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**Armenian Agony - II**

**Lead: Alarmed by the growth of nationalism throughout the region in the 1900s, the Ottoman Empire centered in Turkey began to crack down on ethnic groups such as the Armenians.**

**Intro. : *A Moment in Time* with Dan Roberts.**

**Content: Loosed by the French Revolution, throughout the nineteenth century the spirit of Nationalism began to spread across eastern Europe into those areas controlled by the Ottoman Empire, whose Sultan ruled a large**

**part of the Balkans and the Middle East from the Turkish capital of Constantinople. In the 1900s the decay gripping the Empire began to accelerate. More and more, ethnic and religious groups were seeking independence or autonomy.**

**For hundreds of years the Armenian people had existed within the Ottoman Empire at relative peace with their Turkish neighbors, a Christian community awash in a sea of Islam. Many wealthy Armenians lived in the major cities of the Empire and were successful bankers and merchants. Because they did business with the Turks and depended on the government for contracts and permission to operate, these**

**businessmen tended to take a low profile in political matters. However, in the 1870s, a coalition of intellectuals and the churchmen wrested leadership of Armenia from this business alliance. Infected by the siren call of nationalism and encouraged by the success of Balkan groups seeking independence from Turkey, they began to agitate for a separate Armenian state.**

**The growth of Armenian nationalism alarmed the government of Sultan Abdul-Hamid II and in a pre-emptive strike, he ordered the destruction of the Armenian quarter of Constantinople in 1876. Tension continued to mount when Armenia supported Russia in the war that**

**culminated in the Treaty of Stefano in 1878. The defeated Turks were required to give Armenians civil rights and a certain degree of independence, but Armenia's support for Russia in the war set Turkish teeth on edge and led to the mounting conviction by the Sultan that he must be rid of the troublesome Armenians.**

**In 1894 one of the six Armenian provinces in Turkey failed to pay its protection tribute to mercenary soldiers used by the government to control the region. Constantinople, with an eye to restless ethnic groups all over its territory, treated this incident as open rebellion, sent in troops and began to massacre Armenians. Two years later 200,000 had been killed and**

**when Armenians began to defend themselves, the slaughter increased. Often, peasants were herded into churches which were then set on fire. Pressure from the international community caused the Turks to let up for a time but 1910 they were at it again. Next time: The Turkish solution.**

**At the University of Richmond, I'm Dan Roberts.**

### **Resources**

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**Suny, Ronald Grigor. Armenia in Twentieth Century. Chico, California: Scholars Press, 1983.**

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