

“TURKS, ARMENIANS AND ERZURUM, 1916-1918”

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Abstract:

This article aims to examine the inter-communal relations between Turks and Armenians in the province of Erzurum. After a brief historical background of these relations the article mainly focuses on the relations between two communities at the period of Russian invasion of Erzurum. In doing that it analyzes how the modes of inter-communal conduct had been deteriorated and how Russian administration of the city contributed to this process of deterioration.

Key Words: *Erzurum, Russian invasion, Erzurum Armenians, Kazım Karabekir, Armenian atrocities.*

Öz:

Bu makale Erzurum'da yaşayan Türk ve Ermeni toplumları arasındaki ilişkileri incelemeyi amaçlamaktadır. Bu ilişkilerin tarihsel arkaplanını özetledikten sonra, yazar özellikle Rus işgali sırasında Erzurum'da yaşayan bu iki toplum arasındaki ilişkilere odaklanmaktadır. Bu çerçevede toplumlararası ilişki tarzlarının nasıl dönüştüğü, iki toplum arasındaki ilişkilerin nasıl bozulduğu ve kentteki Rus yönetiminin bu süreci nasıl etkilediği üzerinde durulmaktadır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: *Erzurum, Rus işgali, Erzurum Ermenileri, Kazım karabekir, Ermeni mezalimi.*

Karasu river basin is located in upper Euphrates –as the Westerners called it– river. Erzurum has first established near to the source of the river. In the course of history, it was also named as Karin, Carinitis, and Karinitis. Later on, in the first quarter of the 5th century, Anatolius had built a city, where contemporary Erzurum has survived on, to counter attacks from the east or north east.

The castle had been called as Theodosiopolis – as the name of the emperor – until Arabs conquered it. So, the Muslim geographers and historians mentioned

Kalikala. The Byzantium re-dominated here and named it again as Theodosiopolis until 1071. It appears that after Saltuklus, it started to be called as Erzen er-Rüm, Arz-ı Rum, Erzen-i Rum throughout Seljuqis, Ilkhanids, Karakoyunlus, Akkoyunlus and Safavids. It is officially documented as Erzurum under the Ottomans and the Republican period.¹

There is few what known about settlements around and ethnic composition of the region before the Medians. With the appearance of Karin under the Persians, Parths, and Sasanids the people of Armenians and the region of Armenia were mentioned. Byzantine sources talked about Theodosiopolis Thema,² which means a military zone, rather than Armenia. The dominant power at that time was the Romans / Byzantines. The subjects were composed of various ethnic groups including Armenians. Relationship between Armen/Armenia and Hay/Hayasdan has not been covered academically until today. The “Hay” word is somehow usually translated as Armen in the translations. It seems that Hays who converted to Christianity and some other groups were considered under the framework of Armen.

Erzurum fell under the domination of the Ottomans in 1514. It became the most important center in the east under Suleyman the Magnificent. In spite of the Ottoman-Safavid wars, since it is located on trade ways, Erzurum was enriched as in the Middle Ages.³

Georgians, Armenians, Persians and Turks, with a great majority, were living in Erzurum in the Ottoman period. Armenians were trading freely, and appeared in other arts as well as Turks. Whereas, they were living separately in other cities, Armenians and Turks were intermingled in Erzurum. They were praying freely in church, and their pastors were conducting their activities in temples called Yank. Erzurum Law mentioned on them and determined their positions.⁴

Throughout Celali riots in Anatolia, Armenians continued to concentrate in cities. After the Ani earthquake, many Armenians came around Erzurum. That is why Armenian population in the village of Kan increased.⁵

1 Enver Konukçu, *Selçuklulardan Cumhuriyete Erzurum* [Erzurum from Seljuqis to Republic], Ankara, 1992.

2 Konukçu, *Selçuklulardan Cumhuriyete...*, pp. 4-8.

3 Konukçu, *Selçuklulardan Cumhuriyete...*, pp.137-150, 152-184.

4 Konukçu, *Selçuklulardan Cumhuriyete...*, pp.158-166.

5 Hakov Kamesti, ‘Erzeroum of Topographie de la Haute Armenie’, translated by F. MacIer, *Journal de l’Asiatique*, Vol. 13, No. 2, March-April 1919, p.204.

Armenian concentration on Iran was also seen even in the Nader Shah events in the line of Iran, Azerbaijan, and Caucasus. After the 17th century, the region was like paradise for missionaries.

Until 19th century the Turkish-Armenian friendship was very sincere. Evliya Çelebi, Jean Babtiste Tavemier, and 18th century travelers stated optimistic expressions about the Turkish-Armenian relations.⁶

After the end of Ottoman-Iranian wars, the Tsarist Russia emerged as a new threat in the eastern borders of Ottomans in 1806. Gyumri, in the east of Arpaçay that joins Aras from the north, was fallen in the hands of Russians by an agreement. It was succeeded by the fell of Revan, where is an important base for Erzurum. After the contraction of Gulistan and Turkmençay agreements [with Iran], Russians turned toward the West and they focused on Erzurum in accordance with the testament of the Tsar Petro the Great. Following his achievements in 1828, General Paskevich moved on Erzurum. He captured Erzurum that had a key position as the Eastern gate.

Russians went beyond it by seizing Aşkale, Tercan, and Bayburt triangle as a connection point to Trabzon. Mahmud II was compelled to a strained agreement. By signing the Edirne agreement in 1829, he could have prevented a severe threat.⁷

One of the remarkable developments in 1829 was that Armenians were deceived and have migrated from their homelands. Armenians appeared to welcome General Paskevich, who was accompanied by the eminent Russian poet and author Alexander Pushkin in his entrance to the city in summer. Children, who formed a line from Tebriz Kapı to the city center, initially displayed cross, thereby they emphasized that they were Christians, and then presented their gratitude in the name of Armenian community.⁸ Paskevich met with Christian leaders and Armenians in Erzurum. His reputation as the count of Yerevan, and his adoption of a manner favoring Armenians led the Turkish-Armenian difference, for the first time in Erzurum.

6 Konukçu, *Selçuklulardan Cumhuriyete...*, pp.421-470.

7 A.K. Ushakov, *Geshichte der Feldzuge in der Asiatischen Türkei während der Jahre 1828 und 1829*, translated by A.C. Laemmlein, Leipzig, 1838.

8 A. Puşkin, *Erzurum Yolculuğu* [Travel to Erzurum], translated by Ataol Behramoğlu, İstanbul, 1990, p.427.

Paskevich reported Tiflis and Moscow that he was planning to move Armenians in the region to other side of Arpaçay. It was because he saw that population density was very low in the region surrounded by Georgia, Elizavetpol, Nakhichevan, and Gyumri, he opened this region to newcomers. He found people in Erzurum, Bayburt, Tercan, Pasinler and Kars to transfer there. He gave certain orders to General Pankratiev on this issue, when he left Erzurum. He also ordered Pankratiev to secretly meet with the Armenian leaders in and around Erzurum.

General Pankratiev met with the Armenian clergy in Erzurum in spite of the opposition of Mahmud II and the Armenian Patriarch in Istanbul. The Armenian clergy started initiatives to realize migration in Erzurum. They tried to convince Armenians who were occupied with bakery, jeweler, blacksmith, driver, locksmith, made of swords, butchery etc. in the neighborhood of Lala Mustafa Paşa, Cami-i Kebir, Kara Kilise, Bakırcı, Ayaspaşa, Cennetzade Camii Şerifi, Yoncalık, Hasanbasri, Sultan Melik, Kabe Mescidi, Hanım Hamamı Caferzade, Dar Ağaç, Kadana, Dervişağa, Kasım Paşa ve Tebriz Kapı with pressure and brilliant promises for the Russian part.

The clergymen called as Karabaş by Turks frightened Armenians. They wrote the name of many Armenians on the Karabaş notebook by pressure. Many people fled Erzurum and its villages in 1829. They settled in Gyumri, Ahıska, and Ahalkalek passing the Kars plain. However, the Russian interest in those migrants gradually decreased in time. Thus, the phenomenon of an imagined Armenia started to be abolishing in time.⁹

When the Armenians left Erzurum, silence prevailed in the city and villages. William J. Hamilton, J.Brant, Eli Smith, H.G.O Dwith, M.Wagner, W.F.Ainsworth, H.Southgate who came to Erzurum after the Russians withdrew drew attention to decrease in population of the city after Armenians' fled.¹⁰ Migrant Armenians could not have adapted to life in Russia and disappeared in big cities like Tbilisi.

When the Crimean war had erupted under the reign of Abdülmecid, the Ot-

9 Kemal Beydilli, *1828-1829 Osmanlı Rus Savaşında Doğu Anadolu'dan Rusya'ya Göçürülen Ermeniler* [The Armenians Deported to Russia from the Eastern Anatolia during the Ottoman-Russian War], Ankara, 1988, pp.386-390.

10 W. I. Hamilton, *Researches in Asia Minor, Pontus and Armenia*, London, 1842, pp.178-184; E. Smith and H.G.O. Dwith, *Missionary Researches in Armenia*, London, 1834, pp.62-74; M.Wagner, *Reise nach Persien und der Lande der Kurden*, Leipzig, 1852; W. F. Ainsworth, *Travels and Researches in Asia Minor, Mesopotamia, Chaldea and Armenia*, London, 1842, pp.391-394.

toman-Russian wars came into agenda again. Russians fought the Ottomans near to Kars in 1855, and surrounded Kars. They came into Pasin plain and moved till the mounts of Deve Boyun and Kargapazan.

Due to the safety provided by the Tanzimat, Islahat and constitutional monarchy movements in the Ottoman territories [for the minorities], Armenians returned to Erzurum. Many of the migrants resettled their previous places. They started to live together with Turks again in the plain villages like Hmsk, Umudum, Arzutu, Tivnik, Kan, and Sitavuk. Everything was fraternal as the before. However, missionaries, clergy, and spies took action in a short time. Armenians could not have kept their previous social and commercial positions. The Pastirmacian family was leading of them.¹¹

Armenians had the same rights with all people in the east as the subjects of the Ottoman state until the reign of Abdulhamid II. A group of states led by the United Kingdom, including Germany, Italy, France, and the United States started to send political and commercial representatives. Those consuls preferred to live with the Armenians in Gavur mahallesi (neighborhood) in Erzurum. They managed to get respect and amity of the Armenians in Erzurum through health care agencies, colleges and religious institutions.

Missionaries started to separate Armenians through Catholic and Protestant priests. Armenians appeared as three distinct groups in villages like Umudum and Arzutu. Catholic, Protestant, and Gregorian Armenians were representing social life of any country.

Additionally, the Armenian clergy incited the Turkish-Armenian difference under the influence of the Russian propaganda since the Crimean war. Deyrolle heard such kind of statements from an Armenian priest who hosted him at night. Russians and French supposedly would provide every kind of assistance to them. Of course, it was based on ill-founded reports would never be materialized.¹²

After the Crimean War, militarily crucial structures were designed in Erzurum. Defense lines of Batum, Ardahan, Kars, and particularly Erzurum were solidified. It was remarkable that Turks and Armenians cooperated in construction of military bastions, called as Toprak Tabya by people. One of the bastions in Kars had

11 For Pastirmacians see, Dr. G.Pastermadjian, *Why Armenia Should Be Free; Armenian's Role in the Present War*, Boston, 1918, p.5

12 T. Deyrolle, *Voyages dans Le Lazistan et L'Armenie, Tour du Monde*, Paris, 1896, p.369 ff.

name of the British consul in Erzurum, Zohrab. He was an intellectual Armenian and Britain authorized him with representative power in the 1870s. Many Armenians in Erzurum worked as labor in these bastions. In view of Westerners, those people were originally Armenian, yet they were wholeheartedly loyal to the Sultan.

In early times, Eastern Anatolia was known as 'Armenia', as indicated above. In the mid-ages Islamic sources appealed 'Ermeniye,' a transformed version of 'Armenia.' Even the Turkish political establishments were called as Ermenşahs due to their geographical locations. It should immediately be remarked that these establishment had no relevance with Armenians.

Erzurum and its around, that is Vilayat-i Şarkıyye (the Eastern Provinces), called as 'Turetskoy Armeni' by Russians, and the 'Turkish Armenia' by the Westerners.¹³ Henry Fanshawe Tozer and others, who were impressed by that wave, called Erzurum and its around as "Türk Ermenistanı."¹⁴ In the Western literature, it was not only used the Turkish Armenia, it was also used 'Russian Armenia' for Russia, and 'Persian Armenia' for Iran. There was no use of the 'Türk Ermenistanı' in the Ottoman documents, as well as no use of "Russian Armenia" in the Tsarist Russia, and they did not allowed such a usage. The strict Russian nationalism was literally implemented by the authorities in Tbilisi and Yerevan.

When Sultan Abdulhamid enthroned after Murad V, Armenians were also among those pledged allegiance to him. Greetings for birthdays or day of enthronement were visible in the news reports published in Istanbul newspapers at that time. Ahmed Muhtar Pasha, who was appointed as governor to Erzurum, after taking office reported to Bab-ı Ali (the Ottoman government) that some (Armenian) extremists were active in Erzurum and necessary measures were taken, in 1876.¹⁵ In spite of these activities, he cautiously approached towards Armenians in Erzurum, and advised them to be loyal. Apart from the official documents, Captain Fred Burnaby¹⁶ gave interesting information about the situation of Armenians at that time. Burnaby found Armenians in a clash of ideas in his travel to Kemah, Erzincan, Tercan and Erzurum in 1876.

13 Bilal Şimşir, *British Documents on Ottoman Armenians*, Ankara, 1982, 4 Vols.

14 H. F. Tozer, *Turkish Armenia and Eastern Asia Minor*, London, 1881. The Traveler considers "Turkish Armenia" and Eastern Anatolia as the same place.

15 Gazi Ahmed Muhtar Paşa, *Anılar: Sergüzeşt-i Hayatımın Cild-i Evveli*, İstanbul, 1996, pp.101-107.

16 F.Burnaby, *Küçük Asya Seyahatnamesi; Anadolu'da Bir İngiliz Subay*, İstanbul, 1998, pp.197-215.

Clergy started to raise consciousness of people with political speeches in churches rather than talking about Christianity and the doctrine of Jesus Christ. Naturally, before every storm Russian secret agencies whereas sometimes appealing their own fellows, sometimes exploited clergy in Tbilisi, Gyumri, and Yerevan. They assigned many of them with influencing Armenians in the Ottoman territories, particularly in Erzurum.

The Ottoman-Russian War of 1877-78 broke peace in the region one more time. The Armenian originated generals were commissioned to occupy the Eastern Anatolia. Lazarev, Muraviyev, Ter Gukasov, Loris Melikov were among the Armenian originated soldiers. They were welcomed by the Armenian fanatics in every place they seized, as the Armenian conquerors, not as Russian heroes. After the fighting in Zivin, Kars, and in Kızıltepe, Başgedikler in Şüregel, Russians started counter-attacks and came near to Erzurum, following the way of General Paskevich.

They faced with a very strong Turkish resistance in the wars in Deveboynu and Aziziye. The Armenians, who pursued a policy of "wait and see" until that time, raid Aziziye under the leadership of clergy in Tasmasor and Müdürge, when they saw Russians came to the fronts of the city. Norman, who witnessed the events as the war correspondent of Daily News, drew attention to the role of Tamayev.

Russians could not have entered in Erzurum by fighting. After the sign of the cease-fire, Bab-ı Ali ordered to the command/governor of Erzurum by a telegram to open the gates of city. Ahmed Muhtar Pasha who had come into prominence thanks to his glorious defense and fighting was absent because he was called by Abdulhamid II. Kurd İsmail Pasha left Erzurum for Erzincan within the framework of the order. General Heimann and other commanders accompanying him, who entered in the city through the Kars Kapı, handled the administration of city. Armenians were now more powerful in comparison to Turks, and now they had found backers.

In the period of cease-fire, whereas Turks were keeping their silence, Armenians were pleased to be subjects of a state, like Russia in religious rituals in Armenian churches. Therefore first steps were taken to treason the "right of salt-bread." The crisis period of Erzurum in view of the Turks, clearly exhibited in memoirs of Austrian Dr. Ryan. Monument of Unknown Soldier that was built by Lazarev and Melikov on behalf of the Tsar was as if the symbol of "saving from the Ottomans." The deceived Armenian school children with various pretexts

were brought to the front of the monument, which led another unfavorable event against the Ottomans.¹⁷

The Ottoman-Russian reconciliation was provided through the Edirne, St. Stephanos, and finally Berlin Treaties. After the Berlin Treaty of July 13, 1878, Russians withdrew to the newly establish border; Erzurum, thereby returned to the Ottoman sovereignty. However, Kars, Artvin, Ardahan provinces who have historical bounds, was left to the Russians as war compensation. The new border were tracing line of Narman-Oltu, Horasan-Zivin.¹⁸

Russians went on their deceits on the Armenians after they had withdrawn. They warned the frightened Armenians on a possible wide range of slaughter to be carried out by Turks who would not forget the actions of people of Erzurum throughout the cease-fire and occupation. A group of Armenians prepared to leave Erzurum. Nevertheless, superiority of the Devlet-i Aliye-i Osmani and its responsibility to its citizens was appeared one more time. It was announced to the subjects by the agency of Musa Pasha that such an initiative would never be realized. Erzurum people had no idea to attempt such an action, as well. They knew that living brotherly with Armenians as previously would be accurate in spite of improper Armenian actions. Military and political consuls taking office in Erzurum were trying to protect Armenians rather recovery of Erzurum materially and spiritually. Paris, London, and other centers were often informed by their embassies in Istanbul.

The first movement to internationalize the Armenian question in Erzurum is the 61st article of the Berlin Treaty.¹⁹ Lord Salisbury had his views “Immediately some reforms should be taken in Armenia. Armenians should be assured and promised with welfare and peace in the future. Safety of Armenians should be assured against the Circassians and Kurds. Measures taken on this issue should be overseen.”

Additionally, Lord Salisbury had “the expression of Armenia” emplaced to the text, thereby he stressed that question of Armenia and Armenians was an issue, which should be dealt with the public. Yet, it should be pointed out that there

17 C.B. Norman, *Armenia and The Campaign of 1887*, Paris, 1878; C.B. Norman, *The War Correspondence of Daily News 1877*, London, 1878, p.303.

18 M.Celaeddin Paşa, *Mir'at-ı Hakikat; Tarihi Hakikatlerin Aynası*, prepared by İ. Miroğlu, Istanbul, 1983, pp.575-581.

19 M.Celaeddin Paşa, *Mir'at-ı Hakikat...*, p. 697.

were Armenians, not Armenia, within the borders of the Ottoman Empire. Britain, who had good relations with the Ottomans for years, changed its policy and assumed championship of Armenians in the Eastern Anatolia, as well as its privileges in Cyprus.

The Ottomans, contrary to other countries, had already provided welfare and peace of Armenians. Negligence of rights of the migrant Circassians and Terkememes deported from the Caucasus by the Britain tainted the British objectivity. Some of the Kurds deceived by Russian funds and promises were active behind the border. Problems were not relevant to Armenians; instead they were related with Russians. It had been reported by consuls in the region to Layard in Istanbul that they were scathing with a tribal mood to some Armenians and Turks in the Ottoman territories, both in Iran and Russia for long time.

The Ottomans were experiencing heavy financial difficulties because of the war. Notwithstanding these problems, it had cordially started to reforms particularly in Erzurum as envisaged in the Berlin Treaty. Delegations that were sent to eastern provinces from Istanbul, including Şakir Pasha, embarked on reforms. By the way, the expression of Vilayat-ı Sitte (six provinces) was recorded in official documents for the first time.²⁰ The Tanzimat and Islahat movements had provided the Armenians and Greeks with some rights. The Armenian representatives had started to take office in administration of the provinces, and counties. It is possible to see reflections of it in the Yearbooks (Salname) of the Province of Erzurum.²¹

Scarcities and loss of animals due to epidemic diseases upset economic life of the people of the region. Russian merchants and their Armenian representatives in the region were cheaply buying grains and animal products and selling them more expensively in Russia. As a result of this process many newly enriched people, many of whom were Armenians, were emerged in Erzurum and Kars. After the treaties, the Ottoman-Russian wars seemed to be ceased. Peace in the region continued until 1914. Yet, the Westerners and Russians did not give up to exploit Armenians for their interests. In conclusion, no more than two years after the war and treaty, secret activities were initiated. Armenians involved in illegal activities for an independent country.

The Armenian activity in Erzurum suddenly increased under the auspices of

20 A. Karaca, *Anadolu Islahatı ve Ahmet Şakir Paşa (1838-1899)*, Istanbul, 1933, pp. 83-91.

21 Konukçu, *Selçuklulardan Cumhuriyete...*, pp. 281-296.

Britain and Russia. In his report to the embassy in Istanbul, the British consul Eyres stated that the governor embarked on the Armenian uprising, arrested forty of insurgents one day before and the government knew names of 700 people involved in uprisings.²²

Those were the members of an illegal organization called “Society of Defenders of Motherland.” Founders of that organization were Haçatur Kerekciyan, Karabet Nişkiyan, Agop İsgalatsiyan, Aleksan Yetelikyan, Hovannes Asturyan, and Yeğişe Tursunyan. That society started its activities in May 1881 and raised more than a hundred sworn members within three months. Erzurum bishop, Ormanian were aware of that activity of his community and secretly reported to the Patriarch, rather than government. Security authorities in Erzurum ascertained papers of oath issued by the society. That is why, many were arrested without stimulating Armenian row. Bishop Ormanian was also dispatched to Istanbul because of necessity. Trial of the Armenian secret activity ended in 1883. Forty person were convicted. Kerekciyan was imprisoned for fifteen years, and others were imprisoned for three, five or ten years. The Patriarchate in Istanbul took action upon these convictions. The Patriarchs, Nerses and Ormanian, saved Armenians from imprisonment through “mediation and favoritism.” Kerekciyan and other founding members were granted with imperial mercy by the Sultan.²³

Soon after, Armenians had a demand to open a school near the Great Church of Erzurum. The governor reported this demand to the Bab-ı Ali. That demand of Armenians was evaluated as accurate, and a modern education institution was established. According to H. Pastirmacian, that school was built in the Nazik Bazaar, neighborhood of the Church, by a wealthy Armenian. It is recorded in Erzurum Yearbook that the school was opened in 1865, and licensed in 1897. As to Lynch, the school started to education in 1883, and man whom built the school died in 1890. The school called as Sansaryan by the people, although its original name was Sanasarian, educated many students. Two children of Governor Tahsin (Uzer) and a son of Mehmed Ali Pasha, Hüsrev Efendi were also trained in the same school.²⁴

Armenians took a position against the government in Erzurum, in June 20,

22 Kamuran Gürün, *Ermeni Dosyası*, Ankara, 1983, p. 128.

23 Gürün, *Ermeni Dosyası*, pp.137-138; L. Nalbandyan, *The Armenian Revolutionary Movement*, Los Angeles, 1963, p.87.

24 H. Pasdermadjian, *Histoire de L'Armenie*, Paris 1971, p.272; Lynch, *Armenia; Travels and Studies*, London 1901, pp.213-217; H.Tarbassian, *Erzurum(Garin) Its Armenian History and Traditions* New York, 1975, pp.102-112.

1890 due to a prosecution against them. The Governor took action upon a notice informing manufacture of arms in the church and school. Throughout legal procedure, a search warrant obtained from the court. The search was realized with a delegation involving clergy and manager of the school. The komitadjis immediately found a fertile ground and provoked Armenians with various deceits, and slanders. An uprising occurred in June 21. Upon the occurrence of an uprising and when some soldiers were killed and wounded, the Erzurum people took action as well.

Foreign representatives disseminated rumors that Armenians were being killed despite they lively witnessed to the facts. The Armenian clergy in various countries, also, disseminated baseless claims in a dramatic way – which Jesus never confirm – to provoke Christians there.²⁵

Armenians were separated into different groups in terms of view and faith as of late 19th century. Whereas those Artze and Garin originated were conserving their traditional beliefs, the missionaries (like Cole, Stapleton and Chambers from the USA), who were prioritizing material and health care, were already making distinction of Catholic and Protestant.²⁶ The statements of "Armenian Catholics of Erzurum", and "Catholic Village of Khodoutchor" were dramatic samples of such a distinction.

The British Consuls in Erzurum, R. W. Graves and Charles S. Hamson permanently informed their embassy in Istanbul about the Armenians in Erzurum who were undergoing a very active term. H.A. Cumberbatch also reported some activities of the Armenian revolutionaries to his government. The then Armenian bishop in Erzurum was Ghevant Shismanian. The groups that were pointed out as the Armenian Revolutionary Committees were the Hinchak committee. They were realizing illegal activities among within their community in Erzurum. They killed Lawyer Artin Efendi Serkisyan and Simon Aga Bosoyan (merchant) to intimidate. H. A. Cumberbatch immediately reported the event to ambassador Sir P. Currie on October 11, 1895.²⁷

A great disturbance was the case among the Armenians in Erzurum in 1895.

25 *Müevvet*, 4 Kanun-ı Evvel 1890, p.2; C. Küçük, *Osmanlı Diplomasisinde Ermeni Meselesinin Ortaya Çıkışı (1878-1897)* [Emergence of the Armenian Question in the Ottoman Diplomacy] Istanbul, 1986, pp.106-107.

26 Willame Nesbit Chambers, *Yolculuk; Ramdan Thought on a Life in Imperial Turkey*, London, 1928.

27 B. Şimşir, *British Document on Ottoman Armenians*, Ankara, 1990, p.385.

Hinchak Committee, which founded in 1887, and Dashnaks which increased its influence in the 1890s were threatening those who did not support them. Just a year after its establishment, they killed Kerekciyan from the “Defenders of Motherland” in 1891 with the perception that “who is not with us, is our enemy.” Kerekciyan was a respected man among Armenians.²⁸

In time, that murder was condemned and damned; that is why Dashnaks retreated. Although it declared its excuse for the murder, murderer Aram Aramyan was not convicted whatever the reason. Armenians of Erzurum were also involved in the Ottoman Bank incidence in Istanbul in 1895.

Uprising of the Armenian treachery in Erzurum broke out in October 1895. An armed group raid on the office of the governor to kill governor and bureaucrats there. They were encountered by the commander of gendarmerie. Some soldiers were killed in clashes; however, Armenians were forced to retreat. Developments after the incidence and its consequences were reported to Bab-ı Ali. Notwithstanding, an interesting assessment via Western eyes was made by S. Withmann. He wrote:

“The humor that Marshall Şakir Pasha, who were in charge of reforms in Anatolia, with his watch on his hands as a bloodthirsty man, ordered those waiting for his orders to continue fighting Armenians for one and half an hour further in Erzurum, in October 1895 was disseminated all over the world.

Considering the objective of our travel, I met British Consul Mr. Graves, governor Mehmed Şerif Rauf Pasha, French Consul M. Roquefairreier, and Russian Consul General M. Maximov, respectively. I asked all of them whether they believe in the rumors about Şakir Pasha. M. Roquefairreier told they were ridiculous stories cited for funny, and added several words praising Şakir Pasha. M. Maximov said; “It is not my duty to denounce such stories. What I can say, Şakir Pasha is a brave and a very warm-hearted man. I recognize him for years. He is my friend.” I asked British Consul Mr. Graves “Would you anticipate any massacre if the Armenian revolutionaries did not come and did not encourage Armenians for uprising?” He answered “No” without hesitation. Even no one Armenian would be killed.”²⁹

28 K.S.Papazian, *Annenian Revolutionary Federation or Dashnaghtzoutine*, Paris 1932, p.36; Gürün, *Ermeni Dosyası*, p.134.

29 Gürün, *Ermeni Dosyası*, p.156; S. Withmann, *Turkish Memories*, London, 1914, pp. 29,70-94.

Tahsin Pasha, known as his closeness to the court, mentioned on the events in Erzurum, and other events in the east:³⁰ “Upon the second Armenian event, two people from the US Senate and orientalist came to Istanbul. Representatives of one of leading American newspapers was accompanying them. Their aim was to search the Armenian incidents and inform American people – both politically and via press – with the realities. Since Sultan Abdulhamid attached importance to influence of foreigners, particularly press, he received the delegation came from the USA; and had Şefik Bey, head of the Court of Appeal, accompanied them to go to the Eastern Anatolia. The American public, under incitement and inspiration of leaders of the Armenian sedition, were desperately against Turks.

They were almost convinced that the Armenian people were completely oppressed and faultless whereas Turks were oppressor and murderer. It should be proven that realities were different from that conviction. Members of the delegation that came from the USA were earnest, objective, and just people. They, together with the Turkish delegation accompanied them, toured everywhere. They saw everything; and heard everyman. Eventually, they convinced with the facts and released a report that rumors in America were baseless.”

Initially the committees were responsible for the events of 1890 and 1905.³¹ They dragged the excited Armenians into an interminable adventure through secret propaganda. Despite these facts, Bab-ı Ali ordered just courts and convicted perpetrators to various penalties.

With the exception of several judicial incidents, Armenians remained loyal to the state. It went on till the dethronement of Abdulhamid II, who had a just and unbiased position. Travelers visited Erzurum, glanced at the position of Armenians and noted that they were in harmony with the government. The usual Armenian public opinion at that time was; “We are Armenians, we are loyal to our Sultan”

As K. Krikorian indicated, many Armenians including L. Ayıcıyan, Andranik Bilorian, Derenik Darpasian, Haçatur Der Nersesian, M. Hekimyan, Dariel Karacıyan, Mıgırdıç Efendi, Dr K. Melikyan, Dr E. Papazyan, Kirkor Şabanyan, Dr M. Yarmayan had marked on social and political life of Erzurum. Pastirmacians was also among the leading families in social life of Erzurum.³²

30 Tahsin Paşa, *Tahsin Paşanın Yıldız Hatıraları* [Memoirs of Tahsin Pasha in Yıldız], Istanbul, 1990, p.236.

31 M.Varandian, *Histoire de la Dashnagzoutune*, 2 Volumes, Paris, 1932.

32 Mesrob K.Krikorian, *Armenians in the Service of the Ottoman Empire (1860-1908)*, Boston ,1977, pp.44-

Foreign elements, committees, and those dreaming an Armenian state appeared one more time in the First World War. However, they dragged Armenians into an unterminated adventure. Erzurum experienced occupation between 1916-18, which was called as black days by people. Forces of General Yudenich appeared before the city gates on February 16, 1916. Leading figures in Erzurum and Mr. Stapleton welcomed the Russian commander at the Kars gate according to customs. General Yudenich realized a declaration urging people to go on daily business and to obey this order and later ones. There was not much intemperance in early days of occupation. The city was already evacuated by soldiers and people. Those, whose conditions are not appropriate for fleeing, remained in the city and withdrew to their houses.

Russian army was including soldiers from Kazan, Azerbaijan, Nakhcivan etc.. Due to their tolerant behaviors, people felt relieved to some extent. Settlement of officers and soldiers, who later involved in the occupation, in Muslim neighborhoods was seen as good development. However, Dashnaks and the Russian forces opposing the government due to deportation, initially remained silent. They gathered in Nazik Bazaar called as the Church Neighborhood by indigent people. Then, they secretly scattered into other neighborhoods.³³

General Yudenich directed the western operation flank in Erzurum. Russian forces advanced towards Erzincan and Bayburt targets; partial resistances remained inconclusive. Mahmud Kamil Pasha, commander of the 3rd army moved to Tercan through Yeniköy, and then to Erzincan plain. Ottoman forces were directed from the quarter at Peteriç. Another branch of the Russian army attempted to secure access to Trabzon, yet faced with an unexpected resistance in the Kop mountains and a second Çanakkale (Dardanelles) legend was experienced there, in view of Fevzi Çakmak. The 3rd army could not have withstand in Erzincan, and rapidly withdrew to Refahiye and planned the crucial defense in Suşehri/Endires. Since the rear guards commanded by Abdülkerim accurately realized its mission, there was not much loss in the army. General Yudenich who acted according to plans of Moscow, Tbilisi, Gyumri, and Erzurum, after seizing eastern ridges of Refahiye, announced there as border and order settlement accordingly. Seizure of Erzurum made Tsar Nikolai happy. Initially, he did not believe in reports to Moscow and asked confirmation by a telegram.³⁴

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33 B. Aslan, *Erzurum'da Ermeni Olayları 1918-1920 (Hatıralar-Belgeler-Kazılar)*[The Armenian Incidents in Erzurum, 1918-1920 – Memoirs-Documents-Excavations], Erzurum, 2004, p.120-121.

34 For the army see: *I.Dünya Harbinde Türk Kaftas Cephesi II. Ordu Harekatı* (Operation of the 2nd Army in

General Yudenich leaved administration to the Ottomans. Russian originated Governor and Mayor was appointed. By the way, charity foundations that emerged in Azerbaijan, were reflected in Erzurum and its around. Armenians did not welcome activities of Cemiyet-i Hayriye (Society of Charity) that acted only in a humanitarian line, and secretly overseen it.³⁵ Thus, earlier good days were suddenly ended. Execution of some individuals in charge of being the Unionist, firstly, consternated Turks. Armenians started to pursue their imagined rights. Nevertheless, command headquarter did not provide them with an official opportunity.³⁶

Mobility in Erzurum in 1915-16 was adversely concluded for the army and people. As indicated above, a period of Russian occupation that lasted for two years, started. The Bolshevik revolution that embraced whole Russia, took place in 1917.³⁷ Slogan of “End to War” that disseminated by propagandists of the new regime were reflected even in Erzurum and Erzincan. Since the number of deserters increased, the remaining also followed their path. Officers could not secure order and discipline even in the least brigades. Considering this fact, the government had to concede a cease-fire in the Caucasus front. The Ottomans and Russians with the confirmation of high level military authorities in Moscow and Tiflis, agreed on a cease-fire in Erzincan. After the cease-fire agreement came into effect in December 1917, tranquility in the front was established.³⁸

Russians in Erzincan and Erzurum started to withdraw to the back of 1878 border. The vacuum would be filled by the 1st Caucasus Corps attached to the 3rd Army. That is why the Ottoman Commander Mehmed Vehbi Pasha assigned Colonel Kazım Karabekir, who was just appointed to his corps, with the operation of Erzincan and Erzurum. Meanwhile, it was informed that the Armenians took action. They started to slaughter many Turks to establish long-dreamed greater Armenia, in cities, counties, and villages. Later on, Dr. Azaryevand and Antranik, who came to Erzurum from Tbilisi, initiated a massacre in the region with their forces.³⁹

the Turkish-Caucasus Front in WW I], Ankara, 1993.

35 Y.Aslan, *Erzurum'da Ermeni Mezalimi Hakkında Kantarcıazade Hacı Mustafa'nın Hatıraları* [Memoirs of Kantarcıazade Hacı Mustafa on the Armenian Atrocities], Atatürk Üniversitesi, Atatürk İlkeleri ve İnkılap Tarihi Enstitüsü Dergisi, Vol. 1, No. 6, 1993, p.97.

36 B. Aslan, *Erzurum'da Ermeni Olayları...*, p.123.

37 E.Şahin, *Diplomasi ve Sınır* [Diplomacy and Border], İstanbul, 2005, p.25.

38 *Dokumenti Vneşney Politiki SSSR*, Moskova 1959, p.53-56. For perception of the operation in other side see., G.Gorganov, *La Participation de L'Armenians a La Guerre Mondial sur le ducaucase (1914-1918)*, Paris, 1927, pp.100-108.

39 Twerdo-Khlebov, *War Journal of the Second Russian Fortress Artillery Regiment*, İstanbul, 1919, p.29.

The 1st Caucasus Corps immediately accelerated its operation. It managed to save Erzincan and Erzurum from the Armenian bullying and sanguinary in February and March. Almost 20.000 innocent people were slaughtered by the Armenians in the center and plain villages of Erzurum. The 1st Caucasus Corps could operated in Erzurum only on March 3, 1918. Following an operation realized through the gates of Kayak, Istanbul, and Harput on March 12, 1918, Antranik and his supporters could only survived by escaping through the Kars gate in a despicable way. Thus, Rüşdi, Halit and Fazıl Beys become the saviors of Erzurum.⁴⁰

Erzurum was like an absolute ruin on March 12, 1918. Due to fires, many buildings were beyond any sign of life. Because of the slaughters on March 8-11, 1918, one or two people from almost every family, was martyred. Kazım Karabekir reported the save of Erzurum from the Armenian insurgents to headquarter of the 3rd Army by a telegram. He also informed that he would march towards Hasan Kale through Horasan in a short time.⁴¹

Kazım Karabekir came to Erzurum with his headquarter on March 12, 1918, and immediately took some measures to refresh social life. First of all, fires were extinguished. The Armenian and Russian captives were secured. Recep (Peker) was appointed as the military governor. The municipality affairs were also assigned to Zakir Efendi. Kantarcızade Mustafa Efendi was commissioned to take security measures.⁴²

Erzurum was still far from its previous life in the mid of March 1918. A few days later Vehib Pasha, Commander of the 3rd Army came to Erzurum and took information from Kazım Karabekir about the operation. In a short period, documents and photos of the Armenian atrocities ascertained by military were sent to Ministry of War, Istanbul.⁴³

Erzurum was exposed to probably the most comprehensive and dramatic massacre of its history in February and March 1918. Armenians, without making any distinction of child, women or old, killed many people and put them in mass graves to clean signs of the massacre. Armenians caught many people in station,

40 Kazım Karabekir, *Kazım Karabekir'in Kaleminden Doğunun Kurtuluşu*, prepared by E. Konukçu, Ankara, 1990, p.137 ff.

41 Kazım Karabekir, *Kazım Karabekir'in Kaleminden ...*, p.214 ff.

42 Kazım Karabekir, *Kazım Karabekir'in Kaleminden ...*, pp.147,150.

43 Kazım Karabekir, *Kazım Karabekir'in Kaleminden ...*, p.225.

various neighborhoods as well as mansions of Mürsel and Ezirmikli Osman Efendi in Tahtacılar in Erzurum and killed them. Corpses were gradually searched out until late May by police and municipality – because it posed a danger for Erzurum – and those discovered were immediately buried.⁴⁴

Homicides in Erzurum instantly recorded by Kazım Karabekir as previously mentioned. Photographs were also sent to Istanbul. Kantarcızade Mustafa and F. Tellioglu marked the extent of atrocities on history through their notes, as well.

Russian officers also noted objectively what they had seen, and submitted their notes to Kazım Karabekir, Commander of the 1st Caucasus Corps. Two treatises among them written by Lt. Colonel Andrey Tverdo-Khlebov have a paramount importance. Extent of the Armenian atrocities could be learnt through the treatises noted by that Russian officer.⁴⁵

Captian Ahmed Refik Bey, also, displayed how oppressive the Armenian atrocities were, through documents, photos etc..⁴⁶ European journalists accompanying him documented the Armenian atrocities, as well.⁴⁷ Additionally, a delegation assigned in Istanbul, touring Erzurum and its villages, documented the most detailed information about the murdered Turks. Particularly the photos and cinema films by Necati Efendi carried those horrific scenes to today.⁴⁸

The report submitted by Kazım Karabekir, Commander of the 15th Corps, to the US General J.G.Harbord who was in Erzurum, in September 25, 1919 was also very interesting.⁴⁹ Armenians carried on guilty-powerful game until today. Patronage of the Western states, unfortunately, inverted the facts. According to the Western circles, those exposed to the genocide was Armenians, not Turks.

Armenians continued their murders in the 20th century through remainders of Antranik, an organization like ASALA. However, the West brazenly ignores the facts like an ostrich. Sangunaries like Canpolatyan from Sivas, Vahan, Arşak,

⁴⁴ Y.Aslan, *Erzurum'da Ermeni ...*, p.93-94.

⁴⁵ *Tarihçe: II. Erzurum Kale Topçu Alayının Teşkilinden İtibaren Osmanlı Ordusunun İstirdadı Olan 12 Mart 1918'e Kadın Ahvali Hakkında Yazılışı*, 29 Nisan 1918. Hatıra: 16 Nisan 1918 see, M. Demirel, *Rus Subaylarından Yarbey Tverdo-Khlebov ve Yzb.Pilyat'a Göre Ermenilerin Erzurum'da Türklere Yönelik Katliam Hareketleri*. (Ayrı Basım) pp .1-11.

⁴⁶ For instance, *İki Komite İki Katal* [Two Committees, Two Murders], Istanbul, 1935.

⁴⁷ Kazım Karabekir, *Kazım Karabekir'in Kaleminden ...*,p.97-252.

⁴⁸ My copy.

⁴⁹ Kazım Karabekir, *Kazım Karabekir'in Kaleminden ...*, note 48.

Murad from Sivas, Serop of Çapars, Setrak, Torkom, and above all Sepuh were primary actors of the massacres. Participation of Colonel Morel, who was recorded as a French originated Russian officer and great Armenophil, to them displayed how the massacre was realized.⁵⁰

Until today, the issue of Turks murdered BY Armenians was unknown. Material evidences to the Armenian atrocities were revealed through excavations carried out by myself and members of Atatürk University. These excavations that created wide repercussions, materially introduced the Armenian atrocities to the Western world.⁵¹ As to Armenia, it has been ignoring excavations and resorting lies and slanders like a juvenile offender.

50 Twerdo-Khelebov, *War Journal of the...* p.22.

51 Bkz. B. Aslan, *Erzurum'da Ermeni Olayları...*, pp.677-750. It includes excavations in Alaca, Yeşilyayla, and Tanar.