

A Witness for Talaat Pasha General Lieutenant a.d. Bronsart von Schellendorf

A Witness for Talaat Pasha from General Lieutenant a.d. Bronsart von Schellendorf, former Chief of the General Staff of the Turkish Field Troops, recent Commander of the Royal Prussian Infantry Division.

In the process of Tehlirian, witnesses were called who were unable to make any real statements, or who were able only to relate what they had heard about the situation. Eye witnesses, who had seen the truth were not called. Why did one not take the statements of German officers, who were assigned at the time and were there to see the results of Armenian atrocities. Our witness accounts could have played such a decisive role in this process.

We were notified to be prepared to testify, yet never called. For this reason, I am following my duty as witness, although it is late because I had to gather all of this material, to help truth find its rightful place.

In order to understand how it was possible to place the blame for the Armenian atrocities, it is necessary to look back. Armenian atrocities are age old. They have happened ever since Armenians and Kurds have lived in close proximity in the borderlands of Russia, Persia, and Turkey. Kurds are nomads and raise animals. The Armenians are acre farmers, artisans, or businessmen. The Kurd has no school experience, doesn't know money or the worth of money, and knows that being taxed is forbidden through the Koran. The Armenian, as business man, uses the inexperience of the Kurd in a scrupulous manner, and takes advantage of him. The Kurd feels that he has been cheated, takes revenge on him, and the Armenian atrocities are ready. It must be said that differences in religion never have anything to do with this.



Bronsart von Schellendorf

The ages old discordance received new nourishment as the Armenians, during the big war, started a dangerous revolt in the eastern border provinces of Turkey for no particular reason, because the reforms that the "powers" initiated were putting through, were just beginning to take effect. The Armenians had seats and voices in the new parliament reproduced even a Foreign [Minister](#) of Armenian descent.

They had the same social and political rights as the rest of the population of the state. Peace in

their lands was kept by a Gendarmerie, trained by the French General Baumann.

The revolt had been prepared way before it took place, as the many bulletins, brochures, weapons, ammunition and explosives found in the areas populated by Armenians made it clear. It was surely instigated and funded by Russia.

An Armenian conspiracy against high government works and officers in Istanbul was discovered on time.



Since all the able Moslem men were in the army, it was easy for the Armenians to begin a horrible slaughter of the defenseless Moslem inhabitants in the area. They did not just go against the Turkish Eastern front army from a flank or at its back, but they simply cleaned out the Moslem inhabitants in those areas. They performed gruesome deeds, of which I, as an eye witness honestly say that they were much worse than what Turks have been accused of as an Armenian atrocity.

At first, the Army attempted to bring order to the area, but being strapped to the fight against the Russians, they finally left it to the Gendarmerie, which was subordinated to the Ministry of the Interior as all the states were.

The Minister of the Interior was Talaat, and he had to make the decisions and give the

directives. The Army was in its most vital stage of fighting. The Moslem inhabitants were fleeing from the terror of the Armenians. In this critical situation, the whole ministry came to the difficult decision to name the Armenians dangerous to the state, and to remove them from the border areas to a less inhabited, but fruitful area, to Northern Mesopotamia. The Minister of the Interior gave the task to the Gendarmerie, trained to deal with this assignment.

Talaat was no thoughtless murderer, but a far sighted statesman. He saw in the Armenians, who now were under the influence of the Russians and others who had Great-Armenia dreams, but in quieter times, were very useful citizens, hoped that removed from the Russian influence and away from the Kurdish quarreling, they would, with their intelligence and work ethics make their new home luscious and fruitful.

He also saw further on that the Entente press would use the relocation of the Armenians as a hypocritical propaganda of Anti-Christianism, and he would have even for that reason alone avoided any harsh treatment of the Armenians.

Talaat was right. The propaganda began and successfully had everyone in other countries believing this stupidity of Anti-Christianism. One should know that in a country that is closely allied with Christian countries, that has Christian officers and soldiers in its own army has nothing to do with anti-Christians.



Von Schellendorf is in the middle; Abdurrauf Bey is at far left

Now I come to the deployment of the plan -- the relocation of the Armenians.

The Ottoman Empire was stretched over large distances and there was not always sufficient communication between the various provinces. The governors (Valis) had more or less a lot of freedom to decide on when and where and how things ought to be done. It was not that they disobeyed, but did not always have clear directives and this kind of governing went down the ladder of command, where occasionally unwise decisions were made.

The unusually difficult task to keep thousands of Moslem refugees and in another area Armenians on their assigned marching ways, to lead, feed, find shelter for them all, was overwhelming to the too few who could not cover the masses, nor most often had no idea of how to do so. Talaat did his utmost to help. Even into my hands came requests and demands to the Army to assist whenever possible, to provide food, shelter, doctors and medicine to the civilians under way. Unfortunately, even with all the help that was possible, thousands of Moslems as well as Armenians died.

Here lies the question of whether one could have foreseen these disastrous results of the relocation. Considering that there would not have been any way to stop the Moslem population from fleeing, removing the Armenians was necessary.



Assassin Soghoman Tehlirian; at 17, the traitorous Ottoman-Armenian joined the Russians, killing non-stop for years to follow. He served, eventually, under [Antranik](#).

Let us take, for instance, our present situation (1921). If a ministry found it had the power and the right to order: All Polish activists will be removed from Upper Schlesien and put into prison. Or All violent Communists will be put into boats and dropped off at the Russian coast. Wouldn't there be applause heard throughout the country?

Perhaps the judges of the Tehlirian process will ask themselves these questions and see the Armenian situation from a different point of view.

Talaat refused to have registered all Greeks living on the Mediterranean coast because only sabotage was done there, not a dangerous uprising, though thoughts of that were near. Talaat was a statesman, not a murderer.

Now the atrocities that were deliberately done to Armenians. They have been witnessed so often that there is no doubt that they are real. I begin with the Kurds. Of course, this folk, these people, used this seldom, probably never again opportunity to rob and at times even to beat to death the hated

Armenians who had on top of everything done horrible things to other Moslems. The train of Armenians going to their destination went for many days and weeks through Kurdistan. There was no other way to get to Mesopotamia.

About the Gendarmerie that was assigned to accompany the Armenians, different judgments have been made. In some instances the Gendarmerie defended their charges against Kurdish bands. In other instances they were said to have fled. There were also claims that they worked together with the Kurds, or even alone, robbing and killing Armenians. That they were acting upon higher orders was not brought up. Talaat cannot be made responsible for these acts, which took place 2000 km from where he was. And the Gendarmerie had a different training than the Turkish troops; their training was French.

One can also not deny that some Turkish officers took advantage of the Armenians, but where such dealings were discovered, immediate military action was taken. Thus, Vehib Pasha had two of his officers shot according to military law.

Enver Pasha punished the governor of Aleppo, a Turkish general, who enriched his coffers at the cost of Armenians, by taking away his commission and giving him a long jail sentence.

I think that these examples show that one did not want an Armenian disaster. But it was war, and customs and manners degenerated. I remember the gruesome acts the French did to our wounded and prisoners of war. Has the rest of the world heard of these shameful acts?

Besides the murdered Grand Vesir, Enver Pasha also has been attacked before the German court, I hear. Enver loves his fatherland immensely. He is an honorable soldier of great talent and unmatched bravery, whose eye witness I was repeatedly. The newly formed Turkish field army exists due to his genius, and his spirit, that fought for years against heavy might, and today it still fights for the homeland. No German officer is more able to judge him and his friend Talaat Pasha than I am, who stood from 1914 to the end of 1917 as Chief of the General Staff of the Turkish Field Army in closest ties to those two men.

Talaat Pasha has become an offering, a sacrifice of love for his fatherland.

May Enver Pasha, when his time comes, be able to lift his fatherland to new heights.

That both of these men, through difficult times, gave me their full trust, I may say, that they gave me their friendship, is a proud memory for me.