AK: Yes, in the middle of it all.

GM: Not by wanting to help but for the money.

AK: We got saved because of the money.

GM: Do you think there is anything left that you have not said?

AK: It is endless.

GM: I know that if I stayed here until tomorrow morning you have things to tell. Thank you for giving us your time to do this.