Front Cover Art: Bennett Building, home of the Upsilon-Upsilon Chapter of Phi Alpha Theta and the History and Political Science Department of the University of the Cumberlands. Built in 1906 as part of Highland College, the University of the Cumberlands assumed ownership in 1907. The building underwent extensive renovation in 1986-1987.
Journal of the Upsilon-Upsilon Chapter
of Phi Alpha Theta

THE UPSILONIAN

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It is a time of enormous change for the History and Political Science Department at University of the Cumberlands and for the Upsilon-Upsilon chapter of Phi Alpha Theta. The 2014-2015 academic year has been marked by the retirement of many of our beloved faculty members and many changes to our programs. Dr. John Broome announced his retirement early in the year after decades of service to the university. Dr. Broome has influenced an uncountable number of students over the years and was a faculty member and participant in Phi Alpha Theta that will be greatly missed. It seems that Dr. Al Pilant too will be leaving us shortly. Dr. Pilant has served for years as professor, advisor, and sponsor of many activities on campus. His insightful remarks will too be missed by the Upsilon-Upsilon chapter.

Our Upsilon-Upsilon Chapter advisor, Dr. Eric L. Wake will be retiring at the end of this academic year. Dr. Wake has served the chapter as advisor for decades and it is because of his hard work and dedication to Phi Alpha Theta that we have been able to claim the multitude of best chapter awards to put us as one of the best and most recognized chapters in the nation. It is because of Dr. Wake that we are able to assemble and publish The Upsilonian year after year and the papers published here are verification of his dedication to teaching students the mechanics of research and writing. Dr. Wake’s retirement will be an absence forever missed by the students of Phi Alpha Theta and for all those that have had the privilege of having him as a mentor.

We have also seen many exciting events this year as well. New tracks for the History and Political Science Department have been started, including one specifically for military history. With Dr. Wake’s retirement, Dr. Nathan Coleman will be the new advisor of Phi Alpha Theta. Dr. Coleman has been active with the chapter as student president and has been with students presenting papers at the regional Phi Alpha Theta conference. We have had another successful year in fundraising and inducting new members into the chapter in both the fall and spring semesters.

Lastly, I want to thank all of our members for their time as part of the Upsilon-Upsilon chapter, especially those graduating. I also want to thank all of our faculty and staff for which The Upsilonian and the remarkable students that submit papers would not exist without them. The articles presented here are just a minor portion of the success of the Upsilon-Upsilon chapter and I hope they are a testament for future studies in understanding history.

Matthew E. Kelley, President/Editor
Upsilon-Upsilon, 2014-2015
COMMENTS FROM THE ADVISOR

These are bittersweet comments from the Advisor this year. This will be my last year as advisor after forty-eight years of teaching and thirty years as Upsilon-Upsilon advisor. I have decided that this is a somewhat sad time. The school and Phi Alpha Theta have been my life for forty-eight years and if you consider my four years as a student here, it will add up to fifty-two of my seventy-one years of existence. Anyone who has been in a position this long knows what I am currently going through. But everyone’s time comes and mine has come.

One of my most pleasant memories has been working with Phi Alpha Theta. The students have been great, and usually very hard working. No one wanted to lose our storied tradition. Many presidents have said that the streak could break next year but not in their year. Fortunately in my thirty years as advisor, we have been successful. We are very proud of this accomplishment!

While we have again had some small numbers, we have been able to accomplish our goals. Our lectures, fundraisers, and our socials have been accomplished. Our chapter sent two students, who presented papers, to the regional conference in Kentucky. One faculty member accompanied this group. When our need is the greatest, our students manage to come through. This has always made me so proud.

This year we have lost some of our members to graduation. But this is our job and we hope that they will remember that they are always a part of the Upsilon-Upsilon tradition.

Eric L. Wake, Ph.D
Advisor, Upsilon-Upsilon Chapter
2014-2015
AUTHORS

MIKE FERRARO will graduate from University of the Cumberlands in December 2015 with a major in history and a minor in English. The original draft of his paper was written for the course in history entitled Russia.

ETHAN S. WORLEY graduated from University of the Cumberlands in May 2015 with an area in Social Studies. The original draft of his paper was written for the Issues in History capstone course.

COLE PEAVLER graduated from University of the Cumberlands in May 2015 with majors in Political Science and Criminal Justice. His paper was written for the Issues in Political Science capstone course.
THE CRIMEAN WAR: THE TRAGIC FAILURE OF RUSSIA’S ORTHODOX CRUSADE AGAINST THE OTTOMAN TURKS

By Michael Ferraro

In 1453, the walls of Constantinople, hitherto thought to be impenetrable, were breached by cannon fire, and the heart of Byzantium lay open to the cleaving scimitars of the Ottoman hordes. Eighty thousand Turks (augmented in numbers by treacherous European mercenaries) stood before the walls of Theodosius waiting as the enormous cannon of Sultan Mehmet II pummeled the city’s last defenses for six agonizing days and nights without cessation. Once inside, the Ottomans plundered, raped, and slaughtered the inhabitants of the city, whose meager defensive force of eight thousand, overwhelmed and exhausted after days of spirited defense, succumbed to the plague of Mohammedan locusts. One wonders if Orban, the Hungarian cannon founder whose “Basilica Gun” (as the Byzantines christened it) had obliterated the city’s defenses, looked out upon this scene of carnage with any sense of personal guilt, or remorse. Indeed, though Mehmet’s forces had taken the coveted city of Constantinople for the Ottoman Empire, it was the genius and ingenuity of a “technical mercenary” from Transylvania that had broken down the walls, to the great commiseration of the Orthodox faithful.1

The fall of the Byzantine Empire and the concurrent rise of the Ottoman Empire were both tragic events not only in Greek/Byzantine history, but also for the Orthodox Russians. The spiritual capitol of the Russian Orthodox faith had endured profanation at the hands of the Turks, who desecrated the Hagia Sophia,2 cruelly subjugated the Russians’ spiritual kindred, the Greeks, and waged a war of repression against the Christian populations of Southern Europe.3 The Russians, deeply affected by the events of 1453, never forsook their shared religious and cultural heritage with Byzantium. As the Russian Empire expanded, Russians increasingly sought to exercise their growing power and influence to rectify past injustices, and the Ottoman Empire became the target of numerous wars of retribution. The Russians were, in effect, embarking upon a series of Orthodox crusades against the Mohammedan Turks, with specific wars serving as mere chapters in a bookended struggle over sacred soil.

The Crimean War (1853 – 1856), one of the more consequential of such wars between Russia and Turkey, was a ‘World War’ in this sense, for it was among the great ‘modern’ manifestations of the larger millennial war between Christendom and Islam. Far from being an unnecessary conflict instigated by an aggressive and expansionist Russia, the Crimean War was a just war, a belated counterassault on a vile Ottoman Empire that was utterly
deserving of defeat and dismemberment. Sadly, however, the Ottoman monstrosity was permitted to endure, and not because of any great effort or sacrifice on the part of the Mohammedan Turks themselves. Without the intervention of Western powers, the Turks would have been routed, their troops would have been decimated, and Russia would have likely taken Constantinople. Foreign mercenaries, nominally of the Christian faith, were necessary for the perpetuation of Ottoman rule in Europe, just as they had been necessary to the siege of Constantinople exactly four-hundred years prior. The British and French, who (in the service of their own perceived material interests) provided troops, weaponry and military leadership to the culturally backwards Turks, were the ultimate determining factor in Russia’s defeat, as the fighting-spirit and religious fervor of the Russians would otherwise have carried them to victory. Thus, the “Western” powers served as a kind of mercenary force in the broader context of this civilizational war, doing for the Moslems a deed similar to what the Transylvanian cannon maker, Orban, had done for their forbears. Russia’s war against the Turks was the 19th Century Orthodox equivalent of a crusade, representing not only hostilities between Christians and Moslems, but also a mutual sense of distrust between Orthodox Christians and their Westernized (Catholic or Protestant) counterparts.

Indeed, the “Crimean War” had its origins not in the Crimean Peninsula, but in the Holy Land, and not as a direct confrontation between Turks and Russians, but rather as a diplomatic contest between nominally Catholic France and Orthodox Russia over control of certain holy sites in Ottoman-controlled Palestine. The Ottomans had granted the French vague promises of “sovereign authority” in the Holy Land as early as 1740, and the Russians, via the Treaty of Kuchuk-Kainjari of 1774, were declaimed the “protect[ors] of the Christian religion within the Ottoman Empire.” Thus Russia and France both wrested from the beleaguered Turks some ill-defined measure of authority with respect to the condition of Christian populations in the region.

Such claims were becoming increasingly important in the mid-19th Century, as both Orthodox and Catholic authorities looked to reestablish their influence in the Holy Land amidst the obvious dissolution of centralized power within the Ottoman Empire. In 1845, the Greek Orthodox Patriarch moved his offices from Constantinople to Jerusalem, and Pope Pious IX, in response, sent a Catholic Bishop to the cradle of Christendom “for the first time since 1291.” Thereafter, infighting and petty quarrels arose between Orthodox and Catholic officials concerning ownership of and access to the
Church of the Nativity and the Holy Sepulcher. The controversy over control of the holy sites soon erupted into violence when Catholic officials, having obtained a key to the front door of the Church of the Nativity, proceeded to affix a Latin-inscribed silver star above the manger scene in the building. Heated argument between Catholic and Orthodox clergymen became a fist fight, and Ottoman authorities were called in to quell the violence, though not before the situation had devolved into bloodshed.

The absurd controversy between Orthodox Christians and their Catholic counterparts was actively encouraged by Napoleon III of France, Nicholas I’s Western nemesis, who looked to the cause of Catholic Church rights to the Holy Places as a factor in uniting the French people under his consolidated rule. A nephew of Napoleon Bonaparte, Napoleon III felt genuine disdain for Nicholas and autocratic Russia. Nicholas, for his part, did not regard Napoleon as a legitimate ruler in France, stating his belief that “emperors were made by God, [and] not elected by referendums.” The Tsar’s obvious disregard for Napoleon’s claim to power touched upon an important truth: the self-proclaimed emperor, though popular in France, was nevertheless in desperate need of some legitimating cause. His efforts at securing rights for the Catholic Church in Palestine were not born of any deep-seated religious conviction of his own, but rather his desire to renew the past preeminence of Napoleonic France in world affairs. Napoleon III pushed strongly for a policy of confrontation with Russia because he believed such to be the most effective means of forging alliances with European powers that might otherwise cast suspicion on his own imperial aims.

The Russian Orthodox claim to influence in the Holy Land was, however, much stronger than that of nominally Catholic France, by virtue of what one might call “effective occupation:” of the many pilgrims who came to Palestine to visit such places as the Church of the Nativity and the Holy Sepulcher in the late 18th and early 19th centuries, the vast majority were Russians. Furthermore, it was Russian, and not French or Turkish, money that had maintained the Holy Places in Palestine throughout several centuries of neglectful Ottoman rule. Nicholas I clearly believed that the Ottoman Empire was answerable for the violence between Orthodox and Catholic Christians in Palestine, and further viewed it as his duty to protect the Holy Places from Islamic interference. On June 21 to July 3, 1853, he ordered his troops into the Ottoman suzerain states of Wallachia and Moldavia, with the intention of bullying the Sultan into full acknowledgment of Russian privileges within the Ottoman Empire. Nicholas and his ministers certainly aired their grievances blusterously at the Turks, but the Turks themselves, by
their double-dealings with the French, had practically ensured that the conflict over the Holy Places would devolve into war. The Turks were, moreover, eager for war, and awaited only the guarantees of aid from technologically and militarily superior Western powers – namely the British.\textsuperscript{15}

The British, for their part, had no real stake in the controversy over the Holy Places, but rather viewed the confrontation with Russia in light of their own commercial interests. Russia was undoubtedly an expanding power, moving westward into the hinterland regions of Europe via the acquisition of Finland (1809), Bessarabia (1812), and Poland (1815) in the early 19\textsuperscript{th} Century. In Asia, the Russians made far more significant gains, consuming large tracts of land on the Central Asian Steppe, and fragmented pieces of the Caucasus Mountain region between the Black and Caspian Seas.\textsuperscript{16} The British feared these expansions into Central Asia in particular because they might potentially interfere with overland trade routes with their most valuable colonial possession, India.\textsuperscript{17} For this reason, the British took to arming and supporting Moslem Circassian peoples against Russian “aggression,” though the Circassians were, themselves, largely engaged in a lucrative sex-trafficking operation at the behest of their Turkish overlords.\textsuperscript{18} Though protection of British trade was his primary concern, British Lord Palmerston (then serving in the administration of Prime Minister Aberdeen) did, nonetheless, feel the need to encapsulate his concerns within moralistic tomes. He found his \textit{modus operandi} in the preservation of Ottoman sovereignty and territorial integrity: the Crimean war was fought “to curb the aggressive ambition of Russia,” Palmerston claimed.\textsuperscript{19}

But the British had also shown “aggressive ambition,” largely in their attempts to court a relationship with the Turks for the preservation of their commercial empire. As early as the 1830’s, the British were working to solidify an alliance with the Ottomans, the intention being to secure trade privileges through the Dardanelles Straits and via the overland route to British India (which the Turks tenuously controlled). The British even attempted joint naval operations with the Turks, and were only thwarted in their designs by the strenuous protests of the Russians.\textsuperscript{20} The British claim to a moral high ground was suspect: Turkish rule in Anatolia, Southern Europe and the Caucasus had never been legitimated by anything other than force; what, then, was so objectionable about Russia depriving the Turks of those lands by the same means? Were not the British and the Ottoman Empires aggressive and expansionist imperial powers also? In the memorable words of Orlando Figes, “Britain intervene[ed] to prevent Russia from doing to the
Ottomans what Britain had done to India.” Thus it was not Russian imperialism that the British were truly fighting against, but rather Russian competition for imperial prerogatives the British ostensibly believed themselves more worthy of possessing.

Palmerston suspected Nicholas I of trying to use the treatment of Christians in Ottoman lands as a pretext for swallowing up those lands, and he was substantially correct, though Nicholas’s purposes were not so utterly cynical as what Palmerston supposed. The Orthodox Russians had compelling reasons for wanting to subvert Ottoman authority in lands populated by their co-religionists. The Ottoman Empire was, in the politest terms, a gargantuan parasite on the Christian populations of Southern Europe. In the provinces, imperial agents thieved routinely from the predominantly Christian communities. Consequently, the host Christian communities felt the ill-effects of Ottoman parasitism: by the early 19th Century, Christians were losing virtually half of their income to the wiles of imperial tax-collectors. The Moslem Ulama (class of religious scholars) worked tirelessly to preserve the subordinate position of the hated Dhimmi classes, whose money they depended on for the perpetuation of their “superior” status (as Moslems) within Ottoman society.

Further, the principalities of Wallachia and Moldavia, over which the Crimean War was ostensibly fought, were the scene of horrendous Ottoman atrocities against local Christian populations. Rebellion against Ottoman rule was dealt with mercilessly, as in the “Greek uprising” of 1821, in which Ottoman soldiers, reacting to insurrection in the principalities, “looted churches, murdered priests, men, women and children and mutilated their bodies, cutting off their noses, ears and heads, while their officers looked on.” At this juncture, it should be noted that the Russians, under both Alexander I and Nicholas I, desired to come to the defense of the Greeks against the Turks when no other European power was willing to intervene on their behalf. The British were, in fact, angered by Nicholas’s ominous threats of retribution against the Sultan, though they too were eventually persuaded to come to the defense of the Greeks.

In lands more tightly controlled by the Ottomans, the situation was as bad or worse: In 1850, just three years before the outbreak of the Crimean War, Christians were massacred in Aleppo – ostensibly because the Moslem inhabitants of the city objected to certain reforms directed at improving the lot of the empire’s Christian subjects. Still, none of these events seemed to move any of the Western powers to come to the defense of their fellow Christians; the Russians alone had the stomach to grant the Ottomans the
“holy war” their religious scholars, and numerous members of Sultan Abdulmecid’s cabinet, were calling for.  

The Western powers, Britain and Austria in particular, wanted order above all else, and were willing to abandon Christians in Ottoman-controlled lands if it meant containing Russian designs on those lands. Thus, a characteristically “Russophobic” misreading of Russian intent accounts for their foolish decision to uphold Ottoman sovereignty, even though a partnership with Russia against the Ottomans would have been more advantageous to those countries with interests in the lands they possessed. Tsar Nicholas’s own stated intentions with respect to Russian imperial expansion, and the potential partitioning of the Ottoman Empire, were surprisingly amenable to British interests at least. Nicholas’s designs on Constantinople involved making it a free port of access to both the Black and Mediterranean Seas. He further suggested that Ottoman-controlled Serbia and Bulgaria be declared free and autonomous states, and that Austria (not Russia) be permitted to garrison the Dardanelles Straits. Britain, under Nicholas’s plan of partition, was to obtain Egypt, Cyprus and Rhodes; Russia would, in turn, acquire the Danubian Principalities of Wallachia and Moldavia. Far from the mere private musings of a scheming autocrat, the aforementioned were actual terms given by Nicholas to the British diplomat Sir George Hamilton Seymour at St. Petersburg. The Tsar’s plans were, summarily, intended to draw the European powers into a relatively peaceful partitioning of an empire that no longer had any legitimacy and would, in due time, collapse and undergo restructuring whether the European powers acted or not.

Though he welcomed the opportunity to dismantle the Ottoman Empire, Tsar Nicholas did not ostensibly seek war; rather, the “unholy alliance” of the Ottoman Empire, Britain and France instigated conflict with Russia. War was initially declared not by the Russians, but by the Ottoman Turks, in October, 1853. Even after the Turks declared their intentions, Nicholas I refrained from attacking them, reaffirming his commitment to a peaceful resolution of hostilities, and disavowing any intention of crossing the Danube River. In the event of war, however, he wanted to make absolutely clear that his principal contention with the Turks was Russia’s right – by his understanding of the Treaty of Kulchuk Kainjari – to intervene in Ottoman affairs on behalf of Orthodox Christians, whose safety and welfare were being undermined within the Ottoman state.

The Turks, encouraged by the presence of British and French fleets in the Black Sea, struck the first blow, crossing the Danube River to attack
Russian troops on the northern shore. The Russian navy, under Admiral Pavel Stepanovich Nakhimov, responded by sinking an entire Turkish naval fleet at Sinope (November 30, 1853), but only after Turkish ships had been observed making aggressive maneuvers towards Russian-controlled territory in the Crimean Peninsula. The Turks, in spite of having been primarily responsible for instigating war, were able to use Nakhimov’s dramatic destruction of their fleet at Sinope to persuade both Britain and France into open war with Russia. In March of 1854, both powers declared war, identifying Russian evacuation of the Danubian Principalities as their primary objective. They jointly called for a “grand coalition” to defeat the Russians, and began actively recruiting troops for a campaign to push the Russians out of Wallachia and Moldavia.

But for all of the feigned outrage Sinope (and other “acts of aggression” on the part of the Russians) triggered in Britain and France, it must be reiterated that imperial designs were not, and never had been, confined merely to the Russian imagination. The proposed “grand coalition” of European powers necessarily entailed a plethora of geopolitical schemes. In an effort to garner support from the Habsburgs and Hohenzollerns, the allied powers of France and Britain proposed to annex large swaths of Southern Russia to Austria and Prussia, and that control of the Dardanelles and Constantinople be likewise divided between them.

Nicholas’s own conduct in war exudes personal restraint in comparison with that of his rivals. When neutral Austria objected to his plans for a partitioning of Serbia, he respectfully altered his designs on the Balkans to comport more fully with Austrian wishes, and resigned himself to a limited campaign against the Turks on the Danubian front. The overland war against the Turks in this region was, furthermore, fought with astonishing reserve. Though the Russians, under Field Marshall Ivan Paskevich, did launch a series of offensives resulting in the capture of Turkish fortifications at Tulchea, Isacchea, Matchin, and Babadagh, their efforts were thwarted by Nicholas’s personal vacillations with respect to Austrian demands, and by Paskevich’s lack of resolve in pressing his advantage. The Austrians, ever-cynical defenders of the status quo, at the slightest hint of activity deemed subversive to Ottoman authority in the Balkans, protested loudly to the Russian campaigns in the Danube region; Tsar Nicholas, not wanting to create further tensions, ordered his troops out of the Danubian Principalities entirely –interrupting a crucial siege then taking place at the Turkish stronghold of Silistria.
The lifting of the Siege of Silistria was an utter tragedy for the local Christian inhabitants of the region: the Ottoman Turk, the “Sick Man of Europe,” was all the more dangerous for his illness, and displayed a ravenous appetite for violence against the defenseless inhabitants of Silistria, who, being Bulgars and Christians, were evidently suspected of sympathizing with the Russians. By the account of Leo Tolstoy, then a Russian gunnery officer, some seven-thousand Bulgars departed with the Russian army across the Wallachian border, fearing what might await them if they should remain under the authority of the vengeful Turks. Their fears were justified: with the Russians safely departed, the Turkish armies exercised a free and unrestrained hand in releasing their aggression on the remaining Bulgar inhabitants of Silistria and the surrounding area, slaughtering all but the young women and girls who were deemed fit to serve as sexual slaves.44 The Austrians, having signed a mutual defense pact with the Prussians, further thanked Tsar Nicholas for his gracious exit of the Danubian Principalities by occupying Wallachia and Moldavia themselves.45

Once the British and French had decided to fight for the ignoble cause of perpetuating Ottoman rule, and had succeeded in courting the sympathies of the Austrians and Prussians, Russia’s crusade against the Turks was essentially lost. Nicholas was without any support whatsoever from other European powers, and indeed found the most of them allied against him in defense of the Turks. The Russians were outnumbered on nearly all fronts, and there were simply too many actual and potential fronts to be manned.46 In August of 1854, the British, in an effort to persuade Oscar I of Sweden to join in a naval offensive against Russia in the Baltic, struck at Bomarsund, a poorly-garrisoned Russian naval installation in the Aland Islands.47 Though the attack failed to impress the Swedes (and actually hurt the Russians little, if at all), it did serve to illustrate the vulnerability of widespread Russian imperial claims. The Russians not only had to defend their Crimean possessions, but also those held in the Baltic Sea, the Caucasus and, if Austria or Prussia should join against them, Poland and other inland possessions in Eastern Europe.

The Russians were also outgunned. Russian soldiers, aside from being poorly-concentrated, lacked the technological edge needed to compensate for their numerical deficiencies. The firearms used by the British and French services at that time had an effective range of one-thousand yards, whereas the flintlock muskets of the Russian Army could only be fired with reasonable accuracy at a maximum of two-hundred yards.48 The Russians did possess certain technologies, but in limited supply. Whereas
nearly all British and French enlisted men were equipped with "modern," French-made, rapid-fire rifles, the Russians had only 6,200 such weapons, to be dispersed amongst an army of over one-million fighting men. The Allies were also drawing from seemingly inexhaustible supplies of manpower, enlisting large numbers of mercenaries from a bewildering variety of states and locales.

The Russians, outnumbered and outgunned, nonetheless made a great show of force in their early campaigns against the Turks. In the Caucasus, they won spirited victories against their Mohammedan foe, often in the face of seemingly impossible odds. The Ottoman armies - even augmented with recruits from Egypt and Tunisia and with training courtesy of British and French officers – were soundly defeated by Russian forces of inferior numbers. The Russians fought with tremendous bravery; the Ottomans could only barely be trusted to hold their ground.

Nicholas meant to strike at the Turks from numerous fronts, and his Caucasus Mountain campaigns were intended to constitute a large offensive against Turkey’s eastern border. The small Russian-controlled state of Georgia was the scene of most of the fighting. Therein, Prince Eristov, with a single regiment, decimated a Turkish force of twelve thousand men. Even more impressive was Prince Andronikov’s victory over a Turkish army of thirty-four thousand, which he accomplished with troops barely one-third as numerous as the attacking Ottomans. Russian troops under General Wrangel drove a Turkish force nearly seven times their size from the Ottoman stronghold at Baiazet. Such feats, marvelous though they were, served merely as a prelude to the Russians’ remarkable stand at the Battle of Kuruk-Dar (July 11/23, 1854), in which eighteen thousand Russians held their ground against sixty thousand Turks.

The "civilized" nations of Europe, however, ably came to the defense of barbarism, and swiftly drew Russian forces into battle elsewhere. In September of 1854, the British and French began their eleven-month siege of Russia’s most important naval base on the Black Sea, Sevastopol. Not only did this compel the Russians to concentrate their energies and manpower on defense of their Crimean possessions, but it also freed the Ottoman armies to pursue campaigns against Russia in Transcaucasia. Thus they were able to fortify Kars and Ezerum against the impending onslaught of Russian forces under General Muraviev. Even with British aid, however, the Turks were hard-pressed to repel the Russians on their eastern border with Georgia. General William Fenwick Williams, sent by the British to organize the Turkish defenses in the east, was forced to concede the Turkish
stronghold at Kars to the Russians on November 4/16, 1855 after a long and exhausting siege. The magnanimity of the Russians in victory was here in abundant evidence, as testified by the British themselves. Dr. Humphrey Sandwith, a British medical doctor present at the siege and surrender, stated that the Russians treated “with the most chivalrous bearing…their prisoners of war.” Though the Russians were, for obvious reasons, obliged to take captives, they nonetheless fed and cared for their prisoners more than adequately.

Though the Russians fought bravely and somewhat successfully against the Turks in the east, they lost, with devastating consistency, the more essential battles against the British and French in the Crimea. In that theater, the heart and resolve of Nicholas I and his Russian armies were simply no match for the numerical, organizational and technological superiority of the British and French forces. At the Battle of Alma, the Russian forces under Prince Menshikov were utterly decimated, and their officer class was virtually wiped out by the dual onslaught of the British and French. In one memorable stand in nearby Vladimir, however, ten Russian officers held out against the full force of allied assault – until Menshikov ordered them to abandon their post.

The Russians would lose battle after battle against the British and French, but still maintain their iron resolve. As the final siege of Sevastopol began, Admiral Kornilov, following a procession of priests passing before the assembled Russian troops, admonished them: “Children[,] we are to fight the enemy to the last extremity….kill the man who dares to speak of going back. If I order you to retreat, kill me.” Nicholas himself would show the way, even if only in proxy: the ill-effects of a multi-fronted war against ever-mounting enemies (some of whom he had, hitherto, regarded as allies and even friends) wore on him terribly, and one can almost believe that he did, indeed, die of a “broken heart” on February 18/March 2, 1855. His successor, Alexander II, maintained Nicholas’s resolve to fight for what they both believed to have been a just cause. Under his leadership, and in the face of opposition from some of his own Generals, the Russians held Sevastopol until September, 1855, when they reluctantly proceeded to evacuate the city.

The Russian attitude after the fall of Sevastopol was rueful, but Alexander held firm in his commitment to the honor of the Russian cause. Peace negotiations were a tenuous affair, as the new Tsar signaled his intention to refuse any accord that did not allow Russia to exit the war with dignity and honor. But faced with an ever-growing alliance against Russia
(which threatened to include formerly neutral Austria and Prussia), he was eventually forced to concede defeat, and the war was ended by the Treaty of Paris of 1856. The allied powers thereby imposed a peace that amounted to a prolonged armistice – a peace that utterly failed to address Russia’s legitimate grievances against the Turks that had been at the heart of the conflict.

The Ottomans had been spared inevitable defeat at the hands of the Russians and were not forced to concede anything with respect to the treatment of their Christian subjects. Vague promises of reform notwithstanding, the Turks ostensibly interpreted the terms of peace as giving them carte blanche authority to continue to humiliate, extort, repress and murder their Christian populations – which they indisputably did, with devastating long-term effects in the Balkans and elsewhere. The Russians fought to rescue their Orthodox co-religionists from a repressive empire that had no more claim to Constantinople, the Danubian Principalities, et al. than what could be legitimated by force of arms. Had the “Sick Man of Europe” been dispatched and dismembered by the European powers, rather than resuscitated by their undue care, the whole of what was once Christendom might have averted self-destruction in the following century.

ENDNOTES


3 An excellent primer for the curious reader is Bat Ye’or’s The Dhimmi: Jews and Christians under Islam, revised and enlarged English ed., (Rutherford: Farleigh Dickinson University Press, 1985).


6 Ibid.

7 Ibid.

8 Figes, Crimean War, 103, 104.


10 Figes, Crimean War, 102.

11 Ibid, 8, 9.

12 Royle, Crimea: The Great Crimean War, 17.


21 Figes, Crimean War, 48, 49.
Ibid., 60.

Ibid., 30.


Figes, *Crimean War*, 33.

Curtiss, *Russia’s Crimean War*, 12.

Ibid, 11, 12.

Saab, *Origins of the Crimean Alliance*, 82.

Ibid., 84.

Lobanov-Rostovsky, *Russia and Europe*, 208.


Ibid., 334.


Curtiss, *Russia’s Crimean War*, 203.

Presniakov, *Emperor Nicholas I of Russia*, 68.


Ibid.
40 Ibid.

41 Ponting, Crimean War, 62.

42 Ibid.

43 Ibid, 62 – 64.

44 Ibid, 65.


46 Bayley, Mercenaries for the Crimea, 30.


49 Ponting, Crimean War, 23.

50 Entire books have been written on the subject of British, French and Turkish efforts at foreign recruitment for the war. Charles Calvert Bayley’s Mercenaries for the Crimea (elsewhere cited) explores the recruitment efforts – that of the British in particular – in details far too extensive as to be properly summarized here.


52 Curtiss, Russian Army, 317, 318.


54 Curtiss, Russian Army, 362.

56 Ibid.

57 Ibid.


59 Ibid., 163.

60 Mosse, *Rise and Fall of the Crimean System*, 12.

61 Ibid., 15.

62 Ibid., 12.

NOTES SLIPPED SOUTH OF THE BORDER
By Ethan S. Worley

Between 1913 and 1917, the relationship between the United States and Mexico undertook a transition from argumentative ambassadors and weighty correspondence to active conflicts resulting in invasion and destruction. These international squabbles were broadcast to a wider audience than just the nations involved. American President Thomas Woodrow Wilson had his hands full protecting American industrial interests from foreign intervention when General Victoriano Huerta launched his successful coup in Mexico.

During this time, the Great War broke out in Europe, from which the United States remained neutral. These warring nations began to reach outside the boundaries of their own countries to find assistance and hope of victory. In 1917 Germany resumed the unrestricted submarine warfare in an attempt to strangle British war production that had almost generated an American declaration of war in 1915. Seeing untapped potential in the Mexican-American conflict, Germany reached out to Mexico by way of a coded message later known as the Zimmerman Note. Given the deteriorating state of Mexican-American relations, Germany believed that they could distract America from joining the war through a joint offensive on the southern and western borders of the United States. However, Germany overestimated Mexico’s belligerent desire towards the United States and miscalculated Mexico’s military might.

Most scholarship concerning the Zimmerman Note revolves around questions of its authenticity, or the evaluations of its effect on the American decision to go to war. The question of why the Germans thought that Mexico would entertain an offer of aid in return for declaring war on their northern neighbor deserves further exploration. The mixture of an amphibious invasion of Vera Cruz by the American navy and the long term occupation of Mexican land by the American Expeditionary Force led German leaders to believe that Mexico desired retaliation.

March 4th, 1913, President William Howard Taft stepped down from his position and Woodrow Wilson was sworn into office. The issue of foreign policy toward the Mexican Revolution became Wilson’s first priority.1 At this time, revolutionary parties were fighting for dominance in Mexico: Victoriano Huerta, Venustiano Carranza, and Emiliano Zapata. The first to achieve a superior military force would be able to overthrow Mexican President Francisco Madero and establish his own regime. General Victoriano Huerta established a semi-stable dictatorship and overthrew Madero, by gaining a slim majority of followers and military advantages
over his rivals Carranza and Zapata. Madero was officially removed from office by rebels under Huerta’s command in February of 1913. Huerta formally desired international recognition as the ruler of Mexico to solidify his newly established regime.

Wilson, however, was skeptical of Huerta’s legitimacy as ruler of Mexico. Wilson made it clear that he detested the manner in which Huerta had established his leadership in Mexico and that the United States should not support a ruler who overthrows the government to pursue their own personal agenda. However, Wilson was being pressured by several American oil barons who had extensive claims in Mexican oil fields. These barons expected Wilson to recognize Mexico’s new president to protect their interests. Despite the pressure from these industrialists, Wilson desired to learn more about Huerta as an individual, his military might, and the volatile state of Mexico before extending formal recognition. Taft’s ambassador to Mexico, Henry Lane Wilson, provided details on the new Mexican government to President Wilson when he took office until the new President discovered Ambassador Wilson had assisted Huerta’s overthrow of President Madero. Unable to trust any further reports, President Wilson fired Henry Wilson. Sending a new ambassador to Mexico required congressional approval that would delay the information that Wilson needed for weeks and potentially months. Also, Wilson desired to keep Congress out of his foreign policy with Mexico. Wilson decided to send friends to Mexico as presidential envoys instead of being bogged down by congressional protocol. Wilson chose William Bayard Hale and John Lind as envoys to Mexico. As Hale and Lind were settling into their new positions in Mexico, Wilson was settling into his new foreign policy toward Mexico, referred to as “watchful waiting.”

Wilson’s “watchful waiting” prevented any support or acknowledgment to Huerta’s dictatorship while also promoting trade between American gunmakers and Huerta’s enemies, the Constitutionalists. The trade with the Constitutionalist helped stifle the American investors who were pressuring Wilson to acknowledge Huerta’s regime for capital gain. However, this new foreign policy set the foundation for miscommunication between the two nations that led to the false belief that Germany had a potential ally in Mexico. President Wilson’s decision to avoid formal recognition of Victoriano Huerta’s regime implied his disapproval and intentions to intervene in the Mexican government. Recognition of a nation implies that the approving country supports the new government’s
leadership and will abstain from interference or invasion in the newly recognized government.11

A direct result of strained relations between the United States and Mexico was illustrated on April 9th, 1914. A small misunderstanding between American sailors and Mexican armed forces loyal to Huerta dissolved into a violent and invasive failure of diplomatic communications, known as the Tampico Affair.12

Tampico, Tamaulipas was an oil rich property that was home to many American citizens that had invested in and industrialized the property. Huerta was surrounded by the offensives of revolutionists Emiliano Zapata and Pancho Villa from the South and Venustiano Carranza’s Constitutionalist army from the North.13 Also, there was the presence of a small fleet of American destroyers just outside the city under the command of Rear Admiral Henry T. Mayo.14 Wilson had ordered American military presence to Tampico to protect the lives and interests of the American citizens in the city while it was under siege from the Constitutionalists.15 On April 9th, nine American sailors were sent ashore to secure oil for the U.S.S. Dolphin.16 As the soldiers began loading the oil cans into their whale boat, members of the Tamaulipas guard, faithful to Huerta, stopped them. The Mexican troops, unaware of the oil transfer agreement between the American sailors and the Mexican federal commander earlier that day, arrested the Americans at gunpoint.17 Since gunboats, like the U.S.S. Dolphin, are property of a nation, arresting the sailors was a violation of United States sovereignty.18 Furthermore, the nine Americans were paraded through the streets to the Mexican regimental headquarters. The language barriers created miscommunication that the Mexican federal commander quickly sorted. The nine Americans were then released and were allowed safe passage back to the U.S.S. Dolphin.

Although no harm came to either side, Admiral Mayo sought retribution for the humiliation of his men. He demanded a formal apology from the Mexican government, as well as a 21-gun salute to an American flag raised, full mast, on Mexican soil.19 Huerta delivered a signed apology to Mayo within twenty-four hours of the release of the nine sailors, but he omitted the 21-gun salute to the American flag on Mexican soil.20 This news was wired to President Wilson, who believed the refusal of the Mexican government to salute the American flag was nothing more than another disgraceful display by the Mexican government.21 Wilson reiterated Mayo’s terms of apology to Huerta directly, then turned down Huerta’s counteroffer,
a simultaneous 21-gun salute from both the Mexican and the American governments.\textsuperscript{22}

Wilson ordered ships from the Atlantic fleet to sail into Mexican waters just outside the port of Vera Cruz. He also ordered battle cruisers and submarines from the Pacific fleet to blockade Mexico’s western ports. Then he sought the approval of Congress to use military force to pressure Huerta into submitting to Mayo’s terms. Two days later, on April 22nd, Wilson received Congressional approval.\textsuperscript{23} By this time the Pacific fleet, based out of San Pedro, had rendezvoused with American submarines based in San Diego and was on route to the Harbor of Mazatlan.\textsuperscript{24}

On April 21, one day before Wilson received Congressional approval, Wilson received word that Huerta’s government would be receiving a shipment of German-made guns to assist in repelling the Constitutionalists and the Mexican revolutionaries.\textsuperscript{25} Wilson perceived this shipment of arms as a threat to American lives and ordered the shipment of guns stopped. Word was sent to Rear Admiral Frank F. Fletcher to organize an assault on the port of Vera Cruz. Fletcher received the orders for the assault at 8:00 a.m. that morning.\textsuperscript{26} Slightly before 11:00 a.m., a force of 500 U.S. Marines and 300 sailors stormed the coast of Vera Cruz and invaded the city under the command of Naval Captain William R. Rush.\textsuperscript{27} After the initial landing at Pier 4, the American forces met no resistance and advanced toward their Mexican objectives.\textsuperscript{28} The Marines and Navy were ordered to secure the communication and transportation systems in Vera Cruz and to establish communications with Rear Admiral Fletcher.\textsuperscript{29}

Fletcher notified the Mexican commander General Gustavo Maass of Vera Cruz of his orders and that the waterfront would soon be under American control through U.S. Consul William Canada. Maass gathered a militia of over 600 men, pulling all available troops from the Mexican Naval Academy, as well as infantry and volunteers.\textsuperscript{30} These troops were forbidden to surrender. The news also inspired various mobs to loot American property and burn American symbols in the streets of Vera Cruz.

The first shots were fired between American soldiers and a Mexican police officer named Aurelio Monffort, who shot at the troops on first sight before the two forces collided.\textsuperscript{31} Realizing that the Mexican citizens were prepared to defend Vera Cruz, Captain Rush called in reinforcements to meet the larger force that was marching toward the waterfront. Rush also attempted an armistice with the Mexican leaders before further fighting incurred. Although Canada agreed to mediation and the armistice, no
members of the Mexican authorities could be located in time to prevent violence.

Fletcher ordered Rush to hold the present American position and build a strong defense that would last the night. He also sent reinforcements for the complete occupation of Vera Cruz. At 8:30 a.m. the following morning, Rush began the final push through Vera Cruz, using gunships from the harbor as cover fire. By noon, the majority of the city was under American control, with 19 Americans killed and 72 wounded against approximately 160 Mexican deaths and 225 wounded. Countless Mexican civilians that volunteered to fight lost their lives in the massacre. The Marines remained in Vera Cruz, and martial law was established on April 30th under Brigadier General Frederick Funston.

After the confrontation at Vera Cruz, Wilson discovered that newspaper reports of a shipment of German-made guns had misleading information. When the shipment arrived, the guns were of Remington’s design. A private investor had ordered a shipment of American guns, transported by Germans, designed to assist Huerta against the Constituionalist Army.

On the Pacific front, large anti-American riots blossomed in response to the American occupation of Vera Cruz. The riots were centered in Ensenada, Baja California, where Mexican citizens were threatening the lives of 250 America citizens. On April 23, 1914, U.S. consul Claude E. Guyant wired President Wilson with an urgent message expressing the gravity of their situation and a request for warship assistance. The USS Cheyenne and USS Iris responded to Guyant’s plea and, by April 25, were able to evacuate the trapped American citizens.

The Tampico Affair, which began on April 9th, 1914, was not formally concluded until November 1914, at the Niagara Falls Conference in Canada, preventing a full scale war between Mexico and the United States. The Marines occupying Vera Cruz were instructed to vacate the city as a stipulation of the conference.

The American invasion of Mexico had several consequences. Many Americans were ordered out of Mexico and into the southern portions of Texas. In Mexico, there was a stronger national disapproval of the United States and a refusal to ally with America in any of its future ventures. Even though Mexico had no interest in the Great War taking place in Europe, the Tampico Affair crippled the Mexican military and defenses to the point that Mexico would be unable to successfully participate in the World War I effort, even had they so desired. News of the Tampico Affair spread across
the Atlantic. German leaders kept close watch of the American invasion of Vera Cruz and the resulting Mexican anti-American sentiments. However, in 1917, Germany overestimated the Mexicans’ ability to recover from the American invasions and civil war and rebuild their former military might.

The lack of a powerful ally in the western hemisphere, the looming threat of a coup brought on by both the Constitutionalists and the Revolutionaries, a severe shortage of military supplies, and the violence of the Tampico Affair forced Huerta to relinquish control to Venustiano Carranza in August 1914. Carranza had been a strong supporter of the previous Mexican president, Francisco Madero, and was a seasoned veteran of the Mexican Constitutionalists Army. With Huerta’s dictatorship dissolved, Carranza sought to dislodge the Mexican revolutionists in the South under Villa and Zapata, who had successfully taken control of Mexico City. This forced Carranza to flee Mexico City and go to the loyal cities of Vera Cruz and Tamaulipas to begin his assault on the Revolutionaries. In the battles that ensued, troops loyal to Carranza began to drive back the Revolutionaries. Many of Villa’s men defected into Carranza’s forces. By 1915, Villa’s small band of forces was pushed into northern Mexico, seeking refuge in the mountainous terrain of Chihuahua.

Wilson believed that the best way to establish a stable government in Mexico would be to recognize Carranza as the president of Mexico. He also refused to sell arms to Villa or to supply his army. Wilson allowed troops loyal to Carranza to be transported quickly by American railways. However, these preventive measures did not hinder Villa in gathering support for his band of raiders in Mexican towns.

In January of 1916, Pancho Villa was running low on supplies for his troops. The Mexican Constitutionalists Army had disrupted Villa’s supply lines and had forced his troops into new territories that were not yet supportive of his revolution. Villa knew that Mexicans did not look favorably on the Americans. Many northern Mexican landowners still reviled the decision to make the Rio Grande the southern border of Texas. Villa decided to use this disgust for Americans as a catalyst for his revolution in the North. On January 11, 1916, Villa and his band traveled to the city of Santa Isabel, where they pulled sixteen U.S. citizens off a train and executed them.

With no repercussions for his actions, Villa became more confident. Nearly two months after the executions in Santa Isabel, he launched his first raid on American soil on March 9, 1916, on the border town of Columbus, New Mexico. The raid was designed to gather much needed resources to
continue Villa’s fight against Carranza. Villa had a long standing account at the bank in Columbus and desired to make a withdrawal to fund his revolution. However, the bank refused his withdrawal, because they had insufficient funds to cover his request. Villa’s personal doctor and pro-German activist, Dr. Lyman Rauschbaum, suggested that the bank in Columbus was cheating Villa. Villa shared Rauschbaum’s suggestion with his men, who agreed that Villa should personally go to Columbus and demand the deposit. Villa and his guerrilla bandits targeted the Columbus supply store and the bank. Villa later reported to his men that the Columbus Bank truly had very limited funds at the time of the raid. The raid was cut short when U.S. Calvary from Camp Furlong rushed to the aid of Columbus. Villa and his men were chased back south of the border, but not before burning the town. The raid on Columbus had profited Villa with horses and military supplies. At this point, German activists and foreign ambassadors were keeping close personal correspondence with both of the major revolutionary leaders, specifically Rauschbaum with Villa and German Foreign Minister Heinrich Von Eckhardt with Carranza.

Soon after, there was a rash of raids along the southern border of Texas in Glenn Springs, San Ygnacio, and Fort Hancock. These raids could not be definitively traced back to Villa, but many believed it to be action by his guerrillas. The Mexican common man respected Villa and his revolutionaries. To them, the revolutionaries were the embodiment of the Mexican anti-American sentiment. In each Mexican town, Villa gained new followers and won the hearts and support of his Mexican public. As raids continued along the southern border of Texas, Villa became more of a legend and hero to the common people of Mexico.

Texans expressed their anger at Villa’s revolutionaries to President Wilson. On March 15, 1916, Wilson responded by ordering an expedition into Mexico to protect American lives and to assist Carranza in the dispersal of Villa and his revolutionaries. The American force, known as the Mexican Punitive Expedition, was led by General John “Black Jack” Pershing. Pershing had a force of approximately 10,000 soldiers to assist Carranza in the capture of Villa and to protect the southern border of the United States. Airplanes and transport vehicles were used to make a combined push 350 miles into Mexico in search of Villa. The Mexican government proved very uncooperative with Pershing, in so much that the ill-supplied American troops were refused aid from the Mexican government and were barred from using Mexican railroads to transport troops and supplies from America. The predicted short excursion proved time
consuming, and many resources were exhausted in the hunt for the revolutionary needle in the Mexican haystack. The Mexican government resented the growing U.S. intervention so much so that on June 21st, Mexican troops attacked a detachment of the 10th Calvary at El Carrizal Mexico, resulting in the death of 40 American troops. After an eleven-month search for Villa that turned up empty-handed and an assault on American Calvary by Mexican troops, America would have declared war on Mexico if it had not been for the combined plea of Carranza to Wilson for the removal of American troops and the mounting pressure of the First World War. On February 7, 1917 American troops were ordered to withdraw from Mexico.

While American forces were marching through Mexico, British cryptographers began deciphering a telegram they had intercepted from the German Foreign Minister on January 19, 1917. The telegram was a proposal from Secretary for Foreign Affairs Arthur Zimmermann, sent to Heinrich Von Eckhardt, who was the German Minister to Mexico. The deciphered telegraph reads:

We intend to begin on the first of February unrestricted submarine warfare. We shall endeavor in spite of this to keep the United States of America neutral. In the event of this not succeed-ing, we make Mexico a proposal of alliance on the following basis: make war together, make peace together, generous financial support and an under-standing on our part that Mexico is to reconquer the lost territory in Texas, New Mexico, and Arizona. The settlement in detail is left to you. You will inform the President of the above most secretly as soon as the outbreak of war with the United States of America is certain... Please call the President’s attention to the fact that the ruthless employment of our submarines now offers the prospect of compelling England in a few months to make peace. - SIGNED ZIMMERMANN

Realizing the gravity of this message, the British withheld the release of this information from the Americans and sent the message in its original coded form to Von Eckhardt to avoid German investigation into the possibility of message interception. The British hoped to draw America into the war on the side of the Entente Powers and to prevent the Germans from discovering their interception of the telegram. On February 24th, only a month later, British intelligence delivered the Zimmermann Note to Woodrow Wilson.
Wilson passed the telegram on to the American press, which published the message on March 1st. Before spurring an American reaction to the telegram, President Wilson questioned Zimmermann on the validity of the telegram believing it to be too farfetched a plan to be a serious offer to Mexico. However, Zimmermann attested to the validity of the telegram by sending Wilson a transcript of a speech Zimmermann had given in Germany. In the speech, Zimmermann explained that he had no belligerent intentions by sending the telegram but was seeking an alliance with Mexico only as defensive insurance should America go to war against Germany. This removed all doubt from the telegram, and Wilson began to sell the war to the American people. Noticing the Anti-German sentiment that the note was brewing in America, Eckhardt followed the instructions of Zimmermann’s telegram and informed Carranza of Germany’s offer to Mexico in return for an offensive upon the United States. Carranza ignored Germany’s offer and chose, instead, to watch America’s reply to the telegram. On April 6, 1917, a little over a month after Zimmermann’s note was published in America, Congress formally declared war on Germany and the Central Powers. Carranza had taken the time to investigate the validity of Mexico’s offer with the conclusion that the U.S. was far stronger than Mexico, and Germany’s promise of financial support could not be honored in Germany’s current state. Mexico, torn by civil war, was unable to begin a war with the United States, and Germany’s limited resources would make assisting Mexico impossible. Carranza then responded to Germany’s offer with a firm refusal, leaving Germany to deal with the results of their meddling.

Foreign policies between America and Mexico underwent a transition from the political conferences that had always maintained peace to direct intervention and invasion by the United States. This transition was designed to calm the dissolving Mexican government that was a direct result of the Mexican Revolution. Wilson’s attempts at moral diplomacy resulted in extreme friction between America and Mexico nearly to the point of war between the two. Germany had seen the untapped potential within the Mexican-American conflict and reached out to Mexico. Given the deteriorating state of Mexican-American relations, Germany hoped to distract America from joining the war through a Mexican-led offensive on the southern and western borders of the United States. This would have provided Germany with the time to force peace upon France and Britain on the western battle front, but it was not to be.
ENDNOTES


3 Ibid., 247.


6 Cooper, *Woodrow Wilson*, 263.


8 Ibid., 125.

9 Ibid., 129.


11 Ibid.


15 Ibid., 90.


19 Ibid., 231.

20 Symour, *Woodrow Wilson and the War*, 143

21 Ibid., 142.

22 Ibid., 143.


26 Ibid., 143.


29 Ibid.


31 Ibid., 213.


33 Ibid.

34 Ibid.

35 Ibid.
36 McLynn, *Villa and Zapata*, 221.


38 Symour, *Woodrow Wilson and the War*, 144.

39 Ibid., 90.


41 McLynn, *Villa and Zapata*, 240.

42 Ibid., 160.


44 Ibid., 206.

45 Ibid., 216.


47 Ibid., 212.

48 Ibid., 223.


52 Ibid.

53 Ibid.

55 Ibid., 319.

56 Ibid., 314.


58 Ibid., 224.


61 Rojo, “Erich L. Lehmann, the Lehmann Symposia, and November 20th 1917,” 1-5.


63 Ibid., 224.

64 Ibid., 212.

65 Ibid., 213.

66 Rojo, “Erich L. Lehmann, the Lehmann Symposia, and November 20th 1917,” 1-5.


68 Ibid., 137.

69 Ibid.

70 Ibid., 138.

71 Rojo, “Erich L. Lehmann, the Lehmann Symposia, and November 20th 1917,” 1-5.

73 Ibid., 426.

THE ARMENIAN GENOCIDE: AN ATROCITY SHROUDED IN UNCERTAINTY AND DENIAL

By: Cole Peavler

During the Great War, the Young Turks of the Ottoman Empire committed one of the biggest, yet most unheard of atrocities in human history: The Armenian Genocide. As a consequence, more than half of the Armenian population was annihilated. Many scholars have examined this topic and while many establish this tragedy as genocide, some challenge the claim altogether. They assert that what occurred to the Armenians beginning in 1915 was not genocide, but retaliation for actions the Armenians had done to the Turks. A number of complications arise when discussing the “Armenian Question,” including whether these killings were systematic or not, the motives of the nationalistic Young Turks and their vision for a purely Turkish Empire, and the alleged Armenian-Russian alliance at the beginning of the First World War. These debates have lasted nearly a century, and still have lasting effects. The Armenian Genocide has been contested by scholars through the years, but it is clear that the atrocities enacted by the Young Turks against the Armenians in 1915 constitute genocide in all aspects. It would be beneficial to first examine the historiography surrounding the event, taking a look at the theories and the reasons behind them.

Many reject the charge of genocide in the case of the Armenians, including American political scientist Guenter Lewy. Lewy argues that “one of the problems bedeviling the Armenian side in this controversy is that no authentic documentary evidence exists to prove the culpability of the central government of Turkey for the massacre of 1915-1916. While not denying that the Young Turks did commit horrible crimes against the Armenians, there is an aspect of genocide that, in his opinion, does not fit with what happened in 1915, that of premeditation. Lewy claims that “the historical question at issue is premeditation—that is, whether the Turkish regime intentionally organized the annihilation of its Armenian minority.” Lewy raises a legitimate claim, considering that premeditation is a prerequisite to genocide. Another scholar, Bernard Lewis, to whom Guenter Lewy alludes in his article, has a similar stance on the genocide, but for a different reason.

Lewis, a historian specializing as a public intellectual and a political commentator also refutes the use of the term “genocide” in describing what happened in 1915. He cites the Armenian rebellion and their siding with Ottoman Turkey’s enemy, Russia, in his thesis. There were large numbers of Armenians, including members of the Turkish Armed forces, who deserted their posts, crossed the Russian-Ottoman border and assisted the Russian
forces that were invading the empire. Guerilla warfare became the norm throughout Anatolia. Today, this act of betrayal in the eyes of the Ottoman Turks is named the “National Movement of Armenians against Turkey, and it is clear that the Turkish forces resorted to extremely ferocious methods in repelling it.” The Armenians had sided with an enemy, perhaps because they were simply an ally of Russia, or it could be because of the mistreatment and denial of certain rights brought on by the Ottoman Turks for years prior.

Arend Jan Boekestijn, a former member of the Dutch Parliament, raises multiple objections to the use of the term “genocide” in the Armenian case, and he mostly states that it is impossible to compare this massacre with that of the Holocaust. He states that unlike the Jews, the Armenian people did something wrong, and while the Turkish people may have overreacted to what happened, there is no doubt that the Armenians had sided with Russia. He also claims that not all members of the Turkish government were aware of the deportations, and some tried to punish the perpetrators, but to no avail. Finally, siding with Lewy, he argues that there was no planning in this massacre. He claims “there is not only no evidence that the Committee of Union and Progress government deliberately planned for genocide before 1914, it is also highly unlikely.” While Boekestijn, along with his similarly minded colleagues may be correct in their assumptions, the fact remains that it is hard to gain substantial evidence to disprove something that occurred one-hundred years ago under the shield of the Great War. Many scholars contest the views addressed thus far, and it is important to consider their outlook on the supposed Armenian Genocide.

Robert Melson has dedicated his career to research on genocide, with particular focus on the Armenian case. From 2005-2007 he served as the President of the International Association of Genocide Scholars. He cites World War I and Turkey’s desire to expand their empire as reasons for the destruction of the Armenians. When the Great War erupted in mid-1914, the Young Turks, led by Enver Pasha, joined the Germans and Austria-Hungarians in an anti-Russian alliance. They hoped this coalition would allow the Turkish government to build their state at Russia’s expense. It was in this framework of revolutionary and ideological transformation that the fateful decision to eliminate the Armenians was taken. Melson is clear in writing that there was a goal of destroying the Armenians. The decision to expand to the northeast led to the extermination of the Armenians, being an
obstacle to Turkish development. While many definitions of genocide exist, nearly all state that the act is initiated by a government, which is undoubtedly Melson’s argument in this case.

Melson is not alone in his conclusions. Donald Bloxham, author of *The Great Game of Genocide*, agrees with Melson while also pointing out other reasons the Committee of Union and Progress, a faction of the Young Turk Government, decided to exterminate the Armenians. He stated that “in justification of its deportation policy, the CUP pointed to Armenian nationalist agitation, contending that it aimed to tear apart by secession what remained of the empire”\(^6\) The Armenians wanted citizenship that they had not received for hundreds of years of coexistence, and because of this the CUP became afraid the Armenians were attempting to tear apart what remained of the Ottoman Empire. Bloxham adds that “the CUP also suspected Russian-Armenian military collaboration in the Caucasus-Persian-Ottoman border regions. Thus, according to the CUP’s professed logic, the Armenian deportations were a ‘military necessity.’”\(^7\) It is agreed on both sides of the debate that the Armenian-Russian alliance was a major cause of the conflict in the Ottoman Empire, the debate lies in whether such extreme measures should have been taken against the Armenians.

Finally, lawyer and genocide expert Raphael Lemkin affirmed the use of the term “genocide” in the context of what happened to the Armenians. Lemkin, a prominent scholar in genocide studies, coined the term genocide. He used the Latin word *cide*, for killing, and the Greek word *genos*, for family or tribe.\(^8\) Lemkin’s meaning of the term explicitly tells one that he considered what occurred in 1915 genocide. In his autobiography, he writes “the truth came out…after the war. In Turkey, more than 1,200,000 Armenians were put to death for no other reason than they were Christians.”\(^9\) Lemkin’s definition states that genocide is the killing of a family or tribe. In the case of the Armenians, this group was made up of Christians; therefore it is clear that Lemkin would deem the annihilation of the Armenians as a case of genocide. While these great scholars have their own interpretations of what happened in 1915, as well as their own interpretations of what genocide truly is, the essence of this paper is to give evidence that despite the criticisms involved, the attack against the Armenians by the Young Turks was genocide. The sheer brutality and systematic fashion of the killing by the Young Turks, the desire to create and expand a purely Turkish empire, and an overreaction to an Armenian-Russian alliance, provide reason to
deem this tragedy genocide.

It is pertinent to give the definitions of genocide in order to take a stance on this controversy. Lemkin states that “genocide is intended to signify a coordinated plan of different actions aiming at the destruction of essential foundations of the life of national groups, with the aim of annihilating the groups themselves.” Genocide is a coordinated plan, therefore premeditated and systematic. It is vital to use the definition provided by the Genocide Convention of 1948 as well as the definition Lemkin provides when examining the Armenian massacre to determine whether or not genocide was the case.

The Armenian Genocide was accomplished in an organized, systematic fashion by the Young Turks, which is Guenter Lewy’s main concern when examining the conflict of 1915. Yair Auron, author of the book *The Armenian Genocide: Forgotten and Denied* provides in great detail the origins of the genocide. During the nights of April 23rd and April 24th of 1915, Istanbul police broke into homes of prominent Armenian families in the city. Over two hundred Armenian leaders, including politicians, writers, educators, lawyers, and members of other free professions were brought to the police station in Istanbul and deported. During the following days, the police took the rest of the community members into custody. The Turkish police liquidated the Armenian leadership, weakening the community’s ability to get organized, defend itself, and resist. They left the Istanbul Armenians without direction, alarmed, and frightened. The model of elimination of the leadership first was repeated in the six eastern districts of the Ottoman Empire, where most of the Armenian population was concentrated, as well as in Cilicia.

Auron clearly demonstrates just how systematic and planned this massacre was. The Young Turks went into communities and deliberately took away the people they knew would be of any threat first. They knew that without the strongest and most intelligent people of the community readily available, the Armenians would be basically helpless. Most scholars agree that the incident occurred on April 23rd and 24th, 1915, regardless of their stance. How can Lewy and Boekestijn, along with other scholars not consider these deportations and killings premeditated? There is ample evidence that the decision for genocide of the Armenians was made by the Central Committee of the CUP following intense discussions and deliberations. The massacre and liquidation of the Armenians were the result
of decisions of the CUP. Taner Akcam cites many documents in his book proving these discussions took place, demonstrating the premeditation that was involved prior to the genocide. In December 1918, in a written testimony to the Commission Investigating Sordid Affairs, Vehip Pasa, the Commander of the Turkish Third Army since the beginning of 1916, states:

The atrocities were carried out under a program that was [specifically] determined upon and represented a definite case of premeditation... They [the atrocities] were made possible primarily through the involvement of Ittihat’s representatives and provincial central bodies [of the Party], and secondarily through higher governmental officials who, abandoning their conscience and discarding the law, allowed themselves to be co-opted by the Party and issued the necessary order.  

The Commander of the Third Army was aware of the atrocities and the premeditation involved. He even states that the officials of the state did not take preventive measures to what was occurring, even though they heard of the crimes beforehand, which incited even more killings. This alone is one of the most significant proofs that the atrocities were deliberate.

In addition to this testimony, many telegrams read during the Yozgat trial on February 22, 1919 further support the charge of premeditation. One telegram sent by Mustafa Bey, the commander of the Bogazliyan gendarmes detachment, to the Deputy Commander of Ankara’s Fifth Army Corps, Halil Recyai, states “a group of harmful Armenians gathered from the towns and countryside were sent on to their destination.” Commander Recyai replied by asking the exact meaning of Mustafa’s term, “destination.” In response, Mustafa stated that “the aforementioned Armenians were massacred because they are malicious.”

Even the New York Times was aware of the Turkish government attempt to eliminate the Armenians in 1915, asserting that “attempts to furnish food to the Armenians ordered deported to distant parts of the empire were blocked by the Turkish authorities stating that “they wished nothing to be done that would prolong their life.” This policy falls under the definition of genocide in both sections (b) and (c) of Article II of the 1948 Convention.
It is apparent that the Ottoman government planned to massacre the Armenians. The big question in this case is not only to ask “how” the Turkish government pulled off this massacre, but “why” the government believed it needed to eliminate the Armenians in the first place.

The Young Turks planned these attacks for a reason. They wanted an ethnically and religiously homogeneous Turkish Empire. The Christian Armenians were their biggest obstacle in achieving this goal. The nationalistic goals of the Young Turks were the biggest factor in the annihilation of the Armenians. The term “nationalism” is generally used to describe two phenomena: the attitude that the members of a nation have when they care about their national identity, and the actions that the members of a nation take when seeking to achieve (or sustain) self-determination. The Armenians, neither Turk nor Muslim, simply did not fit the nationalistic vision of the Young Turks.

The subjectively Western ideology of nationalism was the impulse that drove the genocide, the impulse “to streamline, make homogeneous, and organize people to be uniform in some sense . . . [to] compete, survive and develop.” The government believed that the only way to survive in the war was to become a homogeneous Turkish empire, which would require the eradication of anyone of Armenian descent. However, this was only half of the goal of the Turkish government during the war.

While wanting all their people to be Turkish, the Ottoman Turks also wanted more land. Their enemy to the northeast, Russia, seemed a likely target of this expansion. Considering the Armenians lived along the northeast Russo-Turkish border, it seemed that the Young Turks could achieve both of these goals with a single sweep of killings to the Northeast. This was not achieved as easily as they assumed. As the Turks mobilized for war with Russia, the Armenians revolted. Many of the rebels joined forces with the Russians. Others remained in place and formed guerilla bands. These latter groups were a serious threat to Turkish operations in Eastern Anatolia. This rebellion was a major obstacle to the Ottoman regime’s war plans, thus also hurting the entirety of the Central Powers. There’s no doubt that this Armenian alliance with the Russians caused conflict in the empire, and could even be deemed a civil war.

The Armenians hoped for a civil war. The Russians began distributing weapons to Armenians in the Caucasus and Iran in September 1914, seven months before the deportations began. Armenians began
attacking Ottoman positions after being equipped with artillery. This seems like it should be another aspect of the Great War. The Armenians wronged the Ottomans; they joined the enemies’ side. The Armenians wanted war with the Ottomans, this was evident. They wanted to be free from Muslim rule. The Ottomans saw this as an opportunity to solve the Armenian Question under the cover of war. They used the war as a justification to demolish the Armenians.

As defined in the 1948 Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of Genocide, Article II, genocide means any of the following acts committed with intent to destroy, in whole or in part, a national, ethnic, racial or religious group as such: (a) killing members of the group; (b) causing serious bodily or mental harm to members of the group; (c) deliberately inflicting on the group conditions of life calculated to bring about its physical destruction in whole or in part; (d) imposing measures intended to prevent births within the group; (e) forcibly transferring children of the group to another group. The term defined by the Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of Genocide is multifaceted, and states that any of the acts described can constitute genocide.

Part A says genocide is the “intent to destroy and kill members of the group.” This is blatantly obvious; the Young Turks took Armenian lives. Part B states that “causing serious bodily or mental harm to members of the group” also constitutes genocide. In addition to the information provided by New York Times in 1915, there are many eye-witness accounts of brutal physical abuse against Armenians.

Yevnig Adrouni, from the Armenian village of Hoghe, gives a firsthand account of bodily harm performed at the hands of the Turkish government: “They tore open the bellies of pregnant women so that the child was born. It fell free. They used to do that. I have seen such things.” This atrocious torture was accompanied with other types of bodily harm, such as deliberate starvation.

Part C defines genocide as “deliberately inflicting on the group conditions of life calculated to bring about its physical destruction in whole or in part.” This aspect of the definition is blatant in the Armenian deportations. The Young Turks took people out of their homes, killed most of the men, and sent those they did not murder on death marches which led to exposure to the elements, dehydration, and starvation. The Turkish policies beginning in April 1915 had the ultimate goal of physical
destruction.

Part D states that genocide is “imposing measures intended to prevent births within the group.” This can be tied into Yevnig Adrouni’s eye-witness story. What she saw was a gruesome example of bodily harm, killing both mother and child.

Finally, Part E states that “forcibly transferring children of the group to another group” is classified as genocide. The book *Survivors: An Oral History of the Armenian Genocide* details the story of Armenian boy Henry Vartanian:

> We went to the city hall and a judge asked each of us questions like this: "Son, your religion is a very bad one. It should be denounced. Do you denounce it?" And we would say, "Evet, effendi," which means, "Yes, sir." "Do you accept the real religion, the Muslim religion?" "Yes, sir." Then he would say: "Son, your name will be henceforth Abdul Rahman oghlu Assad, and no more Vartanian." Then they gave a fez and a turban. I was to wear it so everyone would know that I was Muslim.21

The Turks forced the children of Armenian Christians to convert to Islam. This was an essential part of the Young Turks’ mission of creating their purely Turkish empire, to kill most, and the ones that were left must convert to their religion and accept a Turkish name. There is clear evidence, when correlating the facts given and the definitions of genocide provided, that the massacre brought upon the Armenians in 1915 was a planned genocide. But why does this debate matter today? Why does the Turkish government refute that genocide occurred against the Armenians?

Since the 1970s, the Turkish government’s denial campaign has been extensive. In the United States alone, to prevent US recognition of the Genocide, Turkey expends significant diplomatic resources to prevent United States recognition of the Armenian Genocide, even to the point of ambassadorial visits to state governments.22 The Turkish government is expending any effort possible to refute the charges. The deniers of the genocide blame the Armenians for the continuing debate, saying “Once Armenians as a group give up concern about their ‘chosen trauma,’ they will be able to have positive relations with Turks as a group.”23 As Theriault points out, deniers of Turkish responsibility for the genocide assume that the
answer to this dispute lies in the hands of the Armenian people. They want the Armenians to simply drop the topic.

The Turkish government’s campaign of denial, however, is in the country’s best interest. The fear of paying reparations and international censure has led them to an adamant denial of what they did to the Armenians. The Armenians have three demands: the recognition of genocide, reparations for losses, and return of their territories. The first of these demands must be met for the other two to be valid. Reparations and returns cannot come without first recognition. This is why the government in Turkey is so insistent in their denial of what occurred. However, does it truly matter if Turkey identifies the genocide, so long as the rest of the world does? It is clear that the government in Ankara is never going to give in to the Armenian demands; therefore it is not beneficial for the Armenians and acceptors of the genocide to continue putting so much effort into recognition by the Turkish government. However, once the world recognizes what happened in 1915 as genocide, which many countries already have, reparations and returns can follow suit.

In August 1939, just a week before the German invasion of Poland, Adolf Hitler asked the question, “Who speaks today of the extermination of the Armenians?” The perpetrator of one of the largest and certainly most well-known genocides of all time used the Armenians as an example of how he would be able to pull off such a massacre as the world watched. This is an example of how the world has forgotten the Armenian Genocide. Scholars have contested this argument for years, and it will continue to be argued for years to come. However when looking at the definitions of genocide, it is clear in all aspects that the atrocities of 1915 constitute genocide. The killings were clearly a systematic, organized plan by the Young Turks. The government wanted a purely Turkish empire, free from minorities. It wanted to occupy more land, and had to fight through the Russians and Armenians to gain the land. The Turks simply decimated the Armenians and sent them on deportations south to Syria. Every single aspect of the definitions of genocide is in line with what occurred to the Armenians nearly 100 years ago. The atrocities that befell the Armenians in 1915 were indeed genocidal.
ENDNOTES


2 Ibid.


7 Ibid.


11 Yair Auron, The Armenian Genocide: Forgotten and Denied. (Tel-Aviv: The Open University of Israel, 2013), 600.

13 Ibid.

14 Ibid., 167.


17 Bloxham, The Great Game of Genocide, 59.


19 Ibid.


23 Ibid., 88.