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ANOTHER INSTANCE OF RADICAL ARMENIAN NATIONALISM AND TURCOPHOBIA BEING JUSTIFIED: SUMBAD BOROYAN

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Translator

The presenting of violence prone agitators, militants, war criminals and terrorists as heroes of the Armenian nation is not only justifying their activities, but also creates perception management at the same time. People who have actively taken part in armed attacks, massacres, black propaganda and radical organization activities being buried in the military cemeteries in Armenia, streets being named after them, their statues being erected with opening ceremonies that are attended by highest level officials are examples of these policies that have been continuing for many years.

It is possible to provide a contemporary example of this situation with a publication of the Armenian Apostolic Church. The This Week in Armenian History page on the website of the Churchs Eastern Prelacy gives the biography of an important Armenian figure every week. Within this context, a brief biography of an Armenian general among the prominent figures of the fedai movement named Sumpad Makhluto Boroyan was published on the website.[1] Boroyan is explained as a veteran fedai who actively participated in the events that occurred between 1914-1921. It is mentioned in the biography that he joined the Armenian Revolutionary Federation (The Dashnak Party) in 1900. The term famous freedom fighters was used for Andranik Ozanian and Hrayr Dzhoghk with whom he cooperated with and served under the command of. The conflicts in Kemerli, Zangezur and Sevan are described as self-defense fights. The conflicts that he joined in Caucasia, Bitlis and many other places were praised. In addition to these, it is indicated that he joined the Persian Constitutional Revolution between the years 1908-1912 and the French Resistance during World War II. Boroyans name was given to a street in Yerevan and Khachik Dashtents novel The Call of the Peasants was dedicated to his life.

As is known, Andranik is the most prominent example of the Dashnak fedais being glorified and heroized by the Armenians. Even though the pro-Dashnak sources and memoirs claim that the Dashnak fedais were brave and selfless fighters, according to almost all of the non pro-Dashnak sources, the Dashnak fedais conducted large scale massacres against the Ottoman Muslim people. Moreover, they engaged in threats, violence, extortion of money and property and murder against the Armenians that did not support them.[2]

In order to see another extent of this mindset, the example of the American author of Armenian origin, William Saroyan, explained in another AVİM article can be given. Saroyan was a person with a different mindset than the current Armenian diaspora organizations, as he was anti-war and not anti-Turkish. However, Saroyan considered Andranik, who was responsible for many atrocities targetting the Ottoman Muslim people, not as a war criminal militant, but as someone who needed to do what was necessary under the circumstances of the time.[3] Regarding this subject, according to Prof. Dr. Haluk Selvi, Andraniks embracing of terrorism as a method of struggle was not a coincidence. Through violence and atrocities, Andranik, who was aware of the lack of material resources, population structure, foreign support necessary for the establishment of the Great Armenia, planned to suppress the Muslims, form the Great Armenia and realize the great powers intervention to the region.[4]

Boroyan also cooperated with Garegin Nejdeh in the Daralagöz region. This case constitutes an ironic situation regarding many supporters of the so-called Armenian genocide narrative attempting to similarize the 1915 Events with the Holocaust. The reason for this is that, despite that the Dashnak leader Nejdeh is considered as a national hero by the Armenians, he was actually a militant who fought among the ranks of the Nazis. Similarly, Drastamat Dro Kanayan was also a Nazi sympathizer (or least a Nazi collaborator in accordance with his goals) and, just like Nejdeh, he is also commemorated and glorified in Armenia. While attempting to similarize the Armenian victims of the 1915 Events with the victims of the Holocaust is historical misinterpretation on one hand, on the other hand the commemoration of Nejdeh and Kanayan, who adopted racist and facist ideologies, with high-level attendance is a critical discrepancy. Furthermore, the grand opening of Nejdehs statue in Yerevan was conducted in spite of the awareness of the discontent it would create in Russia, which is Armenias closest ally.[5]

The Boroyan example on the website of the Armenian Apostolic Churchs Eastern Prelacy can be seen as a reminder that this radical mindset and activities are not isolated cases in Armenia and the diaspora. The preservation of this mindset and the activities it brings forth continue to constitute an impediment to the Turkish-Armenian reconciliation. The radical Armenian nationalism and Turcophobia that supports militancy, terrorism and revolutionism against Turkey and Turks has been extensively ingrained in the Armenian diaspora and citizens of Armenia for many years. It is a long-known fact that the justification of this radical nationalism and Turcophobia also plays a significant pivotal role in the shaping and preservation of the Armenian diaspora identity. Therefore, unfortunately we cannot say that expecting diplomacy, rationality, equity, discussions and mutual trust to gain prominence in the short term regarding the Turkish-Armenian relations is realistic.

**Photograph: A fedai gang*

[1] Birth of Sumpad Boroyan (August 28, 1875), *The Eastern Prelacy of the Armenian Apostolic Church*

, accessed August 28, 2020, http://www.armenianprelacy.org/

[2] AVİM, Dashnak Fedais: Heroes Or Calamities Of The Armenian People?, *Center for Eurasian Studies (AVİM)*, Analysis No: 2019/29, December 20, 2019, https://avim.org.tr/en/Analiz/DASHNAK-FEDAIS-HEROES-OR-CALAMITIES-OF-THE-ARMENIAN-PEOPLE

[3] AVİM, William Saroyans Words Are Being Distorted As Well, *Center for Eurasian Studies (AVİM)*, Commentary No: 2020/28, September 9, 2020, https://avim.org.tr/en/Yorum/WILLIAM-SAROYAN-S-WORDS-ARE-BEING-DISTORTED-AS-WELL

[4] Haluk Selvi, "Kafkaslardan Balkanlara Katliamcı Bir Çete Reisi: Adranik Ozanyan", *Marmara Üniversitesi-Türkler Ve Ermeniler*, accessed September 25, 2020, http://turksandarmenians.marmara.edu.tr/tr/kafkaslardan-balkanlara-katliamci-bir-cete-reisi-adranik-ozanyan/

[5] Mehmet Oğuzhan Tulun, A Nazi Who Is Armenias National Hero, *Center for Eurasian Studies (AVİM)*, Commentary No: 2016/34, June 16, 2016, https://avim.org.tr/en/Yorum/A-NAZI-WHO-IS-ARMENIA-S-NATIONAL-HERO

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Ahmet Can Öktem completed his undergraduate studies at Eskişehir Osmangazi University, in the field of Economics at the Faculty of Economics and Administrative Sciences, graduating in 2013. Öktem was accepted to the Masters degree programme at the Middle Eastern Technical University European Integration field at the Faculty of Social Sciences in 2014. He completed his studies in 2018. He completed the diploma programme of CIFE, Centre International de Formation Européenne, in Advanced European Studies and International Relations in 2018, which he joined in 2016. He worked as an intern at the Ministry of EU Affairs between September 2013 and December 2013. Öktem has been working at AVİM as a translator since October 2017.

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