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# Armenians Arm To Counter Any More Persecution

By HOLGER JENSEN

BEIRUT, Lebanon (AP) — Young Armenian boys practice target shooting with air pistols. Older youths learn karate. Clenched-fist bumper stickers proclaim "Armenian power."

There is vague talk of arms stockpiles in the Lebanese hills, training camps for future guerrilla fighters. But Armenian leaders are quick to point out: "If we had them we wouldn't tell the world about it."

While an Armenian Liberation Front still appears to be the wishful thinking of young hot-heads, the Lebanese government is becoming uneasy about the growing activism of its Armenian community.

Lebanon already is an unwilling host to the Palestine Liberation movement, which spawned the fedayeen guerrillas and precipitated Israeli retaliation. Now the activities of its 200,000 Armenian citizens are angering nearby Turkey.

## Anti-Turkish Parades

This year, the Lebanese government quietly requested Armenian social and political groups to cancel their annual parade commemorating the massacre of their ancestors by the Turks. Such parades in the past have left a trail of anti-Turkish slogans on the walls of Beirut, prompting protests by the Turkish Embassy.

Armenian leaders canceled a 14-mile march through the city, but they insisted on a four-mile parade and a torchlight vigil outside the Orthodox patriarchate at Antelias, where the bones of massacre victims are kept in glass display cases.

"We have good relations with the Lebanese government. They already have enough problems with the Palestinians and we don't want to give them any more Armenian problems," said Shavarsh Toriguiyan, a law professor at the Lebanese University and a prominent member of the Armenian Tashnag party.

## 'Young Hotheads'

"But it is becoming more difficult to control our young hotheads. They want action."

The parade marks the 58th anniversary of the Turkish massacre, which many historians equate with the Nazi extermination of Jews in World War II.

In 1915, the Turks feared that Christian Armenians would cooperate against them with the Russians. They moved 1.75 million Armenians from what is now eastern Turkey to Syria, an Ottoman province that included what is now Lebanon.

More than a million Armenians died or were killed along the way.

The survivors have prospered and multiplied in a number of countries around the world. Their national identity, language and cultural heritage have been preserved by Armenian schools, newspapers, restaurants, bookshops and churches.

## Lebanon Headquarters

There are now about six million Armenians, of whom 4½ million live in the Soviet republic of Armenia and neighboring Georgia and Azerbaijan. Moscow allows them linguistic and cultural independence and some religious freedom, but little else.

The remaining 1½ million are spread throughout the Middle East, Europe and the Americas. While the United States has the largest emigre community of 500,000 Armenians, Lebanon is the seat of the Armenian Orthodox patriarchate and the headquarters of political and cultural activism.

## Parties Use 'Fronts'

Tashnag and two smaller Armenian nationalist parties, Henschag and Rengavar, are based in Beirut along with an Armenian Communist party. They are not registered political groups in Lebanon and try to maintain a low profile, at the request of the government, behind front organizations like the Homenetmen Sports Association and the Tekeyan Cultural Association.

But the parties are well organized with central executive committee Politburos, lobbyists, public relations men and paramilitary security branches suspected of training Armenian resistance fighters.

## Armenians Ready

"I cannot talk about training camps," said one young activist code-named Ara Gregorian, "but I can tell you that Armenian men have guns and know how to use them. If it comes to the crunch we can produce an army of 10,000 in Lebanon alone — and we are not the only Armenians in the Middle East."

More responsible leaders like Toriguiyan say such talk is unwise and premature.

"Talking never did the Palestinians any good," he said. "It only embarrasses the Lebanese. As guests, we have to be careful."

"Violence is the last resort. We have not yet felt the need to train and arm large numbers of men, but I'm not saying this won't happen," Toriguiyan said.