

## MASSACRES OF THE TURKS AND MASS GRAVES

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The First World War was a disaster for the Ottomans on the Trans-Caucasian Front. Tsarist Russia, regarding the bombing of Black Sea harbours as a *casus belli*, attacked the Ottomans in eastern Anatolia at the end of 1914. The Third Army at first won some victories under the Acting Commander-in-Chief Enver Pa a in the Allahuekber and Sar kam Mountains, but the sudden onset of winter conditions, bringing extremely cold weather compared by the Russians to that of Siberia, resulted in large numbers of Turkish soldiers freezing to death. One of the main factors in the Turkish defeat on this front was inadequate supplies of food and medical equipment. The Russian fleet blockaded the Trabzon harbour, and the railways and roads leading eastwards from stanbul *via* Eski ehir, Ankara and Kayseri were unsuitable.

Following the victory at Sar kam , the Russians marched on Hasankale and Erzurum. Impervious to winter conditions, General Nikolay Nikolayevich Yudenich captured the Erzurum Fort (16 February 1916).<sup>1</sup> Since the Commander of the Turkish Third Army, Mahmud Kâmil Pa a, had ordered the garrison to withdraw, losses were slight. Abdülkerim Pa a had simultaneously withdrawn with the rearguard through the stanbul Gate to the Il ca line. The population of Erzurum once more became refugees, fleeing under the extremely difficult conditions towards S vas.<sup>2</sup>

Enver Pa a and the government concealed the fall of Erzurum and its occupation by the Russians from the Turkish public.<sup>3</sup> In

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<sup>1</sup> General Yudenich (1862-1933) is better known as the Tsarist commander of the White Army in the Baltic area after the Bolshevik Revolution. He had emerged a general from the Russo-Japanese War (1904-5). He commanded all Russian forces in the Caucasus in 1914-1915, and again in 1917. Michael T. Florinsky, ed., **Encyclopedia of Russia and the Soviet Union**, New York, McGraw-Hill Book Company, Inc., 1961, p. 617.

<sup>2</sup> Enver Konukçu, **Selçuklulardan Cumhuriyete Erzurum**, Erzurum, Erzurum Ticaret ve Sanayi Odası, 1992, pp. 378-379, 386.

<sup>3</sup> **Ibid.**, p. 385.

Moscow spirits were high, because few had believed that General Yudenich would be able to take the city. When news of the fall of Erzurum was confirmed through Tbilisi, a mood of celebration swept through Moscow and the palace. Tsar Nicholas II rewarded Yudenich with medals and decorations. The Russian Army continued its march westwards between February and July, and on 25 July 1916, captured Erzincan. The Third Army had set up its headquarters at Su ehri. It was at this time that on the orders of the Acting Commander-in-Chief, Vehib Mehmed Pa a was appointed the Army Commander. Since his troops were now exhausted and their numbers depleted, General Yudenich called a halt to the fighting. The two sides reinforced their defences at transit points of strategic importance, and certain areas were mined. Frontier posts were set up. In the spring of 1917 General Yudenich decided to launch a general offensive, the plans for which were drawn up in Sar kam and Tbilisi.

Now, however, uprisings commenced against the Tsarist Government, and the October Revolution broke out. Russia was thrown into chaos. Lenin was engaged in a struggle to bring the Bolsheviks to power. The troops at the front were exhausted. They had been fighting for a long time, and their families were poverty stricken. Bolshevik agents from Trans-Caucasia won many supporters among them with promises of relief for their problems. Before long, the Russian Army was showing signs of disintegration. Officers found it increasingly difficult to make the soldiers obey their commands. General Yudenich left his post and returned to Russia at a time when extremely dangerous clouds were gathering on the horizon. Generals Przevalsky, Lebedinsky, Vishinsky and others, who had gained considerable experience in the course of war against the Turks, began to realise that it was hopeless to continue fighting on the Turkish front.<sup>4</sup>

At this juncture, Acting Commander-in-Chief Enver Pa a called the Third Army Commander Vehib Pa a from his headquarters in Su ehri instructing him to conclude a peace. Meanwhile, the Russians were after peace with Germany, and moves had been taken for preliminary talks at Brest-Litovsk. The Third Army commander sent Lieutenant Kahraman to Refahiye to contact the vanguard post. The commander in Erzincan was sympathetic towards the Ottoman peace initiative, but for the moment there

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<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 387.

was nothing he could do. The Turkish lieutenant stayed that night with the Russians, who learned from him the intentions and proposals of Army Commander Vehib and the Istanbul Government.

Erzincan contacted Erzurum, Sarikamış and, via Kars, the general headquarters in Tbilisi. It was decided to accept the Ottoman proposal, and General Przevalsky immediately sent a delegation to Erzincan. Ottoman-Russian talks (on 17 and 18 December 1917) were concluded with an immediate truce, known as the Erzincan Armistice.<sup>5</sup> After both sides signed the terms of the truce, the Russians began to withdraw to behind the former frontier. The same would follow for Erzurum.

On 11 January 1918 (29 December 1917), the *dekret* (decree) of 'Turkish Armenia', signed by the Chairman of the Soviet People's Commissars (V.I. Ulyanov-Lenin), People's Commissar for Nationality Affairs (I.V. Dzhugashvili-Stalin), Chairman of the Administrative Affairs of the Soviet People's Commissars (V. Bonch-Bruевич), and Secretary of the Soviets (N. Gorbunov), was promulgated. This resolution,<sup>6</sup> made public right after the Erzincan Armistice, opens with these words: "The People's Commissars declare to the Armenian people that the Russian Workers and Peasants Government supports the right of the Armenians in 'Turkish Armenia' which is under Russian occupation to determine their own fate freely, even to the extent of achieving full independence".

The four articles of the decree and its Annex (*Primechaniye*) are important in throwing light on what was to come. It states that in order to protect the property of the people of 'Turkish Armenia' following the withdrawal of the Russian army, an Armenian People's Militia should be established immediately; that Armenian emigrants in various countries should be allowed to return without any obstruction; that Armenians forcibly moved to the interior provinces of Turkey by the Turkish authorities during the war should be free to return to 'Turkish Armenia'; that this subject should be insisted upon in peace negotiations with the Turkish

<sup>5</sup> Stefanos Yerasimos, **Kurtuluş Savaşında Türk-Sovyet ilişkileri: 1917-1923**, İstanbul, Gözlem Yayınları, 2000, pp. 38-40. For the text of the *dekret*, see: Ministerstvo Inostrannykh Del SSSR, **Dokument Vneshney Politiki SSSR**, Tom Pervyy, Moskva, Gosudarstvennoy Izdatel'stvo, Politicheskoy Literatury, 1957, pp. 74-75. Also: **Dekret Oktyabr'skoy Revolyutsii**, Tom Pervyy, Moskva, Partizdat, 1933, pp. 393-394.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 40-42.

authorities by the People's Commissars; and that a provisional government to be called the Armenian Soviet of People's Representatives should be set up in 'Turkish Armenia'. Provisional Extraordinary People's Commissar for Caucasian Affairs, Stephan Shaumyan, was to be appointed "to implement these provisions for the people of 'Turkish Armenia', to organise the withdrawal of Russian troops from 'Turkish Armenia', and to provide every kind of assistance for the establishment of a joint commission". The Annex to the decree states that the Armenian People's Representatives elected on democratic principles from the inhabitants of the neighbouring provinces in question would decide and determine the geographic boundaries of 'Turkish Armenia' in conjunction with the Provisional Extraordinary People's Commissar for Caucasian Affairs.<sup>7</sup>

This document, dated 11 January 1918, prompts certain problems and answers. The term "Turkish Armenia" used by the Soviet leaders was, even at the time, not the official name for the region, either in political or geographic terms. Contemporary Turkish sources referred to it as *Vilâyât- arkiyye* (the Eastern Provinces), or by narrower definition as *Elviye-i Selâse* (the Three Sub-Provinces). Whether intentionally or not, the Soviets exposed the unfounded claims of our day.

Under the Statute of Relocation, some of the Armenian population of Erzurum and its environs were forced to migrate, but as of May 1916, they returned to Erzurum and other places under Russian occupation. This was organised by offices established by the Armenians in Erzurum, Erzincan, Van and Bitlis, and settlement was rapid. Meanwhile, the Soviet leadership was violating Turkish rights by demanding that a provisional government be established in what was called 'Turkish Armenia'. The Dashnag Armenians had launched a movement of this kind in Tbilisi, appointing Dr. Azaryev. The decree of 11 January 1918 runs entirely contrary to the Erzincan Armistice.

Following the armistice, the Third Army made some changes in its command echelons. Colonel Kâzım Karabekir was appointed Commander of the First Caucasian Army Corps. Hüsameddin (Tuğaç), who had been a prisoner of war for nearly two years, managed to return to Turkey and finding his way to the

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<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 42.

headquarters of the Third Army, provided very valuable information about new Russia and the changing Russians. It was from him that Vehib Paşa discovered that the Russian army was actually melting away. Kâzım Karabekir immediately moved to Refahiye and made a speech to the troops of the First Caucasian Army Corps, telling them that everywhere up to the Russian border, including Erzincan, Erzurum and Sarıkamış, would be eventually liberated. Soon afterwards, he went to Suşehri to discuss operations with the commander of the Third Army.<sup>8</sup>

The First Caucasian Army Corps was ready to march in January 1918. A task of crucial historical importance lay ahead. Despite limited means and deficient numbers, the march eastwards commenced on 10 February 1918. They liberated Erzincan, Tercan, Erzurum, Hasankale, Horasan, Kötek, Sarıkamış, Kars, and Gümüş. Thus, the campaign that began in February 1918 was successfully completed by the middle of May. Kâzım Karabekir, Halit Bey and Rüşüki Bey played major roles in liberating those places from Armenian occupation and brutality. The role of the militia was also significant in the Erzincan operation and the taking of Erzurum. It was in the former that the Armenians were first disappointed in their aspirations, and in Gâziantep -that is, Erzurum- which they had chosen as the capital of an imaginary Armenia, that these aspirations were extinguished altogether. Their attempt to cling on to Kars failed despite the efforts of some Russian officers. With the recapture of Gümüş, the Turkish Army had swept back the Russians and other enemies to beyond the former frontier.

In Erzincan, Tercan, Aşkale, Bayburt, Ilıcak, Erzurum, Hasankale, Horasan, Karaorgan, Sarıkamış, Kars, Iğdır, Kağızman and around Gölle in Ardahan, the Armenians carried out systematic massacres on a large scale. They razed cities, towns and villages in their path, and murdered the inhabitants, including women, children and the elderly. Mass executions were carried out. People were herded into buildings that were then set alight. They were seized on the pretext of working on road building projects, taken away and slaughtered. Some were shot, others stabbed to death with bayonets. Whole groups of people were

<sup>8</sup> Kâzım Karabekir, **Kâzım Karabekir'in Kaleminden Doğu'nun Kurtuluşu (Erzincan ve Erzurum'un Kurtuluşu: Sarıkamış Kars ve Ötesi)**, Erzurum, Erzurum Ticaret ve Sanayi Odası, 1990, pp. 57, 61-63.

gathered at river fords and shot through the neck or the head. Bodies were thrown into wells.

Kâzım Karabekir documented these massacres in Erzincan, Erzurum and Kars. He had photographs taken and reports drawn up. He informed the Third Army, and this documentation was sent to İstanbul.<sup>9</sup> About the findings in these three cities, Kâzım Karabekir wrote:

“Erzincan: I had reports drawn up about the Armenian atrocities, and photographs taken. I also recorded the account by a Russian officer, whom we took prisoner, of what he had witnessed on this subject...Erzurum: On 15 March 1918. I talked to Russian officers whom we had taken prisoner and to Lieutenant Colonel Tverdo-Khlebov. He told me that the Armenians numbered 6000, and that they had perpetrated many atrocities. He promised to sign his statement describing these. He wrote two reports in Russian, which were translated into Turkish and French. These include a history and memoirs, our operation and the actions of the Armenians...Kars: On 4 May 1918. The commander of the Third Army asked that the photographs of the massacres and murders committed by the Armenians be sent. Today, I sent a total of 55 photographic plates, 44 of which had not been developed, together with a letter, reference number 1398 and dated 11 May 1334[1918], with Assistant Chief Physician Fahri Bey of my army corps to Commander Vehib Paşa in Batum. I have no plates left”.

Subsequently, a report was drawn up on the massacres and atrocities carried out by the Armenians in Erzurum and other eastern cities, printed at the army corps press, and given to General James G. Harbord on 24 September 1919.<sup>10</sup> This report is an official document recording the massacres carried out in Erzincan, Gümüş and Iğdır. Witnesses of the Armenian atrocities, among them Kazimir, Mrs. Passy, Tverdo-Khlebov and Ivan Pilyat, presented accounts of what they had seen to the Turkish authorities. The statements were given by the free will of those concerned, motivated by humane values. Captain Ahmed Refik

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<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 77, 151, 362.

<sup>10</sup> General Harbord was the commander of a commission, sent to Anatolia by the U.S. President Woodrow Wilson to determine local feelings about the post-war settlement. He is also the author of the Harbord Commission Report (16 October 1919). Stanford J. Shaw and Ezel Kural Shaw, **History of the Ottoman Empire and Modern Turkey**, Vol. II, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1978, pp. 331, 346-347.

and a number of foreigners and Turkish journalists travelled to Trabzon, Gümüşhane, Erzincan, Tercan, Aşkale, Ilıcay, Erzurum, Hasankale, Horasan, Sarıkamış, Yeni Selim, Kars, and Ardahan in May 1918 as observers. The atrocities carried out in Erzincan and Erzurum by the Armenians were made public. The observations of Abdullah Efendi and pictures taken by photographer Necati Bey, who were sent especially from Istanbul, form the most reliable documents of all. Unfortunately, only a typescript of this document exists, although I have a copy in my private library. Western sources refrain from mentioning the Armenian massacres in Erzincan, Erzurum and Kars. Those who reported the events of 1914-1916 on a daily basis to the press organs in London, Paris, Rome, Berlin, New York and Chicago were now silent. The American missionaries, charity organisations, consuls, military attachés, doctors, nurses, and others who were there, wrote not a line about the systematic destruction of the Turks in this region. Documents in the Armenian archives in Erivan and in Tbilisi await researchers, if permission is given. The imagined genocide which Armenian researchers allege so frequently has fallen into the confusion of technology. In books written on the subject, the terminology is seen to change over time from atrocity and massacre to genocide, and, at the present time, even to *Holocaust*.

The names of those who planned and carried out the systematic massacre of the Turks in eastern Anatolia are recorded in documents: Antranik, Tero, Hecoy, Muradyan, Torkom, Arak, Sebuhi, Dro (Drastamat Kanayan), Mardiros, Canbulat and Armen Garo. The last-mentioned was from Erzurum and belonged to a wealthy and respected family. He had served as a deputy for Erzurum in the Ottoman Parliament, then joined the Dashnag Committee and became a militant leader. The enmity he displayed for the Turks between 1916 and 1920 was manifested in the fact that it was he who ordered and organised assassinations of members of the Committee of Union and Progress. Dr. Azaryev was an organiser of the atrocities in Erzurum after 3 March 1918. Muradyan played a role in almost all the massacres, beginning with the incidents that took place in Karahisar. It was he who gave the orders for the massacres of Erzincan and Erzurum, and sent bands of militants to the villages for this purpose. Kötürlü Antranik was responsible for the deaths of thousands of Turks. Unfortunately, the Armenian diasporas and Westerners know him as a "national hero". Knowing well that one who may be

a “patriot” for a group may be a “murderer” for another, my considered opinion, judged by the bloodshed caused, is that he was nothing more than a bandit and gang leader.

Under pressure from Armenian lobbies, the United States, France and Britain have debated the subject of genocide in their parliaments, some of which have recognised an Armenian genocide. Now a campaign for genocide is being continued, the latest example being displayed by the Greeks. The genocide allegations of the Armenians are entirely unfounded. No documentary evidence exists. The alleged total of 1,500,000 Armenian deaths is tremendously exaggerated. It has even been claimed that Hitler learned mass extermination from the Turks. This only demonstrates the weakness of Armenian and Western sources. At the same time, examples such as Algeria, Azerbaidjan, Russia and the like are never brought up at all. The Kathryn Woods, and Bab- Yar, which has been the subject of a novel, seem to have been forgotten. No one wishes to remember the innocent people systematically killed by the Armenians in eastern Anatolia, or the Turkish people who had to flee their homes in 1916 and lost their lives in the mountains.

For this reason Atatürk University launched a study of mass graves, and between 1986 and 1999 conducted field research in areas where, according to documentation, the Armenians carried out massacres in the provinces of Erzincan, Erzurum, Kars, Iğdır and Ardahan. Mass graves have been found at Alaca, Ye ilyayla and T mar in Erzurum, Subatan in Kars, Oba and Hak Mehmed in Iğdır, and Zeve in Van.<sup>11</sup>

### **Alaca**

This site is near Il ca, west of Erzurum, on a hill on an upper tributary of the Euphrates. The testimony of Kâz m Karabekir, the ATASE Archive (attached to the Turkish Chief of Staff) and smail Efendi were examined. Kâz m Karabekir wrote in a report dated 10 March 1918: “I moved my headquarters from Tazegül to the village of Alaca. First, I went around the village. The most dreadful disaster has taken place here. The weeping and mourning over bayoneted or burnt bodies were spine chilling. Some mothers

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<sup>11</sup> Cevat Ba aran, “Son Geli meler I ğ nda Iğdır-Oba Köyü Toplu Mezar Kaz s ve Yank lar ”, **Iğdır: Tarihi Gerçekler ve Ermeniler Uluslararası Sempozyumu**, 24-27 Nisan 1995, Ankara, Iğdır Valiliği Kültür Yay nlar , 1997, pp. 53-56.



holding babies stabbed by bayonets were tearing out their hair. I think few eyes on earth have seen so fearful a scene. We are among those to have grieved at such a bloody sight. With mortification we saw how human beings, when deprived of humane emotions, can become creatures more brutal than animals".<sup>12</sup> They buried all the people who had been burnt or bayoneted to death at Alaca in a mass grave in the barn. This was uncovered in 1986, and 284 skeletons were counted, although documents put the death toll at around 600. The excavation was reported on television and in the press. The former Turkish President Kenan Evren visited the village and inaugurated a memorial there. Memorial ceremonies are held here annually on 11 March.<sup>13</sup>

### **Ye ilyayla**

This village, previously also known as Arzuti, is at the foot of Y lanl Tepe, north of the Erzurum Plain. The Karasu River runs south of here. Eyewitnesses of the massacre were Dumluoğlu Durak Ağa, öhret Nine and Kâz m Karabekir. In addition, Abdullah Efendi recorded the Ye ilyayla incident in May 1918. The report of the Eastern Front Command General Staff Intelligence Office, dated 10 July 1922, established the following:

"The atrocity which took place in the village of Arzuti [Ye ilyayla] while the Armenians were withdrawing during the advance of 1918 was described by one of the survivors, the 65-year old Dumluoğlu Durak, who escaped after being wounded in eighteen places: 'Following the fall of Erzurum, the Armenians began to withdraw, at which 17 Armenians in the village of Arzuti rounded up 120 Muslims and slaughtered them all. The names of some of the dead are thus: Arapoğlu smail Ağa, Mevludoğlu Muharrem, Mevludoğlu Ali an, Ali anoğlu Nâz m, Hur idioğlu Ziya, Hocioğlu Abdullah, Mehmedoğlu Ramiz, R dvanioğlu Ali, Mehmedoğlu Hakk , Osmanoğlu Hamza, Tosunoğlu Kadir, Alioğlu brahim, brahimoğlu Halil, Mehmedoğlu Musa, Mehmedoğlu Receb, Hüseyinoğlu Receb, Hüseyinoğlu Mustafa, Hüseyinoğlu Dursun, and Mustafaoğlu Yusuf".<sup>14</sup>

<sup>12</sup> Karabekir, *op. cit.*, p. 132.

<sup>13</sup> Enver Konukçu, the "Alaca file" in the author's private library.

<sup>14</sup> Ba bakanl k Osmanl Ar ivi/Hariciye, Siyasi, No. 2878/89.

Based on this source and local investigation, Atatürk University conducted an excavation, which uncovered numerous skeletons. The excavation was carried out on 7 October 1988, in the presence of members of the press. When skeletons began to appear, the representatives of the foreign press agencies who had been invited began to leave the site. The Turkish Radio and Television (TRT) and the CNN reported the news, and a book was later published on the subject.<sup>15</sup>

### **T mar**

This village lay in the district of Pasinler in the province of Erzurum, and is now in the catchments area of a dam. In March 1918 the inhabitants of the village were shut up in a barn, which was then set alight and fired upon by Armenians from Hasankale. On 7 June 1994, Atatürk University participated in excavations here based on the statement of Necati Efendi in May 1918 and local research. Armenians systematically murdered 321 people here.<sup>16</sup>

### **Subatan**

This settlement is on the road between Kars and An , close to the border. Kâz m Karabekir, Ta demir of An , Mehmed of Daynal k, and smail Ağa of Subatan recorded the massacre here. Kâz m Karabekir wrote on 23 April 1918: "According to reports received this evening, the Armenians are withdrawing from every direction towards Gümrü. It has been learnt that four days ago (19 April 1918), over two-hundred men, children and women from the Turkish inhabitants of the village of Subatan were killed in the village haybarns".<sup>17</sup> Other villages in the vicinity of Subatan close to the Arpa River suffered a similar fate. Burhanoglu Ta demir and Mehmed, son of Zeynel Ağa from Daynakl k, said in their accounts that the entire populations of Korhane and Daynal k were killed. Their livestock, provisions and property were looted. Most of the inhabitants of the village of An were also killed. Very few managed to escape. Everything they owned was plundered. There were many Muslim skeletons in the mosque in An .<sup>18</sup>

<sup>15</sup> Enver Konukçu, **Ermenilerin Ye ilayla'daki Türk Soyk r m** , Ankara, Atatürk Üniversitesi Rektörlüğü Yay nlar , 1990.

<sup>16</sup> Enver Konukçu, **Hasankale/Pasinler**, zmir, Nil Yay nevi, 1998, pp. 199-202.

<sup>17</sup> Karabekir, **op. cit.**, p. 347.

<sup>18</sup> Resmî Belge, Ba bakanl k Osmanl Ar ivi/Hariciye Siyasi, No. 2878/81.

This document reflects the terrible situation at the historic site of An . The Armenians herded the people of An into the mosque next to their holy church in the ruins and burnt them. One of those who witnessed the Subatan massacre was Alioğlu smail Ağa from the village. His account includes the following words: “There were a hundred houses in the village. Its population was 516. The Armenians seized 800 cattle, 1500 sheep, 93 horses, and all our property and food stores. Only ten houses escaped the plunder. The other inhabitants were forced into their houses and burnt. The girls were dishonoured. Their mouths and noses were severed”.<sup>19</sup>

An official document on this subject in the Ottoman Archive is classified under BOA/Hariciye, Siyasi, No. 2878/81. On the basis of this document, and local investigations here and in the neighbouring villages, it was decided to conduct an excavation. With the assistance of Atatürk University, the site near the mosque was excavated, revealing the skeletons in a mass grave that had been photographed by Kâzım Karabekir in 1918. This was concrete evidence of the inhuman murders carried out by the Armenians in April 1918.

### **Oba**

Oba is a village in the province of Iğdır, south of the Aras River. On 1 March 1986, a mass grave in the barn was opened. The remains of over one hundred people, massacred by Armenian militants, were found. The site was located on the basis of an account by a local woman, Sekine Aksu Hanım, and guided by M.A. Köprülü. This site is important as the first mass grave of people massacred by Armenians to be excavated. Dashnag members Alikamerli Haçatur Ağa and General Dro, and the Yezidi Cihangir Ağa are known to have taken part in the massacres here.<sup>20</sup>

### **Hak Mehmed**

This village lies on the Iğdır Plain, south of the Aras River, on the road to Oba. This massacre is related to the one that took place in the latter village. In Hak Mehmed the bodies were tossed into the well next to the mosque in the village square. Extensive excavations that took place here on 5 and 6 October 1999, found

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<sup>19</sup> **Idem.**

<sup>20</sup> Enver Konukçu, “Oba Kazısı”, **Iğdır: Tarihi Gerçekler ve Ermeniler Sempozyumu**, **op. cit.**, pp. 49-51.

the remains of those who had been massacred in the well, and this discovery was made public. At other places in Erzincan, the people were also thrown into wells on the orders of Muradyan and Major Morel. An international symposium was held on the subject of the Hak Mehmed excavation. A memorial was erected to commemorate those who died in Oba, Hak Mehmed and other villages in Iğdır, and a book written on the subject of Hak Mehmed and the symposium.<sup>21</sup>

### **Zeve**

Zeve is an abandoned settlement on the shores of Lake Van. The village, whose name is a corruption of the word *Zaviye*, originally had around 2000 inhabitants. Armenian militants attacked it, and many people were killed. The excavation, carried out here by Yüzüncü Yıl University on 4 April 1990, revealed the truth of what happened in 1918 and the Armenian massacres of the Turks. A more extensive excavation is required here.<sup>22</sup>

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Hundreds more mass graves remain to be excavated in Erzincan, Ardahan, Erzurum, Iğdır, Van, Muş, Bitlis, Doğubayezid, Kağızman and elsewhere. There is documentary evidence of further mass graves in Erivan, Gümrü, Serdarabad, Artarak, Talin and the like. The Armenians, not only killed Turks, but many others who opposed them around Karakilise, Delican and Gümrü.

As we enter the 21st century, spurious charges of genocide are still continuing. Intellectuals are certainly aware of the myths that have been built up around Armenian history. The Armenians have to stop regarding every church and its environs as a part of Armenia.

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<sup>21</sup> **Türk Ermeni İlişkileri: XXI. Yüzyıla Girerken Tarihe Dostça Bir Bakış**, Ankara, Atatürk Araştırma Merkezi Yayınları, 2000, pp. 163, 219, 235-249.

<sup>22</sup> **Yakın Tarihimizde Van Uluslararası Sempozyumu**, Van, 2-5 Nisan 1990, Ankara, Yüzüncü Yıl Üniversitesi Rektörlüğü Yayınları, 1990, pp. 76-77.