

War Journal

Of the Second Russian Fortress Artillery Regiment

OF ERZEROUM

From its Formation Until the Recapture of

Erzeroum by the Ottoman Army

March 12th, 1918

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Certain passages of this journal show up the atrocities committed by the Armenians towards the Mussulmans. Those who wish to have further details on the oppression and iniquities so cruelly inflicted on the Turks, may advantageously consult the memoirs of Lieutenant Colonel Twerdo Khlebof, commander of the 2nd Russian Fortress Artillery Regiment at Erzeroum, recently published.

Towards the middle of December, 1917, the Russian Army of the Caucasus had retired from the front on its own initiative and without authorization of its officers or superior command. The fortress artillery regiment stationed at Erzeroum left with the rest of the army, and there only remained about forty officers belonging either to this regiment or to the fort of Deve-Boynou. These officers had remained from a sense of duty in charge of the batteries which their men had abandoned. More than four hundred cannons were in the forts, and, as it was impossible to move them, they were obliged to be left behind. As for the officers, they wished to preserve their military honor, and waited for fresh troops or for the order to quit their posts. Those who remained after the departure of the 1st regiment, formed the second fortress artillery regiment of Erzeroum. The Armenians of this town, taking advantage of the retreat of the Russian army, had rebelled and had formed the Armenian Military Union. The command of the army attached four hundred of them to this second regiment. They were all novices quite new to the service. Some deserted and the remainder only served as sentinels or to keep guard round the batteries.

Some time before the retreat of the Russian Army, internal warfare has commenced in the north of the Caucasus. Communications between Russia and Transcaucasia were at that time interrupted and the provisory government constituted at Tiflis had taken the name of Commissariat of Transcaucasia, declaring Transcaucasia an integral part of Russia and that they represented the government provisory and until the return of a normal situation. The commissariat of Transcaucasia, while not claiming to be an independent government, decreed, in December, 1917, the formation of a new army to take the place of one which had withdrawn. This new force, on the basis of nationalities, was to be formed of Russian, Georgian, Mussulman, and Armenian army corps, and to have contingents recruited among the Circassian tribes and so on.

Until the intervention of a decision on the subject of the nationality the artillerymen, the guard of the fortress of Deve-Boynou-Erzeroum, was composed of Armenian soldiers and Russian officers. The command was entirely Russian. In the same way as the command, the lists of artillery formations were also Russian, and no one could imagine that the troops were Armenians. Nobody, moreover, had given any orders in this sense and these formations have always borne the name of Russians. We have always served in the Russian Artillery, received our pay from the Russian Treasury, and been under the orders of Russian commanders. There was in the regiment a Russian church administered by a Russian pope and no Armenian church.

Almost two months had passed since the retreat of the Russian army and no military appoint had come to Erzeroum. Discipline could not be restored to the regiment. The soldiers deserted and began to pillage. They soon began to threaten the officers and to disobey them openly.

Colonel Torkom who was, I learnt, an Armenian Bulgarian, was appointed commander of the fort of Erzeroum. Towards mid January, 1918, one of the notabilities of the town, whose name I forget, was assassinated and his house pillaged by Armenian infantry soldiers. The commander-in-chief, Odichelidze, sent for all the chiefs of the troops and exacted the discovery of the assassins in a delay of three days. He declared to the Armenians that their honor was at stake in this crime and that an end must be put to the

insubordination and atrocities of their soldiers, otherwise he would be obliged to distribute arms to the Mussulman population for personal defense. Colonel Torkom answered angrily that the crimes and thefts committed by some brigands could not affect the reputation of a whole nation, and that all Armenians were not brigands. The officers then insisted on a court-martial and the application of the penal code and the death penalty on the criminals. Their request was granted, but I do not know if the murderers were discovered.

On February 25th, as far as I can remember, Colonel Torkom organized a review of all the troops in this town of Erzeroum. A salvo of 21 cannon was fired on this occasion. During the ceremony Torkom addressed a speech in Armenian to Odichelidze. Not one of us knew Armenian, so naturally we understood nothing. Afterwards, we heard that the question of the constitution of Armenia had been touched upon, and that Torkom had declared he had taken up the administration personally. As soon as the commander-in-chief heard of it, he turned Torkom out of Erzeroum. From that we deduced that the government did not wish in any way an independent Armenia.

I had often heard it said, that more than once the Headquarter Staff had declared to the Armenians that all arms, material, and other effects coming either from the front or from the depots in Erzeroum and its neighborhood, had been given to the Armenians only for the time being, and that, in case of need, they had to be restored immediately.

It was on this that the massacre of poor unarmed, inoffensive Turks took place in Erzindjan by the Armenians who, on the approach of the Ottoman troops, left the town and fled towards Erzeroum.

According to information received by the commander-in-chief and the declarations of Russian officers present in Erzindjan at the time of the massacre, 800 Turks were assassinated by the Armenians who on their side had only one casualty caused in legitimate defense. It was proved that the unhappy Turkish peasants of the village of Ilidja, near to Erzeroum, were also massacred.

On February 7th in the afternoon, the soldiers and militia of Erzeroum began to collect in the streets a number of men and to sent them off in an unknown direction. This drew my attention, and I asked the reason for it. I was answered that they had been recruited as workmen to clear away the snow from the railway. Towards three o'clock, one of the officers of my regiment, sub-lieutenant Lipisky, telephoned me that several Armenian soldiers had brought live Turks to the barracks, and that they were beating them and were likely to kill them. Having tried to free them, he was himself threatened and an Armenian officer, present at the time in the barracks, refused to set the Turks free. Accompanied by three neighboring Russian officers, I went to the help of the poor wretches. The officer who had telephone and the mayor of Erzeroum, Stavrosky, came to meet me and told me they were looking for a Turkish friend who had been arrested in the street by the Armenians. They added that the Armenians had opposed armed resistance to entry into the barracks courtyard. When we approached, we saw a dozen Mussulmans flying in terror. We managed to stop one, but could not speak to him without an interpreter. I entered the barracks without any difficulty and asked for the men arrested in the streets to be indicated to me. I was told that not a civilian was among them, but, on perquisitioning, I found about 70 Turks shut up in the bath of the building. Terror

was imprinted on their faces. I made immediately an inquiry and set the poor fellows free, at the same time imprisoning the six soldiers whom I understood to have been the promoters of the arrests. During the inquiry, I learned that a poor fellow who was standing on the roof of a neighboring house, had been killed by a shot fired by an Armenian whose name was not heard. The documents concerning this inquiry and the list of Turks saved, unfortunately disappeared with all my official archives at the recapture of Erzeroum by the Turks, on February 27th. But one can retrace the phases of events by interrogating the Turks I saved who show their gratitude by their affectionate greeting to me every time they meet me. The interpreter, Ali Bey Pepenof, in the service of the mayor Stavrosky, who had drawn up the report of the inquiry, could easily recognize the persons of whom he had drawn up the list.

At the end of the inquiry, it was proved that the Armenian infantry sub-officer Karagoudaieff, attached to the artillery regiment, had organized these acts and while arresting the Turks at their homes he had carried off a great part of their furniture and belongings with the help of Armenian soldiers already experienced in these matters. He was imprisoned at the same time as his men and the commander-in-chief was advised the same evening by the commissary Zlanof and his assistant Stavroski. That same day, the Armenians had perpetrated several assassinations in different parts of the town, and set fire to the Turkish bazaar.

Murders were daily occurrences at this time in Erzeroum and its neighborhood. One day I myself caught an Armenian who had assassinated a Turk near Tafta Fort, and gave him up to the commander of the fort. It was said that most the Turks enrolled as workmen had disappeared. The municipality drew the attention of the commander-in-chief to this fact.

The superior artillery officers, including myself, had presented a collective demand to the commander-in-chief, asking for the permission to leave the fort as their presence was of no service, and they did not wish to stain their honor by being passive onlookers of the Armenian atrocities, against which they were powerless. The commander answered that the Ottoman army had occupied Erzindjan, and was continuing its forward march in order to enter into contact with the Russian forces, this being the only means of putting an end to the atrocities committed by the Armenians against the surrounding population.

Following this advance, the commissariat of Transcaucasia made peace proposals to the Ottoman Government. The reply received by wireless, was an acceptance of this proposal by the Ottoman Army and its commander, and that it had been communicated to the Turkish Government.

General Odichelidze telegraphed to the president of the Transcaucasian commissariat Keketchkouri, and to the commander-in-chief, General Lebedinski, on the subject of our demand. He was answered that an ultimatum had been given to the Armenian National Assembly formally demanding the end of the Armenian scandal, and that, in order to put a stop to the misdeeds at Erzeroum, the said assembly had delegated Dr. Zavrieff and Antranik, and that the officers had to remain at Erzeroum until it was seen how the Ottoman Government would receive the peace proposal. At the same time the commissariat thanked the officers for having until then done their duty and expressed the hope that, considering the danger in which Russia still was, they would not abandon their posts till the last moment, adding that they

would in no way be molested or dishonored. It was therefore on the orders received from Russian commander and in the interests of Russia that we stayed at Erzeroum. We heard meanwhile that the Ottoman Government had accepted the peace proposition made by the Transcaucasian commissariat and that the peace discussions would begin at Trebizonde on February 17th.

The commander of the army declared verbally to all the officers that, as they had no intention of fighting against the Ottomans, they would remain in Erzeroum until peace was signed and that, according to the treaty of peace, all arms and war material would be either transferred to Russia or entirely made over to the Ottoman Government. If before the signing of peace the Ottoman troops attempted to recapture Erzeroum, the Russian soldiers and officers would retire to Russia, after having destroyed their artillery. In any case, they would receive seven days notice.

Until it was decided whether or not the officers would remain in Erzeroum or not, it was necessary to take certain measure against any eventual attacks of the Kurds. The Government had officially declared at the time of the armistice discussion, that the Kurds did as they liked, and would listen to no one.

The result was that at the end of January, the commander of the army decided to post a sufficient number of guns along the line from Erzeroum to Erzindjan to prevent the pillaging of the food depots stationed along this line. To secure this effect, an officer and one or two cannons were placed at each halting place. When the Armenian troops retired from Erzindjan to Erzeroum, the guns were also taken to the latter town. Towards February 10th, the guard house of Buyuk-Keremitli and Sourp-Nichan, above the Door of Trebizonde, received to this end two cannon each as well as all parts of the town capable of being defended. The same was to be done between the gates of Kars and Kharpout, to prevent any attack of the Kurds on the side of Palan-Deuvene. But these guns, though they might do against the Kurds, were no good against a regular army furnished with artillery. So, towards the middle of February the guards placed at a distance were dismounted and put into the central depot. The same measures were taken for the cannon near at hand, except for those at Palan-Deuvene. No immediate attack by the Ottoman forces was expected, as it was supposed that the latter were quite demoralized and incapable to taking action before the summer.

On February 12th, Armenian brigands armed to the teeth shot a dozen Turks near the railway station. Two Russian officers who were present, tried to save these poor wretches, but were themselves threatened and the poor Turks killed.

On February 13th, the commander of the army proclaimed the state of siege, and formed a martial court with the order to apply capital punishment, in conformity with the ancient law. Colonel Morel was appointed commander of the fort of Erzeroum and an Armenian was made president of the martial court.

The commander-in-chief and General Guerassimof, governor of the fortress, left Erzeroum on the same day. They went to choose the place where the artillery was to concentrate in case of retreat. I remained in the town as commander of the fort artillery. The headquarters of Colonel Morel was composed mostly of Russian officers. The head of the regimental staff was Staff Captain Schneur.

Colonel Morel took quite a different attitude after the departure of the commander-in-chief. He declared that Erzeroum would be defended to the last and that no man capable of carrying arms would be allowed to leave the town. When I gave the list of officers who wished to leave, to the martial court, one of the members of the court, Sohoumian, cried out that he would himself kill anybody who wished to leave and that those who did so secretly would be caught by Armenian troops who had been posted for that purpose between Keupru-Keuy and Hassan Kale, and court-martialed. I realized that we were caught in a trap from which we could hardly escape, and it became manifest that the state of siege and the martial court had been instituted against the Russian officers and not against the Armenian bandits. In town, tyranny continued as in the past. The Turkish population who, was as usual, deprived of all arms and means of defense and exposed to all kinds of attacks, were protected as much as possible by the Russian officers, many of whom under my orders forcibly saved Turks who were being robbed and arrested in the streets.

Caraieff, who held the office of technical agent, killed an Armenian who was running off after having publicly robbed a Turk. The promises made to punish those who murdered peaceful, non-armed people were never carried out.

The martial court, fearing the Armenians, did not condemn one. It was the Armenians specially who had insisted on the institution of this court, though the Turks were sure that one Armenian would never punish another. We thus proved the truth of the Russian proverb which says that a crow never picks out the eyes of its fellow crow. The Armenians fit to bear arms went off on the pretext of accompanying their families who were leaving the town. The non-commissioned officer Karagoudaieff, whom I had arrested, was set free without my permission or knowledge. When I asked Colonel Morel the reason, he answered that a new inquiry had been made, which had proved the innocence of the prisoner. Now, I and one or two of my officers had been the principal witnesses of the misdeeds of Karagoudaieff and no one had questioned us. I then made an inquiry through the regiment itself and sent on the papers to Colonel Alexandrof.

The assassin I had myself caught at Tafta did not receive the slightest punishment. Colonel Morel began to fear a rising of the Turkish population of Erzeroum. On February 17th, Antranik arrived in that town. Dr. Zavrieff, assistant commissary of the invaded territories, accompanied him. Never having been interested in the Armenian question we did not know that Antranik was considered by the Ottoman Government as a criminal and condemned to death. I only learned this after my interview with the commander of the Ottoman army, on March 7th. Antranik had arrived in the uniform of a Russian brigadier-general, and wearing the 4th class decoration of Saint Vladimir, the cross of Saint George of the second class for officers and the special medal for simple soldiers. His chief staff-major, the Russian Staff-Colonel Sinkievich, formed his retinue. One day before the arrival of Antranik at Erzeroum, Colonel Morel made know the telegram he had received from him saying that machine guns had been posted at Keupru-Keuy to destroy all cowards who had fled from the town. On his arrival, Antranik took the command into his own hands and Colonel Morel was thus under him. As for us, who were still under the orders of Morel.

On the day of Antranik's arrival, I heard from my officer at Tepe-Keuy that the whole population of that locality, within the zone under my command, had been massacred by the Armenians. I told Antranik of it at my first interview. He sent off in my presence twenty horsemen with orders to arrest the assassins.

Colonel Torkom then reappeared, and a few days after the arrival of Antranik the Armenian artillery Colonel Doulouhanof arrived. He told me from the first that he would be my chief as he was an artillery inspector. I answered that, having the functions of a divisional commander, I had no need of a chief, otherwise I would retire. Thereupon Doulouhanof said he had been put in charge of the artillery of the fortress of Erzeroum and he made known to me his decisions not in his name, but in Antranik's.

Captain Djamboladian, an Armenian commander of the artillery battery under my order, had also had the desire to interfere in my affairs. When I gave out that the dynamos and projectors of all the guns would be removed, he declared that as in any case, the Armenians would remain in Erzeroum, they would need all this apparatus and that he would not sanction the removal of a single one. It soon became evident that the Armenians wanted to get the command into their hands and only to leave to the Russians the work of executing orders. They worked for the independence of Armenia using the Russians to further their plans, but doing their best not to let the Russians understand they were being made a cat's paw, for fear the Russian officers would abandon them. The declarations made further on by Captain Pliat, commander ad-interim of the 7th Caucasian mountain artillery battalion, prove how much the Armenians feared the departure of the Artillery officers.

On hearing that the mountain artillery battalion was to leave on February 7th for Sari Kamiche, the Armenians arrested on the 6th the Commander of the artillery who released by order of the commander of the army, was again arrested. They threatened to put Erzeroum to the sword if the artillerymen left the town. The commander gave up the idea of letting them go and those who had been imprisoned were set a liberty through the care of the officers of the Russian general staff.

It became necessary to come to some agreement with the commander of the 7th artillery battalion and we decided secretly to help each other if the Armenians used violence towards the Russian officers, and exacted openly that we should help in the interest of the Armenians. As material force, we had cannons, machine guns and the Russian officers. The officers of the mountain artillery regiments began to live as near as possible to each other and the artillery officers of the fortress gathered round the Mussulman quarter where was in the beginning our headquarter.

After the arrival of Antranik, the fear of a rising of the population of Erzeroum was redoubled in the camp of Colonel Morel. The latter ordered the Russian officers at Fort Medjidie to open fire if a revolution broke out, should the promoters of the insurrection be arrested, and he moreover told us to leave the Mussulman quarter and take up our lodgings in the Armenian quarter. Having lived for two years side by side with the Mussulmans we laughed at this imaginary fear of the Armenians and the artillery officers answered unanimously and categorically that, having remained in the service to fight against a loyal and correct adversary, they would never consent to fire on women and children, for there was no longer any

doubt that that was what the Armenians were going to exact while pretending, without any reason, that the Mussulmans had risen.

Our removal to the Armenian quarter was impossible for many reasons: first, we could not possibly change our domicile within the time prescribed. Then to leave the Mussulman quarter would immediately authorize the Armenians to indulge freely in massacres. And lastly, the Russian officers would be thrown into an Armenian circle which they did not trust. The officers of the mountain artillery battalion who did not form part of the lists of the fortress, refused a proposal of the same kind, in the same way. The Armenians were thus obliged to settle their affairs themselves and began to arrest those people whom they considered having provoked the rebellion. The intention of Colonel Morel of firing on the town having come to my ears, I thought it necessary to consult urgently the officers under my orders.

We held two meetings with a day's interval between them. At the first were present, besides all the artillery officers present in Erzeroum, two English officers who were there since a few days; Colonels Morel, Sinkivich, Dolouhanof, and Torkom; Antranik and Dr. Zavrief.

Our object of inviting the English officers to this meeting was simply to let them see the relations existing between the Russian officers and the Armenian commander, so that they might understand how far our officers were able to prevent the Armenian cruelties, and might bear witness on their return. Not having under my direct control either telegraph or telephone, and knowing that the telegrams I sent were never transmitted, I openly declared all I had heard about the cruelties and horrors, and related the events which had been told me by the commander-in-chief Odichelidze. In conclusion, I declared that the Russian officers had remained in Erzeroum by order of their superiors to serve Russia and not to cover by their uniform and reputation the Armenian atrocities, and that we demanded that an end be put to this barbarity, or that we should be allowed to leave our posts and retire. The officers who spoke after me, all upheld my views. Antranik answered that the Armenians were extremely grateful to Great Russia of which they formed an inseparable fraction, that their only object in the present war was to help Russia, that the so-called massacres were but the result of the unfriendliness existing between Turk and Armenian, that he had come in person to Erzeroum to assure order and that unless he could make the Armenians obey and stop the massacres, he would be the first to leave the city. The deliberations had taken place through an interpreter. To the question as to whether those officers who wished might leave the town, Antranik replied that those who had not enough courage would do better to leave and that he would favor their departure as much as possible. Colonel Sinkievich declared that he was convinced that at Erzeroum only Russia was served and that it was full of this conviction that he himself was there. In the end the officers decided to wait ten days in order to see how far Antranik's words would be realized and to act in consequence.

This meeting had taken place on February 21st or 20th. Shortly after, Colonel Dolouhanof confessed to us with much surprise that he had never imagined that the Russian officers could have such an aversion for the Armenians.

The next day, Antranik had posters stuck up in Turkish saying that all authors of crimes committed either against an Armenian or against a Turk would be discovered at any price and would share

the same fate; that the Mussulmans could without fear reopen their shops and do their business, and that if any one of those who had been enrolled and sent off as workmen disappeared, all those in charge of the expedition and enrolling would be held responsible and would answer his life by their own.

On riding through the street the next day, with Captain Djamboladia, commander of the battalions under my orders, we saw some men reading the notices. Djamboladian explained to them in Turkish that, if the Mussulmans did not rise, the Armenians would not harm them. They answered that for the past two years the Mussulmans had done nothing wrong and that they had no intention of doing anything wrong in the future, but as they were unarmed and defenseless, they begged to be left alone and not assassinated without cause. I answered through Djamboladian that I was the commander of the Russian artillery and neither my comrades, the Russian officers, nor I, wished the Mussulman population to be molested, and that in the future, as in the past, we would protect them as much as we could. Many of those present, and particularly one or two persons who remembered having been saved by me at the time of the events of February 7th, confirmed my words. Djamboladian was a member of the Armenian committee.

The second meeting was composed exclusively of Russian officers and Dr. Zavrieff. It was then shown that the 2nd artillery fortress regiment of Erzeroum did not belong at all to the Armenians, as the latter imagined, but remained as always a Russian regiment, that not one of its officers had taken service voluntarily or otherwise with the Armenians, that not one of us was in their service and consequently the Government should settle in a formal manner if this regiment was Russian or Armenian, and, in the first case, send us Russian soldiers; in the second, allow the officers who did not wish to serve except in the Russian army, to leave the regiment and to send to other fronts those who did not wish to serve in the Caucasus; and lastly, if what was rumored was true, that Transcaucasia would separate from Russia, the Russian officers should be absolutely called back in order to prevent their remaining here as foreign officers. On the basis of old decrees it was decided that each officer could have recourse officially to his superiors to ask to be put at the disposal of the War Office or to be transferred to one of the Russian army corps. I declare that I would uphold the demands addressed to me in this sense, and would send them on to the competent department.

During these discussions, Captain Yermoloff, of the 7th mountain battalion of the Caucasus, refusing to be enrolled in a newly formed Armenian battalion, asked for his recall. They tried to dissuade him from this, but he insisted. Colonel Morel then wrote below the demand that, this officer not being qualified for service, was put at the disposal of the Staff at the front, and urged Yermoloff to leave Erzeroum within 24 hours. We thus lost a devoted officer whose only fault was not to have wished to serve in the Armenian ranks, and to commit the inadvertence of declaring openly that Colonel Morel served the Armenians. Dr. Zavrieff repeated at this meeting the proposals of Antranik and pointed out that it was in the interest of Russia that we should remain at Erzeroum until the conclusion of peace and that, as officers of a civilized nation, we could not say to the Armenians: Settle your affairs with the Turks yourselves; murder each other and may the devil take you! We Russians will not interfere in your private affairs! He added that it was a duty to humanity for us to remain in Erzeroum and prevent the massacre of Mussulmans. This

speech had not the desired effect, and, after the meeting, the doctor himself acknowledged that there was no longer any hope of seeing the situation improve and that all the officers would probably leave.

Ten days after the recapture of Erzeroum by the Ottoman army, I had the opportunity of reading certain documents in which Dr. Zavrief spoke openly of granting an autonomy to the Armenians, but he was of the opinion, that for doing so, it was necessary to take advantage of the services rendered by the Russian officers. Dr. Zavrief, who had written these papers before his arrival in Erzeroum, had well understood the feelings of the Russian officers. We were but soldiers and had no wish to interest ourselves in politics. This was the cause of our indifference to Armenian party quarrels.

The promises of Antranik remained always in the state of promise. The public in no way believed in them. The bazaars remained shut. Everybody was afraid and no one was seen in the streets of the Musulman quarters. One or two stalls near the Municipality were the only ones opened during the day and where a few Mussulmans met. No Armenian was punished, no Armenian criminal was discovered. And how could one punish innocent Armenians? At this last remark of the Armenians, the Russian officers stated that they had arrested many guilty Armenians but that not one had been punished. Silence answered them. The murders could not be stopped, but the assassins did their best to act in secret. Crimes began to be committed in the villages at a distance from the town and beyond the sight of the Russian officers. The Turks of the neighboring villages disappeared and no one could find out what became of them.

The villages at a distance had recourse to arms to defend themselves. The arrests in town were multiplied from fear of rebellion. I asked Colonel Morel what had become of the prisoners; if they did not run the risk of being slaughtered as in Erzindjan, and if their lives were in safety. He answered that they were under the guardianship of patrols that could be trusted, and some had been sent to Tiflis and the rest kept as hostages in Erzeroum.

The service of revictualling began to show irregularities. When one asked for oil for the artillery regiment, the clerk of the commissariat, an Armenian, would not give any; whereas the corporal of the Armenian companies called "electricity" obtained anything he chose to ask for in consideration of his old acquaintanceship with Antranik. The latter withheld all the sugar from the town under the pretext of making a fair distribution and we could never get any. The Russian officers who traveled along the line of halting places complained of the privations they suffered from on the way. The Armenian officers, on the contrary, found shelter and warm food everywhere. Toward the middle of February, two wagonettes were put at the disposal of the artillery officers for the transport of their belongings and families. The staff had agreed to give them three more, but, as soon as he had left Erzeroum, the question was put off. Colonel Sinkievich was approached on the subject. The Armenian functionary to whom the demand was referred, declared he could not do anything before two days, when it can be proved by all the officers present that all means of locomotion were put at the disposal of fugitive Armenians.

On the second road, these armed fugitives assassinated every person they met either out of fear, or to rob them. It thus became extremely dangerous to send off families or goods without an escort, but no fresh troops arrived and the few soldiers at one's disposal no longer obeyed orders. Before the arrival of

Antranik, the infantry companies refused to go to the front. They were sent afterwards but deserted in so scandalous a manner that it was only with blows or sabre strokes that Antranik could get them back to their posts. As to the units in which the Russian officers were obliged to stay, they were transformed into small bands.

Antranik had perhaps military administrative talent, but the orders he gave through Colonel Dolouhanof surprised me by their absurdity.

The Armenians, headed by Antranik, had put all their hope in the Russian artillery. But they did not realize that to get any advantage from the cannons of the fort they needed sufficient number of trained and disciplined soldiers. Their main object, as events have proved it, was to be able to escape under the protection of our guns.

The peace conference at Trebizonde was continually put off. Fixed first of all for February 17th, then to the 20th, and finally to the 25th. We heard this news from the staff of the troops at Erzeroum. The two headquarters in this town were at a certain distance from each other. The telephone of the one at the fortress being out of order and almost useless, I was obliged to go to the second twice a day. From information from Colonel Morel and his staff I learned that there were no regular Ottoman troops in the neighborhood of Erzeroum and that they were only fighting against Kurdish bands and armed villagers, among whom were some trained soldiers of the Ottoman army who had staked behind when the latter had retired from Erzeroum in 1916. It has supposed that both these bands, or groups of peasants and soldiers, had been organized by Ottoman officers who had come into these districts specially for the protection of the Mussulmans. The aggressors possessed in all only two mountain cannons left by the Armenians at Erzindjan. They could attack in the direction of Erzindjan-Olti as well as on the side of Kars and Palan-Deuvene. But, for some unknown reason, Colonel Morel did not think they would attack from the Olti side. The scout service was very badly done by the Armenians. The horsemen attached to this service spent their time in murdering and robbing the peasants. Their reports were entirely untrue and invented. Enemy forces having attacked the reconnoitering patrol, made out to be of two thousand men, were in reality less than two hundred. The scouts who pretended to have been surrounded by two or three hundred men of the enemy, declared having only had one killed and one wounded. One day an Armenian officer announced by telephone that a detachment of four hundred men had begun to attack his position. In reality, it was only two unarmed peasants who had come out of a neighboring village, and where they had soon returned. During the whole time that elapsed between the desertion of Erzindjan by the Armenians and the recapture by the Turks of Erzeroum, the patrols of Armenian scouts only brought in one prisoner, an unfortunate cavalry soldier who probably had frozen feet and could not walk without assistance.

After the second meeting of officers, some amongst them had asked for their transfer to other divisions. When I presented their demands to Colonel Morel, he got angry and said that by decision of the martial court he would forcibly oppose to their departure. I explained to him that as the cannons were still in charge of the Russian officers, they might reply to force by artillery fire and that he should agree to their demand, considering that they were not abandoning their posts, but legally asking for a transfer. Morel

then told me that he would give each officer who left the same kind of certificate as he had given to Captain Yermolof, at that those who wished to sully their reputation were free to do so. Colonel Dolouhanof, whom I reminded of what he had said at Tiflis and at Batoum, that one could expect nothing from officers kept at their posts against their will, told me that, at his request, they had promised to send sixty English officers to Erzeroum.

At this time I heard that a Russian or Polish soldier occupying the post of stationmaster at Erzeroum, had been imprisoned because he did not wish to continue his work, and had been kept by force at his post. Under the pretext of a prompt execution of orders given, but in reality to be ready for any eventuality, I advised the officers to live near one another, so as to be able to give help mutually in case of need.

Captain Yermolof had left on February 25th. I told him to stop at Sari-Camiche to put before the general Vichinsky, chief of the Staff, and general Gerassimof, artillery commander, our bad situation in the midst of the Armenian, and to beg them to save us.

On February 24th, an Ottoman airplane did some reconnoitering in the neighborhood of Erzeroum. From this I deduced that the Turkish forces were already at Erzindjan and perhaps even at Mama-Hatoun. Colonel Morel then told me he had received from the Turks a written proposal to evacuate Erzeroum. After the occupation of the town by the Ottoman forces, I learned from the commandant of the Turkish army corps, Kiazim Bey, that this proposal had a definite character and had been made by letter bearing his own signature. Colonel Morel gave no importance to it and tried to deceive me by making out that the letter was an anonymous propaganda document.

On February 24th, and 25th, the staff of the fortress announced that the front ran no risk. In the neighborhood of Teke-Keressi, only, the Kurds were concentrating. Some troops were sent off to prevent their advance. It was said, on the other hand, that a second detachment sent from Erzeroum had repulsed the enemy and driven them back some verstes beyond Illidja. But on February 27th the Armenian detachment was surrounded; that of Illidja was beaten, and all who could escape of these two detachments fled towards Erzeroum.

I had received from Colonel Morel the verbal order to fire on the attacking party, but there were none to be seen, outside the Armenian soldiers flying in panic towards Erzeroum along the Harpout road. On the road the Trebizonde, the Armenian troops were retiring to Erzeroum in serried masses, advancing as on a drilling field. In the afternoon it was heard that the enemy was round the village of Youz. I estimated that there were about one thousand five hundred men. They seemed a well-ordered regiment and not irregular Kurdish bands. But the few horsemen who framed them gave them the appearance of Turkish detachments. The sight of the retiring Armenians were piteous and their condition desperate. Sometimes they spread in skirmished over a small space, at others they advanced in small groups, with wild looks and fear painted on their faces. To put a little order into this muddle, Antranik went to the line of sharpshooters, and managed to get them to advance a little. But the cowardly Armenians, once down, could not get up again. On our side, the artillery fire continued until nightfall.

As soon as the attacks of the Kurdish bandits began and we were busy in repulsing them, all the Russian officers gave up the idea of leaving and tried to do their duty zealously so as not to be accused of cowardice.

I understood from that day what ideas the Armenians serving in the artillery entertained. Those who were entrusted with the guarding of the battery of Buyuk Keremetli, could not be sent forward. They even abandoned their cannon and withdrew toward the Kharpout gate. The Armenians flying from the village of Tekke-Deressi, carried off the cattle belonging to the surround district and assassinated the unarmed people they came across.

The approach of the Turks towards Erzeroum had taken place at an unexpected time by the Russian staff. No fighting orders had been given us to this effect, or at least if they had been done, they never reached me. When from outside the clarions sounded the call to arms and the signal of attack, I learnt that each section of artillery had been assigned the place it had to occupy. But neither had this order reached me.

My duty was very simple: to take the enemy under the fire of my cannons in order to prevent them from going beyond the line of the forts. In the advanced entrenchments, together with the infantry, there were mountain batteries that were not under my orders.

On that day, and until night, the Armenian militia arrested without stopping all the Mussulmans of the town, including the old and sick. They made out they were enrolling them as workmen to clear the snow from the railway lines. I heard in the evening that an Armenian University Student had presented himself at my house with a patrol in order to make a so-called search. The door of my lodging bore my name. On the opposition of my family, the patrol did not dare to enter the house, nor to carry off an old Turk who was the proprietor, nor our few Kurdish servants, but the patrol spat forth a heap of insults. The student declared that all this was done by order of Antranik. I had a door made between my lodgings and the house of my Turkish proprietor so that the latter could take refuge at my place if ever they came to take him.

Latterly, every time I went to speak to Antranik of his staff, I always took with me Captain Jultkevitch, director of the mobilization section, so that he should be witness of my dealings with the above named. One night, we went with him to the officers' meeting. We noticed that the meeting had already begun before our arrival. Antranik, Dr. Zavarief, Colonels Sinkievitchk, Morel, and Dolouhanof and a few others took part in it. As soon as they saw us, Colonel Sinkevitch read the following telegram from the Commander Odichelidze:

“The commander of the Ottoman army, Vehib Pacha, having informed by wireless that his forces have received the order to occupy Erzeroum, the cannons of the fortress should be destroyed and the troops withdrawn. Signed: ODICHELIDZE.

This order having come a little late, we could not carry out the work of destruction which would have taken two or three days.

Antranik, in a rage, cursed and swore in Armenian. Dr. Zavarief tried to calm him and translated his words to us: "We have sent off ten to fifteen thousand men, said he, and instead of preserving Erzeroum, they stayed in the rear and have destroyed the Armenian nation and Armenia. Of the few thousand Armenians we have at our disposal, not one will go to the front. Cursed be their leaders!" cried he.

Antranik informed us of his final decision which was to hold out two days longer at Erzeroum and not evacuate without having destroyed everything possible. He then undressed himself as if there were no one else in the room, and went to bed.

The fires that broke out in different parts of the town were not put out and the militia carried off during the night, even the old and sick Turks to be sent to unknown destinations. I spoke of it to Dr. Zavarief, who told me that orders had been given to put out the fires and not to arrest the Mussulmans. In my former interviews with the doctor, he repeated to me that in his capacity as a member of the government, he ardently desired that no irregularities should be committed and that he would make all efforts to attain this object. I heard the same words from other intellectual Armenians. I do not know what private sentiments these Armenians cherished, but it is undeniable that there were some among them who openly condemned all ideas of murder and pillage and Dr. Zavarief should know better than I did the Armenian ideal.

After some deliberation on the way of carrying out Antranik's decision, each of us returned home. The advanced entrenchments and the number of defenders at our disposal were able of defending the town not two but forty-two days and not only against the Kurds but even against regular forces. The Turkish Government having officially declared at the time of the armistice deliberations that the Kurds could not be made to hear reason, we were obliged to take all measures to ward off an attack by the Kurds.

In the evening, on reaching my lodging, I noticed that the fires had been put out and disorder had stopped. I gave the necessary orders for the destruction of the cannons. This could be done in two days but I learned from the reports of my officers that under cover of the night, the infantry soldiers had abandoned the trenches. After many difficulties, I managed to get into telephonic communication with Colonel Morel and transmitted my information to him. He answered that all necessary arrangements having been made and reinforcements sent off, there was no danger to fear.

Between two and three in the morning, some shots were fired in the town, and as on the proceeding days, one could distinguish the Armenian voices in the road, axe blows, the sound of doors being burst in and people being carried off. Two thoughts troubled me: 1) that of seeing Russian officers compromised with the Armenians because people, not having seen with their own eyes the cruelties of the Armenian bandits, champions of liberty, might imagine that they were authorized by our officers; 2) that some regular Ottoman troops might be found among those attacking the town.

The decision, the order and the wish of the commander-in-chief being to evacuate Erzeroum and not to fight against the regulars, misunderstanding might have cropped up. Before these two eventualities, I decided to go early to Colonel Morel and propose: 1) in case he did not feel strong enough to stop the

brigandage of the Armenians, to train part of the cannon on the latter to master them by brute force; 2) to sent parliamentaries to the Ottoman forces to notify that all military operations would be suspended and the town evacuated and delivered within two days without effusion of blood; and lastly, to prevent the Armenians from all massacres during the evacuation, to form, under the command of Russian officers, detachments into which no Armenians were to enter. At dawn I went to the Colonel accompanied by Captain Jultkievitch. On the way we met fore the artillery munition depot sub-lieutenant Baradonian. He told me that the retreat having been ordered, he wanted to set fire to the munitions but to be able to do so an order from me was necessary. This surprised me as the ammunition depot depended on Colonel Dolauhanoff. Nevertheless, as an explosion would harm the population as much as the Russian officers and that the artillerymen had received no order in this sense, I succeeded in dissuading the sub-lieutenant and in saving the ammunitions.

On approaching Colonel Morel's headquarters, I saw everybody flying. Opposite, the American Consul's house was in flames. Colonels Morel and Torkom were on horseback. They had put their good on an automobile and some carriages were ready to start. It was seven o'clock in the morning. I asked what was happening. I was answered that the order to retire had been given at five o'clock and it was incomprehensible that I had not yet received it. What I feared happened. While the officers were aiming their guns and trying to stop the assailants, the Armenians in the rear massacred and then ran away. Unless I had arrived not one Russian officer would have had knowledge of the order to retreat. The least possible details were given me on the events while, on the other hand a number of circulars and orders in connection with questions that did not concern me in the least were communicated to me.

My first idea under the circumstances was to go to Fort Medjidie to send by means of shrapnel a greeting and thanks to the brave Armenians, who wrapped up in thick jackets, were flying towards the Kars road to escape the shots. But I gave up this idea for fear of harming any innocent people that might be among the fugitives, many people having stayed with their families at Erzeroum.

It was in this way that, duped by the Armenian conquerors, the Russian officers could not destroy their cannon. We returned to headquarters. On the way we met a number of Armenian fugitives who had lost their heads through fright. The streets were impassible, being stopped with their furniture and goods. We took less frequent streets. There we heard noise and shots without being able to see what was happening further on. The marks of blood which were to be seen on the snow made one suppose that a fight was taking place in the vicinity. We turned back and came to a square where we got out of the carriage and walked. The Armenian commanding the militia came riding out of a side street and the sight of him confirmed my suspicions.

Arrived at headquarters, I ordered my batteries to retire at the same time as the infantry, and the carts to be put at the disposal of the artillery officers. I heard that the carters in the service of transports had all gone off in the evening. Armenian deserters, armed from head to foot, had unharnessed the carriages, and getting two by two on horseback, had gone off towards Kars. They had tried also to carry off my horses but, on my coachman's resistance, they fired and wounded one of the horses without being able to

carry off the other. Out of the fifty carriages that composed our transport service we would use only two or three, which some officers took advantage of to leave in haste with their goods. One might have been able to use the other means of transport but the Armenian fugitives in their fear fired right and left and, in order to protect ourselves from their shots, we were obliged to take refuge in the houses. The Turks assured us they would protect us as well as our families from the attacks of the Kurds. In any case, if we had tried to advance in spite of the shots the Armenians stupidly poured down, we would not have been able to pass the gate of Kars which was held by the Turks. Captain Mitrophan, who was quite close to it, had not been able to pass and had returned.

Shortly after the entry of Ottoman forces into the town we heard that the assailants were composed of regulars and not only of Kurds. The brave Armenian infantry, taking advantage of the dark, had fled during the night towards the Erzeroum-Kars road with the swiftness of the storm. A real storm could not, in so short a time, clean Erzeroum of the Armenian stain.

Neither in the town, nor in the trenches, were found Armenians killed or wounded, which shows the tenacity of their defense! The fact that the prisoners made by the Turks at Erzeroum were principally Russian officers shows also how great were the sacrifices made by the Armenians.

As soon as I heard of the occupation of Erzeroum by the Ottoman troops, I presented myself to them with my a.d.c. to advise them of our presence. It was only at this moment that I learnt of the conclusion of peace between Russia and Turkey. *The Turks I met on the way shook my hand, thanking me for having saved them. They showed the same gratitude to the other Russian officers, for without them the Ottoman troops would not have found a single Turk on their entry into Erzeroum.*

Petronius the Roman wrote: "The Armenians are men, but they walk on four paws at home." And the Russian poet Lermontof said: "Thou art a slave, thou art a coward, thou art an Armenian!"

Provisionary Commander ad-interim of the position of Deve-Boynou
(Erzeroum Fortress) and Commander of the Second Fortress Artillery
Regiment of Erzeroum, Colonel Lieutenant TWERDO KHLEBOF.

NOTES

Of Superior Russian Officer on the
ATROCITIES AT ERZEROUM

Drawn from the Memoirs of Lieutenant Colonel TWERDO KHLEBOF
Commander of the Second Russian Fortress Artillery Regiment
Which held the garrison at Erzeroum until its recapture by the Turks,
February 27th, 1918.

This document depicts and illustrates in all its extent the atrocities committed upon the Moslem population of the districts of Erzindjan and Erzeroum and upon the inhabitants of the regions situated on both sides of Erjindjan-Erzeroum road.

The original Russian manuscript of this document written by Colonel Lieutenant Twerdo Khlebof is kept in the archives.

The animosity which has always existed between the Turks and Armenians has never been manifested with as much violence as during the present war. In Russia, as in the rest of Europe, we knew since long of the antipathy of the Armenian for the Turk. To justify these sentiments, the Armenians have always posed as victims of Turkish oppression, and seconded by their religion and their civilization, they have always succeeded in passing as a subjugated and tortured nation. But the Russians who have had the opportunity of being for a certain length of time in contact with the Armenians, have formed quite a different idea, and have found them rather wild, grasping, avaricious and parasites. Even the Russian peasant judges them quite differently and I have often heard it said to our troopers: "What a brave nation, these Armenians! The Turks have got the upper hand over the, but they have not finished them off. They should not have left a single one!"

The Armenians serving in the Russian army have always been considered inferior to their comrades. They always preferred secondary and insignificant posts far from the front, and many deserted or mutilated themselves in the beginning of hostilities so as to be safe from all danger. But what I myself saw and heard during the two months which preceded the recapture of Erzeroum by the Turks, surpasses all that can be said, in their disfavor.

At the time of the Russian occupation of Erzeroum in 1916, not a single Armenian was allowed to approach, and as long as General Kalitine, head of the first Army Corps, which in command of this district, the divisions, including Armenians, were not sent there. After the revolution, all anterior measures were suppressed and the Armenians rushed on Erzeroum, and began immediately to pillage the town and villages, to massacre the inhabitants and to commit all sorts of excesses. The presence of the Russians prevented the Armenians from publicly committing these atrocities, and it was in secret that brigandage and murder took place.

In 1917, the revolutionary Executive Committee of Erzeroum, principally composed of soldiers, began to make perquisitions everywhere, under pretext of disarming the population. The search for arms, which was in no way legal, degenerates into pillage, and the most cowardly Armenians at the war were those who took part with the greatest ardor.

One day when I was going through the town on horseback, I saw several groups of Russian soldiers led by an Armenian soldier, white with rage, horse whip in hand, dragging the old Turks of over seventy, across bad and muddy roads. I tried to persuade the soldiers to treat these old more humanely. But the Armenian, who was leading the crowd, brandishing his whip, advanced towards me, crying out: "You take the part of these fellows, don't you? They assassinate us, and you protect them." Other Armenians joined him and sided with him. The Russian soldiers were so arrogant and insubordinate that everywhere they thrashed their officers and sometimes assassinated them. I was in a difficult position. Happily, a patrol which had remained faithful to superior command passed just then and saved the situation. The Armenians sent off and the Russian soldiers stopped insulting the two old men.

At the time of the breaking out of the Russian forces and until the arrival of fresh troops from the front, it was feared that the Armenians at Erzeroum or at the front might attack the Turkish peasants in the

rear. The Armenian notabilities gave formal assurances that such an event would not take place, that they would take all possible measures to establish complete harmony between the Turks and the Armenians and that they were sure to succeed. It was hoped that, after that, peace and quietness would reign at last, and, as a matter of fact, certain acts in the beginning seemed to lend belief to these assurances. For instance, the mosques which had been transformed into barracks by the Russian soldiers were evacuated and disinfected.

Local militia composed of Turks and Armenians were organized and the Armenians loudly demanded the institution of court-martials to try those guilty of theft and assassinations. But it was not long before it was seen that all was a fraud and a trap. The Turks who had joined the militia soon returned, as several of their comrades who had been told off for night duty had disappeared. Those who were sent outside the town also did not come back. The court-martial which had at least been set up, fearing to be itself condemned to death, did not dare to punish anybody. This state of affairs caused isolated cases of theft and murder to multiply. Between January and February, Bekir Hadji Effendi, a well-known figure in Erzeroum, was assassinated one night at his house by robbers. Commander Odichelidze gave his subordinates orders to discover the assassins within three days and severely reprimanded the commanders of the Armenian troops for the indiscipline of their men. Addressing the enlightened class of Armenians, he reported to them in bitter terms the atrocities and brigandage which their compatriots had committed against the Turks. The great number of those who were sent into the country on the pretext of road-making did not return, and he added that, if the Armenians wished to be masters of the occupied territories, they had better show more morality and not commit crimes which sullied the reputation of their nation. Especially as the general war was not yet finished and the peace congress had not yet accepted and approved of the cession of this country to the Armenians, the latter, to prove themselves more worthy of liberty, should respect law and justice more. The Armenian commanders and the national representatives declared in answer that the savage act of a small minority could not sully the honor of the whole, that some of their compatriots were taking vengeance for the past misdeeds of the Turks, but that the educated Armenians were doing their best to prevent them, and that they would consider the adoption and putting into practice of radical measures to put a stop to the massacres.

Shortly after came the news of the massacre of the Turks of Erzindjan by the Armenians. I learnt the details from the lips of the commander in chief, Odichelidze, who narrated the affair as follows:

“The massacre was organized by the doctors and the tradesmen, that is to say, not by the lower classes or brigands. Not knowing exactly the names of these Armenians, I will abstain from mentioning any. More than 800 Turks deprived of any means of defense were assassinated. Great ditches were dug, into which the poor Turks were thrown after having been slaughtered like cattle. The Armenians counted them, and were heard to say: “There are only 70, the ditch will hold ten more. Kill!” and ten more were killed to fill up the hole, which was then covered over with earth. One tradesman put 80 unhappy creatures in a house and amused himself by killing them one by one as they came out. After the Erzindjan massacre, the Armenians, armed with the best weapons, retired towards Erzeroum. A Russian artillery officer, who, in order to protect his line against the attacks of the Kurds, had been obliged to retire with a few cannons,

was obliged to make some Armenians take up position at the front. The latter, not approving at all of this decision, set fire one night to the house in which the Russian officers were lodging. The Russians, who were most of them asleep, had great difficulty in escaping. Many of them lost all their belongings.

The Armenian bands retiring from Erzindjan to Erzeroum destroyed all the villages and the Mussulman inhabitants on their passage. We had engaged native Kurdish drivers for the transport of provision carts and artillery munitions. They were peaceful people and unarmed. As they approached Erzeroum, the Armenians, taking advantage of a time when the Russian officers had gone home, fell upon the Kurds and began to kill them. The officers who, on hearing the cries of the unhappy fellows, came to their help, were threatened with the same fate, and forced to abstain from all interference while the massacre went on.”

The artillery lieutenant Medivan publicly reported at the officers mess at Erzeroum the following incident of which he was witness:

“an Armenian had attacked one of the Kurdish carters, but the latter was not yet dead and was lying face upwards on the ground, dying! The Armenian wanted to force into his mouth the club he was carrying. Not being able to do this, he finished him off by kicking him in the stomach with the heel of his boot.”

Odichelidze relates that the Turks of Illidja, who could not fly, were all massacred. He added that he himself had seen several bodies of children whose head had been cut off.

Lieutenant Colonel Griaznoff, returned from Illidja on February 26, three weeks after the massacres, said he saw on the road leading to the villages a great number of mutilated bodies which each passing Armenian spat on and cursed.

In the courtyard of the mosque, 10 to 15 sages wide corpses, had been piled up to a height of two archines. Among them were the bodies of old men, children and women of all ages. The women bore on them signs of violation, and in the sexual organs of many of them, cartridges had been introduced. Lieutenant Colonel Griaznoff brought into this courtyard, some young Armenian girls who were employed as telephone girls in the Armenian battalions, and, in terms of reproach, told them to be proud of their compatriots. He thought they would be touched by his words. What was his astonishment and disgust when he saw them on the contrary laugh with joy at the sight of the bodies! He reprimanded them indignantly, telling them that the Armenians, and even their women, were one of the most savage and vilest of peoples, and that they themselves, young girls supposed to be educated and well brought up, proved it by doubling-up with laughter before such a horrible sight, a sight which made him, an officer used to war and its miseries, shudder.

These remarks brought back the girls to a sense of propriety. They made out that their laughter was nervous, but that did not hide their bloodthirsty instincts.

An Armenian shopkeeper, a purveyor to the base commander of Aiadja, said, in speaking of the atrocities committed in this town on February 27th, that the Armenians had nailed a woman alive to the wall. Then they tore out her heart which they hung over her head.

The first great massacre of Erzeroum had commenced on February 1st. Artillerymen assembled in the road two hundred and seventy persons and, after having completely stripped them, shut up in the barracks bath with the view to massacring them. After extraordinary effort I managed to save a hundred of them. They made out that the others had been released when they heard that I had learned of the arrests. The organizer of these acts was a brute named Karagadoueff, sub-officer in the ranks of Armenian infantry attached to the artillery corps. The same day, some Turks had been killed in the road.

On February 12th, the Armenians shot at the railway station at Erzeroum more than ten peaceable and non-armed Mussulmans and they threatened with death the Russian officers who attempted to protect them. Just then I had imprisoned an Armenian who had killed an innocent Turk. The commander ordered a court-martial to be held. According to the ancient law, anybody guilty of crime had to be executed. When an Armenian officer made known to the prisoner that he was to expiate his crime by being hanged, he cried out in a rage: "Has one ever seen an Armenian hanged for a Turk!"

The Armenians set fire to the Turkish Bazaar. On February 17th I heard that the men, women and children, in fact all the population of Tepe-Keuy, a village within the zone of our artillery regiment, had been assassinated. The same day, Antranik, having arrived in Erzeroum, I spoke to him about this massacre, and asked him to find out the authors of it. I do not yet know what was the result.

Antranik has promised the artillery officers in their barracks, that order and discipline would soon be restored. But this promise was in no way fulfilled, although the government of Transcaucasia had delegated Antranik and Dr. Zavrief to Erzeroum for this special purpose. In town, the tumult calmed down to a certain degree and peace came back to the villages where no one was left alive! But when the Turkish troops came near to Illidja, the Armenians began again to imprison the Turks in Erzeroum, and, especially on the 25th of February, the arrests had reached vast proportions. In the night of the 26th, the Armenians, eluding the vigilance of the Russian officers, indulged again in massacres, but, frightened by the Turkish soldiers, fled. These massacres were not at all by chance. On the contrary, they were so well organized that all those who had not been arrested at first were so afterwards, and then put to death one by one. The Armenians congratulated themselves on having massacred that evening three thousand persons. The number of those defending the town was so few that they could not hold out against two cannons and 1,500 Turkish soldiers and fled. But the number of persons massacred that evening was very high. The Armenian notabilities were quite capable of preventing the massacres. The fact of their not having done so, proves that they were as much implicated as the murderers, for the lower classes of Armenians are extremely obedient and submit to superior orders, especially to those given by more or less important people. My regiment commanded by Russian officers was composed entirely of Armenian soldiers. We were powerless to act against them and still we always go our orders obeyed. These soldiers never openly committed a crime and the night of the massacre, while there was only one Russian officer on duty in the barracks in which was stored the rolling stock of the regiment, not one Kurdish carter was killed. It is worthy of note that while there were many hundreds of Armenian artillerymen, round about forty Kurdish carters, not one Mussulman was killed.

I do not want to insinuate that all better class Armenians indiscriminately were involved in these crimes. No. I have met many who condemned these atrocities and acknowledged that the path chosen would but lead to a deadlock. There were even some who not only opposed the crimes by words but by deeds. But the latter were in the minority and, considered as refractory to the realization of the national ideal, they were disowned by the great majority of Armenian savages. Others who outwardly showed themselves against all crimes, secretly massacred on every opportunity.

To the reproaches and reprimands addressed to them on the subject of the massacre, some Armenians answered that the Turks also acted in the same way to exterminate the Armenians and that they were but taking their revenge. Others said: "You are Russian and you can never understand the Armenian national idea!" Others preferred to be silent and say nothing. These people have never known remorse, nor realized that the human conscience created spotless, like a precious stone, must be kept as such.

The above events cannot be effaced or denied. They bring into full light the aspirations of the Armenian nation, and show that the latter sowed the wind, forgetting that he who sows the wind reaps the storm.

Provisionary Commander ad-interim of the Position of Deve-Boynou
(Erzeroum Fortress) and Commander of the Second Fortress Artillery
Regiment of Erzeroum Colonel Lieutenant TWERDO KHLEBOF.