

## **OFFICIAL DIARY OF THE SECOND RUSSIAN GARRISON ARTILLERY REGIMENT IN ERZERUM**

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The Russian Army of the Caucasus evacuated the stations they had previously occupied towards the middle of December 1917, and, without having received orders from G.H.Q. or any of the Army Commanders, began their withdrawal. The Garrison Artillery Regiment brought up the rear of the Army. Of the detachments from the Deve-Boinu fortresses and the Artillery Regiment from Erzerum only 4° officers remained behind. Deserted by their men, they remained by the guns from a feeling of duty. In the fortresses were more than 400 guns, left behind for lack of means of transport. The officers, inspired by feelings of honor and duty, waited permission from G.H.Q. to leave the guns or for reinforcements to carry on the defense. With the officers of the first Regiment the cadre of the second Artillery Regiment was formed.

After the withdrawal of the Russian Army an Armenian Revolutionary Committee was set up in Erzerum, calling itself "The Armenian Military Union". At the same time the Army Commander sent to the Second Garrison Artillery Regiment 400 untrained Armenians, of whom the majority deserted and the remainder could only be used to guard the batteries of the fortresses.

Shortly before the withdrawal of the Army, when touch had been lost between Russia and the Trans-Caucasus, a provisional Government had been formed in Tiflis, which was called "The Trans-Caucasian Commission." This Commission announced that there was no intention of instituting an independent Trans-Caucasian Government, as before Trans-Caucasia belonged absolutely to Russia, but until the restoration of order the Commission would undertake to represent the central administration.

On the 18th December, 1917, the Commission issued a proclamation that in place of the scattered Russian Army, a new Army would be raised on a national basis, consisting of three Army Corps-one Russian, one Georgian, one Mohammedan-and some detachments of smaller nationalities, such as

Circassian, Ossets, etc. Only the artillery in the fortresses of Erzerum and Deve-Boinu retained their old character (i.e., comprised troops of various nationalities) until a decision should be arrived at as to the nationality of this unit, consisting of Russian officers and Armenian men. It was clear that this unit, whose cadres and leaders were in Russian hands, could not be claimed as Armenian. Moreover, we had received no orders with regard to the Armenian character of the formation, which was still regarded as Russian, being led by Russian officers who had actually served in the Russian Army and drew their pay from the Russian Treasury. The fact that the Army possessed no Armenian, but only a Russian church, conducted by Russian priests, was a further proof of the complete Muscovite character of the unit.

Since the withdrawal of the Army, begun some two months before, order could not be re-established among the soldiers, who deserted, looted, and threatened their officers, and were in a state of complete mutiny. Colonel Torkum, alleged to be an Armenian Bulgar, was appointed Commandant of Erzerum.

Towards the middle of January 1918, some Armenians of the infantry detachment murdered a Turkish notable of Erzerum in his dwelling and looted the house. Commander-in-Chief Odichelidze mustered all detachment commanders and summoned them to discover the perpetrator of this horrible crime within three days at most. He then turned to the Armenian officers and told them that the honor of the Armenian nation was at stake in this matter; it was therefore their duty to leave no stone unturned to discover the guilty person if they were to clear their reputation in the eyes of the world.

"If these outrages of which the Armenians are guilty do not cease, I shall find myself compelled to distribute arms to the Mohammedan population so that they can defend their lives and property," he added. To these accusations Colonel Torkum retorted in an injured tone that it was unjust to lay the crimes of a few individuals at the door of a whole nation. The detachment commanders proposed the setting up of a court martial, which by military law could punish

murder with death. Odichelidze replied that he had already taken the necessary measures.

Colonel Torkum, if I am not mistaken, organized on 25th January a review of the troops and had twenty-one guns fired to impress the population with his military power. On this occasion he made a speech in Armenian. In this speech, which is directed against General Odichelidze, he asserted Armenian independence, and mentioned that he was taking over the reins of authority as head of the new State. After hearing this grotesque statement the General had the new head of the State, Colonel Torkum, removed from Erzerum.

This measure was sufficient to show that the Russian Government intended to prevent at all costs the founding of an independent Armenian State. I have learnt that the Russian General Staff has reminded the Armenians repeatedly that all arms, ammunition, and other war stores, partly from the depots at Erzerum, partly from other depots, had only been handed over to them provision because no other troops were available. These arms, therefore, were only loaned to the Armenian and had to be handed back at any time on request.

In these days the Armenians were perpetrating indescribably cruel murders among the poor Turkish inhabitants of the neighborhood of Erzindjan; the Turks were unarmed and without any means of self-defense. On hearing that the Turkish troops were approaching, the Armenians, committing fresh crimes, fled in the direction of Erzerum.

According to the reports of the Commander-in-Chief, confirmed by officers who were actually present at the scene of the crime, the Armenians slew more than 800 Turks in Erzindjan, and so avenged one of their miserable accomplices who had been killed by a Turk in justified self-defense. Furthermore, the Armenians massacred the unhappy Mohammedan population of Ilidja, in the neighborhood of Erzerum, without sparing the women and children.

On February 7th the following incident came to my notice: I ascertained that the Militia and the Armenian soldiers of the town were carrying off some hundreds of Mohammedans to an unknown destination. When I inquired into the reasons

for this, I received the answer that these men were being recruited to clear the railway of snow. I expressed myself satisfied with this explanation.

The following story will prove how unsatisfactory it was:

About three o'clock 2nd Lieutenant Lipsky, an officer of my regiment, reported to me over the telephone that some Armenian soldiers had attacked five Turks in the streets; they had driven them into a corner of the barrack yard, beaten them mercilessly, and would certainly kill them. The intervention of the Russian officer in favor of the unfortunate men was met with threats, where-upon an Armenian officer, who was also present at the scene, took the part of the bandits and joined in preventing Lipsky from intervening. On hearing this I hurried, accompanied by three officers, to the scene of the outrage. On the way I met the officer who had telephoned to me and the Mayor of Erzerum, Stawrosky, looking for one of their Turkish friends who had been captured by the Armenians. Lipsky told me that the soldiers were holding the entrance to the barracks by force of arms. I went on my way. As I came near the barracks I saw twelve Turks leaving; they were running away, obviously panic-stricken. I stopped one of them, but, as I did not understand his speech, it was impossible to know what he said. Finally, with great difficulty, I entered the barracks. I immediately inquired about the Turks who had been captured in the street. The soldiers affirmed that there was no civilian of the town in the barracks. I began a personal search of every nook and corner of the barracks, and finally discovered in the bathroom seventy Mohammedans, victims of the most ghastly horrors. I immediately instituted an inquiry and had six Armenians who were responsible for this crime arrested. I also learned in the course of the inquiry that an Armenian, whose identity I could not establish, had shot an unfortunate Mohammedan who had shown himself on the roof of a house near the barracks. Naturally I at once set at liberty the unfortunate victim of this horrible outrage. The minutes of this inquiry, together with my own records, including the list of the Mohammedans whom I had succeeded in rescuing, were lost during the reoccupation of Erzerum by the Ottoman troops on February 27th. But the

incident can be confirmed by questioning the Turks, who, whenever we meet, are profuse in their gratitude. In addition, Ali Bey Pepeoff, the Secretary of Mayor Stawrosky, who drew up the list and the protocol, would certainly recognize the parties concerned.

The inquiry revealed that Karaguedoff, an Armenian cadet of the artillery regiment, was the instigator of the outrage. In the course of ruthless house-searching in Turkish homes, which he had conducted in the company of Armenian soldiers accustomed to such methods, he had appropriated furniture and other domestic property. Karaguedoff was arrested, together with other Armenian soldiers. The incidents were reported the same evening to the Commander-in-Chief in the presence of Government Commissioner Zetaloff and his assistant. On the same day the Armenians murdered other Turks and set fire to the Turkish bazaar. It was generally known that during these days several murders were committed in Erzerum and its neighborhood. I personally arrested an Armenian who had killed Turks in the neighborhood of Tafta and handed him over to the Commandant. It was said in the town that the Turk who had been told off to work in the fields never returned from their work, and that nothing could be learnt as to their whereabouts. The magistrates reported the disappearance of these men to the Commander-in-Chief.

In a report which we handed to the Commander-in-Chief on the occasion of an officers' conference we requested his permission to leave the fortress of Erzerum in view of our complete uselessness and the impossibility of preventing the Armenian crimes. We were afraid of besmirching our reputation. Odischelidze told us of the arrival of a wireless message which he had received from General Wehib Pasha, in command of the Ottoman troops. The General informed him that his troops had received orders to garrison Erzindjan and to advance until they had established touch with the Russian troops. Wehib Pasha further remarked that this was the only means of paving the way for the suppression of the barbarous cruelties practiced by the Armenians upon the Turkish population.

After this the Trans-Caucasian Commission made offers of peace to the Ottoman Government. In the telegram of reply the Commandant of the Ottoman troops expressed his readiness to accept the proposal, and added that he had communicated the proposal of the Trans-Caucasian Commission to his Government, recommending its acceptance. In accordance with a petition from us, General Odichelidze got into communication with Gueguetschkoni, the President of the Trans-Caucasian Commission, and General Lebedinsky, the Commander-in-Chief.

The reply contained the announcement that an ultimatum had been dispatched to the Armenian National Assembly, demanding the immediate cessation of all Armenian atrocities in order to put an end finally to these lamentable occurrences, and that Dr. Zavrieff and Andranik had been sent as delegates to Erzerum. As to the request of the officers, the advice of the Commissaries was that they should remain at their posts until the expected answer to the peace overtures had been received from the Ottoman Government.

The Council expressed their thanks to the officers for the service they had rendered, and declared that if Russia were faced with any fresh danger they were sure that the officers would be found at their posts to the last minute.

The Commander-in-Chief of the Army also issued an order of the day in which he recommended officers not to leave their posts, adding that to shield their honor and protect their lives he would enforce the most stringent measures against the Armenian criminals. On these conditions we remained at Erzerum with the sole object of safeguarding the interests of Russia, and under the sole command of the Commander-in-Chief. We learned that the Ottoman Government had received the proposal of the Trans-Caucasian Commission with favor and replied to this effect, and that peace negotiations would be opened on February 17th in Trebizond.

Our Army Commander informed all officers that there was no intention of stirring up enmity against the Ottoman troops in Erzerum and the neighborhood and that accordingly they were to remain in Erzerum until the conclusion of

peace, when arms and other war material, according to the peace conditions, would either be transported to Russia or handed over finally to the Ottoman Government. In case of any attempt on the part of the Ottoman troops to occupy Erzerum before the signing of peace, all guns were to be put out of action and the troops and officers withdrawn to Russia, definite orders for which would be promulgated at least seven days in advance.

The necessity for defending ourselves against the attacks of the Kurds until the final decision as to our remaining grew more and more obvious, for during the Armistice the Ottoman Government had declared that the Kurds were subject to no orders and would act on their own initiative. The Army Commander had, therefore, decided as early as the end of January to strengthen the Erzerum-Erzindjan line-of-communication by an appropriate number of guns to keep off the attacks of the Kurds, who were trying to loot our line-of-communication depots. An officer and two guns were ordered to each strategic point. On the withdrawal of the Armenians from Erzindjan and Erzerum the guns were withdrawn with them. On February 10th two guns were placed in all the positions from Buyuk-Kiremidli along the road from Trebizond as far as Erep-Michan, as at all other important strategic points of the town, with the same object in view. In view of the probability of a Kurdish attack from the direction of Palan-Dongno, guns were to be placed also between the Kars and Charput gates. These guns, which were only to be used against a possible attack by the Kurds, and were scarcely adequate for this object, would have been useless against a regular army with artillery: a few shots would suffice to put them out of action. Towards the middle of February the sights of the guns in the outlying positions were collected and delivered to the central depot; the same measure was now to be carried out also in the case of the guns in the nearer positions. This order was also given for the guns in Palan-Dongno, but was never carried out.

Only the guns, which remained in the positions to be used against the Kurds, retained their sights. However, no immediate offensive on the part of the

Ottoman troops was expected, as the Turks were regarded as demoralized and not in a position to undertake any movements before the summer. On February 12th some Armenian bandits, armed to the teeth, had openly shot ten or twelve Turks in the neighborhood of the station. Two Russian officers, infuriated by these impudent outrages, had tried to interfere, but had been compelled to give way before armed threats and to leave the victims to their fate.

On February 13th the Commander-in-Chief proclaimed a state of siege and convened a court martial, which was to enforce the death penalty according to the old regulations. Colonel Morel was appointed Commandant of the fortress of Erzerum, and an Armenian as president of the court martial. On the same day the Commander-in-Chief and General Gerassimoff left the town; they wished to fix a rendezvous in case the artillery had to withdraw. I remained in Erzerum in command of the Garrison Artillery. Colonel Morel's staff consisted exclusively of Russian officers, and the Adjutant of the regiment was Staff-Captain Schnauer.

After the departure of the Commander-in-Chief, Colonel Morel at once changed his attitude. He declared that Erzerum was to be defended to the last moment, and forbade all officers and inhabitants capable of bearing arms to leave the town. When I submitted to the court martial the wishes of some of the officers to avail themselves of this permission, one member, an Armenian named Sokhonnyan, replied brutally that he would himself cut down all who showed any intention of quitting the town, and would have any man who should dare to attempt flight seized by the Armenian forces in Kopri-Koj and Hassan-Kale, and taken before the court martial unless they were provided with permits. These permits, however, were issued solely by him. I realized that we were in a trap, escape from which would be extremely difficult, and that the court martial and the state of siege were directed less against the bandits than against the Russian officers.

The outrages continued in the town, and the unhappy Turkish population, unarmed and defenseless, was continually attacked by the Armenians. Their

only refuge was the Russian officers, who, however, could only offer them very limited protection. A few officers under my command had been obliged to use force to save the lives of a couple of Turks who were being robbed in the street. A military engineer, Karaieff, shot down with his rifle an Armenian who was taking to his heels after robbing a Turk in the street in the middle of the day. The promise to punish the bandits who murdered peaceful, unarmed Mohammedans remained, as usual, a dead letter.

Fearing Armenian revenge, the court martial did not dare to sentence one single Armenian, in spite of the fact that it had been set up chiefly at Armenian request. The Turks, moreover, had prophesied that a court martial of Armenians would not condemn a single one of their compatriots. We could now see the truth of the proverb that the wolves do not prey on one another.

All fit Armenians immediately escaped with their wives on the pretext of being obliged to protect them. I learned that a non-commissioned officer, Karaguedoff, had been freed from prison without my permission. I made inquiries of Colonel Morel as to the reason for this, and was told in reply that Karaguedoff's innocence had been established at a new inquiry. In spite of the fact that two of my officers and I had been the principal witnesses on this occasion, neither of us had been summoned to this very extraordinary inquiry. I expressed my dissatisfaction with the reply received from Colonel Morel, reported the matter again, and handed over the minutes to Colonel Alexandroff. The murderer I had captured in Tafta likewise went unpunished.

Colonel Morel feared a mutiny of the Turkish troops in Erzerum. On February 17th Andranik arrived in Erzerum, accompanied by Dr. Zavrieff, Assistant Commissioner for the occupied area. As we had not been instructed on Armenian questions, we did not know that Andranik was one of the criminals condemned to death by the Ottoman Government. I first learned these details on March 7th, in a conversation with the Turkish Army Commander. Andranik appeared in the uniform of a Russian brigadier-general. He was wearing the Order of Vladimir, Fourth Class, and the Cross of St. George, Second Class, as

well as the Military Cross of St. George, Second Class. He was accompanied by his Chief-of-Staff, the Russian colonel, Zinkewitsch. In the evening before his arrival Colonel Morel informed us that, according to a telegram received from Andranik at Kopri-Koj, machine-guns were to be employed to shoot down all cowards who attempted to escape from Erzerum. Immediately after his arrival Andranik took over the command of the fortress; Colonel Morel was subordinate to him, and we to Morel.

On the day of Andranik's arrival the whole of the inhabitants of Tepe-Koj, which belonged to my command, were massacred—men, women, and children. The officer on duty in this section communicated the tragic news to me, and I immediately reported it to Andranik in our first conversation. In my presence he gave orders for twenty horsemen to be dispatched to Tepe-Koj to bring back at least one of the criminals. Up to the present day I have never heard the result of this step.

Colonel Torkum turned up again in the town, and at the same time the Armenian artillery colonel, Dolukhanoff, made his reappearance in Erzerum. His first announcement was that he, an Inspector of Artillery, would henceforward rank as my superior officer. I replied that I held the rank of a Divisional Commander and did not require a superior officer; otherwise, I added, I should leave the service. It was thereupon announced that Colonel Dolukhanoff would carry on the administrative work of the Garrison Artillery, and that consequently his instructions to me would not be issued under his own name, but, as before, under that of Andranik. One day the Armenian lieutenant, Djanbuladion, who commanded the artillery battalion under my orders, also made an attempt to interfere with my affairs. When I directed that all guns, searchlights, and dynamos were to be transported towards the rear, he replied that he would not allow any withdrawal of material, as the Armenians intended to take all the administrative posts in the command into their own hands, and might only use the Russian officers as executives; they also wished to use them, without their realizing it, in establishing Armenian independence. Had the

Russian officers grasped the purpose they were intended to serve the majority of them would have resigned, and the Armenians would have been left with an inadequate number of officers. The following statements of Captain Peliat, temporary O.C. of the 7th Battalion of Caucasian Mountain Artillery, show how gravely the Armenians feared the resignation of the artillery officers. When the Armenians learned that the 7th Battalion Mountain Artillery were holding themselves in readiness to withdraw to San Kamisch on February 7th, they seized the commanding officer on the 5th of that month; and although at the orders of the Army H.Q. they were obliged to set him at liberty, they repeated the attempt three times.

The Armenians of Erzerum threatened H.Q. to drown the town in blood if the guns were withdrawn. The Army Commander was consequently forced to cancel the order for the withdrawal of the artillery. An attempt had to be made to come to an understanding with the officer commanding the 7th artillery Battalion. We agreed secretly that, in case the Armenians should attempt to force the hands of the Russian artillery officers and officially propose that they should ally themselves with the Armenian cause, we would help one another mutually. We possessed considerable war material, guns, machine-guns, and officers. The officers of the Mountain Artillery tried to find billets as near as possible to one another in the town, and we of the Garrison Artillery collected as far as possible in the Turkish quarter, where our headquarters had been situated since the occupation of the town. Since Andranik's arrival at Colonel Morel's side the fears of a rising of the inhabitants of Erzerum had greatly increased. The Colonel ordered that an efficient Russian officer should be put in command of Fort Medjedie to direct the bombardment in the event of a rising, which might follow the arrest of the instigator of the unrest. We all received the order to leave the Turkish quarter and transfer ourselves to the Armenian quarter. As we had lived in this quarter for two years, and were always in sympathy with the Mohammedan population, we thought this suggestion, to say the least of it, remarkable.

The Russian artillery officers unanimously declared that they had remained in the service to fight a worthy foe, and would never agree to fire on women and children, for it was quite clear that the Armenians would use a threatened Turkish rising as a pretext to open a bombardment of the Turkish quarter. As to the transfer to the Armenian quarter, it was impracticable for three reasons: Firstly, it was impossible to effect the removal in the time given; secondly, the withdrawal of the Russian officers from the Mohammedan quarter would of course, be followed by a fresh massacre; and thirdly, in view of the strained relations that had existed for some time between them and the Armenians, it would have been risky for the Russian officers to venture into their midst.

The officers of the Mountain Artillery Battalion who did not belong to the cadre of the Garrison Artillery also rejected the proposal. Finally the Armenians, who were left with no choice but to do their own dirty work, began to arrest some alleged agitators.

As Colonel Morel's proposal to bombard the town was very significant, I considered it necessary to call together all the officers under my command. We met twice in the course of three days. The first meeting was attended by all artillery officers in Erzerum, as well as by two English officers who had arrived a few days before; also by Colonels Morel, Zinkewitsch, Dolukhanoff and Torkum, Andranik and Dr. Zavrieff. Our object in inviting the English officers was to let them see the relations existing between the Russian officers and the Armenian Command. It would also give them an opportunity of finding out what resources the Russians had at their disposal to prevent Armenian atrocities, so that on their return they might support their observations by tangible proofs. As I had no telephonic or telegraphic connections under my personal control, I was convinced that telegrams sent by me would never reach their destination. I therefore seized the opportunity of this meeting to describe in the greatest detail all that I had myself observed and heard from reliable sources as to the atrocities and horrors perpetrated by the Armenians. I described to my hearers the degree of insubordination that prevailed among the Armenian troops, and cited

examples I had heard from the lips of General Odischlidze himself. I concluded with the words: "We are Russian officers who have remained in Erzerum have not done so with the object of placing our uniforms at the service of the Armenians as a cloak to conceal their ghastly crimes, but simply and solely in obedience to our superiors and to protect Russia. Unless the Armenian atrocities are suspended during our stay in Erzerum," I added, " every Russian officer will insist on leaving the town and resigning his post." Some other officers, speaking after me, emphatically confirmed what I had said.

In his reply Andranik intimated that the Armenians would be eternally grateful to Russia, that the Armenians formed an integral part of the population of Greater Russia, and that they had no other end in view than that of serving Russian interests. As to the so-called massacres committed by the Armenians, they were the result of the enmity existing between Armenians and Turks. He added that the principal object of his mission in Erzerum was to put down such crimes, and, should he fail to bring the Armenians to reason, he would be the first to leave the town. The business of the meeting was carried on through the medium of an interpreter.

Questioned as to his views on allowing officers who wished to do so to leave the town, Andranik replied that he considered it desirable that all those who were not too confident of their own courage should leave the town, and he would himself assist their departure as far as possible. Colonel Zinkewitsch declared before the whole meeting that, once convinced that the continued presence of the Russian officers in Erzerum would serve the interests of Russia, he would remain solely for that reason. In the end all officers decided to remain ten days longer and to regulate their conduct by the future course of events, according as these might confirm or refute Andranik's pledges.

The meeting had been held on February 20th or 21st. Shortly afterwards Colonel Dolukhanoff expressed to me and other Russian officers his astonishment at the contempt and even horror with which the Russian officers regarded the Armenians. On the next day Andranik proclaimed, on large wall-

posters written in Turkish, that any man who killed either Armenians or Mohammedans would be arrested and punished by death; further, that the Turks might resume their occupations without fear, and that, in the event of anyone of the Mohammedans engaged in labor in the fields failing to return from his work, he would hold the entire detachment in charge of the supervision of the work responsible. As I was riding through the streets the following day, accompanied by the Armenian captain, Djanbuladian, we noticed many people reading the posters. Djanbuladian assured them in Turkish that provided the Mohammedan population refrained from revolt, they would have nothing to fear from the Armenians. The reply was that for two years the Mohammedans had committed no crimes, and that there was no intention of doing so in the future; all they asked was that the Mohammedans, who were unarmed and without any means of defense, should not be killed, without reason. I asked the captain to tell the people that I was the Russian artillery commander, and to state that I and my Russian comrades were sympathetic towards the Mohammedan population, and would continue, as before, to look after these poor people. Some of the Turks present, two or three especially, confirmed my words, saying that I had with my own hand saved their lives during the massacre of February 7th. Djanbuladian, who acted as interpreter, was himself a member of the Armenian Committee.

At the second meeting Russian officers were present, the only foreigner admitted being Dr. Zavrieff. The following points were discussed: That an attempt should be made to define clearly the status of the 2nd Garrison Artillery Regiment of Erzerum, in the sense that this regiment was not, as the Armenians imagined, an Armenian artillery regiment, but a Russian regiment; not one of its officers had voluntarily enlisted in Armenian service, not one of us had made any agreement to do so. If the regiment was Russian we insisted on preserving Russian status; if Armenian, we desired the right to leave the town at will in order to serve with the Russian Army.

The state of siege had only served to prevent the departure of those officers who wished to leave in order to serve on another than the Caucasus front. If, on the

other hand, the current rumor materialized and the Trans-Caucasus had split off from Russia, it would certainly be necessary to grant leave of absence to the Russian officers if we were not to find ourselves strangers in a foreign land.

After prolonged discussion we reached the conviction that, according to the circular we had received, every officer had the right to apply for transfer to a Russian Army Corps or to be placed at the disposal of the War Ministry. I therefore consented to forward all such applications to the proper authorities.

During the meeting the experience of Lieutenant Yermoloff, of the 7<sup>th</sup> Battalion Caucasus Mountain Artillery, was brought up as a striking example. He had asked to be transferred from the new Armenian battalion to which he had been assigned. Colonel Morel had first tried to dissuade him, then, in face of this officer's fixed determination, he had added to the written form of application that the officer in question had shown himself incompetent for his duties, that he would therefore be placed at the disposal of the General Staff of the Front, and would receive orders to leave Erzerum within twenty-four hours. Thus was the honor of an efficient officer attacked, for the sole reason that he refused to serve Armenian interests and had been indiscreet enough to declare that Colonel Morel had allied himself to the Armenian cause.

Dr. Zavrieff repeated word for word Andranik's statement given above. He said that by remaining in Erzerum until the conclusion of peace we should be serving Russian interests. Officers belonging to a civilized nation had no right to adopt such a line of reasoning as, for example: "Let the Armenians and Turks settle their own quarrel! Let them cut each other's throats! Why should we Russians interfere with their affairs? Let them go to the devil!"

At the conclusion of his speech, which had not made the desired impression, Dr. Zavrieff said that if we wished to serve humanity it was our duty to remain in Erzerum to prevent butchery of the Turks. Andranik's promises were not fulfilled, nor had the Mohammedan population ever placed any faith in them. Shops remained closed and terror continued to reign. Not a living soul showed himself in the Mohammedan quarters. Only a few shops in the neighbourhood

of the Town Hall opened their shutters, and there a few Mohammedans collected during the day.

Not a single Armenian was punished. To keep up the pretence of Armenian innocence the question was asked whether the innocent were to be punished for the sake of Andranik's promise. But when the Russian officers replied that they had themselves handed over various Armenian offenders and accused them before the authorities, this irrefutable argument was received in silence. Murder still went on and was merely concealed. It was practiced in the more remote villages, no longer before the eyes of the Russian officers.

The Turkish inhabitants of the villages round Erzerum disappeared, and nothing was heard as to their fate. Arrests in the town increased in number on the excuse of a possible rising. To my ironical question, what happened to the prisoners, and whether they all ran the risk of being slaughtered, Colonel Morel replied that some would be taken to Tiflis under adequate escort, others would be kept in Erzerum as hostages. In the streets Armenian bands, formed of Armenian deserters, murdered the by-passes - partly from fear, partly to rob them of their possessions; in any case, robbery was the chief motive. Before Andranik's arrival the companies refused to go into the front line. Afterwards they obeyed the order, but only to desert in the most craven fashion. Andranik, on horse-back, tried to drive them back with his sword and fists. To have him at their head was the dearest wish of all Armenians of the Russian artillery. They were apparently incapable of grasping that the Garrison Artillery required the services of trained artillerymen and an adequate number of infantry. But it was easy to guess their secret thought: when the moment came for withdrawal, to escape under cover of the guns. Subsequent events have proved the truth of this. The opening of peace negotiations at Trebizond was delayed. We learned through the General Staff at Erzerum that the negotiations fixed for February 17th had been postponed until the 20th or 25th. As my Staff was separated in opposite ends of the town, and the telephonic communication was in an inefficient state, I was compelled to make the journey twice a day.

According to information I received from Colonel Morel and his Staff in the course of an official visit, there were no regular Ottoman troops in the neighborhood of Erzerum; we were fighting Kurdish bands and villagers, together with a few regulars, relics of the Turkish Army of 1916. It was understood that these bands had been raised by some Ottoman officers who had come to the neighborhood to protect the population. These troops had only two mountain guns, which had been left in Erzindjan by the Armenians. They could advance by the Erzindjan-Olti- Jeni road, or from the other side from Kars and Palan-Dogno. Colonel Morel, on what grounds I do not know, assumed that the attack would be made from Olti. The intelligence service was conducted by the Armenians most inefficiently. They were chiefly occupied in murder in the villages and driving off any herds of cattle they came across. Their reports were lies from beginning to end. If they reported that the patrol had been attacked by an enemy force of 2,000 men, one could be sure that there had actually been 200 at most. They were not ashamed to admit having fled before an attack by 300-400 men, in which their sole loss was one killed and one wounded. One day an Armenian officer reported over the telephone that his detachment had been attacked by 400 of the enemy; it transpired that two unarmed men had emerged from a neighboring village and immediately withdrawn into their houses. From the evacuation of Erzerum until the Turkish occupation the Armenian Scout patrols only once succeeded in making a capture -a single Turkish horseman. He was probably suffering from frozen feet or was prevented by some other reason from escaping.

After our second officers' meeting some officers had applied for transfer to other posts. When these applications were submitted to Colonel Morel he was very angry, and said that he would refuse to permit their departure on the grounds of a court martial decision. When I pointed out that the guns were still in the hands of the Russian officers, who could reply to such unjustified severity with artillery fire, and, moreover, that as the applications were absolutely legal and could not be stigmatized as an attempt at desertion, it was necessary to

comply, he retorted that, if the officers insisted, he would give them, as he had done in the case of Captain Yermaloff, papers which would compromise their records. I replied to Colonel Morel that, as Colonel Dolukhanoff had justly declared in Tiflis and Batum, officers who were forced to remain at their posts against their will could not be expected to give good service. He replied that for this reason he had asked for sixty English officers to be sent to Erzerum, and had already received formal consent. On this occasion I also heard of another incident: a Russian or Polish soldier who was acting as stationmaster in Erzerum had refused to continue his duties. He had been at once arrested and forced to carry on. Under the pretext of facilitating a more rapid circulation of orders I ordered my officers to billet themselves as near to one another as possible; in reality my object was that we might be in a better position to help one another in case of need.

Captain Yermoloff had departed on February 25th. I had asked him to break his journey at Sari-Kamieko to inform Generals Wischinsky and Gerassimoff, artillery commanders. of the serious position in which we were placed in relation to the Armenians, and to urge him to free us as quickly as possible from this cul-de-sac.

On February 24th I sighted a Turkish airplane reconnoitering, and concluded that the enemy was at Erzindjan or even Mama-Khatum. The same day Colonel Morel informed me that he had received the Turkish proposal regarding the evacuation of Erzerum. After the Turkish occupation I learned from Corps Commander Krazim Bey that this proposal had not been a worthless scrap of paper, but an official document bearing his own signature, whereas Colonel Morel had deliberately led me to believe that this official ultimatum, signed by the Officer Commanding the Army Corps, was mere bluff. The General Staff of the fortress announced on February 24th and 25th that no danger was imminent. Only a band of Kurds had been seen in the neighbourhood of Teke-Deressi, and their advance had been checked by a detachment sent out against them. It was also stated that a detachment sent out from Erzerum had thrown back the enemy

a few kilometers beyond Ildja. Meanwhile we heard that on February 26th the Armenian detachment at Teke-Deressi had been attacked, and that those who had been able to escape had fled like the wind to Erzerum; the Ildja detachment, completely broken up, was also running away in the same direction.

I had received from Colonel Morel verbal orders to open artillery fire on the attacking enemy, but I could see no target. On the Charput road only fleeing Armenian soldiers were visible, and on the Trebizond road Armenian detachments retreating on Erzerum in close formation, as if on the parade ground. In the course of the afternoon it became known, also, that an enemy detachment was halted close to Guoz-Koj. I estimated it at 1,500 men; it did not look like Kurdish bands, but a properly led regiment.

Andranik attempted to muster the fugitives and send them against the enemy, but these cowards took to their heels as soon as they came into touch with the foe. The artillery fire, however, was maintained until midnight. Immediately the Kurd offensive was opened and we had got to work, no more was heard of departure from the Russian officers, who carried out their assigned duties honorably.

I could not induce the Armenian infantry attached to my batteries at Buyuk-Kiremidli to attack; instead they deserted the batteries and withdrew persistently towards the Charput gate. The Armenians who had fled at Teke-Deressi even carried off in their flight the herds of cattle and slew the defenseless isolated peasants they encountered on their way. The Turkish advance on Erzerum came as a complete surprise to the Russian General Staff; no battle orders had been issued, or, if they had, I, at any rate, had heard nothing of them. My task was very simple: it consisted of keeping the enemy under fire to prevent him from piercing the belt of forts, which surrounded the town. In the advanced positions were also infantry and mountain artillery, which were not under my command.

On the same day the Armenian militia busied themselves in the town until evening in seizing all male Mohammedans, including old men and sick. When

questioned as to the object of these measures, the reply was that men were being collected to clear the railway of snow. In the evening I learned that an Armenian student, with his band, had forced an entry into my house, in spite of my name on the door, on the excuse of searching it. As my wife resisted this deliberate intrusion he did not succeed in his attempt, and was also prevented from carrying off the owner of the house, an old Turk, together with some Kurdish servants; he cursed roundly at this thwarting of his plan. The student declared that the searchings were being carried out at the order of Andranik. I at once had a communication door cut so that the old man could take refuge with us in case they came a second time to fetch him.

I had recently been in the habit, each time I visited Andranik and his Staff, of taking with me Captain Yulkewitsch, the chief of the Mobilization Department, as a witness of my relations with these men. One evening he accompanied me to an officers' meeting. When we entered the meeting had already begun. Those present were Andranik, Dr. Zavrieff, Colonels Zinkewitsch and Dolukhanoff, and a few others. On my arrival Zinkewitsch began to read aloud the following telegram from the Commander-in-Chief, General Odichelidze: "I have received a wireless message from Wehib Pasha, commanding the Ottoman forces, in which he states that his troops have orders to occupy Erzerum. Destroy the guns of the fortress and withdraw with the troops. (Sgd.) Odichelidze".

This belated order left us no time to destroy the guns. After Andranik had given vent to his fury, he announced his decision to hold Erzerum two days longer, to enable the destruction to be carried out, and then to evacuate the fortress. When Dr. Zavrieff pointed out that nothing was being done to suppress the firebrands who infested the town, and that the Mohammedan aged and sick had been seized and dispatched to an unknown destination, he replied that orders had already been given to put down this disorder. But, as with all the others, these fine promises were never carried out.

After discussing the best way of carrying out Andranik's decision we withdrew. As to the question of holding Erzerum for two more days, considering the

strength of the troops and of the advanced position, the town could have held out for another forty-two days, not only against the Kurds, but even against a regular army.

As Ottoman H.Q. had officially stated in the course of the armistice negotiations that they could not be responsible for keeping the Kurds in order, it was our duty to take all necessary measures against a possible attack from them.

When I returned to my Headquarters I gave the necessary orders for the destruction of the guns, which in any case could have been rendered useless within two days. I learned from the reports of my officers that the infantry, under cover of darkness, had deserted the trenches and taken to flight. I communicated this news to Colonel Morel, who assured me that it would give rise to no danger at all, as reinforcements had been sent up. I returned home and went to bed about one o'clock.

Between one and three I heard isolated shots in the town, and soon after I could hear the voices of Armenians, the sound of doors being smashed in with axes, and the despairing cries of the poor unhappy Mohammedans, who had been attacked. Two thoughts gave me anxiety: In the first place, our honor was threatened, for anyone who had not witnessed personally the cowardly cruelty of the Armenians (fighting for freedom!) might assume that these inhuman brutalities were being perpetrated with the connivance of the Russian officers, and we should have to share the blame with these wild beasts; in the second place, as it was not in accordance with the views of G.H.Q. to engage the regular Turkish forces, the result might be that the orders of the Commander-in-Chief would not be obeyed if a misunderstanding should arise among the attackers. With regard to these two points I came to the following decision: To call on Colonel Morel first thing in the morning and suggest to him--first, that the Armenians must be prevented from perpetrating fresh outrages, even if the only method of doing so were to turn part of our guns upon them and so control them to heed our orders; secondly, envoys should be at once sent with a flag of truce to the Turkish troops to inform them that in two days the town would be

ceded without bloodshed. Moreover, it would be necessary to raise detachments, excluding Armenians, in order to suppress the disturbances by force of arms and prevent the butchery of the Turks by the Armenians. When, in the early morning, I went to see Colonel Morel, accompanied by Captain Yulkewitsch, I met, near the artillery munition dump, the Armenian second lieutenant, Bagratonian, who was on duty at this depot. He told me that when the order came to withdraw he would like to blow up the dump, but would wait for orders from me. This statement astounded me, for the ammunition depot was under the command of Colonel Dolukhanoff, and no orders had been received to blow it up. I gave him to understand that such an explosion might cause injury to the Russian officers as well as to the civilian population, advised him to abandon his project, and finally succeeded in convincing him. In this way I saved the ammunition.

As I approached Colonel Morel's quarters I saw that everyone was taking flight. The house of the American Consul, which stands opposite his quarters, was in flames. Colonel Morel and Colonel Torkum were mounted and ready for flight; their baggage had been loaded on to a motorcar and several carriages. It was seven o'clock in the morning. I inquired as to the situation. I was told that the order for withdrawal had been issued at 5 a.m., and astonishment was expressed that I had not received it. This is what I had feared: the Armenians succeeded in escaping under the protection of the Russian officers and the artillery. But while the Russian officers were working the guns single-handed and beating back the onslaught of the attackers, the Armenians were at full liberty to slaughter the Mohammedans and take to their heels. If I had not appeared no Russian officer would have known of the order for withdrawal. I thought for a moment of running to Fort Medjedie to send a farewell of shrapnel into the brave Armenians who, clad in bulletproof tunics, were fleeing unhindered along the Kars road. But it occurred to me that there might be one or two innocent men among them, so I abandoned the idea.

It was also a result of the cunning and cowardice of the noble Armenian looters that the guns could not be put out of action. When I returned to my quarters I heard in an obscure street cries of pain and the crackle 'of a terrific rifle volley. As I was at a street corner I could not see what was happening, but the bloodstains in the snow showed that a fight had taken place. I got down from my carriage to continue my journey on foot; but when I saw the Armenian Commanding Officer of the Militia on horseback, coming out of a side street, I could imagine the scene of horror that had been enacted.

When I was back in my quarters I gave orders to the batteries to sound the retreat at the same time as the infantry and to get the carriages ready for the artillery officers. I was told that the outriders had already escaped in the night. Armenian deserters, armed to the teeth, had taken the horses belonging to the carriages, and galloped off two on each horse. As my groom had put up a resistance they had not been able to take my horses, but they wounded one of them with a shot. Of the fifty carriages we were left with only three, which some of the officers used. Soon afterwards we learnt the Turkish army had entered the town, and were at last able to ascertain that they did not consist of bands of Kurds collected together haphazard, but regular troops. The brave Armenian infantry took advantage of the night to dash off with all speed along the Erzerum-Kars road. A hurricane could hardly have swept Erzerum so thoroughly of the Armenian dirt in so short time.

Neither in the firing trenches nor in the town were there any wounded Armenians to be found. This proves afresh with what courage and audacity they had defended Erzerum. The only prisoners were Russian officers, so the Armenians can boast of having taken a negative part in the defense of the town. After receiving news of the occupation of the town by the Turks I went with my adjutant to headquarters to report. As I passed along the streets, the Turks I met expressed in most moving fashion their gratitude to me for saving their lives. This gratitude included all the Russian officers, for if the Russian officers had

not been there, the Turkish troops reoccupying Erzerum would not have found a single Turk alive.

ERZERUM, April 29th, 1918.

(Signed) LT.-COL. TVERDOHLEBOV,

*Provisional Commandant of the Fortresses of Erzerum and Deveboynu,*

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