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## The First Shot

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Historians should love the truth. A historian has a duty to try to write only the truth. Before historians write they must look at all relevant sources. They must examine their own prejudices, then do all they can to insure that those prejudices do not overwhelm the truth. Only then should they write history. The historians creed must be, "Consider all the sides of an issue; reject your own prejudices. Only then can you hope to find the truth."

Do historians always follow this creed? They do not, but good historians try.

There are ways to tell if a historian has been true to his craft. All important sources of information must be studied: A book on American history that does not draw upon American sources and only uses sources written in French cannot be accurate history. All important facts must be considered: a book on the history of the Germans and the Jews that does

not mention the death of the Jews in the Holocaust cannot be true. Uncomfortable facts, facts that disagree with one's preconceptions and prejudices must be considered, not avoided or ignored: Any book on the history of the Turks and the Armenians that does not include the history of the Turks who were killed by Armenians cannot be the truth.

This is obvious. It should be so obvious that it need not be said. But we know it must be said, because so many have forgotten the rules of honest history.

Like historians, politicians also have a duty to truth. If they make pronouncements on history, they assume the duties of historians. They must look honestly at the historical record, the whole historical record. They must not accept that what they are told is true because political pressure groups tell them it is true. They must not accept that something is true because their fathers believed it was true. They must not accept as truth what their own prejudices tell them is true. If politicians speak on history, if politicians pass resolutions on history, then they must follow the rules of history. Otherwise, what the politicians proclaim will not be the truth. It may be good politics. It may win votes. But it will never be the truth.

Again, this should be obvious. If politicians believe they are historians, they must follow the rules of historians. This is not, however, a lesson that has been learned by the parliaments that have passed resolutions on what is called the "Armenian Genocide." The appalling historical pronouncements of politicians are easy to recognize as bad history. When they passed their resolutions on the Armenians did the French Parliament or the European Union Parliament consider any evidence that disagreed with their prejudices? No. When President Jacques Chirac declared recently that all governments should accept the "Armenian Genocide" did he make a detailed study of all the sources, including what the Ottomans recorded? No. Did those who attempted to pass "genocide resolutions" in the American Congress acknowledge that millions of Turks died in the same conflict? No. In the counterfeit history of these self-proclaimed historians the only dead were Armenians.

It can be argued that members of the French Parliament or the European Union government could never follow the rules of historians. They have no time for detailed research on historical issues. They have little or no training in the study of history. To them I offer this unsolicited advice: if you cannot do the work necessary to find the truth, say nothing.

I will admit that as a historian I am angered by those who refuse to study the whole issue, but speak freely from their own prejudices or for their own political advantage. I am also angered by the hypocrisy of those who falsely proclaim that they are indeed studying all sides of the Armenian Question, when in fact they are doing no such thing.

Historical knowledge depends on debate. No matter how hard we try to see all sides of an issue, each of us is fallible. All historians can make mistakes. We learn our mistakes through debate. We listen to others who disagree with us, consider our evidence, and sometimes change our minds. Someone who will not study the evidence brought by others is not a scholar. Someone who will not listen to the judgments of others is only pretending to be a historian.

Recently there have been meetings on the Armenian Question held in Germany and America. The meetings in America were mainly held behind closed doors. They were secret. No one but the participants knows what went on in these meetings. Some few meetings have allowed the public to listen, but have never included speakers who have doubted the existence of the "Armenian Genocide." Nevertheless, these meetings have been widely publicized, because there have been both Turks and Armenians at these meetings. The Armenian nationalists say, "You see, Turkish scholars agree with us."

Who are these Turks? They are those who have passed a test before they are allowed into the club. Before they can be a part of the gatherings, the Turks must agree that there was an Armenian genocide. The Armenian nationalists will not meet, or even speak, with anyone who disagrees with them. So these meetings are not scholarly inquiries. They are political gatherings of those who wish to condemn the Turks, and some of those who condemn the Turks happen to be Turks themselves.

There is nothing strange in this. I need not tell you that there are Turks whose ideology drives their historical judgment or that there are Turks who honestly disagree with the large majority of other Turkish scholars. It is a good thing to have disagreement, because wisdom comes out of debate. That is the problem with these meetings — they are not debates.

I have recently read many e-mails and letters that condemn the Turks who meet with the Armenians. Other Turks condemn them for in some way betraying their country. This is not right. No scholar should ever be attacked because he says what is unpopular. Freedom is the basis of all good scholarship, and that includes the freedom to be wrong. Attacking those who disagree with you is the way of the Armenian nationalists who bomb professor's houses, kill diplomats, threaten scholars, and take advantage of unjust French laws to sue professors who dare to speak out.

I hope this is never the way of the Turks. I go into bookstores in Istanbul and Ankara and see books in Turkish, written by Turkish citizens. These books state that the Turks did commit genocide. I read Turkish newspapers that include interviews with men whose words sound as if they were been written by Armenian nationalists. Sometimes I laugh at their arguments. Sometimes they anger me. But I know that it is a good

thing that they are able to speak. It shows that Turkey is mature enough, confident enough, to accept disagreement.

So are these scholars not to be criticized ? Yes, I do rebuke them — not for disagreeing with me, not for being wrong, surely not for betraying Turkey. I accuse them of betraying scholarship. I condemn their closed meetings. I accuse all those who only speak to their friends, then pretend they are holding dialogues. I rebuke anyone who refuses to listen to disagreement.

I ask only one question of those, whether Turks or Armenians, who hold their secret meetings. I ask only one question of those, whether Turks or Armenians, who will only talk with their ideological friends. I ask only one question of those, whether Turks or Armenians, who refuse all scholarly debate. What are you afraid of ?

I renew the call for honest debate. Those who believe in their cause should be willing to defend it with their words. They must be willing to argue, not just to preach to those who agree with them.

To the parliamentarians and the historians I offer one more piece of advice : Forget the politics and ask the real historical questions. No study of the history of the Armenians and the Turks can be undertaken unless one central question is asked : Whatever they believe the Turks did, whether genocide or self-defense, why would the Turks do it ?

One of the main problems with the Armenian nationalist explanation has always been the question of why the Turks would attack the Armenians. The Turks and other Muslims were a large majority in a Muslim Empire. They had lived with the Armenians for centuries, and allowed the Armenians to keep their customs and religion. Yet, if one believes the Armenian nationalists, the Turks suddenly decided to attack the Armenians. Worse, the Turks suddenly decided to destroy all the Armenians in a planned genocide. The Armenian nationalists have invented many supposed reasons for the imaginary Turkish plan: The Turks supposedly planned to steal Armenian property. They supposedly desired to link the Turks of Anatolia with the Turks of Central Asia and Armenians stood in the way. Or the Ottomans needed Armenian land to house the Turkish refugees from the Balkan Wars. More emotional reasons have also been invented : The Turks allegedly desired to kill the Armenians out of jealousy, because the Turks felt the Armenians were superior. Or the Turks purportedly acted out of what was called "religious hatred."

Did the Turks wish to seize the property of the Armenians ? If so, it would indeed be odd that the Turks fought against Armenians in Eastern Anatolia, where the Armenians were relatively poor, and did not touch the property of rich Armenians in Istanbul, Edirne, and Izmir. Of course, we can never prove that in their hearts Turks did not covet Armenian

property. We can ask, however, who had stolen whose property ? Who was the thief ? Who was the victim ? When World War I began Armenians were living in seized Turkish property in Erivan, Karabag, and Kars. Turks had not stolen Armenian property; Armenians had stolen Turkish property. During World War I, when the Russians invaded Eastern Anatolia, it was the Armenians who once again first stole the property of Turks and Kurds. Only after 100 years of losing their homes and farms did the Muslims of Anatolia finally take their revenge and seize Armenian property.



The desire to join with Central Asian Turks was indeed a mad dream of some Ottoman leaders, particularly Enver Pasha. It never was considered seriously, except perhaps for Azerbaijan. In any case, how would the Armenians have stood in the way of such a plan ? The path to Central Asia, had the Ottomans been mad enough to take it, was through Iran, not Armenia. It only takes one look at a map to prove this. A Turkish army advancing north through Armenia to reach Central Asia would have had to pass over the highest point of the Caucasus Mountains, then over desert and steppe, and finally around the Aral Sea to the South. Not even Enver Pasa would have tried that. Even Cengiz Han [Gengis Khan] took the coast road. Would the other Armenians, those who lived in Ottoman Anatolia, have stood in the way of Ottoman conquest to the East ? They would only have been a problem if they took up arms to prevent the advance. They did indeed take up arms against the Ottomans, but the Armenian revolt had nothing to do with Central Asia.

The theory that the Ottomans planned to take Armenian lands for Balkan War refugees has an evident problem. The refugees were all housed before the beginning of World War I and they were almost all housed in Thrace and Western Anatolia, not in Eastern Anatolia.

Did the Turks hate the Armenians and try to kill them because they felt the Armenians were superior ? There is of course no evidence of this in any Ottoman document or speech, but the evidence I prefer is what is evident to anyone who has lived with Turks. I have known many Turks over the past 35 years. Most of those Turks felt that all men were equal. No Turk ever felt that Turks were inferior to anyone. I very much doubt if the Ottoman Turks felt any different.

As for "religious hatred," history shows this to be a laughable lie. Is one to believe that the Muslims, having accepted the Armenians for 700 years, would decide to violate the principles of Islam and no longer accept the Christian right to exist ? Is one to forget that the history of the Ottomans was one of exemplary tolerance, much better than the record of Christian states ? No, the Muslims of the East did indeed begin to hate and fear Armenians, but that was a result of Armenian and Russian actions.

In the final analysis, the arguments of the Armenian nationalists come down to one assertion — the Turks were crazy. After 700 years of coexistence the Turks suddenly began to hate the Armenians and resolved to kill them. No other explanation can satisfy the Armenian nationalist desire to blame the Turks. All the explanations that are given for the supposed genocide depend on the Turks acting completely irrationally.

I have heard it argued that this explanation makes sense. After all, the Germans acted irrationally when they killed the Jews. The differences are worth considering. The Nazis called upon a long tradition of hatred of the Jews. The history of Europe had been filled with attacks on Jews. There was also a long German tradition of evil literature written against the Jews. Hitler and his followers thus called upon a long tradition of hatred. They used prejudice against Jews as a tool to aid their rise to power.

Was anything similar ever seen in the Ottoman Empire ? Before the beginning of Armenian revolts had there been attacks on Armenians like the German attacks on Jews ? No. Was there a long tradition of Ottoman popular writings against Armenians? No. Did any Turkish political parties base their campaigns on animosity to Armenians ? No. In fact, even while Armenian nationalists were rebelling against the Ottomans other Armenians were welcomed into the Ottoman Government. Armenians rose to high positions in the Ottoman State. European-style racial hatred was foreign to the Ottoman Empire. The sort of prejudice that resulted in the deaths of the German Jews was virtually unknown in the Ottoman Empire. Any claim that "racial hatred" led to aggression against Armenians is pure fantasy.

It is better to look for rational reasons for the conflict that developed between Turks and Armenians. The real reason the Turks fought the Armenians is easily explained and completely rational. The Turks were defending themselves.

This brings the next question : Who started the conflict between the Armenians and the Turks ? Who was the attacker ? Who was defending himself ?

Other historians and I usually avoid those questions. When I have spoken and written on the history of the Turks and Armenians, I have described it as a sad chapter in the history of humanity. I have even said that who was at fault was not the real issue. I have said that the real issue is the suffering of humanity, whether Turks or Armenians. That is still the most important consideration. But the question of who was the attacker must now be considered, because the politicians who condemn the Turks have never been satisfied to pity all suffering humanity. When Armenian nationalists have admitted any Turkish suffering they have said that Turkish deaths were the result of war and Armenian deaths were the result of genocide. They have said that Turks persecuted Armenians, then suffered because of what the Turks started. Was this true ? Did the Turks suffer because they attacked the Armenians ? Was what happened the fault of the Turks, and so should we feel less pity for the Turks ? To answer this, we must study who started the conflicts between Turks and Armenians.



Contrary to what is usually told, the conflict began not in the Ottoman Empire in the late 19th century, but in what was then the Persian Empire in the eighteenth century. Armenians, including officials of the Armenian Church, allied themselves with Russian invaders. In 1796, Armenians living in Derbend were instrumental in the Russian defeat of the khan of Derbend and the capture of the city by the Russians. An Armenian bishop of the 1790s preached that Armenians should join the Russians to, "free the Armenians from Muslim Rule. Most Armenians of Azerbaijan did not take any side, but those who did take sides supported the Russians. Armenian volunteers fought alongside the Russians throughout the Russian conquest of Azerbaijan and Erivan.

More than anything else, Armenian loyalty to the Russians was shown by their desire to live under Russian rule. When the Russians took Karabag and Erivan, they killed or evicted Muslims, mostly Turks, who lived there. Their empty homes and farms were taken by Armenians from Persia and Ottoman Anatolia. As more Turks were evicted in the coming decade, more Armenians came to take their place. It must be remembered that a majority of the population of what is today the Armenian Republic were Turks before the Russians conquered. Soon the majority was no longer Turkish.

Armenians had lived with Turks in the Southern Caucasus region for 700 years. Their lives had not been perfect, nor had the lives of the Turks. Yet the proof that they must have been treated with tolerance is the fact that 700 years after the arrival of the Turks the Armenians were still there. They were not hiding in the mountains, fiercely defending their independence. They were living all over the region and working in the cities, where they could easily have been eradicated. Yet they lived in peace. The Armenians were a scattered people, living all over the region. In no province of the Southern Caucasus were they a majority. When the Russians arrived, many of the Armenians joined the invaders against their governments. Those who joined the Russians wanted a minority, the Armenians and Russians, to rule over a majority, a Muslim majority under whose rule they had lived for 700 years. They did not wish democracy. They did not wish the will of the people. They wished to rule. And the Muslims who stood in the way of the Armenian nationalists were to be removed.

It was not the Turks who attacked the Armenians. It was the Armenians who attacked the Turks.

The Russians carried the invasions into Eastern Anatolia in a war in 1828-29 and in the Crimean War. Ottoman and Russian Armenians joined the Russian side when they invaded Anatolia, and they acted as spies and scouts for the Russians. When the Russians were forced to withdraw, thousands of Armenians left with them. They had taken the side of their country's enemy.



### 1877-78 Russo-Turkish War

At the beginning of the 1877-78 war between Russia and the Ottoman Empire the Ottomans should have been able to depend on their subjects, whether Muslim or Christian. Indeed, 84 Christians of Erzurum had volunteered for military service on the first day that Christians were accepted into the Ottoman Army. However, the Russian consul at Erzurum notified the Christian bishops that Russia did not look kindly on Christians fighting for their country. The bishops told the Christians not to serve, and the Christians no longer enrolled.

All who live on a battleground suffer, but the Armenians of the East were neither selected out nor persecuted by the Ottoman government during the war. Instead, there is plentiful evidence from European sources that civil and Muslim officials protected Armenians from Kurdish attacks. Sadly, when the Ottomans lost the war they were not able to protect the Muslims from the Armenians.

When Kars fell to the Russians, local Armenians attacked both Ottoman soldiers and the local Turks. The British reported that the Armenians were assisting the Russians in murdering the Turkish wounded. Upon conquering Erzurum, the Russians placed an Armenian in charge of the police. The persecution of the Turks began. 6,000 Turkish families were forced to flee the city. The British ambassador wrote, "There is no doubt that when the Russians occupied Erzurum the Armenians availed themselves of the protection they received to molest, ill-treat, and insult

the Mohammaden population."

During the war, many Armenians in the Ottoman East joined the Russian side. Ottoman Armenians acted as scouts and spies for Russian invaders. None so wholeheartedly allied themselves with the Russians as the Armenians of the Eleskirt Valley. They confidently expected that the Russians would retain all they had conquered. This was not to be. Other European Powers forced the Russians to withdraw from Eleskirt. Between 2 and 3,000 Armenian families joined the Russians in their withdrawal. There was no lack of houses and farms to give the Armenians who joined the Russians, because the Russians had forced 70,000 Turks from the region they conquered.

### **Armenian Revolutionary Organizations**

The Dashnaktsuthiun Party, the Armenian Revolutionary Federation, known usually as the Dashnaks, was founded in Tiflis in the Russian Empire in 1890. It joined earlier Armenian nationalist parties in planning the downfall of the Ottoman Empire in Anatolia. The party was socialist and nationalist in ideology. Its Manifesto declared a "people's war against the Turkish government." It spoke of "the sacred task of securing national freedom." Amidst calls for redistribution of land, communal brotherhood, and good government, the Dashnak Program of 1892 set forth its revolutionary intentions. These included organizing revolutionary committees and fighting bands and arming "the people. The Dashnaks declared their intention "to stimulate fighting and to terrorize government officials . . ." and "to expose government establishments to looting and destruction." (1) In the ensuing years they carried out their plan.

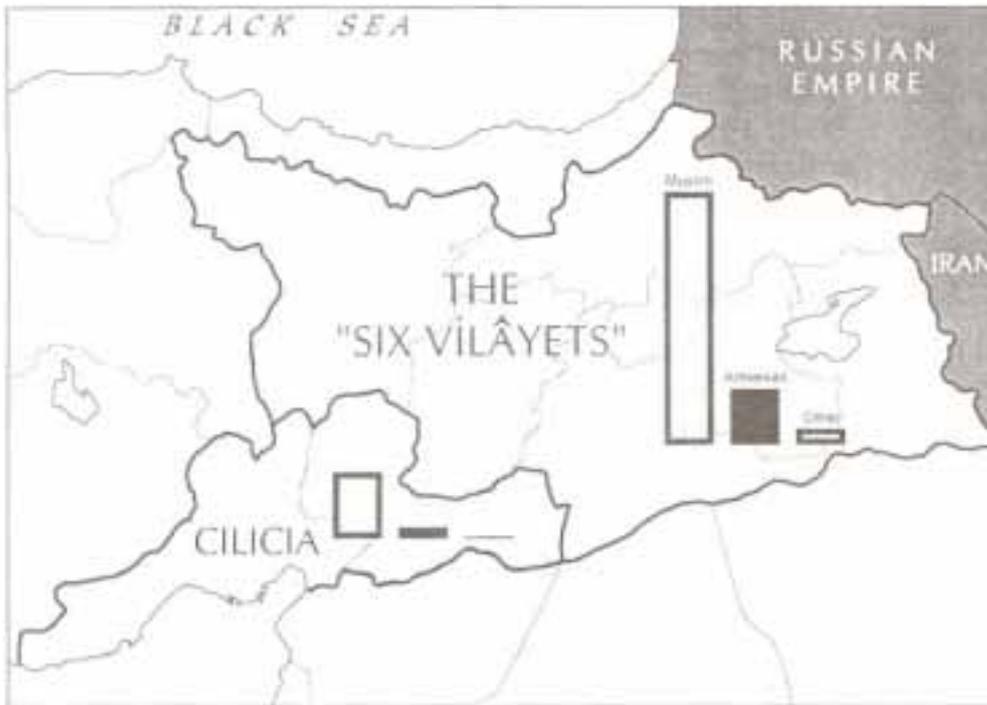
The Dashnak motto (1896) was "Arms! Battle! The victory is ours!" (2)

There is neither the time nor the need to describe here the organization and philosophy of the Dashnaks and the other Armenian revolutionary movements. Their own words indicate their purpose--bloody rebellion against the Ottoman Empire. It is more important to consider their deeds than to study their words. One thing must be understood about the purpose of the Armenian revolution, however: The aim of the Armenian revolutionaries was very different than the aim of other nationalist revolutionaries. The people of Italy were Italian. Italian revolutions wanted a state where the majority ruled. Polish nationalists wanted to create a state for the Poles, who were an oppressed majority, ruled by a Russian minority. The same was true all over the world--whatever their methods, good and bad, nationalists at least fought for a state in which the majority would rule themselves.

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<sup>1</sup> Louise Nalbadian, *The Armenian Revolutionary Movement*, Berkley, 1963, pp. 156-168.

<sup>2</sup> Nalbandian, p.178.



It was not so with the Armenian nationalists. Armenian revolutionaries fought to conquer a land in which they were less than 20% of the population. In the region they claimed, the so-called "Six Vilâyet," Muslims outnumbered them by more than four to one. Unlike the Poles, the Italians, the Uzbeks, the South Africans, the Algerians, or the Irish, the Armenians were not a large majority ruled by an imperial master. They were a small group who wished to defeat the majority and seize their land. They were a small group that enlisted the aid of the enemies of their country, because they could never conquer the large majority of Muslims without outside help.

What would the Armenian nationalists have done if they had succeeded? History teaches from the sad example of the fate of the Turks of the Balkans. The only way to create an "Armenia" was to exile or kill the majority. There could never have been an Armenia state in Anatolia unless the revolutionaries had rid themselves of the Muslims.

This fact must be remembered whenever one considers the Ottoman response to the Armenian revolutionaries. The Ottomans were not only defending their government. They were defending the majority of their people against those who would deny majority rule. Moreover, they were defending those who would be dead or exiled if the revolutionaries succeeded.

## The 1890s Rebellions

Armenian rebellions took place in Eastern Anatolia in the 1860s and earlier. But it was in the 1890s that the Armenian revolutionary organizations truly began to put their plans into effect.

In 1894, Armenians in the Sasun region rebelled against the government. Large rebel bands concentrated their attacks on symbols of the Ottoman State-tax collectors, government officials, official buildings. They also fought battles with Kurdish tribesmen. There had always been animosity between the Armenians and the Kurdish tribes. This much is understandable. Whether or not one approves of Armenian rebellion, it is understood that rebels attack the government and their old enemies. What happened next is not in any way excusable. The Ottoman army advanced on the rebels. As the rebels retreated they slaughtered the Muslim inhabitants of the villages in their path. In response, the army and local Muslims killed Armenians.

It was not the Muslims who began to kill Armenians. It was Armenians who began to kill Muslims. The result was horrible for both.

The actions of Armenian rebels in Zeytun and Maras in 1895 were all too similar. Their rebellion was a mass murder of Muslims of the region. The Armenian leader himself claimed to have killed 25,000 Muslims. The Ottoman army was not even allowed to punish the murderers. The European Powers protected them.

In Van in the same year the rebels, and many innocent Muslims and Armenians, died when the Armenian nationalists once again rebelled. In Adana in 1909 it was the same; Armenians rebelled, confident of European support that never came. Although the Armenians suffered the greater mortality, Armenian rebel forces unquestionably began the conflict. The Turks responded. They were not only protecting their state; they were protecting their people.

In Sasun, in Van, in Zeytun, in Maras, and in Adana, it was Armenian rebels who began the slaughter. It was the Armenian rebels who began to murder their fellow Ottoman citizens. It was not the Turks who attacked the Armenians. It was the Armenians who attacked the Turks.



## World War I

The events of World War I cannot be understood without first looking at the Balkan Wars of 1912 and 1913. Those wars gave revolutionaries a reason to believe that their methods would be successful. Nationalist rebel bands killed the Turks of the Balkans and drove them from their homes. Invading armies finished the job of murder and exile. Muslims, most of them Turks, had been a slight majority in Ottoman Europe in 1912. By the end of the Balkan Wars they were a distinct minority. 27% of the Muslims of the Ottoman Balkans had died. What remained were Bulgarian, Greek, Montenegrin, and Serbian states that had rid themselves of their Muslim populations. Lands that had Muslim majorities now had Christian majorities. This was exactly what the Armenian revolutionaries would have to do on a greater scale, and it had worked in the Balkans.

Both sides learned the lessons of the Balkan Wars. The Turks knew what would happen to them if revolutionaries succeeded. The intentions of the Armenian rebels were the same as the intentions of those who had forced the Turks from the Balkans. They wished to rid Eastern Anatolia of its Muslim majority, so that it could become "Armenia." To do so they would use the same tactics that had been effective in the Balkans.

Even before the first world war began, Armenian guerilla bands had begun to organize in the Russian Empire. These included Armenians from both Russia and the Ottoman Empire. Approximately 8,000 Armenians went to Kagizman to train and organize. 6,000 went from Anatolia to Igdir, more to other training camps. They returned to fight the Turks and

to aid the Russian war effort. Large caches of guns, ammunition, supplies, and even uniforms had been hidden in depots in Anatolia, ready for use.

These were not small units of guerillas. They were not a few men committing random acts of terrorism. There were indeed innumerable such individual acts, but the main Armenian attack came from well-armed and trained rebel bands. They may have numbered as many as 100,000 men. In Sivas Vilâyeti alone Ottoman officials estimated 30,000 Armenian partisans.

The mythology of Armenian history holds that peaceful Armenians were attacked without provocation by Turks. The reality was far different.

To understand the situation, one should attempt to visualize the situation on the Ottoman-Russian border in Spring of 1915. The Ottoman Army on the Russian Front was in ruins. Enver Pasha had tried to defeat the Russians with a bold but ill-conceived attack at Sarikamis. He had failed badly. 3/4 of his army had been lost. All that stood between the Ottoman heartland and Russian invaders were the remnant of the Ottoman Army in the East. Some of these were very good troops. The gendarmerie divisions, made up of gendarmes from the East who knew the territory well, were particularly effective. But the Ottoman forces were few. The Russians were more numerous and better equipped. The only chance the Ottoman forces had was to hold their defensive positions. Every man was needed at the front.

However, thousands of men could not advance to the front. They were needed to fight behind the lines. Indeed, some of the best soldiers were withdrawn from the front and sent to fight internal enemies, Armenian rebels. The Russian Front was in danger. Ultimately it collapsed. Ultimately the Russians invaded and conquered Eastern Anatolia, bringing with them triumphant Armenian rebels.

The Russian invasion of Anatolia in 1915 was spearheaded by units made up of Armenians from both Ottoman Anatolia and Russia. Armenians served as scouts for the Russian Army. Most important, bands of Armenians hampered transportation and cut military communications throughout the Ottoman East.

The internal threat from Armenian guerillas, Armenian "chette" bands, was a serious threat to the existence of the Ottoman Empire and a real threat to the lives of the Muslims of Anatolia.

Before any Armenians were deported, before any Armenian nationalist politician was hung, before any Armenian died at the hands of an Ottoman soldier, even before war was officially declared, Armenian nationalists had begun to organize their rebellion. The actions of the Armenian rebels were not simply rebellion. Ottoman Armenians acted as agents of the Russian Army. They made war on their own country, the

Ottoman Empire, and fought on the side of its main enemy, the Russian Empire. As they freely admitted at the time, they were traitors who had enlisted with their country's worst enemy.

In order to see the effect of the Armenian Rebellion, one need only look at the map. Only the main centers of rebellion are shown. Armenian bands were actually traveling throughout Eastern Anatolia, hindering transportation, cutting communications lines, and attacking isolated Muslim villages. Only the regions of major activity by large bodies of men can be shown on the map.

At first glance, some of the regions of rebellion seem to be oddly chosen. Why Sivas ? It seems an unlikely place for a rebellion. Only 13% of the population of Sivas Vilâyeti was Armenian. Sivas was far from the front, far from possible Russian support. But look at the roads. In order to reach the battle with the Russians, troops and supplies had to pass through Sivas. Retreating soldiers also were forced to pass through Sivas. Sivas was also the hub for the telegraph system that extended to the battle zone. The city and province of Sivas were transportation and communication bottlenecks. Any disruption in Sivas was a blow against the Ottoman war effort.

The regions of Armenian rebellion in Cilicia and Urfa were also in regions with great strategic importance. Because the Taurus tunnels had not been completed, war materials and soldiers for the theater of war in Iraq had to be trans-shipped in Cilicia, then travel on through the Urfa Region. The British seriously considered attacking in Cilicia rather than Gallipoli (and would have been far more successful if they had.)

Armenian forces in Van and in the Russian border areas also had a potential strategic effect. The Russians had moved into Western Iran. They threatened Ottoman positions in the East and ultimately intended to attack into Iraq and join with the British. (No one expected that the Ottomans would defeat the British in Iraq.) In order to check the Russian advance, the Ottomans should have moved East. There were only two possible roads from Anatolia into Iran — the routes through Bayezit in the North or through Van in the South. Is it only coincidence that these two were major centers of Armenian rebellion ?

Until someone is able to research Russian army orders to Armenian units, we will not know how much of the Armenian rebellion was well planned to aid the Russians. It seems unlikely that such strategic points were chosen at random. The important point, however, is not why they were chosen but the grave danger they presented to the Ottoman forces. The Ottomans needed to put down the revolt. They needed to do so because Armenian forces were slaughtering Muslims, but they also needed to do so for military reasons. The Armenian rebels were enemy forces that were contributing to Ottoman defeat.

The main Armenian contribution to the Russians was the fact that their rebellion occupied so many Ottoman soldiers and gravely hindered the Ottoman war effort. But from the standpoint of humanity, the worst effect of the Armenian rebellion was the mortality of the innocent Muslim civilians killed by the Armenian rebels and, it should not be forgotten, the mortality of the innocent Armenian civilians who were killed in revenge. It was Armenian rebels who began the killing. By far the greatest number of dead were Muslims.

Why did the Ottomans deport the Armenians ? They did it to remove a civilian population that would surely aid and comfort the enemy, as had been proven. Perhaps most of the Armenians would not have acted against the Ottomans, but how could anyone know who would and who would not aid the Russians, the British, and the French ? I believe that, in the heat of war and in their desire to defend their Empire and its people, the Ottomans went too far and deported many who were no threat. But it should never be forgotten that the Ottomans had good reason to act as they did. Nor should it be forgotten that it was the Armenians and Russians who first forced Muslims from their homes.

One fact cannot be doubted. During World War I, as for 100 years before, it was not the Turks who first attacked the Armenians. It was the Armenians who first attacked the Turks.



## **Azerbaijan and Armenia**

At the end of World War I, it was the turn of the Turks of Azerbaijan to be attacked. Allied with Bolsheviks in Baku, Armenian nationalist forced nearly half of the Turkish population of Baku to flee the city. Between 8 and 10,000 Muslims, almost all Turks, were killed in Baku alone. The Armenian guerilla leader Andranik destroyed villages in Nahçivan [Nakhichevan] and Southern Azerbaijan, forcing more than 60,000 Turkish refugees to flee. 420 villages were destroyed. Hundreds of villages were ruined and many thousand more Turks were killed in Kars Province. Two-thirds of the Turks of Erivan Province disappeared. Turks took revenge in Baku and elsewhere, but it was Turks who most suffered mortality and exile.

The Turks of the provinces of Erivan, Kars, and Azerbaijan had been completely under the control of the Russians. Almost all unarmed, they had neither the ability nor the desire for war. It was Armenians who initiated the conflicts. It was not the Turks who attacked the Armenians. It was Armenians who attacked the Turks.

### **The Armenian Claims**

Those who claim there was an "Armenian Genocide" are in the habit of taking their facts selectively and out of their historical context.

We are told that the Ottoman Government deported the Armenians, and that many died during the deportation. This is true, although the number who died are always grossly exaggerated. What facts are ignored? The fact that most of the Armenians who were deported survived, indicating there was no plan of genocide.

We are told that in the 1890s tens of thousands of Armenians were killed by Muslims. This is true. What is never told is that tens of thousands of Muslims were killed by Armenians, and that the Armenians began the killing.

You know well the main fact about World War I that always goes unmentioned — the millions of Muslim dead. Any war in which only one side's dead are counted appears to be a genocide.

And one incontrovertible fact that is never mentioned is the truth we have discussed today — Armenians died because of conflicts started by Armenians. The Turks responded to Armenian attacks. Sometimes the Turks overreacted ; sometimes they acted out of revenge, sometimes the actions of Turks and Kurds were wrong. But the Turks did not start the bloodshed. They did not start the long conflict between Armenians and Muslims that began in the 1790s. They did not start the conflict between Turks and Armenians in World War I.

In 1796, was it Turks who attacked Armenians ? No, it was Armenian

rebels who allied themselves with the enemies of their country.

In 1828, it was not the Turks who attacked the Armenians. It was the Armenians who took the homes and farms of the Turks.

In 1878, was it the Turks who attacked the Armenians ? No, it was Armenian rebels who once again helped the Russian invaders. It was Armenians who oppressed the Turks of Erzurum.

In the 1890s did the Turks first attack the Armenians ? No, it was Armenian revolutionaries who first attacked the Turks.

In 1909 did the Turks first attack the Armenians ? No, it was Armenian revolutionaries who began to attack Muslims.

In 1915, did the Turks first attack the Armenians ? No, it was Armenian rebels who seized Van and killed Van's Muslims. It was Armenians who raided Muslim villages and killed Muslims on the roads. It was Armenians who killed Ottoman officials, destroyed Ottoman Army communications, and acted as spies, guerillas, and partisan troops for the Russians.

In 1919 was it the Turks of Baku who first attacked the Armenians ? No, it was the Armenians who attacked the Turks.

Some will argue that the actions of the Armenian rebels were justified, because they were not properly governed by the Ottomans. It is true that in many periods of history Ottoman Eastern Anatolia was poorly ruled. But it is also true that the time of Armenian rebellion was also the time when Ottoman rule was greatly improving. Nineteenth century reforms, begun by Mahmud II, passing through the Tanzimat period, and culminating in the reforms of the Committee of Union and Progress, had improved governmental control in the East. It often was this improvement that caused Armenians such as those in Zeytun to revolt, because a stronger central government collected taxes more efficiently.

At the time of the Armenian revolts life was becoming better. The exception to this occurred in the regions that suffered due to Russian invasion and expulsion of Muslim peoples, and those Russian actions had been supported by the Armenian nationalists. The Armenian nationalists had themselves and their Russian friends to blame.

Whatever the reason for the Armenian revolts, reaction from the Ottomans and local Muslims was justified. Muslim excesses, like Armenian excesses, were never justified, but opposition to the Armenian revolt was morally and politically necessary. The Armenians who rebelled were a minority that planned to dominate a Muslim majority. It was the duty of the sultan's government to fight against such an injustice.

A minority has the right to live in peace. It should be allowed equality

under the law, with all legal rights. Its religious freedom should be absolute and always protected. All these rights should be guaranteed to any minority. But a minority should never have the right to rule over a majority. A minority should never have the right to deny rights and freedom to a majority. A minority should never have the right to evict a majority from its homeland. And a minority should never have the right to become a majority through murder and exile of the real majority. This is exactly what the Armenian nationalist rebels attempted to do.

The Turks who opposed the Armenian rebels were doing the moral thing. Their methods were not always good. In the heat of war, crimes were committed and mistakes were made. But the Turks were absolutely right to oppose the rule of a minority. The Turks had the right to defend themselves.

I have said it before, but it is worth saying again. The Ottomans acted rationally in opposing the Armenian revolutionaries. The Armenians were just like other rebels. In the nineteenth century, the Ottomans had fought against Muslim rebels in Eastern Anatolia, Arabia, and Bosnia and against Christian rebels in the Balkans. They had fought to defend their Empire and its people. Of course they also fought against rebel Armenians. That was their duty and, despite many failings, the Ottomans tried to do their duty.

Were the Turks and the Kurds innocent babes who hurt no one? They were not. Attacked, they fought back. Often they killed in passion, and the innocent suffered. Both innocent Armenians and innocent Muslims suffered. Did the Armenians sometimes suffer more than the Turks? Yes. In a century of warfare, sometimes the Turks lost more, sometimes the Armenians. That is the way of war.

However, there is a moral difference between the actions of those who begin a war and those who respond. No one should ever be excused for killing innocent civilians, but the primary guilt is the guilt of those who begin the slaughter. My country, America, responded to the evil of Adolf Hitler and the Nazis by bombing German cities and, in the process, killing civilians. Some actions, such as the bombing of Dresden, were inexcusable. But does anyone doubt who was truly at fault? It was Hitler and his followers who were guilty. The guilty were those who first began to kill for their cause. [One can see that M. McCarthy is no historian of Germany. Remember: he said those who do not know the facts should keep quiet. Ed.]

No one should ever try to say that Turks were completely innocent, but the truly guilty were those who began to kill the innocent.

The question of who started the conflicts is important, both historically and morally important. In more than 100 years of warfare, Turks and Armenians killed each other. The question of who began the

killing must be understood, because it is seldom justifiable to be the aggressor, but it is always justifiable to defend yourself. If those who defend themselves go beyond defense and exact revenge, as always happens in war, they should be identified and criticized. But those who should be most blamed are those who began the wars, those who committed the first evil deeds, and those who caused the bloodshed. Those who always began the conflicts were the Armenian nationalists, the Armenian revolutionaries.

The guilt is on their heads.

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We corrected minor misprints and one error (Ottomans for Armenians)

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