

## **ՀՐԱՊԱՐԱԿՈՒՄՆԵՐ**

## **PUBLICATIONS**

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### **THE CHICAGO DAILY NEWS REPORTS ON THE ARMENIAN QUESTION, THE WORLD WAR I AND THE GENOCIDE OF ARMENIANS**

On August 1, 1914, the First World War broke out between two warring political and military blocks, the Entente, which included England, France and Russia, and the Central Powers, which included Germany, Austria-Hungary and Italy. Afterwards Turkey also joined them.

The Ottoman Empire always relied on war and desire, it did not open any doors to its rayyas (in Arabic, word “rayya” means herd, pasture) which belonged to different nationalities and religions. Turkey always followed the path of war, violence and pogroms<sup>1</sup>. In a state with a similar structure, genocide must have been a completely natural phenomenon. Prone to pogroms and genocide, the Ottoman political system was based on the concepts of Ottomanism and pan-Islamism, but with the coming to power of the Young Turks, the system relied on pan-Turkism.

The doctrine of pan-Turkism became their official ideology. The Armenian genocide completely fit into the framework of the implementation of the plans of

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<sup>1</sup> Hovhannisyan 2009, 391.

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Young Turks to create a “pure” Turkish state, preserving the territorial integrity of the Ottoman Empire and the ideology of pan-Turkism.

Before World War I, Turkey dealt with European powers, which were known as “European Concert”. This included England, Austria-Hungary, Germany, Russia and France. As a result of the war, the “European Concert” fell into two blocks – on the one hand, England, France, Russia, on the other – Germany, Austria-Hungary and Ottoman Turkey. During the war, the Entente states did not have the right to interfere in the internal affairs of the Ottoman Empire, to influence it, regarding the Armenian Question as well.

Germany had its own plans for Turkey. One of its major goals was to turn Turkey into its ally and reinforce itself in the Near East, forcing out England and France. On the other hand, Germany wanted to use Turkey against Russia, and achieving its strategic goals was a priority for Germany<sup>2</sup>.

On July 4, 1915, Germany fully endorsed and supported the plan of Young Turks in a secret letter addressed to the Turkish Government. The German consuls encouraged, and the German officers took part in the atrocities committed by the Young Turks<sup>3</sup>.

In July 1914, a congress of the Armenian Revolutionary Party Dashnaksutiun was held in Erzeroum. Prominent figures of Young Turks Nadji Bey, Shaqir Behaeddin and Hilmi Bey took part in this congress. They demanded that the Armenians, in case of war, both in Turkey and in Russia be faithful to Turkey, make up troops of Armenians to war with Russians and raise a rebellion in the Caucasus at the back of the Russian army. In response to the demands that the Young Turks put forward, the congress declared that in case of war, the Armenians of the Ottoman and Russian Empires would end up in different camps, since they were subjects of various states and were loyal to them. However, if the Turkish government decided to enter the war, then the Armenians as Turkish subjects would fulfill their obligations that would be assigned to them in Turkey, as well as serve their homeland, the army and defend the country<sup>4</sup>.

At the end of 1914, special secret orders, signed by the Minister of the Interior Affairs, Talaat, were sent to the Empire's local authorities, regarding the

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<sup>2</sup> NAA, f. 412, l. 1, w. 2551, p. 1.

<sup>3</sup> Հայերի ցեղասպանությունը ըստ երիտթուրքերի դատավարության փաստաթղթերի 1988, 10.

<sup>4</sup> NAA, f. 412, l. 1, w. 2551, p. 3.

special preparatory measures to be taken for the extermination of the Armenians. The “Union and Progress” party made a decision to kill and destroy the Armenians, not to leave any person alive. To carry out this command the presidency established an “Executive Committee of Three”, consisting of Dr. Nazim, Shaqir Behaeddin and Midhat Shuqri. Under their guidance, there was the so-called “Teşkilât-i mahsusa” (“Special organization”), which involved deliberately liberated criminals from prisons. The obligation to carry out the Armenian Genocide was laid out on this very ‘chetes’ - bandits, gangsters and other scum of the society, capable of the most barbaric crimes<sup>5</sup>.

As a result of the genocidal policy pursued by the Young Turk government in 1915–1916, the Western Armenians were in danger of extinction. Mass deportations and massacres in Western Armenia had nothing to do with military-oriented purposes, as the issue of the annihilation of Armenians had been pre-arranged and decided in advance by the Young Turks. They had chosen this strategy in order to solve the Armenian Question. The war was a good opportunity for them to achieve their goal<sup>6</sup>.

The Armenian Genocide of 1915 was by no means a coincidence. It derived from the nationalistic and carnivorous policy, pursued by the Turk sultans and later the Young Turks. During the preceding decades, they implemented it against the non-Turkish nations of the Empire, including Armenians,. This was the official state policy of Ottoman Turkey. The Ottoman Empire typologically can be recognized as a “genocidal state”<sup>7</sup>.

“But no one in the world is such a polished hypocrite like the Turk”<sup>8</sup>.

We have found the following document in the National Archives of Armenia (NAA, f. 412, L. 1, work 2551). This publication features the Chicago Daily News special correspondent’s reports on Western Armenians, World War I, the Armenian Question and the tragedy of Armenians.

## VI.

(Special Correspondence of the *Chicago Daily News*)

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<sup>5</sup> Հայերի ցեղասպանությունը ըստ երիտթուրքերի դատավարության փաստաթղթերի 1988, 10.

<sup>6</sup> Հայերի ցեղասպանությունը ըստ երիտթուրքերի դատավարության փաստաթղթերի 1988, 5.

<sup>7</sup> Hovhannisyan 2009, 369.

<sup>8</sup> NAA, f. 412, l. 1, w. 2551, p. 2.

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Constantinople, August. – August 1914 and the following months were trying days for the Armenians. The World War had begun, and both Russia and Turkey were mobilizing their armies in haste. Russia had entered in the struggle and Turkey was ready at any moment to be the cat's paw for Germany. If Turkey's entry into the war was doubted in many quarters in Europe and America, at least the Armenians in Turkey were well aware of the Turkish intentions. They knew well that the Caucasian front had to be a death struggle fighting between the two adversaries, and Armenia was to become a theater of war. Being almost evenly divided between the two Empires, Armenian soldiers of the same race had to fight against one another. Consequently, that being the lot of the Armenians, they had to decide for themselves what course should be taken.

In appearance, the question was very simple. The Armenians in Turkey would enlist in the Turkish Army, and be loyal to the Turks, and the Armenians in Russia – loyal to Russia. But there was the experience of the past, and the Christian races persecuted and massacred for centuries, had no sympathy either for the Turks or for the Germans.

The Armenians for over thirty years had endeavored by means of diplomacy or resistance to obtain a fair security for life, honor and property in the Ottoman Empire. Revolutionary societies since 1890, organized and spread among the Armenians all over the world, had to undergo a life and death struggle against the Turkish tyranny. The story of Armenian revolution gives many incidents of self-sacrifice and bravery. But the key of the Armenian question was not in the hands of the Armenians, its solution depended only on the European concert, and that concert never existed, diverse interests being against one another. Germany had her Bagdad railway with the carefully planned projects of domination of the Near East, England had Egypt and India, France Syria, and Russia planned to reach the warm waters of the Mediterranean through Armenia. And the Young Turks in the secret Congress of the Union and Progress Committee at Salonica in 1911, had found the only way of solving the Eastern Question – to destroy the Christian element. That was the plan of Pan-Turanism, skillfully measured on Pan - Germanism. The Turks propagated openly in their publications the annihilation of all the races living in Turkey except the Turks, who never had a majority over other races they ruled. Of course, they said, Sultan Fatih was guilty for not having massacred all the Christians at the time when he conquered Constantinople. Other massacres, according to the Young Turks had not been thorough, and

Christians remained yet in the Empire in prospering conditions; even Abdul Hamid was to be condemned for not having finished with the Armenians, having ordered the massacres to be ended in each locality for a certain period of hours.

Now, the war had come. There was no more Europe to interfere with the affairs of Turkey. The Turk, they argued, had an ample time to solve the problem with a sword, fire, and plunder, and thus, their ambition was, not only to create a homogeneous Turkish Empire, but also to become the masters of Asia; Egypt, and North Africa were to be reconquered; the Caucasus, Persia, Beludjistan, Afkhanistan, Buchara, so far as Manchura were to be added to the Ottoman Empire. It was a huge dream, the realization of which Berlin had painted with rich Oriental colors.

And all this was known, at least to the Christians in Turkey. But no one in the world is such a polished hypocrite like the Turk. The general war was declared in August 1914, and Turkey went into the war in November of the same year, yet for three months the Entente diplomacy failed to penetrate into the secrets of Turkey. The “word of honor” of Talaat that Turkey would never enter the war had a meaning for the Allies’ representatives in the Turkish capital, while very same Talaat and company were preparing plans and plots in secret nightly gatherings at the German Embassy at Pera.

Up to the last moment of his entrance into the war the shrewd Turk had calmed down all the suspicion of the Entente diplomats, and in the meanwhile not neglecting all sorts of maneuvers to hide his final designs from the subject races, and endeavoring to make them his own tools to the detriment of their own interests. The Armenian revolutionary Committee Dashnaktzoutioun, an ally of the Young Turk party, was holding a congress in Erzeroum at the time. Talaat saw a chance of intriguing. Dr. Behaheddin Shakir, Eomer Nadji Bey, and Hilmi Bey, three most prominent members of the Young Turk Committee hurried from the capital to Erzeroum, for negotiating with the Armenian Committee.

The proposition was a very simple one. The Turks declared that they had decided to go into the war on Germany’s side and against Russia; the Armenians were to be with the Turks, and they were to organize a voluntary army and entering Armenian provinces in Russia revolt against the Russian government. They assured that the Georgians, the Tartars and the union of Armenians with them would force the Russians to evacuate the Caucasus at the first move, and that their return would be impossible, since they would be beaten soon on the

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German front. The Armenian Committee argued with the Turks, tried to show them the encountering dangers in the interference in the great European war. They said it was a suicide for Turkey to be against England and France, and made their utmost to persuade the Turks to remain neutral and benefit the country with the outcomes of neutrality and peace. "If Turkey has finally decided to join the war", they said, "we can make only one sincere promise, that is, the Armenians in Turkey will be loyal to Turkey, and Russian Armenians – loyal to Russia, we will not instigate revolution either against the Russians or against the Turks". This was an honest, well-meaning promise, and the Armenians meant to keep it. Before Turkey entered the war, their sympathies were openly with the Entente Powers. They were enthusiastic with their success and downhearted when they were in reverse. A Turkish paper caricatured the Armenians as barometer of war: when Armenians were smiling that was the victory of the Allies, when they were sullen and sad that meant the German army was advancing. That was true. It was not a question of sentiment, but the Armenians knew very well that the Turkish declaration of war was the death sentence of their own nation, and consequently they made all possible efforts to keep away the Turks from the international mingling, and finally they had come to the conclusion that the victory of the allies only could bring the Turks to a common sense. The efforts of the Armenians were in vain, the German gold and German lavish promises had taken the Turk's heed away.

Turkey threw itself in the fire, and Armenia had to take the matter as it was. Hiding all their sentiments, fearful of the dangers connected with their national existence, they took every necessary step to avoid any discontent on part of the Turks. They joined the army, and the desertion of the Armenian soldiers was less than that of the Turks. They contributed to hospitals and the needs of army most lavishly. They fought well on the front, even on the Caucasian front where they had to fight against their brothers. On the declaration of Enver Pacha they won the victory in Keopri Koy over the Russians. Armenian merchants were robbed officially, women and children were forced to carry ammunitions and food for the army, in the interior entire villages were destroyed and inhabitants massacred, and all this was borne by the Armenians with silence in order to avoid any Turkish pretext of revolution on their part. "Be loyal and careful" was the byword among the Armenians. To illustrate I bring here the story of a young Armenian officer in the Turkish army. Two years ago, I met a young Armenian officer taken prisoner

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by the Russians. He had his story. For three years, he served in the Turkish Army. "One day", he said, "I took some forty prisoners, all of them were Armenians. I knew very well that, if I had taken them to the headquarters, they would have been butchered, but I did, thinking my loyalty to the Turks and my military duty would influence the Turks to appreciate the service and show a kinder attitude towards the Armenians in Turkey. All the Armenians in the Turkish army, conscious of their responsibility towards their nation were as loyal as I was. But, look what the Turks have done in return. They have turned Armenia into a graveyard. Now, I am suffering of my conscience, I could have saved the lives of those forty Armenian soldiers, and I did not; tell me was I right or wrong?" I let it to my reader decide.

VII.

(Special Correspondence of the *Chicago Daily News*)

Constantinople, August. – The Armenians in Turkey at the commencement of the war did their utmost in one way or another to get a long in peace with the Turks. Unwillingly they sacrificed anything that was in the sphere of their capacity or power in order to avoid any misunderstanding that might have caused the distrust by the Turks. Notwithstanding this, their loyalty was rewarded with fire and blood, and no appeal to reason stopped the Turkish government from the outrageous deeds that are so well known all over the world.

While this was the case in Turkey, on the other side of the frontier the Armenians in Russia were overenthusiastic in their efforts and sacrifices in supporting the Russian Government. There had been only one ideal for them for the last forty years, and that was the freedom of their conventionalists from the Turkish rule. Their own liberation from the Moslem tyranny was not a history of many years; they had fought for Russia each time when there had been a war between the cross and the crescent, and had welcomed the Moscovite power as a liberator. They knew well that the Czars had not kept their promises for the autonomy of Armenia yet, – at least they had enjoyed safety of life and property, – and to them Russian despotism was more preferable than the Turkish massacres.

However, this time they believed that the victory for Russia meant the independence of Turkish Armenia. Facts are too well known about Russian plans. All that Russia wanted was the conquest and annexation of Armenia, and there

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were not a few among the Russian diplomats, who wanted Armenia, but without Armenians. Some facts during the war proved that Russians retarded the occupation of Armenia, in order to give time to the Turks to do away with the Armenians. Yet, at the first mobilization, 80,000 Armenians joined the Russian regular army, later the number reached 150,000. With their national resources, the Armenians organized also a voluntary army of seven “droujina” over a thousand men in each under the command of a revolutionary leader.

The Armenian national hero – Antranik was invited from Bulgaria to take the commandment of these volunteers. Antranik was a peasant, having no schooling, but he was a man of extraordinary abilities. His vitality and boldness are proverbial. He possessed a commonsense and prudence that made him respectable even to his antagonists and enemies. He spoke little but acted quickly. He was approachable and in time with everybody, but a most decided critic was handicapped in his presence. He was loved and feared in the meantime both by a friend and a foe. Up to the armistice, for about thirty years Antranik did not lay down his arms and always fought against the Turks; only in this war alone he fought fifty-three battles, never behind his men, always the first to attack the enemy. It is unbelievable to say that in 1918, in July, he occupied the city of Khoi with eleven men, among his booty being several thousand prisoners and four cannons. He did this while his army of six thousand men were only two miles away of the fallen town. In all his daring adventures, Antranik was never wounded. This fact made him a terror to the Turks and Kurds, who believed there was something superhuman in him, and that he was invulnerable.

In his youth Antranik was an apprentice in a carpenter’s shop in the little town of Shabin Karahissar in Anatolia. The massacres of 1895, 1896 made such a revolting change on his mind, that Antranik fled from Turkey and joined the Armenian revolutionary society.

Gathering a few hundred hot-headed and self-sacrificing youths around him, the poor carpenter boy became a soldier of daring adventures. From the Russian and Persian frontiers entering the Turkish territory in Armenia, with his men, he soon turned out to be a terror to the Turks and Kurds. Having his headquarters in the mountains of Sassoun, Antranik appeared now in Moush, now in Van or in other parts of Armenia as protector of the persecuted peasants. Wherever he learned that Kurds or Turks were attacking an Armenian village, Antranik was there to drive away the mischief doers, then he would pursue his adversaries and



attack them in their own quarters. Thus, in years he became a master of guerilla fighting. All who had been comrades in arms with Antranik testify his gallant attitude towards the weak, and his cruelty towards the criminals. He never raised his hand himself or allowed his men to raise a hand against unprotected or unarmed men, women and children. Such a wrong done by his men was punished by immediate death by his own hands.

The popularity of Antranik among Armenians is due to his bravery and integrity as well as his irreproachable character. He never utilized his chances towards his personal ends, and as he started life as a poor boy, he was a poor man and owned nothing, notwithstanding the fact that he was ranked a major general of the Russian army.

After the Turkish constitution in 1908 when the Armenians believed that the days of their suffering had come to an end, Antranik dispersed his men and retired into private life, secluded in a little town in Bulgaria, and always refusing to appear in public. Perhaps he was the only one among the Armenians who never trusted the Turks and thought that the dark days were not over. It was due to this distrust that Antranik gathered his men anew, and joined the Bulgarian army during the Balkan war in 1912 and 1913. In this war, he distinguished himself in many battles and was rewarded by decorations from the king of Bulgaria. In November, 1914 when Turkey joined in the war, the first Russian army that entered the Turkish territory was composed almost entirely of the Armenian soldiers and volunteers of Antranik. Bajazid was occupied, and the army advanced as far as Hassan-Kalé, the foremost fortress of Erzeroum. The Turks thunderstruck by this rapid advance were either surrendering in mass to the Russians, or evacuating fortification after fortification and fleeing in panic into the interior of Anatolia. The defense of Erzeroum was given up and in haste a new line of defense from Sivaz to Harpoot was organized under the direction of Limen von Sanders Pasha. But what the Germans and the Turks could not do with their arms, they did with gold and corruption. Two commanding generals in the Russian army one of German origin and the other a Georgian, suddenly ordered the retreat of the army. The advanced guard composed entirely of Armenian soldiers, ready to take the fortress of Hassan-Kalé, refused to obey the command. This treachery was reported to Petrograd, two generals were arrested, but soon they were released while most of the Armenian soldiers were sent to the Galician front against the Austrians.

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The Turks took the advantage. In this interval, they concentrated over 200,000 soldiers in the Caucasian front under the command of Enver Pasha, and with the decided intention began an offensive of occupying the entire Caucasus. More than 80,000 Armenian soldiers had been sent to the Eastern front, the Tartars were decidedly in unrest and the Russians had less than 60,000 men in the whole Caucasus. At the commencement of this offensive Enver's plans were crowned with success, Ardahan and Ardanoush were occupied, Turks were only a few miles away from Batoom, Sarikamish had fallen, and Kars was in danger. The Russians had given up all hope of defense and the Generalissimos Grand Duke Nicholas Nicholaevitch had ordered the evacuation of the Caucasus. The military authorities had left Tiflis and the people, mostly Armenians, were running away in a crazy panic. However, the situation was saved. Thanks to the cold, freezing winter of the Armenian mountains, the lack of food and transportation had disheartened and decimated the Turks, while a small group of volunteers under the leadership of Keri, one of Antranik's captains, resisted for weeks on the heights of Ardahan, while Hamazasb, another of Antranik's men, coming with his one thousand men from Bajazid, attacked the rear of the Turkish army in Sarikamish. The Turks in confusion, believing that the Russians had received new forces were demoralized and badly beaten. The entire army of Enver was annihilated, and mostly taken prisoners. The Turkish Napoleon, Enver himself escaped on automobile with eighty men only. Enver took his breath in Constantinople and planned to avenge himself on the Armenians in the Turkish Empire, notwithstanding the fact that he owed his life to an Armenian who had saved him in Ardahan.

In the spring 1915, things became worse for the Armenians in Turkey. After the winter success in Ardahan and Sarikamish, the fighting had stopped on the Caucasian front. Had the Russians continued their advance toward the east, they would have taken Erzeroum without losing a single life. But they did not take the advantage, for the simple reason – they did not want to leave “Armenia with Armenians”. That was their secret plans. The Armenians had put a whole-hearted fighting against the Turks, but this fact, instead of being rewarded, turned the Russians against the Armenians. The Turks who had a free entrance to the Caucasus, soon learned the things as they were. The Armenian guard, by name of Allahverdian, who had arrested a Turkish officer-spy on the frontier with the plans of the Russian staff, was condemned to death. Encouraged by the Russian

inactivity and intrigues, Enver Pasha took his plan of conquest of the Caucasus anew. This time his uncle Khalil Pasha was to attack the Russian from the south, that is, advancing from Persia, Khalil was to pass the river Araxes and besiege the Muscovite army from the rear, while Enver's brother-in-law Djevdet Bey was dispatched to Van with his band of Circassians to clean that vilayet from the Armenians, who might cause difficulties to the Turkish army when they advanced in the Caucasus.

Most of the Armenian villages in the vilayet were destroyed and the inhabitants massacred when the Armenians in the city of Van took up arms to fight for their own lives. For about a month, the Armenians under the command of Egarian, a brave revolutionary soldier, put a bold war against Djevdet's regular army and kept the Turks away from their homes.

While the fighting was going on in Van, Khalil's army of 35,000 men advanced as far as Diliman in Persia, where he encountered the army of General Nazarbegoff, composed only of 3000 Cossacks. Against such superior force, Russians were ready to retreat when Antranik arrived with his men, only one thousand in all. Antranik took the command, he ordered an extreme opening of five, and instead of the retreat he began an offensive, showing an example of bravery personally. Soon a panic took the Turks. Khalil fled with only few thousands, and the rest of his army was either killed or taken prisoners. The number of the Turkish prisoners was twice as much as the Russian army engaged in war. That was Antranik's greatest success among all the battles that he had waged against the enemy. After the victory of Diliman Russians drove the Turks away from Persia, and advancing in Turkey, they occupied Van. The first to enter the revolting city were the Armenian volunteers.

Hereafter the Turks gave up the plan of the Caucasian invasion; but the Russians had the plans of their own, occupation after the occupation they organized sham retreats again and again, thus moving several hundred thousand Armenians from one place to another, and causing not only loss of property, but of lives of several thousands, men, women and children too.

While the official Russia with such a treachery was causing catastrophe for the Armenians, one may feel a duty to mention the kind attitude of the Russian soldiers, more especially of Cossacks, towards the Armenians. This was the situation when Russian revolution came.

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### VIII.

(Special correspondence of the *Chicago Daily News*)

Constantinople, August. – In February 1917 when Russian revolution occurred, and the Czar abdicated the throne, the Russians had already occupied more than a half of the Armenian provinces in Turkey, having concentrated over one half of a million soldiers in the Caucasus. In the spring, Turkey was in a deplorable situation; The British forces had occupied Baghdad, and most parts of Mesopotamia, and on the other side, they were advancing in Palestine after the fall of Jerusalem. The Turkish army being decimated on diverse fronts and for the lack of food and provisions, desertion in its ranks had grown in an alarming degree. Above all, famine, epidemics and brigandage were devastating the country from one end to the other. Never had the Turks in the war been so downhearted and discouraged as they were in that period. Had the Russians made an effort undoubtedly Turkey would have fallen on its knees. The Russians could have advanced to Sivaz and Harpoot, and descending down to Diarbekir, thence they would have been in the position to cut all Turkish communications with Mosul and Tigris regions.

But they did not. On the contrary, without any excuse they evacuated Bitlis and Moush, and retreated on a new line of defense, where they remained till autumn. The distance between the Russian and Turkish lines were in some parts more than one hundred miles. In the heights of Dersim and Keghi Kurds ruled independently having one frontier with the Turks and another with the Russians. It was in this period that the Kurds of the above mentioned region liberated over ten thousand Armenians, who had taken refuge in their homes after the massacres. The Kurds brought down the Armenians in groups from their mountains to Erzinjian and sold them for one Turkish pound each.

In October, eight months after the revolution, Bolsheviks took the rule of Russia in their hands; and the vast Empire became disorganized, divided into hostile camps, party strifes and racial feuds. The czar's realm was shuddering down into pieces, and sanguinary civil war handicapped and made worthless as far as Russia's combating power was concerned. The situation in the Caucasus became more than critical.

Tartars in the Caucasus, who from the start of the war, made no secret of their affiliation with the Turks, now became impertinently outspoken of their

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wishes to see Enver's army marching through the Caucasus, as conqueror. The writer himself, going from Petrograd to the Caucasus at that time, became an eye-witness of the events that followed. German and Turkish officers scattered all over the Caucasus were organizing a Tartar army and drilling it in haste. Russian soldiers on their return to Russia, were attacked by Tartars, about 20,000 of them were massacred mercilessly in Shamkor near Elizabethapole, and all the cannons, guns and ammunitions were captured. Guns were distributed freely among the Tartars and almost every Tartar was armed.

***NAA, f. 412, L. 1, work 2551, 13 pages.***

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