

Westerners on the Armenian Strategy and Rebellion

Michael van der Galiën
November 20, 2007

An interesting debate ensued in the comments thread of [my latest post](#) on what some call the Armenian Genocide. One of the commenters (Paul), an Armenian-American, asked me why it is that I believe that Armenians rebelled well before 1915, killing Turks, in an attempt to get the Great Power (of Europe) to intervene in their behalf. The reason is simple: Western witnesses. [In a comment](#) I quoted the following individuals:

The Armenian Patriarch told the British Ambassador Elliot on December 6, 1876 that.

If it is required to start revolution or to rise up in order to secure the intervention of Europe in this matter or to draw its attention that can be done quite easily.

The British Ambassador Currie at Istanbul expressed the following view in his report he sent to the Foreign Office on March 28, 1894:

The Armenian revolutionaries stir up disorders with the aim of forcing the Ottomans to retaliate and thus pave the way for the intervention of foreign countries.

The British Consul Grave at Erzurum in a message sent to the British Embassy at Istanbul on January 28, 1895, reports that:

The purpose of Armenian revolutionaries is to compel the Turkish government and Turkish nation to take action against themselves because of the general discontent they create themselves and so draw the attention of foreign powers to the imaginary sufferings of the Armenian people and convince them of the necessity to improve the situation.

When New York Herald correspondent Sydney Whitman asked British Consul Graves whether clashes between Armenians and Turks would have occurred if the Armenians wouldn't have rebelled, the latter answered: "of course not, I do not think that a single Armenian would have been killed."

General Mayewski who served as Russia's Consul General at Bitlis and at Van, reports as follows in a report of 1912:

Armenian revolutionaries created such a suspicion between Armenians and the local people in 1895 and 1896 that it became impossible to carry out any reforms in this area. Armenian clergymen were not busy with religious education at all. They endeavoured instead to disseminate nationalistic ideas. Such ideas were developed within the walls of the mysterious monasteries and enmity of Christians towards Muslims replaced religious duties. The reason of the rebellions taking place in many provinces of

Anatolia in the years 1895 and 1896 was neither the poverty of Armenian villagers nor the supposed oppression on them. For these villagers were richer and more prosperous than their neighbours. Three causes may be mentioned for the Armenians uprisings:

1) their increasing consciousness in political matters; 2) the spreading of the ideas of nationalism, liberations and independence in the Armenian public opinion and 3) support provided by Western governments to such ideas and the effort of clergymen to disseminate them.

The British Vice-consul at Van, Mr. Williams, points out in his report dated March 4, 1896 that:

Tashnaks and Hinchaks incited people in an excessive and wild manner and paralysed all the effort and activities undertaken to implement the reforms and that Armenian revolutionaries were responsible for whatever happened in Anatolia.

The British Consul General at Adana, Mr. Doughty Wily, says in his report dated 1909 that:

Armenians have been striving to secure the intervention of foreign powers.

General Mayewski states in another Report of his dated 1912 that:

The Tashnak militants have been trying to pave the way for Russian intervention by inciting troubles between Armenians and Muslims.

The Armenian historian Papazian wrote:

The purpose of all the incidents and uprisings was to induce the European states to intervene in the domestic affairs of the Ottoman state.

And there is more. Much more.

Whenever Armenians refer to the period of the mid 1890s it's wise to keep the above quotes in mind. Armenians rebelled against the Ottoman government in the 19th century already and, according to Western sources, exaggerate the response of the Turkish Muslims in an attempt to get more Armenians to rebel and to get the Western powers to intervene on their behalf.

That's, of course, information that's not often shared with foreigners. Turks know it, Armenians should know it if they're as informed as they say they are, but Westerners often don't know it.

We often forget that the Ottoman Empire wasn't just weak at that point in time, but that the European powers were incredibly strong (the US as well by the way). Since the mid 19th century Russia, France and Great Britain were talking amongst themselves how they could divide and conquer (parts of) the Ottoman Empire.

European countries were still highly imperialistic. They conquered and colonized large parts of the Ottoman Empire (Arab lands anyone?). They wanted to divide the Ottoman Empire between themselves. For this to happen, however, they needed the

support of Christians living under Ottoman (read: Muslim) rule. These Christians needed to rebel. This would cause the Ottoman Empire to become even weaker and it would create goodwill in the West for a massive military offensive.

The above aren't opinions. They're facts. The Armenian lobby - I've already explained in the past who I mean by that - would like you never to see these facts, but they're there and can be read / understood for all those who are interested.

Armenian nationalists are still carrying on the battle of their ancestors. The difference is that they don't use force (well, save for in the late 21st century when Armenian terrorists killed / tried to kill those who disagreed with them), they use diplomacy and political pressure (and threats, lawsuits and other kinds of pressure of course). The goal remains the same: to create a Greater-Armenia. This Greater-Armenia consists out of large parts of what's Turkey today.

To quite some of them, the 'recognition' of a 'genocide' isn't the goal. It's a means.

Next time lawmakers want to pretend they're historians, they'd better keep that in mind and look at (all) the facts; not just the stories given to them by the Armenian pressure groups.

There are many polite, civil and honest Armenians out there, who truly believe that what happened to their great (great) grandparents constitutes genocide. These individuals, however, would be wise to take a look at the facts, and to distance themselves a bit from it all - so that they can be more objective.

When one says that what happened isn't 'genocide' one is by no means saying that what happened was minuscule. It wasn't. In the civil war, and during the relocations, many innocent Armenians sadly died. Turkish gangs (even some soldiers and officers acting on their own / ignoring the wishes of their own government) and Kurdish gangs attacked Armenian deportees, and made many innocent people suffer tremendously.

That's also a fact.

But that doesn't mean that what happened was genocide, nor does it mean that the numbers and sequel of events aren't exaggerated and twisted by some Armenian pressure groups. They are. And a genocide it was not. The Ottoman government ordered its soldiers to take care of the Armenian deportees to the best of their abilities and warned them that those who attacked the Armenians would be punished.

Which many of them indeed were.

A government that wants to exterminate a people wouldn't do that.

Anyway,

What's also important in this debate is that people talk about the Turkish casualties and Turkish suffering caused by Armenian nationalists. These individuals - who actually were the leaders of the Armenians at that time - went out and attacked Muslim villages, burned them down and killed many innocent Muslims. They did so because they hoped that the Turks would react, which would then give them great

propaganda material (which the Western powers could also use as an excuse to help them).

Yes. Those are facts as well.

There are two sides to this story and lawmakers - no matter in what country - should not talk about matters they know nothing of. The sad reality is that the lawmakers who support genocide resolutions don't know what they're talking about. They didn't do research. The only thing that's important to them is whether or not voting in favor of such a resolution will help them politically.

Voting for distorting the truth, however, should never be the popular thing to do.

Lastly, here is an entire report from First Lieutenant Abgral, Commander of the Russian Forces at Erzurum. The report was written and sent in 1918 - yes, after the deportations - but that doesn't make what happen any less horrific. Warning: It's a long, and a terrible read.

"Massacre of Muslims by Armenians
Russian Official Document No. 31
Erzurum, March 3, 1918

To the Commander of the Caucasian Army

On February 26, 1918, at mid-day, a company of militia began to assemble the Turks in order to make them clean up the railways and the roads leading to the fortification. This order came from General Atranik. But it was carried out by the chief of the militia of the town, named M. Farachian.

The Turks complained and said that they were being gathered together without taking into consideration the prescribed formalities according to which a written order should be issued by the Commandant of the town... I at once communicated with M. Farachian who told me that the above-mentioned formalities necessitating to get a written order of the Commander had been abolished in view of the circumstances... Thus three sections of workers were formed. One section was sent to the gate of Kars; second, towards the gate of Oltu; the third toward the gate of Trebizond. At about 3 PM I was informed by one of my soldiers that the Turks of Kars, referred to above, were taken behind the fortification of Azizie. I realized the true significance of that information given by soldiers, only on February 27. While leaving Erzurum, I saw on the road of Kars more than 70 dead bodies (Turkish) riddled with bullets on the head, the neck and the chest as well as wounds from bayonets in the region of the heart and the abdomen. With the second section of the Turks the Armenians dealt in the following manner:

The Turks were tightly squeezed into the barracks, made of wood, where they were so crowded up that they could hardly sit down. On that night, according to the testimonies of the workers on the railway line, the Armenians began shooting the Turks one by one and after some time they began firing on the barracks.

The third section, according to my informants, was shot by machine-guns at the gate of Trebizond. Now I shall try to draw a picture of February 26, the day of nightmare and blood. The Armenians broke into the houses of Turks by using force and seized the males of age 11 and above, including the elderly ones, and formed them in

columns and led them with blows of whips and rifles, outside the town, where they massacred them in the most savage manner. Once I asked them where they were taking the Turks and if it was to make them work? 'No' replied the soldiers with an air of satisfaction 'we shall probably kill them.'

When I told them: 'Have you gone crazy? come back to reason,' they replied to me: 'For the love of God, do not prevent us. We do not touch you at all and what we do with them is not your business.' There was a great excitement in the town; every one was running about. Cries of children and lamentations of Turkish women were heard everywhere in the town. The Armenian soldiers were walking about in groups in the town and were continually forcing open the doors of Turkish houses. Finally, came the terrible night that shook the spirit of desolation. The blood congeals at the thought of the horror of this night. The cries increased. One should like to go to the rescue of the unfortunate victims, but when one goes there, one receives everywhere the impertinent answer 'do not interfere' which is accompanied by threats. I heard the cries of women. I opened the door and climbing up the stairs I entered a room. Here I saw seven Armenian soldiers fully armed, one of them holding a candle in his hand, some searching for what they could find and some were massacring in a savage manner. There were three unveiled Turkish women, down whose faces blood was trickling. Their blouses were torn showing their breasts covered with blood. On their sides, children were there so terrified that they appeared dead with fear. A child cried out in an extraordinary voice opening the eyes full of tears. One of the Armenians prevented it from crying, but the terrified child understood nothing and kept on crying. Then the Armenian delivered a blow on the head of the child with his rifle and the child stopped crying and fell on the floor. When the mother saw the child in this condition she began to sob. Then he slaughtered the child with his bayonet and landed a blow on the head of the mother and bayoneted her. The other women seeing this began to cry hands on the eyes. The children folded their arms, with bended heads they awaited their turn, but at once a dagger was aimed at my abdomen. I thought it would be better to leave the room. I came out of the house, I heard a carriage coming, I at once recognized that it was that of the commander of the militia, M. Farachian. I begged him to enter the house; he roughly answered me thus: 'when Armenia boils one cannot think about individuals' and asked me at once why I did not enter myself to stop these fools. I replied that I was a Russian and that they would not listen to me. M. Farachian then told me 'I am surprised that at such a moment you should find enough time to busy yourself with such silly things.' I left him and walked for a long time in the streets. I also visited the Turkish quarters. Everywhere the same horrible picture that breaks one's heart was to be seen, the same cries, the same moaning of women and children. The victims of these crimes have been so numerous that it would not be wrong if I say that only 250 Turks, who could hide themselves, have been left alive in the whole town. The Armenians, having also realized that possibility, began to reclaim them from the Russian officers. They also called at my house where they searched for them everywhere, even in the cupboards and under beds. But they forgot to search the garret where I had hidden a Turkish family.

The following scene, which took place in the house of the former military cashier is characteristic. I happened to be there by chance. I found a few Armenians there. They were seated before a lamp and were picking out some articles in gold, rings, bracelets and other articles that they had robbed. One of them told me that he could not take a bracelet of the wrist of a woman as she would not open. He had to cut the hand and the fingers of the woman (he himself said this) to take the bracelet, etc. off. The Armenians set the town on fire. They also burned non-military buildings and

the house of the American Consul, M. Stempletten. Now and then we heard rifle reports; they completely massacred the remainder before the arrival of the Turkish Army. All the roads leading from the gate of Kars to Hasankale were covered with massacred Turkish bodies, despoiled of their dresses, and the noses and ears of a great number of them had been cut off. We came close to Hasankale and saw a group of Turkish prisoners along the railroad who were led by an Armenian soldier, who made them run. Those who happened to be behind were being whipped and hit on the heads. Their faces were covered with blood. Finally, we arrived at Hasankale. Among these prisoners was a blind old man, accompanied by a boy. The blind old man groping his way and the boy had no more strength left to help the old man. A soldier on horseback began to beat them. These poor persons were wiping the blood off their faces without uttering a word. They kept quiet thus hoping to be spared the martyrdom. But fate had it differently, as soon as they reached Hasankale, the crowd that awaited them massacred them at once by fusillade. We proceeded on to Keupry-Keuy. On arriving there I alighted from the train. I suddenly heard cries from the direction of Hasankale and saw a crowd of Turks running. I counted them afterwards and them to be 40.

In front of them there were two soldiers on horseback, who, from their uniform, seemed officers. But I could not see their ranks, since they were quite far away. The horsemen who were in front made their horses trot and gallop and the Turks had to imitate them. Those who were unable to do so were beaten. Sometimes the horsemen would stop suddenly then the human momentum caused by inertia brought the prisoners almost up to the horsemen, the horsemen landed blows of rifle on their heads, made them pass through a group of carts; at a given time they had to come down a slope; a Turk fell down and this did not please one of the horsemen who went up to him and drew his sword and delivered a blow cutting open his forehead and lips. The wounded Turk attempted to rise but the horseman shot him dead. At this time the Armenians began shooting the prisoners and within five minutes there lay 40 warm dead bodies of the Turks on the side of our wagon. A few Armenians not content with this went and examined the bodies and fired a few more shots at those who showed any sign of life. All along the railroad we saw the same thing. For example at Horasan the Armenians opened fire on the Turks working on the railway lines. Happily only two were killed there; Russian mechanics bandaged the wounds of the wounded and carried them to the barracks. When we arrived at Karaorgan we learned that all the wounded had died.

First Lieutenant ABGRAL
Military Commander of the town of Erzurum
Erzurum, March 3, 1918."