

I WITNESSED and LIVED THROUGH

(Erzurum 1917-1918)

Lt.Col. TVERDOHLEBOV



Notes pertaining to the Armenians' attitude towards the Turks living in Erzurum and in the settlements nearby, between the outbreak of the Russian Revolution and the delivering of Erzurum by the Turkish Forces on March 12, 1918.

These notes are appended to the "Notes on the State of the Second Russian Artillery Regiment". These notes are prepared separately to serve as an individual document.

The Turkish-Armenian enmity that is known by the European and the Russian public opinion has reached its peak with the events experienced during the First World War.

Armenians' aversion to the Turks is a renowned fact throughout the ages. Armenians have always been successful in presenting themselves as a nation subjected to heavy torture, and oppression by the uncivilized bigoted Turks.

The Russians who had close relations with the Armenians to a certain extent have developed different views on their level of civilization. Armenians having considerably vile, surprising, and rapacious character can only live off on others. However, the Russian peasants have different judgments on them. I heard the Russian soldiers saying, "Turks have only treated them roughly, but did not kill them. They should have killed them to the last man!"

The Armenian troops among the Russian soldiers have always been regarded as the most inferior. They have always preferred working in the rear echelons rather than fighting at the fronts. The increases in the desertion of the Armenians and in their wounding themselves are all definite proofs of the idea developed.

The things I personally witnessed and heard during the two months that passed until the Turkish forces' delivering Erzurum are beyond all the evil one would think of the Armenians.

None of the Armenians were allowed to enter neither in the city nor in its environs during the occupation of Erzurum by the Russians in 1916. During the office of the Commander of the 1st Corps General Kaltin, who was the commander of the forces in Erzurum and its environs, no military units having Armenian troops were sent to this region.

After the lifting of all the measures, following the Revolution, Armenians attacked Erzurum and its environs in waves.

Synchronous to those attacks, the houses in Erzurum and in the villages were pillaged and people were killed. The presence of the Russian units and Russians were keeping the Armenians from committing massacres. They were conducting massacres and pillaging in secret and cautiously.

In 1917, the Erzurum Revolutionary Executive Committee, mainly composed of the Armenian military personnel, launched a search for confiscating the firearms the people had. As the searches could not have been carried out properly, troops of uncontrollable mob gradually started full scale pillaging. The Armenian troops did their best to tyrannize and torture people during battles.

One day, as I was riding through one of the streets in Erzurum I saw a group of soldiers, lead by an Armenian, dragging two elderly Turkish people, both about 70 years old, along the street. An Armenian soldier was carrying a whip made of wire fencing. Streets were all covered with ditches and mud.

This mob, composed mainly of the Armenian soldiers, was dragging these two poor elderly men in mud all over the street. The elderly men were drenched in mud, and whenever they found an opportunity to stand up they would drag them again and commit all sorts of torture.

I tried hard to persuade them to behave in a civilized manner towards those two poor elderly men. The Armenian soldier leading the mob, walked over me with his whip made of wire fencing, and shouted, "You are backing them are not you? They are killing us, and you are backing them!" The mob started walking over me. At that time, the Russian soldiers were so out of control that they were beating, and even murdering the Russian officers. Situation was

getting worse. Upon arriving of a patrol column under the command of an officer the situation changed. Armenians disappeared all of a sudden. The patrol column saved those men and took them to their homes without uttering any words of insult.

There was a danger of Armenians' rushing into the region, right after the withdrawing of the Russian units at their own initiative, and committing massacres on the Turks until the arrival of the units of other nations.

The prominent Armenians were guaranteeing that no such thing would happen again. They were trying to make everybody believe that all the measures for the establishment of neighborly relations between the Armenians and the Turks were taken.

It was believed that peace and order would be established. After the Revolution, the mosques used as dormitories and depots by the Russian forces were all cleaned and evacuated. A joint police force was set up with the inclusion of the Turks and Armenians. Armenians were loudly advocating the setting up of Martial Courts and practicing of capital punishment for those who committed massacres and pillaging.

It was soon discovered that all were nothing but wiles and traps. Turks who were taken into this police force started abandoning their places immediately. Because, the Turkish night patrols started to disappear all of a sudden and nothing was heard of them ever. Even the Turks who were taken out of the city to work were not coming back. The members of the Martial Courts established did not try or punish any of the criminals as they feared to be sentenced to capital punishment.

The number of the massacres and pillaging started to increase steeply. One night, at the end of January according to old calendar in other words at the beginning of February; Armenian gangs murdered Hacı Bekir Effendi, one of the most prominent people in Erzurum, at his home. The Commander-in-Chief Odichelitzé¹ ordered the unit commanders the finding of the murderer within 3 days.

The Commander-in-Chief talked at the commanders of the Armenian units condemning them, in its most general terms, about the disgraceful deeds of their troops. He also said that he was extremely offended by the pillaging and the brutal force exerted on the people.

¹ Georgian origin Commander of the Russian Caucasian Army.

He voiced his anger about the Turkish people, who were taken out from their homes under the pretext of having them work on the roads, most of whom were somehow kept from returning. He reiterated his ideas saying if the Armenians are really the owners of the occupied Armenian territory, they ought to display their honesty and the level of their moral values as a nation, thinking of the honor of the Armenian nation; and that they ought to act within frame work of the law; and do everything possible to curb all the barbarousness and brutality committed by the mob. He pointed out that the intellectuals were obliged to do it. Moreover, he said, at a time when the handing of the occupied region over to the Armenians was not yet decided at a peace conference, and at a time when the First World War had not come to an end, the Armenians ought to obey the rules of the law much more carefully.

The Armenian commanders of the Armenian units, and the representatives of the troops declared that it was not appropriate to libel the name of the Armenian nation by just equating them with a couple of murderous gang members; that some of the deserters might have wanted to take revenge on the past deeds of the Turks; that the Armenian intellectuals were doing their best to curb those events; and finally that they were thinking of taking decisive measures and implement those measures.

Soon I heard that the Armenians were massacring the Turkish people in Erzincan. I heard all the details of the massacres directly from my Commander-in-Chief Odichelitzé in person.

The event happened as follows. The massacres were organized by a doctor and a contractor. In other words it was not conducted by one of the gang members. I cannot write the names of those two Armenians as I do not remember their last names. More than 800 unarmed innocent Turks were massacred. Only an Armenian was killed while the massacred were trying to defend themselves. They slaughtered the people as if they were sheep. They had the people whom they sentenced to death dig large ditches. They took the people to edges of those ditches in groups and after having butchered them like beasts they dumped them into those ditches. One of the Armenians was counting the corpses thrown into ditches and upon his saying, "Is there only 80 people? It can take 10 more! Slaughter another 10!" disdainfully ten more people were slaughtered, thrown into the ditch and the corpses were covered with earth.

This Armenian contractor is said to have ordered the taking out innocent Turks from a building one by one. And he, just for fun, chopped the heads of some 80 people one by one as they were coming out of the door.

The deserter Armenians who were equipped with the most modern weapons started to retreat towards Erzurum after the Erzincan massacres. The Russian artillery officers, who were to protect the logistics lines from the kurdish attacks, were forced to retreat with their guns.

In one of those lines a necessity of placing a unit for a probable clash occurred. The Armenians, who were discomforted with the orders, set the Russian officers' houses a fire while they were sleeping, Russian officers barely managed to get out. Most of their war gears were burned into ashes.

The Armenian mobs retreating from Erzincan to Erzurum exterminated all the Muslim villagers they met on their way. The artillery guns that were being withdrawn from the logistics support lines were being transferred on the covered wagons. The wagons were under the care of the hired, civilian and unarmed kurds. As the convoy came closer to Erzurum, the Armenian deserters and the troops started to kill those kurds at the places where they stopped for a rest. They realized their evil deeds whenever the Russian officers entered their rooms. Whenever the Russian officers came out of their rooms on hearing the clamors, and tried to save the kurds, the armed mob walked over, and threatened them with the same end.

Those massacres were carried out in the most repulsive manner. For example, at a meeting held by the artillery officers at the Erzurum Garrison, Lieutenant Mzivani narrated an incident he witnessed: an Armenian soldier approached a kurd who was dying in agony, running, and tried to push the stick in his hand into his mouth. As he could not manage to push the stick into his mouth that was tightly closed, he took the dying man's clothes off, and started to kick his naked body with his iron heeled boots.

All of those who could not manage to flee from Ilca² were massacred. The Army Commander [General Odichelitzé] said he saw lots of corpses belonging to children whose throats were butchered with blunt knives, and bodies cut into thin and long strips.

² Ilca district affiliated to Erzurum.

Lieutenant Colonel Gryaznof, who went to Ilica three weeks after the massacres, on his return on February 26 told me about a scene he saw there: "the corpses are lying along the village roads in the open air. All the Armenians going in the front were spitting on the corpses and cursing at them. A mosque yard about 12-15 square sages [an area roughly equal to 55-70 square meters] was covered with the corpses of the senior Turkish citizens as well as of men, women, and children that formed a pile reaching 1.5 meters in height. The traces of vile assaults were observed on the women's corpses. Rifle cartridges were pushed into the genital organs of most of the women."

Lieutenant Colonel Gryaznov said he had called two Armenian girls, who were following a series of courses, to the mosque. They were working as telephone operators at the detachment. He told them to witness what the Armenians had accomplished there. Lt.Col. Gryaznov found their joyous laughter bizarre.

Lieutenant Colonel reproved them severely expressing his anger and indignation in fury. He asked, "How could the well-bred and well-educated Armenian girls laugh and exhibit joyous behavior at the sight of such an event?" He said, "This is an enough proof for Armenians', even their women's, being more contemptible than the wildest animals. This is even much more than an officer, who is shaken by this sight, and who has seen many battles and terrible events, can bear!" The Armenian girls replied him saying that they laughed as a result of nervous breakdown.

A contractor working at the Alaca³ Logistics Support Command, told us about a despicable event that took place in Alaca on February 27. The Armenians nailed a Turkish woman upon a wall alive; took her heart out and placed it on her head.

The first full scale massacre in Erzurum started on February 7. As it is now claimed, the soldiers of the artillery regiment gathered some 270 Turks from the streets by force. They captured them and locked them up in the baths in the barracks displaying their true intentions. I managed to save only 100 of them. I have just learned that the others were released by the soldiers after their learning about my arrival. Under the light of the testimonies of the rescued, this vile attempt was realized by the Armenian Reserve Officer Karagadayev, who was temporarily appointed to the artillery regiment from the infantry units. I still could not have determined his role in this event clearly.

³ A village affiliated to Ilica district of Erzurum.

Several other Turkish people were killed in the streets that day.

Several Armenians, forming an execution squad, shot more than 10 unarmed civilian Muslims at the railroad station on February 12. This gang threatened to kill the officers who tried to save those Muslims.

Meanwhile, I ordered the arresting of an Armenian who had murdered a Turkish person for no reason at all. The General Commander of the Caucasus Army had already given his permission for the founding of a Court Martial in Erzurum in line with the previous stipulations prevailing before the Revolution, with an authority give death penalty.

When one of the Armenian officers told this arrested Armenian that he was going to be hanged he started to shout, "Where on earth have you seen an Armenian hanged for killing a Turk?" offended.

Armenians started to set the all the Turkish markets in Erzurum afire. I learned that all the Muslim villagers of Tepeköy⁴ – where Combatant Artillery Regiment was situated – were massacred, regardless of their age and gender by unidentified members of a gang on February 17.

I informed Antranik⁵ who came to Erzurum the same day. He ordered the finding of the murderers. I do not know what came out of it.

⁴ A village affiliated to Erzurum.

⁵ Antranik Ozanyan, was born in 1865, Şebinkarahisar. He took part in the insurgence of 1885 incited in Şebinkarahisar. He later went to Istanbul and established contact with the Daschnaks, he fled to Batumi after killing a Turkish chief of police. On May 16, 1895 he went to Sasun together with his 40 men, armed, and joined Armenian Serop's gang, and replaced him on his death. He massacred numerous Muslims in Sasun and its environs in two years. He even attacked the Armenian villages and tortured the Armenians by various means. He received arms and ammunition support from the Russians. He went to Bulgaria in 1906, and he massacred Muslims in Edirne, Keşan, Malkara, and in Tekirdağ together with his gang during the Balkan War. When the Armenian voluntary regiments in the Caucasus joined the First World War as the forward forces of the Russian army, the Armenians in Selmas and its environs joined the Russian forces under his leadership. Antranik, took over the office of Provost Marshall from Colonel Morel when he came to Erzurum on March 2, 1918, dressed in Russian general's uniform. After having realized great damage and massacres he fled to Caucasus. He organized the Armenians in Karabagh, Zengezur and its environs against the Turks. After the signing of the Mouđhros Armistice, he dissolved his gang and went to Paris on May 15, 1919. He sought support in London, Paris, and New York for the establishment of a greater Armenia on the Turkish soil. By putting the blame of the massacres he committed on the Turks, he propagandized that the Turks killed the Armenians. Antranik died in the United States in 1927. He was indulged in farming until his death. As his corpse was not welcomed to Erivan in the USSR, he was buried to Paris.

Haluk SELVI; "Anadolu'dan Kafkasya'ya Bir Ermeni Çete Reisi: Antranik Ozanyan"
[From Anatolia to the Caucasus, An Armenian Gang Leader: Antranik Ozanyan] in

Antranik had promised Russian artillery officers that he would set the public order, and order of law. But neither his promises nor the promises of Dr. Zavriyev, who was sent by the Southern Caucasian Government just to set the public order, did not prove anything but vain words.

The chaos in the city decreased. Silence prevailed in the villages where the inhabitants disappeared. When the Turkish forces started to march over to Ilica, the Armenians started to arrest the Muslims in the town again. The arrests intensified a great deal during February 25-26.

The Armenians carried out massacres by dodging the Russian officers in the evening of February 26, in Erzurum. They retreated with the fear of approaching Turkish army.

The number of the massacred Muslims reached 3.000 that night. To be more explicit, the massacres were not fortuitous events but premeditated. They were all committed in accordance with a plan devised that was first put into practice by arrests. There was no time, they had such a small force; they could not even keep their position from an enemy force of 1.500 men and 2 artillery guns. They lost too many lives.

The prominent Armenians could have stopped the massacres. The responsibility of those massacres lived through cannot be put on the gangs solely. As far as I observed recently the Armenians from the lower end of the social strata were strongly adhered to the intellectuals of the community, and especially to the orders issued by some of them.

I believe it will be sufficient enough to confess that we did not have any power to fight decisively against the banditry and misbehavior right from the early days. Although the command echelons of my regiment were mostly composed of the Russian officers, the troops were mostly composed of the Armenian soldiers.

Sekizinci Askerî Tarih Semineri Bildirileri [Proceedings of the 8th Military History Seminar]. *XIX. ve XX. Yüzyıllarda Türkiye ve Kafkaslar*. Vol: I. Ankara: Gnkur. ATASE Bşk.lığı Yayınları, 2003. pp. 459-473.

Moreover, during the night of the massacres none of the kurdish stablemen was killed in the yard where the wagon wheels were kept; although there was only one officer on guard. At least the officers under my command have reported to me as such. Kurds were totally unarmed there. A couple of meters away there were some 40 Armenian soldiers fully armed.

I do not want to go further and say, nor can I claim that all the prominent Armenians were guilty. No. I saw conscientious people asserting that pursuing of such policies was wrong; that such politics was nothing but vileness. Those Armenians, rebelled against the swinish instincts of their own people, and they even fought against them. There were hardly any of those people among the Armenians. They were being obliterated by the majority on the charges of treason against the Armenian cause. Other Armenians were showing themselves as the warriors of truth and goodness in the presence of the others, and thus were trying hard to conceal the reality of their being crossbred with the kurds by putting mask of hypocrisy; considering themselves related to the issue used to retort Russian reproaches saying, "You are Russians! You can never understand the Armenian nation's ideals!" Those people did not want to understand, and could not understand that the nobility of the soul was an untouched diamond and it would stay a diamond no matter what the circumstances were.

Against the Russian reproaches and indignation for them on their massacring the Turks there was another group claiming "How do you know that the Turks did not do all this to libel the Armenians? Can not it be a provocation?"

The events proved the forces affecting the intellectual Armenians. No one can deny the events happened. Armenians sow wind, but they have forgotten that one who sow wind would reap the whirlwind!

Deputy Commander of the Fortified Artillery Post at Deveboynu,
Erzurum
Commander of the 2nd Armenian-Russian Fortress Artillery Regiment
Prisoner of War
Lt.Col. Tverdohlebov

April 16/29, 1918
Erzurum

Notes pertaining to the period extending from the organization of the 2nd Fortress Artillery Regiment in Erzurum to the delivering of Erzurum by the Turkish Forces on March 12, 1918

In mid-December 1917, the Russian Caucasus Army withdrew from the front at its own discretion; without the permission of the Army Command or of the Supreme Command.

The Erzurum Fortress Artillery Regiment retreated together with the army. Only 40 officers from the Fortress Artillery Regiment, and the administrative staff at the Deveboynu⁶ Fortified Area Command remained.

These officers remained there to take care of the guns that were deserted by the soldiers. Other officers had also left. There were more than 400 guns at the fortified positions. There were no forces to pull the guns from the region. Guns had to be left in their positions. The officers dominated by the ideal of mission and honor remained with the guns. They were waiting for the arrival of new troops or for the orders to be issued by the Supreme Command.

The 2nd Erzurum Fortress Artillery Regiment was set up with the remaining officers of the 1st Regiment.

⁶ A passage between the Erzurum and Pasinler plateaus.

Following the withdrawal of the army, an Armenian revolutionary organization was established in Erzurum. They named themselves as the "Armenian Military Unit". Some 400 Armenians, all of whom were novices, were given to the command of the 2nd Erzurum Fortress Artillery Regiment. Some of them deserted in no time. The remaining was barely sufficient for keeping guard of the guns in the positions or to be used as sentinels.

An internal fighting had already begun in the Northern Caucasus just before the withdrawal of the army from the front. A government was founded in the Southern Caucasus. This provisional government assumed the name of "Southern Caucasus Commissariat"⁷.

The Commissariat declared that they were not an independent entity, that they took up the control from the Russian government temporarily until the establishment of a new central government, and that the Southern Caucasus shall continue to live as an indispensable part of Russia.

The Southern Caucasus Commissariat declared the formation of a new army to replace the army that withdrew with a circular on December 18, 1917. This new army was to embrace Russian, Georgian, Armenian, Muslim corps; and the small units were to be composed of small tribes like Romaics, Assyrians, Osetins⁸.

Until the clarification of the command of the artillery units, the Erzurum and Deveboynu Fortified Region Artilleries maintained their multinational command. The command echelon was thoroughly composed of the Russian officers whereas the troops were composed

⁷ Following the Russian Revolution, all the parties, associations, military committees, army commanders in Tbilisi and Southern Caucasus convened and declared a provisional government on October 11, 1917. With the inclusion of the Georgians, Azerbaijanis, and Armenians they found the Southern Caucasus Commissariat, which had a federal government structure.

İzzet ÖZTOPRAK. "Maverayı Kafkas Hükümeti" [Regional Government of the Caucasus]. *Sekizinci Askeri Tarih Semineri Bildirileri I* [Proceedings of the Eighth Military History Symposium I]. Ankara: Genelkurmay Basımevi, 2003, p. 127.

⁸ Osetians are believed to be the last generation of the historical Alan peoples living in the Northern Caucasus. The Osetians call themselves Eron (some call themselves Gron). Their language is said to be very close to the Polowi, an ancient Iranian Dialect. Today, the Osetins are living in two autonomous administrations in Northern Osetia and Southern Osetia located on the either side of the Caucasus Mountain Range. Ottoman State received a wave of Osetian migration as of 1864. Today they are living around Muş and Sarıkamış.

Hayri ERSOY, Aysu KAMACI. *Çerkes Tarihi* [History of the Circassians], 3. Ed. İstanbul: Tüzmamanlar Yayıncılık, 1994, p. 128-129.

of the Armenians. Nobody regarded those artillery units as Armenian units for the command echelons and the artillery regiment commander were Russian. None of the orders issued stated that those artillery units were Armenian. Those units continued keep their former Russian names. We all served in those units affiliated to the Russian artillery forces. We received our salaries from the Russian treasury; and worked under the command of the Russian Army Commander, and the Russian Commander-in-Chief. There was a Russian Church and a Russian priest in the regiment. There was no Armenian church.

Two months had passed after the withdrawal of the Russian army. There were no new reinforcement troops coming. There were no troops coming from the other nations. Discipline could not have been maintained in the regiment. The soldiers were continuously deserting the army, and looting civilians, threatening the officers, performing disobedience openly.

Colonel Torkom, whom I heard was a Bulgarian Armenian, was appointed to the Central Command of Erzurum.

In mid-January, several Armenian soldiers from the infantry units, massacred one of the notable people in Erzurum at his home, and pillaged his house. I do not remember the name of the massacred person.

The Supreme Commander Odichelitzé summoned all the unit commanders, and ordered the finding of the murderer within three days' time forcefully. He especially told the Armenian officers that such behavior of the Armenian troops caused the libeling of all the Armenians and said that the Armenian people's honor demanded the finding of the murderers. In his speech he also added the necessity of putting a decisive end to the atrocities and the violation committed by the Armenians on the townspeople. He, moreover, said, he would have to give firearms to the Muslim people in the town to protect themselves.

Colonel Torkom, in an offended and reproachful manner said that the Armenian people would never do such a thing; that the atrocities and the pillaging committed by a couple of bandits could not be ascribed to the whole Armenian nation; that all those should not serve the libeling of a nation.

The unit commanders asked for the establishing of the Martial Courts for the practicing of the Penal Code, and for giving death penalty from the Supreme Commander. The Supreme Commander said he was not authorized to put the death penalty into practice at his discretion, but that he had already applied for the enforcement of the discipline law. I do not know whether the murderers were found or not.

At the end of January, if I am not mistaking on the 25th, Colonel Torkom held a prayer ceremony, and a military parade containing 21 salute shots fired from the guns, in Erzurum. He explained, he did it out of a necessity to improve the morale of the garrison, and to show the townspeople the power of the garrison. During the parade, where General Odichelitzé was present, Colonel Torkom read a speech, which none of us understood, in Armenian from the notes he was holding.

We later learned that he declared the establishment of the autonomous state of Armenia openly; and declared himself as the administrative tsar of this autonomous state. General Odichelitzé upon learning all about it expelled Colonel Torkom from Erzurum.

We understood that the government would never allow the establishment of a free Armenian state. I used to hear frequently, that the authorities at the Army Command Headquarters reproached the Armenian administrators saying none of the equipment, which in fact belonged to the Russian army, taken from the depots, and from the fronts by the Armenians were handed over to the Armenians, that the equipment were given to their control temporarily; that they were entrusted to them for protection until the coming of the new troops.

Meanwhile, the Armenians had slaughtered the unarmed and innocent civilian Turks in Erzincan. We heard that the Armenians were fleeing towards Erzurum as the Ottoman units were approaching the region. According to the information the General Headquarters received and the according to the testimonies of the Russian officers coming from Erzincan the Armenians had slaughtered some 800 Turks. Only an Armenian was killed as a result of self-defense. We later learned that the desperate unarmed Turks in Ilica village, near Erzurum, were also slaughtered.

On February 7, 1918, in the afternoon, the militias' and soldiers' gathering men in the streets of Erzurum in masses and sending them to an unknown destination in groups attracted my attention. When I inquired, they said they were sending them to the railway station to sweep the snow on the rail tracks.

Towards 15:00 in the afternoon, one of the Russian officers – Lieutenant Lipskiy – reported to me on the phone that several Armenians caught six Turkish men in the streets, and having interrogated them in a corner in the courtyard they started to beat them, and the beating would likely to end in murder. Lieutenant said that he could not help those Turks. Because the Armenian soldier threatened him with fire arms for he attempted to save those Turks. An Armenian officer, there, refused to stop those soldiers.

Taking three Russian officers, nearby, I ran to the barracks to save those desperate Turks.

On my way, Lieutenant Lipskiy and the Mayor of Erzurum Stavrovskiy intercepted me saying that they were looking for a Turkish friend of theirs among the Turks caught by the Armenians.

They said the soldiers resisted to their entrance in the barracks courtyard. We moved a little further. When we approached the barracks, we saw some 12 Turks running away through the courtyard door in fear, struck with terror. We managed to stop only one of them, but we could not talk to him as we did not have a translator there. Without meeting any obstacles I entered the courtyard. I told them to take me to the place where they took the innocent people whom they had gathered in the streets. They said there was nobody from the public in the barracks. I began to search the barracks. I found 70 Turks locked up in the barrack baths in fear and struck with terror. I immediately launched an investigation. Arresting the six soldiers who were declared to be the instigators, I set all the arrested Turks free.

During the investigation I learned that an Armenian, whose name I could not learn, shot an innocent, sick old man standing on the roof of one of the houses around with a rifle on the same day.

Unfortunately, I lost the list, on which the names of the Turks I saved were written, and the official documents of the Artillery Command I had during the Turkish units' delivering Erzurum from occupation on March 12. This event may be brought to daylight by questioning of the Turks who were kept there under pressure. I still meet people in the streets who pronounce their sincere words of gratitude for saving their lives. The translator Ali Bey Pepenov, scrivener at the office of the Mayor of Erzurum, Stavrovskiy, knows them well. He himself had written the minutes of the investigations and drawn the list.

At the end of the investigations it was found out that the Armenian Infantry Reserve Officer Karagadayev, who was appointed to the orders of the Artillery Regiment, was the instigator of the events. According to the testimonies of the released Turks, Karagadayev, was the ringleader of the pillaging, and some of the properties found were seized by the soldiers. Karagadayev was arrested along with the others, and kept in prison until his trial.

Late in the afternoon everything about the events was told to the Supreme Commander at the presence of the regional inspector Glotov and his aid Stavrovskiy. Armenians have killed several people here and there, and set the Turkish bazaar aflame on the same day.

In those days we used to hear about the massacring of the unarmed civilian Turks by the Armenians in and around Erzurum one by one. I had an Armenian arrested who had massacred a Turkish person near Tafta⁹ fortifications, and turned him over to the Provost Marshall personally.

Turkish people were talking about the Turks who were taken away to work elsewhere, most of whom did not come back. The public administration informed the General Headquarters about these complaints.

A day after my rescuing the Turkish people who were taken under arrest forcibly, we, the high ranking artillery officers – Artillery Commander, I, Director of the Artillery Command Mobilization Department – submitted a report to General Odichelitzé requesting permission for all the artillery personnel at the Erzurum Fortified Region to leave Erzurum. We were of no use as a combatant unit. We were not needed. We were unable to do anything to stop the Armenian massacres. We never did want the atrocities committed by the Armenians veiled by our names.

Commander-in-Chief explained us that he had received a telegram message from the Commander of the Ottoman Army, Vehip Pasha¹⁰,

⁹ A village, today Gökçeyamaç, affiliated to the Dumlu subdistrict of Erzurum.

¹⁰ Vehip (Kaçi) was born in 1877, Khaniá, Crete. He was graduated from the Military Academy in 1897 and from the Staff Officers' College in 1900. He was first appointed to Yemen, from where he was sent to the orders of Diyarbakır Division. In 1907 he was appointed to the 4th Army Headquarters in Erzincan. In 1909, he was first appointed to the Ministry of Defense, then to the War Academy and to the Kuleli Military High School as the Commander of the Military Schools. He took part in the Balkan War as Khaniá Fortified Region Commander; at the Hijaz Front as the Commander of the 22nd Hijaz Division. He was appointed as the Governor and Governor of Hijaz. He served at the Çanakkale Front as Southern Group Commander.

where he declared that he had ordered his troops to deliver Erzincan from occupation, and to continue their forward movement, in line with the stipulations of the Law of War, until the establishing of an immediate contact with the Russian forces; and that he informed him about the atrocities committed by the Armenians on Turks living in the region.

As a consequence of the forward movement of the Ottoman Army, the Southern Caucasus Commissariat made a peace proposal to Turkiye.

The reply they received from the Ottoman Army Command stated that the peace proposal was highly welcomed, and that the proposal made by the Southern Caucasus Commissariat was forwarded to the government for solution.

Upon our request Army Commander communicated with the President of the Commissariat Mr. Gegechkori, and the Supreme Commander General Lebedinskiy through telegram. In the reply received it was said that Dr. Zavriyev and Antranik were sent to Erzurum by the Armenian National Assembly to establish order in the city; that an ultimatum demanding the stopping of the Armenian atrocities had been given to the Armenian National Assembly as it was capable of meeting the request; that the final orders would be issued after the receiving of the Turkish Government's consideration of the peace proposal; that we should continue staying in Erzurum until then. Finally it was stated that: "I would like to express my deepest gratitude to your honor and to your officers for the heroic stance displayed. We are of the full conviction that you and your staff shall continue to remain in your position heroically, which is especially important at a time when Russia is threatened by the catastrophic circumstances."

The Army Commander issued an order pertaining to this issue. He emphasized we should remain in our positions as sentinels; and that he, with his all capacity would not allow any loss of officers for no apparent reason.

He was the Commander of the 3rd Army at the Eastern Front from February 1916 to June 1918. From June 9 1918 to September 9 1918 he served as the Eastern Armies Group Commander. He retired from the army on October 18, 1918. He deceased on June 13, 1940.

Harp Akademileri Komutanlığı. *Türk Harp Tarihi Derslerinde Adı Geçen Komutanlar* [Commanders Whose Names are Mentioned in the Turkish History of War Courses]. İstanbul: Harp Akademileri Komutanlığı Yay., 1983, p. 315-322.

We stayed in Erzurum as a result of this order, and for the interests of Russia. It was just then, when the Ottoman State found the peace proposal made by the Southern Caucasus Commissariat appropriate, and the peace talks was scheduled to start in Trabzon as of February 17, 1918¹¹.

The Army Commander in his speech declared that we were to stay in Erzurum until the signing of the peace treaty; that following the signing of the peace treaty all the guns and equipment were either to be transported to Russia or left to the Turkish forces; that we were to leave if the terms of the treaty required; that we were to leave Erzurum after having destroyed all the guns if the treaty is would not be signed; that the Army Commander had no intention of engaging in a battle in the environs of Erzurum; and explained that after observing of the first signs of a general attack to be launched by the Turkish units, he would notify us within 7 days.

Briefly, until the finding of a definite solution for the staying of the officers in Erzurum, a necessity of taking measures against the possible kurdish attacks on Erzurum was born. Because, the Turkish Government had officially informed us, during the peace talks, that the kurds were not obeying the orders given but were acting at their own will.

To this end, at the end of January, upon the orders of the Army Commander, artillery guns were transferred to the logistics support units along the Erzincan-Erzurum line to drive the kurds who started attacking the depots to provide food back.

Several guns were deployed along the logistics support lines under the supervision of officers. Those guns were brought back by the units that were mainly composed of the Armenians withdrawing from Erzincan.

Towards February 10, Army Commander ordered the positioning two guns on each of the Büyükkiremitli and Surp Nishan emplacements over looking the Trabzonkapı. Later, more guns were positioned on the various parts of the town. It was also evaluated that the positioning of guns between the Karskapı and Harputkapı emplacements would be appropriate to prevent the possible kurdish raids to come from the direction of Palandöken¹².

¹¹ Trabzon peace talks started in March 14, 1918. Kemal ARI. *Birinci Dünya Savaşı Kronolojisi* [Chronology of the First World War]. Ankara: Genelkurmay ATASE Başkanlığı Yay., 1997, p. 336.

¹² A sub-district affiliated to Erzurum.

Those guns were placed solely to retaliate the kurdish raids. Guns were so openly positioned that they were unable to fight against any orderly unit supported by artillery units. They would easily be destroyed at the first two or three shots. However, it was the only possible way to repulse the kurdish attacks successfully.

In mid-February, the breeches, telescopic sights and quadrant sights of the guns positioned in distant places were all taken to the central depots. Only the telescopic sights of the guns positioned near were taken out; now it was the time for dismantling their breeches. The same order was issued for the guns positioned in Palandöken Mountain; but the task could not have been realized thoroughly yet. Only the telescopic sights of the guns to be used against the kurds were left.

The Ottoman army's attack was not expected to start soon. It was thought that the morale of the Ottoman units was low and that they were not capable of making any maneuvers before the summer.

On February 12, two Russian officers, who witnessed the shooting of 10 or 12 Turks by the Armenian gangs armed to the teeth out in the open near the train station, tried to save those people, but the Armenians threatened the officers with weapons and pushed them away. None of the gang members was taken under arrest in relation to this event.

On February 13, the Army Commander declared Martial Law. He ordered the setting up of the Court Martial, and the practicing of the death penalty in line with the stipulations of the former law, preceding the revolution. Colonel Morel was appointed to the Command of the Erzurum Fortress and to the chair of the Armenian Court; and he set off the same day. Brigadier General Gerasimov, Commander of the Fortified Region, left with him to set up a new base for a possible transfer of the guns. I kept my position and took over the duty of Commander of the Fortified Region as a deputy.

The majority of Colonel Morel's headquarters were composed of the Russian officers. The Chief of Staff of the Regiment was Staff Captain Shneur.

As soon as the Army Commander left, Colonel Morel put on a different air. He declared that Erzurum would be kept in hand, defended until the very last moment, and that he would not allow any of the officers and men who could bear arms leave the city.

The day the Army Commander left, as we were having a meeting with Col. Morel at his office, I told him that there were officers who were looking forward to leave. An official present there, Sogomonian, an Armenian, said, in the presence of everybody there, that as a member of the Court Martial he would not let any of the Russian officers leave; that he would personally shoot all those who would attempt to leave Erzurum; and that reinforced police stations were established in Köprüköy¹³ and Hasankale¹⁴ to arrest those who would try to leave without the documents signed by him and bring them before the Court Martial.

I then understood that we were caught in a tight trap from which it was impossible to escape. It was evident that the declaration of Martial Law and the establishing of the Court Martial were solely for the Russian officers, not for the ferocious Armenian gangs.

Tyranny and oppression continued in the city as before. The Russian officers were trying hard to defend the unarmed and desperate Turks. There are lots of incidents where the officers under my command used force to save the Turks who were arrested and violated in the streets by the Armenians. Karayev, Laboratory Director, opened fire on an Armenian soldier who stripped naked a Turk out in the open in the day light.

None of the promises made for the hanging those who were massacring the unarmed innocent people were kept. The Court Martial established could not function. It was afraid of the threats posed by the Armenians. Although it was promised by the Armenians, before the Court Martial's getting into effect, that the guilty Armenians would be hanged none of the guilty Armenians were punished. By the way, Armenians were the ones who strongly advocated the putting of the Courts Martial into effect in no time.

Turks have always been saying determinedly that an Armenian would never punish another Armenian. A Russian proverb says, "Crow, would not scoop another crow's eye out." We witnessed the truth of this proverb with our own very eyes.

Armed Armenians fled together with their families. The Reserve Officer Karagadayev, who was in prison, was released without my authorization. Colonel Morel answered my enquiry on Karagadayev's release by saying that the investigation launched proved him not

¹³ Sub-district affiliated to Pasinler district of Erzurum. Today, Çobandede.

¹⁴ Pasinler district of Erzurum.

guilty. None of us was invited to take place in the investigation. Although we were the primary witnesses in the case none of us was called in to testify. However, I ordered the taking of our testimonies at the regiment; I assigned the case to Colonel Aleksadrov. I made a proposal for the removal of the Reserve Officer Karagadayev from his post and sending him back to the infantry unit to which he was affiliated earlier.

Even the murderer Armenian whom I personally caught on the spot in Tafta was not taken to court at all. Colonel Morel was afraid of the uprising of the Turks in Erzurum.

Antranik came to Erzurum on February 17. Dr. Zavrief, the Vice-Commissioner of the Regions under Occupation, was with him.

As we have never occupied ourselves with the Armenian history or with the activities, none of us was aware of the fact that Antranik was a Turkish subject and a ferocious murderer sentenced to capital punishment by the Turkish Government. I learned all about those when I met the Commander of the Ottoman Army on March 7.

Antranik was wearing a Russian brigadier general uniform. He was carrying an order of St. Vladimir of a fourth degree, and a combatant order of Stanislav of a second degree. He was also carrying a St. Georgievski cross of a second degree. Russian Colonel Zinkević, the chief of staff, came to Erzurum with him.

A day prior to Antranik's arrival in Erzurum, Colonel Morel announced the telegram message he received from Antranik stating that machine guns were placed in Körpüköy to kill all the cowards fleeing Erzurum.

As soon as Antranik came to Erzurum he took over the Fortress Command. Colonel Morel entered his command. We remained under the command of Colonel Morel as before.

The day Antranik came, one of my officers in one of the regions under my area of responsibility reported me that the Armenians massacred all the unarmed innocent inhabitants of Tepeköy, especially, regardless of their age and gender. I informed Antranik about this massacre immediately at our introduction. In my presence, he ordered the sending of twenty cavalymen and catching at least one of the murderers. I do not know what came out of it.

Colonel Torkom reappeared. Two days after Antranik's coming Armenian Artillery Colonel Doluhanov came to Erzurum. He first said, he was appointed as an Artillery Inspector and he would be my superior. Upon my declaration of my authority as a Division

Commander, my not needing any superiors, and my assertion that I would gladly submit my resignation at once if he continued to insist; he issued an order saying Colonel Doluhanov was appointed to Erzurum Fortress to deal with the affairs of the artillery. He started sending the orders and the regulations on behalf of Antranik, not in his name.

Senior Armenian Lieutenant Canbolatyan, who was working as an artillery battery commander in my regiment, was trying to interfere in my affairs. When he learned about the plans made for the transferring of the artillery guns, and about the partially broken electric motors and projectors he said he would not allow the transfer even of a single gun, and continued "Russian officers may or may not stay, but the Armenians will stay no matter what the circumstances are. They will be in need of these guns."

It was evident that the Armenians, under the disguise of serving the Russian interests, were actually in pursuit of taking all the command and control into their own hands, and have all the Russian officers execute their orders.

It gradually came to surface that they were taking steps in pursuit of declaring free Armenian state with the help of the Russian officers rather than working for the Russian interests. They were trying to veil their true intentions with all their might. Otherwise, there was a possible threat of majority, or all, of the Russian officers' leaving at once. The Armenians did not have any artillery officers.

The Armenians were afraid of artillery officers' leaving their posts. The Deputy Commander of the Caucasus Mountain Artillery Battalion Captain Plat told me about an incident. He said that the Armenian administrators, on learning that the Mountain Artillery units were to be transferred to Sarikamiş from Erzurum on February 7, arrested the Commander of the Mountain Artillery Supply Battalion on February 5 in a hurry; and released the officer upon the orders of the Army Commander. Armenians arrested him three times afterwards, and threatened him saying they would drench Erzurum in blood if the Mountain Artillery would ever leave Erzurum. What he implied with drenching Erzurum in blood, was in fact drenching it with the blood of the Russian officers. The arrested were being released upon the interventions of the Russian officers at the headquarters. The Army Commander postponed the withdrawing of the Mountain Artillery.

This incident compelled me to sign reconciliation with the Deputy Commander of the 7th Caucasus Mountain Artillery Battalion.

We agreed to help each other considering the possibility of their coercing the Russian artillery officers physically in order to have us, or our officers, work for the Armenian cause. This reconciliation was evidently secret. The material power we had consisted of the artillery guns, machine guns, and Russian officers.

The Deputy Commander of the Artillery Battalion gathered his officers near our houses in groups. I had already gathered everybody in the regiment around the Artillery Command located in the Muslim district of the town, since the formation of the regiment and the entrance of the Russian units into Erzurum.

Following Antranik's arrival in Erzurum, a wide spread fear of a possible uprising of the prominent people of the town dominated Colonel Morel's headquarters. This fear multiplied everyday.

I received orders from Colonel Morel about three days after Antranik's coming to town. The orders stated that I should appoint experienced officers at the Mecidiye¹⁵ fortifications to open artillery fire on the Muslim district of the town to prevent an uprising during the arresting of the possible leaders. We were ordered to leave the Muslim district and to settle in the Armenian district of the town.

We, the Russian officers who have been living together with those people for about two years, did not believe in the threat of an uprising. We were laughing at the Armenian cowardice openly.

Artillery officers clearly stated that they would not open artillery fire on the town. They asserted that they were there to fight an enemy honorably rather than opening fire on the civilian people, women, and children. Under the prevailing circumstances we inferred that the Armenians would demand opening of artillery fire on the town either out of fear or out of a certain drive, without any reason at all.

We did not leave the Muslim district. Firstly, it was physically impossible to move out in the given period of time. Secondly, our moving out from this part of the town would give the Armenians the chance to commit massacres freely, as it was the case in Erzincan.

¹⁵ Mecidiye Fortification – over looking the Gürcüboğazı to the north and the Vank Creek to the northwest – is located on the Topdağı (2042 m.) to the west of Erzurum.

Thirdly, moving into the Armenian district would mean our falling into the hands of the Armenians in whom we never had confidence.

The officers at the Mountain Artillery Battalion, who were not affiliated to the Fortified Region, also refused the Armenian proposals for moving. At last the issue was left to the Armenian volition. It is needless to say that the leaders of a possible rebellion were arrested without a single sign of an uprising.

Colonel Morel's possible orders for opening artillery fire on the town agitated the officers, and forced me to hold a meeting with the artillery officers under my command.

We held two meetings, with a day's interval. Aside from all the artillery officers, two English officers, who were on a visit to Erzurum for a few days, Colonel Morel, Staff Captain Zinkević, Doluhanov, Torkom, Antranik, and Dr. Zavriyev were present at the first meeting.

We invited the English officers to show them the rear echelons of the front, front headquarters, foreign military missions, the spiritual condition of the Russian Artillery officers, the relation between the Russian and Armenian officers, and to inform them about the measures taken to prevent the bloody atrocities committed by the Armenians. These officers were invited on purpose. Because, I neither had a post office nor a telegram office under my command. I could never be sure of my telegram messages' arriving at their destinations. In fact, I was absolutely sure that my telegrams were never sent.

At the meeting, I explained the current situation and the circumstances forcing the Russian artillery officers come to Erzurum in detail. I minutely informed all the people present at the meeting about my personal observations, about the reports I received from other officers, as well as about the incidents of Armenian defiance and savagery I had heard from other people and Army Commander General Odichelitzé himself.

I concluded my explanations stressing a fact, as follows:

We are Russian Officers. We, the honorable Russian officers in uniforms, did not stay in Erzurum to cover up the plunderer Armenians' atrocities committed on the poor people. We stayed here to serve the Russian interests and in subordination to our superiors. We did not

stay here to serve the Armenian massacres and sheer violence; but to serve to the Russian cause. We are not intended to libel our names by the nations of the world. We would like to see the ending of the disgraceful Armenian atrocities as long as we stay here. Otherwise, we shall be insisting on our return home as soon as possible.

The events I talked about were proved right by the observations of the other officers who had a say at the meeting.

In reply, Antranik stressing the Armenians' gratefulness to Russia claimed that they were a part of the Great Russian peoples; that they did not want to separate from them for the time being, but to serve Russia; that the massacres were the result of the enmity that had been continuing for centuries between the Turks and the Armenians; that all the defiance and savagery would be ended decisively; that there would be no signs of a probable idea of coercing the civilians in a short time; that he came here to put an end to such deeds; that he if he were not to succeed he himself would leave at once. All the talks were held with the help of translators.

When he was asked about the Russian officers who wanted to leave Erzurum; he replied saying it would be better for the weak to leave for the welfare of the cause, and that he would do his "best not to keep them from leaving."

Colonel Zinkević did his best in trying to convince all the people present that the Russian cause keeping us here was in fact the same true cause that brought him here; and that he fervent follower of the cause.

At the end of the meeting, all the officers declared, prior to taking up steps on the issue, that they would wait for another seven, or rather ten, days to see how things would develop; and if Antranik's promises were met.

This meeting was held on either February 20 or 21. After the meeting Colonel Doluhanov told me that he was extremely surprised to see the hatred and loathsomeness in the Russian officers against the Armenians. He voiced his surprise to the other officers as well.

Antranik issued an order saying that anybody committing murder, may it be Armenian or Muslim, would be punished the same without any discrimination of nationality. Bulletins and posters, in Turkish, calling the people to open their shops and to work freely without any

fear were hung all over the city. It was also declared in the bulletins that those who would gather people to work elsewhere would be held responsible for loss of any Turkish lives; and that those who were accompanying those convoys would be equally held responsible as well.

Couple of days later I was passing through one of the streets around the town hall. Senior Lieutenant Canbolatyan, an Armenian commander of one of the battalions under my command, was riding with me. On seeing couple of Turks reading the bulletins, we stopped.

Senior Lieutenant Canbolatyan told the people gathered there in Turkish that the Command Headquarters had taken all the measures to prevent any Armenian soldier from committing any crimes against the civilian Turkish people; and that no harm would be done unless the townspeople rose.

In reply to his words they said, the past two years had not witnessed any rebellion, or any attempt for rebellion; but complained about the treating of the helpless people with disdain.

I asked Senior Lieutenant Canbolatyan to explain them that I, as the Commander of the Russian Artillery, and all the Russian officers were, are, and would be the defenders of the unarmed civilian Turkish people; that we had taken all the measures possible in order to stop all the violence; and that we would immediately voice our requests to our superiors once more.

Most of the people there approved my words saying that they were already aware of the truth of my words. Meanwhile, three people in the crowd declared that I had saved their lives on February 7. Senior Lieutenant Canbolatyan was taking part in the activities of the Armenian Committee.

In the second general meeting of the officers, only Dr. Zavriyev was present as a foreigner. We declared that the 2nd Fortress Artillery Regiment in Erzurum was not an Armenian regiment as the Armenians were eager to see it; that only its troops were Armenians; that none of us had signed any contract to serve the Armenians, nor that we had any idea to serve them as mercenaries; that we did not sign any document to serve in the Armenian units; that we did not sign any contract to do so; that it was high time that the government put forward decisively if the regiment was Russian or Armenian; that if it were Russian we needed Russian soldiers; that if it were Armenian

the Russian officers who wanted leave should be set free to serve in another Russian Corps; that those who did not want to serve at the Caucasian Front should be set free disregarding the obstacles put by the so-called martial law.

In case of Southern Caucasus's separating from Russia, the rumors about which had already reached us, and it was highly expected then, we would leave at once. In such a case we would be aliens in the Southern Caucasus.

Thus, under the light of the prevailing instructions and orders it was understood that everybody held the right to apply his superior for resignation or for his transfer to Russian Corps. I declared that I would not delay any applications that would reach me, and that I would immediately sent all the applications to the authorities.

At this meeting, Senior Lieutenant Yermolov from the 7th Caucasus Mountain Artillery Battalion, told the officers that he had written a personal application for his dismissal as he did not want to serve in an Armenian Battalion; that they, at first, tried to convince him, and upon his decisively declaring that he would not stay whatsoever, Colonel Morel issued a written order stating that Senior Lieutenant Yermolov was an "alien," in other words he was a useless and dangerous person as an officer, who was dismissed from his post to be sent to Front Headquarters; and that he was ordered to leave Erzurum within 24 hours at the latest.

Such was the attitude towards an officer who was holding several decorations of war. His rightful refusal of a post in an Armenian unit compelled Colonel Morel to confess, in his anger, his extreme loyalty towards the Armenians openly; and as a result he was libeled.

Dr. Zavriyev tried to persuade the Russian officers to the following terms: by staying in Erzurum the Russian officers were serving the Russian army and serving the Russian interests only, not the Armenian cause; that the Armenian people were strictly bound to Russia; that they would continue their existence with the help of Russia in the future; Armenians were not in pursuit of breaking up with Russia whatsoever; Armenian people were a part of the Russian people; that the prevailing circumstanced necessitated our staying in Erzurum for the economic and political interests of Russia until the signing of a treaty. He said, being Russian citizens, we did not have the right to say, "You the Armenians and the Turks do what you have to do! Are you butchering each other? Go ahead and do it! Damn you!

It is your internal affair. We, the Russians, have nothing to do here!" morally.

Finally he said, "If we, as human beings, really want to put an end to massacring of the civilians determinedly; then we, with all our characteristics as human beings, should continue to stay in Erzurum to prevent the Armenian mobs from massacring the Muslims in Erzurum."

Doctor Zavriyev's words did not have any repercussions at all. After the meeting he told me that there were no signs of hope and that all the officers would leave soon.

I found an opportunity to read several documents 10 days after the Turkish forces' delivering Erzurum from occupation. In those documents I saw that our suspicions on the declaration of the Armenian autonomy with the help of the Russian officers were not groundless at all. In those documents Dr. Zavriyev was explicitly talking about the intentions of establishing an autonomous Armenia. The document was bearing a much earlier date than Zavriyev coming to Erzurum.

Dr. Zavriyev was not mistaking in his evaluations of the morale state of the Russian officers. Our intentions of leaving could be seen on our faces. It was evident what the Armenians asked for, and why they needed the Russian officers.

We were all soldiers, and we did not have any intentions in dealing with politics. We could never have considered the Armenian partisan engagements as our own.

Antranik's words proved to be nothing more than vain promises. People did not believe in them. The market places were closed. Everybody was in fear. There was nobody in the streets of the Muslim districts of the town. Only one or two shops near the town hall were open. Only a few Turks would come together during the day light. No Armenian was sentenced to death. Armenian plan worked as follows: "There are no criminals. Show us the murderer. So we can send him for trial immediately. How can we punish a person without knowing who the criminal is?"

In spite of the Armenians' claims, the Armenians were told unceasingly that the Russian officers had shown them lots of criminal Armenians who were released without being punished; that finding of the Armenians sought by the police was not the Russian officers' duty;

that if the Armenians were really in pursuit of finding the criminals they had the means of finding them in no time.

The Armenian hypocrisy was getting more and more repulsive. Violence directed at the civilian people was not ceasing; they were being committed in secret. The Armenians had shifted their activities to the near by villages which could not be seen by us. The Turks living in the villages near the city started to disappear. I do not know how and where they disappeared. The people living in the distant villages started to defend themselves with firearms.

In the city people were being arrested under the pretext of curbing a possible uprising. I inquired Colonel Morel about the extent of the security of the lives of the arrested. I implied, whether the arrested people would be slaughtered like sheep in an organized manner as it was the case in Erzincan. He replied saying that the arrested leaders of a probable Turkish uprising would be sent to the rear echelons of the front, to Tbilisi, in secured convoys; and that some of them would be kept in Erzurum to be used as hostages for a possible uprising.

Reports pertaining to illegal activities of the Armenian logistics units started to arrive one after another. Fat required by the regiment personnel was being refused at the point of transfers. If any demand for fat was voiced by the electricians' battalion, their needs were met in no time, for its non-commissioned officer had once close contacts with Antranik. The Armenian official in charge of the depot did not give the amount of sugar required by the regiment by claiming that Antranik had taken the distribution of sugar in his own hands. This Armenian official refused to give a written document stating the case.

Russian officers coming to the city from the front, following the logistics supply lines, were complaining about the lack of food and a warm place to lodge; but they said, the Armenian officers always found plenty of food to eat and a warm place to lodge on their way back.

Army Headquarters allocated two wagons to the artillery officers in the middle of February. Officers sent some of their belongings and their families to the rear echelons of the front. Three more wagons were asked for the transfers of the remaining families and belongings. Army Headquarters had approved the allocation of those wagons before its departure from Erzurum.

Following the departure of the Headquarters from Erzurum, the allocation of those wagons was delayed. At last, Colonel Zinkević wrote a personal petition for the allocation of the wagons.

Upon receiving of this document, an Armenian official, or an officer, who was responsible for the allocation of the wagons, said that the allocation of the wagons would not be possible before two days. He later promised to tell him when the wagons would be allocated. In fact, the Armenian deserters were occupying the first place in the allocations.

We were afraid to send our families and our belongings with convoys without our personal protection, or of Russian protection. Because, the logistics support lines behind the rear echelons of the front were full of well-armed Armenian deserters and fugitives. Those places were not secure at all. Because the Armenians who deserted the battlegrounds, and ran away from the real soldiers cowardly and disgracefully, did not hesitate in displaying their unyielding courage and extreme devotion while they were attacking the lonely poor people whom they met on the roads – may them be elderly, women or children – in groups.

Reinforcement of the units from the rear echelons was extremely inadequate. The morale of the infantry troops was really low. None of the superior officers, or the others in the lower ranks, was obeying their commanders. Before Antranik's coming, the units used to refuse taking their positions in the emplacements. They started going to the fronts recently; but they are fleeing the emplacements in a disgraceful manner. Antranik himself forced them to go back to their positions by means of sword and fist. The units where the Russian officers were kept coercively had all turned into ignoble filthy gangs.

I am not sure, but, Antranik might have been someone successful in military matters. The incongruities and the nonsense in his orders, which I used to receive through Colonel Doluhanov, pertaining Artillery units used to take me by surprise frequently.

It was clearly observed that, considering the technical aspects of the issue, disregarding the necessity of the well trained and experienced personnel, qualified low ranking officers, and well trained and strong infantry units; the future hope of the Armenian units led by Antranik resided in the Russian guns, and I the Russian artillery officers.

Their aim was evident: to form a cover during their escape. In fact it happened to be so.

Peace talks that were to start in Trabzon were being delayed every day. It was previously scheduled to start on February 17, then it was delayed to February 20, and then to February 25. I was receiving the information through either by Erzurum Detachment Headquarters or by the Fortress Headquarters. I was not able to correspond via telegram. Those two headquarters were situated on the either sides of the town. The telephone lines of the Fortress Headquarters hardly ever functioned properly. Sometimes, when it worked, it was impossible to communicate through the telephone lines as nothing was heard properly. Therefore, I was compelled to go to the Fortress Headquarters twice a day.

Under the light of the information I received from Colonel Morel and from his headquarters I understood that we were not fighting with the regular Turkish Army at the front; but with the kurdish gangs, and rebellious groups among which were well trained soldiers who remained in the villages in the region after the withdrawal of the Turkish Army from Erzurum in 1916.

It was thought that those kurdish gangs were set up, and trained by several Turkish officers and military personnel in order to enable the local people, among whom were soldiers, fight back in their own self-defense.

It was believed that the attackers had two Russian Mountain Artillery guns that were left by the Armenian units as they were retreating from Erzincan. The reconnaissance reports suggested that the kurds would attack from the direction of Famski, Erzincan, and Oltu¹⁶. Their launching an attack from the rear echelons of the front, from the direction of Kars through Palandöken was also possible. I do not know why; but, Colonel Morel was expecting an attack from the direction of Oltu only.

For me, the reconnaissance activities were being carried out desultorily by the Armenians. The cavalry units were in pursuit of massacres, pillaging, and stealing the live stocks of the villagers rather than performing reconnaissance activities in the villages. Their reconnaissance reports were frequently erroneous.

Whenever a reconnaissance detachment reported a force of 2.000, it was always found out to be a force of 200 men only.

¹⁶ District affiliated to Erzurum.

And whenever it was reported that a reconnaissance detachment of 300-400 men had to perform a breakthrough on the surrounding enemy force, overwhelming their number, it was soon understood that the detachment's casualties were one dead and one wounded only.

One day, one of the Armenian officers reported to me on the phone that a detachment of 400 men had launched an attack on the troops that were responsible for keeping the artillery guns. It was understood later that they saw two unarmed men coming from the village across, who later had left.

During the period passed between the fleeing of the Armenians from Erzincan and the delivering of Erzurum by the Turkish forces, the reconnaissance units were able to capture only one cavalryman. I did not see him personally. It is highly probable that this poor man's feet were either frozen or he was too weak to walk alone without help.

After the second meeting I received several petitions from the officers requesting their dismissals and transfers to Russian Corps, to the orders of other commanders, to the units where there were troops from other nationalities.

I reported to Colonel Morel that leaving of it was highly probable that most of the Russian officers, may be all of them, would leave Erzurum. He went red and said that he would not allow it happen even if it were a decree issued by the Court Martial. I told him that my officers still in possession of the guns; that violence would be retaliated by guns; that it would be best to leave relying on the decree issued by the government as it was legal right of every single individual.

I explained Colonel Morel that none of the officers really wanted to leave; that every officer wanted leave just to make use of their legal rights; that there would be no difference between those who had left their positions earlier and us, preferring to continue our legal duties. It was such a complicated situation that conscience and honor of duty were not permitting us to stay here.

Colonel Morel asserted that there was no legal arrangement made for leaving; that he would give the same employment report he had given to Senior Lieutenant Yermolov to anyone who would attempt to leave.

I told Colonel Doluhanov that there were lots of willing officers in Tbilisi and in Batum¹⁷, and said it was no good in trying to keep those who were eager to leave. Colonel Morel said that he had requested sending of 60 English artillery officers to his command and that he had their word.

I heard that they arrested and forced a Russian, possibly a Polish, citizen, who was working at the Erzurum train station as a chief for a living, as he wanted to leave his position no matter how much they paid, while all this talk was proceeding.

I ordered the battalion commanders to gather all the officers around the artillery headquarters, close to them, in order to convey the orders easily and to keep them under a certain organization in case of an attack that might come up.

Before his leaving Erzurum, I asked from Senior Lieutenant Yermolov to see General Vichenskiy, the Chief-of-Staff of the Army, in Sarkamış and to inform him about the conditions we were living in, and do his best to save us from the miserable position we had fallen into among the Armenians. I told him to inform General Gerasimov, the Artillery Commander, likewise. Yermolov left Erzurum on February 25.

I believe it was on February 24, when a Turkish airplane conducted a reconnaissance flight over Erzurum, which caused me to deduce the idea that the orderly Turkish troops were either in Erzincan or even in Mamahatun¹⁸.

In those days, Colonel Morel was saying that he had received a "proclamation" from the Turkish forces requesting the evacuation of Erzurum. After the delivering of Erzurum I had the chance of meeting Kâzım Bey¹⁹, the Commander of the Turkish Corps. At the meeting he

¹⁷ Georgian city on the coast of the Black Sea.

¹⁸ District affiliated to Erzincan. Today, Tercan.

¹⁹ Kâzım (KARABEKİR) was born in 1882, Istanbul. He graduated from the Military College in 1902 and from the War Academy on 1905. He was appointed as the Chief-of-Staff of the 1st Army and the 6th Army; Commander of the 8th, 2nd, 1st Caucasus, 14th, 15th Divisions; and the Commander of the Eastern Front on June 14, 1920 respectively. He was appointed as the 1st Army Inspector on October 21, 1923; but as he was a member of the Turkish Grand National Assembly (TGNA), he was given a leave by a special decree dated December 19, 1923. He was elected as the Deputy of Edirne in the 1st and 2nd term; and as the Deputy of İstanbul in the 5th and 8th terms of the TGNA. He served as the president of the TGNA from 1946 to 1948. He died on January 25, 1948. He gave numerous seminars and conferences, published books on military, political, and historical issues, 44 of which were published.

said that the note was not a "proclamation" but a real letter he, I mean the Commander of the Turkish Corps, personally had written.

Even if we consented to agree the Turkish requests, and regard the letter as an anonymous or illegal letter, Colonel Morel did not have the right to hide the signature of the commander of the regular Turkish Forces from us and declare the letter as a "proclamation."

The information we obtained from the Fortress Headquarters on February 24-25 there was nothing to be worried about at the front. We heard that a detachment sent to the environs of Tekederesi²⁰ had surrounded a kurdish gang. It was also said that the troops coming from Erzurum had allegedly repulsed the enemy troops by several *vests* (1 vest = 1.06 km.) in the outskirts of Ilıca.

On February 26, it came to the daylight that the Armenian detachment sent to Tekederesi from Erzurum was surrounded, that they were thoroughly dissolved, that the survivors fled disgracefully, and that the Ilıca detachment retreated running.

Colonel Morel, in his verbal order told me to open fire on the attacking Turkish troops; however, there were nobody attacking nowhere. There were panic driven Armenian mobs retreating on the Harput highway in a disorderly manner. There were groups retreating calmly along the Trabzon highway just like a convoy in a state of mobilization without stopping or spreading.

In the afternoon, it was understood that the enemy forces were around the Gez village²¹ that was located at a distance of 6 vests to the city. According to my perceptions there were units of 1.500 men.

The number was unimportant, but they did not look like untrained kurdish bandits. It was clearly observed that they were well trained troops conducted and steered in a highly disciplined manner. The existence of several straggling cavalymen next to them brought to mind that they were roughly organized kurdish detachments rather than orderly troops.

Turkish General Staff, Directorate of ATASE. *Türk İstiklal Harbine Katılan Tümen ve Daha Üst Kademedeki Komutanların Biyografileri* [The Biographies of the Division Commanders and Higher Ranking Generals Who Took Part in the Turkish War of Independence]. Ankara: TGS Printing House, 1989. pp. 177-179.

²⁰ A village affiliated to Erzurum.

²¹ A village affiliated to Erzurum.

The state and the condition of the retreating troops were very sad and hopeless. They were either spreading along the road as if they were small liquid chains or coming together every now and then. It was evident that fear and anxiety prevailed them. Antranik took the lead of this chain that was gradually melting away. He managed to straighten the retreating people up; but soon they started dissolving again in exhaustion.

Our artillery fire continued until the evening. It ceased after the fall of dark. With the launching of defense measures against the kurds, all the officers were compelled to act gracefully as the circumstances of war demanded from honorable officers. Everybody was clearly aware of the fact that retreating at such a point would serve to libeling us eternally with cowardice and treachery. We had to resist the attacks at first.

Today, I learned what the Armenian forces understood from allocation of the artillery units, and from making use of them during the battle. My guns positioned in the Büyükkiremitli fortified emplacements were a *vest* ahead of the infantry units that were stuck in the direction of Harputkapı, and refused to go any further to provide cover for the guns.

Moreover, on the same day, the retreating units' not forgetting to take some moveable properties, steal the live stocks of the villagers, and kill the unarmed and innocent people whom they met on their way attracted my attention, despite the state of fear and panic they were living through since their departure from Tekederesi.

It seemed that the enemy's advance towards the city was unexpected. No orders were issued for battle and organization. It might have been issued, but I assure you that I did not receive such an order. I once heard that a scheme was devised for the infantry troops' capturing the main corridors of the city upon the giving of signs of alarm. I did not receive this order either.

I was to cover the fortified region by artillery fire and to prevent the kurdish forces from penetrating in. In the field, there were the infantry forces and the mountain artillery guns that were not under my command.

That day, and the day before, the police was not only gathering the men who were capable of working but the old and disabled Turkish men as well. When they were asked they used to say they were "gathering workers to clean the snow covered rail tracks."

In the evening I learned that one of the Armenian patrols under the command of an Armenian cadet tried to break into my house under the pretext of conducting a search, during the day, despite my name written on it. According to what he said he did not know who was living in the house. Upon decisive and strong resistance of my landlord this cadet, this insolent being, uttered the most despicable words to my spouse, and left without showing any signs of courage for taking my landlord, who was an elderly Turkish person, and the Kurdish people who were in my service. The testimony of this cadet revealed that this absurdity stemmed from the orders Antranik issued.

On learning this, I had a door opened between my apartment and my landlady's apartment so that the elderly landlady could take shelter in my apartment in case the Armenians come again to take the household away. She complied and had a door opened to my apartment through one of her neighbors.

That night they called me to Antranik's office for a military council meeting. I went there together with Captain Joltkević, the Chief of Mobilization Department and Technical Services. I was taking him to all the meetings I was attending in those days so as to render him as a witness to talks held.

When we arrived at the meeting they had already started. It was evident that they need not my putting forward my ideas. There were, Antranik, Dr. Zavriyev, Colonel Zinkević, Colonel Morel, Colonel Doluhanov, and several others at the meeting. Colonel Zinkević read the telegram message by the Commander-in-Chief Odichelitzé to me. In his message, General Odichelitzé was mentioning about Vehip Pasha's, the Commander of the Turkish Army, coded telegram message, where he informed him about his having given orders to his troops for launching an attack on Erzurum and deliver it. Consequently, General Odichelitzé ordered the destruction of all the guns in the reinforced emplacements and withdrawing of all the units.

Antranik had given me a written order on the destruction of those guns. General Odichelitzé was keeping his promise on the destruction of the guns, but his orders arrived late. It was impossible to destroy some of the guns. The Turkish forces had already intercepted our lines. But, we still had more than half of our guns to destroy. On the other hand, the sights and breech mechanisms removed were scattered all around, we could destroy them all but we needed two or three days to do it.

Antranik was yelling, swearing, and cursing at some people in Armenian. Dr. Zavriyev was both trying to calm him down, and telling us that Antranik was cursing and swearing at the Armenian administrators and statesmen who never wanted to fight at the fronts, and who abandoned the Armenian people and Armenia by sending a force of 3.000-4.000 men until then, although they had all the chance on their side earlier.

At last, Antranik explained his decision: to resist in Erzurum for another two days; and to evacuate the city to a maximum extent possible in this limited time. Antranik, disregarding our presence in the room, shamelessly, took his clothes off, washed his face and hands, wore his pyjamas, and went to bed as if we were not there.

I informed Dr. Zavriyev about the arsonings and fires breaking out in the city. I told him about an incident I witnessed on my way to meet him that day; there was a dozen shops burning to ashes in the town and no one was even attempting to extinguish the fire in the market place. He said necessary orders for extinguishing the fires in the city were already given.

I inquired Dr. Zavriyev about the gathering of the Muslim people and sending them to other places to work by the police. He said, they were gathered for the cleaning of the railroads. Upon my inquiring him, in great bewilderment, especially on the gathering of the elderly and the disabled, who were not capable of working at all, in the middle of the night and sending them to work right away; he said he did not know anything, but that he would investigate the issue.

I believe the words I had spent to Dr. Zavriyev about the coercion exerted on the civilian people previously created an enough sense of grief and anxiety for not turning a blind eye on the oppression and massacres carried out. He, as a member of the government, was trying to do his best in persuading the Armenians establish flawless relations with the Muslim population within the framework of the laws prevailing.

I used to observe such intentions among the Armenian intellectuals in Erzurum as well. I have no chance of knowing what they really have in their minds; but their words sounded as if they were full-heartedly standing against the most reprehensible acts and massacres. Dr. Zavriyev ought to have known the instincts of the other Armenians better than I did, but he did not.

After Antranik's placing himself in his bed comfortably, we passed on to the other room. We dismissed following the talks we held about the implementation of the tasks Antranik had assigned us.

Resisting for another two days did not seem implausible at all. On the other hand it was possible to resist not just for two days but forty-two days as we had well-constructed wired trenches, strong city walls, a two times bigger defense force that was not only capable of resisting the attacking kurds but to the orderly units of a well organized army.

We were absolutely right in repelling the kurdish attacks; because, the Turkish government had already warned us expressing that the kurds were not complying with the orders issued, and that they were unable to keep them from fighting. In other words, the burden of defending ourselves from the kurdish raids was placed on our shoulders.

On my way back, I saw that the fires, I mentioned above, were being taken under control and even put out. The city, when observed from outside, looked quite calm. It was quite evident that there were no signs, or danger, of breaking out of massacres.

On returning to the artillery headquarters I gave my orders for declaring the guns hors de combat. They could have been destroyed within two days at the most. I was receiving reports pertaining to the withdrawal of the infantry units in the dark from my officers. I hardly found an opportunity to get in touch with Colonel Morel, and I conveyed all the reports to him. He told me that all the counter measures were taken, that reserve troops and reinforcements were sent to the city, and that there was no reason to feel anxious about.

I went home and slept at about 1 o'clock. At about 2 or 3 o'clock in the morning, I heard several distant rifle shots coming from the city. I heard the sounds of rammed doors in the city. I heard the same foot steps of the touring Armenian detachments who were gathering the townsmen in the daylight, as well as the voices of people. There were no signs of coming help. Having observed the arresting of the townspeople, I suddenly developed a feeling that the Armenians were getting ready for massacres feverishly and fervently.

After having evaluated the situation I came to the conclusion that: first, while were fighting with the Turks honorably and defending Erzurum, those blood-thirsty and coward Armenian "freedom fighters" were deceiving us with what they did from behind. They started to carry out full-scale massacres on the unarmed elderly, women, and

children without worrying about libeling their own names before the world public opinion, let alone libeling the reputation of the Russian officers. Those who did not know enough about the developments might have thought that the Russian officers were helping the Armenians in realizing their activities. Secondly, the attackers could have been the orderly Turkish forces. If they were not there yet, they would have come the other day at dawn, or later in the day. Fighting against the orderly Turkish units did not have any place neither in the peace plans of our Army Command nor in our given tasks.

Accordingly, I decided to visit Colonel Morel at dawn and ask him to stop the Armenians from committing massacres any more; if he was not capable of doing this, we would force them to comply by turning our guns over the Armenians and stopping them by means of threat, or by means of opening fire if the circumstances required. After ceasing of the battle, we would send the members of the parliament to hold talks with the Turkish forces for our evacuating the city within two days at the latest without shedding blood.

A plan had to be devised for the securing of full protection of the Muslim population while the Armenians were retreating. For example, a detachment might have been formed by the Russian officers, Russian officials (although very few in number), and Russian soldiers who remained in Erzurum. And to set up a Turkish detachment to help the Russians or give them under the Russian command.

I went to see Colonel Morel, together with Captain Joltkević, at dawn. On our way, I learned from the Reserve Officer Bagratunyanets that he received orders for withdrawal; that he wanted to destroy the arsenal, but that Colonel Morel wanted me to deal with the problems pertaining to the arsenal. I was amazed to hear such an order. This arsenal was not affiliated to me at all; but it was under the responsibility Colonel Doluhanov.

I explained Reserve Officer Bagratunyanets that destroying of the arsenal would not yield to a plausible end; that it would be an unnecessary show of power; that we, the Russian artillery officers, were betrayed as we were not informed of the orders of withdrawal; that we all lived near the arsenal; that we would die immediately in case of an explosion. My reasoning proved to be plausible, and the arsenal was saved.

On reaching Colonel Morel's headquarters we witnessed the fleeing of people. The American Consulate, where some Armenian offices were found, across the headquarters, was burning in flames. Everything was

in flames. Colonel Morel and Colonel Torkom were on their horses. They were prepared to leave. It was 7 o'clock in the morning.

When I inquired them about the situation, Colonel Morel said, they received orders for withdrawal at 5 o'clock in the morning, and that he did not understand how the orders did not reach me until then.

I was facing the very thing I was afraid of. They were running away under the cover of Russian officers and artillery. While the Russian officers were loading and firing the guns with their own hands to stop the enemy, the Armenian "warriors" were massacring the people behind them, and were robbing the people off their properties without fear. If I had not come, none of us would have learned about the orders issued for withdrawal.

They used to inform us about the orders, may them be trivial or not, by sending at least an officer. But now they did not do it.

I first thought of going directly to the fortified emplacement at Mecidiye to express my gratitude to the Armenian heroes(!), who were running away towards Kars wrapped tightly in their overcoats and flak jackets, with artillery fire; for having deceived us; for not giving us enough time to destroy our guns but committing most despicable massacres behind us; for betraying and libeling an honorable senior officer; and for betraying other officers under my command.

Thinking of the innocent people among them I abandoned my idea. There still were lots of chaste Russians, people of other nations, women and children in the city.

We set out to return to the artillery headquarters right away. The streets were full of running, panic stricken desperate mobs of Armenian forces. I could not see any Armenian officers around. The roads were covered with belongings, overcoats, military equipments, and food thrown away by the fleeing Armenians.

It was almost impossible to make our way out of the town as the roads were crowded with streams of people and wagons. We tried to pass through other roads. We changed our direction, and met with cries of the people, and noise of fusillades.

I could not see what was happening in the streets. My sight was blocked by a corner on the street. Only thing we were able to see was the blood that was covering the snow in the street. I ordered going back to where we returned from, thinking that there was a street

battle going on. When we returned to the crossroads, we left our car and started to walk the remaining distance.

Meanwhile an Armenian, the chief of police of the town, made his way out of the street where the noise of fusillades and cries of people came from. I realized that he was there also. At last my perceptions proved to be right.

On returning the headquarters I ordered the batteries to withdraw together with the infantry forces. I also ordered the allocation of means of transport for the artillery officers. Soon it was understood that all the means of transport of the artillery headquarters had been stolen as a result of the thoughtlessness of the commander of the Service Company during the night. The regiment's means of transport, which were attended by an officer during the night, were being taken away before our eyes. The stablemen who came out of the courtyard gate started to run away galloping in the direction of Kars without even bothering themselves coming to the artillery headquarters.

The Armenian soldiers, who were armed to teeth, were trying to get on the covered wagons in maddening fear. Some of them were unleashing the horses from the wagons, riding on them in pairs, and were fleeing the city bellowing.

They even tried to take my wagon, which I had left on the road, by using force. But, on my driver's resisting them, they wounded one of my horses, but still could not take the wagon.

We were able to save only two or three of the fifty wagons. Only few officers were able to make use of them. They loaded their belongings hastily and drove away.

There remained two wagons and two phaetons. We could have left the city by making use of them; but as the panic stricken, fleeing Armenians were shooting desultorily in the streets they deserted. We decided to stay in our houses involuntarily. Turks were guaranteeing to protect us, and our families, from the terror of the kurds.

It was understood later that if we were to leave neglecting the fusillade of the Armenians in the town, we would never have succeeded it. We had lost our contact with the Karskapı. Senior Lieutenant Mitrofonov, who tried leaving the city, was compelled to return.

After a while we heard that the Turkish forces entered the city. We thus learned that we were not fighting against the kurds only but against the orderly Turkish troops.

Almost all of the courageous Armenian infantry(!) had deserted the battlefield hastily under the cover of the night, and set out towards Kars. They were running away as if they were being chased by a storm. Even a storm could not have cleansed Erzurum from the Armenians as they purged the city off their existence by themselves.

The reality of finding hardly any dead or wounded Armenians in the defense lines and in the city itself denoted to their understanding of upright defense and how they resisted for a long time. Moreover, the fact that the Russian officers were the only prisoners of war, could not have testified any worse for the immense courage and dignity of the Armenians.

Upon learning the entrance of the Turkish forces into the city, I went out, together with my aide-de-camps, to meet and inform them about our presence in the town. We then learned that a teary was signed between Turkiye and Russia.

During the following days, on my way to the headquarters and on my way back home, lots of Turkish citizens in the streets were trying to embrace me, kiss my hands, and do whatever they could to show their gratitude.

Being aware of the fact that – if it was not for the Russian officers in Erzurum – the Turkish forces might not have been able to find any living Turkish person in the city, they were showing he same due respect towards the other Russian officers as well.

Now I am most grateful to God for not letting me leave the city with the Armenians – about whom the ancient Roman historian Petroni declared "The Armenians are certainly human, but at home they go all on fours;" and again about whom the Russian poet Lermontov justly said "Thou art a slave, thou art a coward, and thou art an Armenian!" – after witnessing what they did in Erzurum before their leave, and learning the number of the unarmed elderly people, women, and children whom they massacred.

Lt.Col. Tverdohlebov

April 16/29, 1918
Erzurum