

# ARMENIAN TERRORISTS AND THE EAST-WEST CONFLICT

By Z. Michael Szaz

Recently, the activities of Armenian terrorist groups were highlighted by the exploding suitcase at Orly airport, killing eight prospective passengers, mostly Frenchmen, and by the subsequent suicide assault on the residence of the Turkish ambassador in Lisbon. A Turkish diplomat was gunned down the day before the Orly bombing in Brussels. Later bombings of French diplomatic property in Teheran and West Berlin constituted "revenge" for the French arrests of the perpetrators of the Orly bombing.

The geographic scope of Armenian terrorism (which has included in the past, Australia, Canada, the United States and independent Communist Yugoslavia in addition to Western Europe), the lives claimed and the material damage caused, led Undersecretary of Defense Fred W. Ikle to state last spring before a Senate Committee that the Armenian terrorist groups are the deadliest, yet least studied, of all international terrorist groups. Although information about the groups, especially the Justice Commandos of the Armenian Genocide, are available in detail only to law enforcement agencies, careful research of unclassified United States and European sources and published ASALA (Armenian Secret Army for the Liberation of Armenia) materials reveals a fairly accurate picture of the composition, aims and methods of these groups.

First, distinction must be made between three groups, each of which claims credit for the killing of the 28 Turkish diplomats and their family members, for the bombing of Turkish property which took the lives of many innocent passengers and bystanders both at the Ankara and Orly airports, and also other smaller bombings in Western Europe.

The atrocities committed by officials of the Ottoman Empire against the Armenians while deporting them from eastern Anatolia in 1915 are purported to be the direct cause for the

emergence of these three groups, i.e., the Armenian Secret Army for the Liberation of Armenia, the Armenian Revolutionary Army (a splinter group of ASALA), and the Justice Commandos of the Armenian Genocide. It must be noted, however, that there is little historical continuity to link these events. Between the end of World War I and 1975, there was only one instance of Armenian terrorist activity, the assassination of two Turkish diplomats in Los Angeles by a survivor of the 1915 deportations, who was sentenced by American courts and is now living in a nursing home under guard. During the period of 51 years, no other attempts were made until now to avenge the atrocities committed during the First World War.

The results of the First World War radically changed the distribution of Armenians over the world, increasing the numbers living under Russian rule. Almost 70 per cent of all Armenians reside now in the Soviet Union, 3.2 million in the Armenian S.S.S.R., and about one million in other parts of the Soviet Union. The areas in Anatolia which had a sizeable Armenian minority, are today inhabited almost exclusively by Turks. The entire Armenian community in Turkey, centered mostly on the Istanbul region, numbers about 60,000. The largest Armenian community in the diaspora lives in the United States, about 600,000, mostly in California (where even the governor is an Armenian-American) and the Greater Boston area. France became the home of about 300,000 Armenians (Marseilles area). About 150,000 Armenians stayed in the Lebanon following the deportations.

The prosperous Armenian community in the United States lobbies, in conjunction with the American Greeks, to try to keep the memory of the 1915 genocide alive and to help pressure Turkey to recognize it. The community, which is conservative on economic and political issues, nevertheless maintains cultural ties with Soviet Armenians. Despite the presence of an atheistic, Communist regime in Soviet Armenia, with concomitant violation of human and civil rights and sharp restrictions on the exercise of religious rights, the American Armenian community seldom criticizes these violations in their publications. Rather, Soviet Armenia is widely regarded as an imperfect, but the only existing, structure for the preservation of Armenian culture. This dichotomy of conservative American-Armenian feeling — anti-Soviet, yet grateful to the Soviet Union

for preserving at least a semi-autonomous Armenian cultural and political entity — prevails, despite the unquestionable patriotism of the community towards the United States.

In order to research the beginnings of Armenian terrorism, we must return to the Armenian community in the Lebanon at the outbreak of the Lebanese civil war in 1975.

Another event, unrelated to the Armenians, is seen important to the emergence of the ASALA, the first of the terrorist groups. This was the attempt of the Greek colonels through their agents to oust Archbishop Makarios as President of the Republic of Cyprus and to affect its merger with Greece in the summer of 1974. Their grave miscalculation resulted in the fall of their military regime in Athens and to Turkish occupation of 36 per cent of the Republic of Cyprus. Turkey invoked the right to intervention, awarded to it under the 1960 Zurich Agreements establishing the Republic of Cyprus, despite the non-participation of Great Britain, the other guarantor power. The subsequent deterioration of relations between Greece and Turkey, and especially between the government of the Republic of Cyprus (now restricted to the south of the island), and Turkey, resulted in successful lobbying efforts by American Greeks in the U.S. Congress to cut off military aid to Turkey between 1975-78. As a result, there was Greek Cypriote moral, if not material, support to the fledgling ASALA as John Reeves wrote in the *Review of the News* in 1980.

The godfather of ASALA was, however, not a Greek Cypriote, but Dr. George Habash, the chairman of the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP), the most radical and pro-Soviet member of the PLO. Habash could provide the would-be terrorists with a territorial base in West Beirut, also with some equipment and training. More importantly, he could serve as the ASALA contact in Moscow. Ostracized within the PLO in 1975, Habash was interested in new allies, particularly outside of the PLO.

The PFLP's support enabled the terrorists to organize assassination teams to kill Turkish diplomats and to approach the U.S.S.R. for material help in cash and arms. As the Soviet Union was already supplying arms to leftist guerillas in Turkey, using the ASALA to help destabilize Turkey presented no difficulties.

Thus in 1975 the ASALA was formed in West Beirut follow-

ing the outbreak of the Lebanese civil war which enabled the PLO, and even the PFLP, to exercise semi-sovereignty in West Beirut and to protect ASALA. ASALA then made its first approaches to Lebanese Armenian youth concerned about the lack of an Armenian "national liberation" movement patterned on the role model of the PLO.

Ideologically guidance for the ASALA was also derived from Dr. Habash. In reality strongly Marxist, but publicly claiming "nationalist" values, the new ASALA leadership began to consider itself part of the world revolutionary movement against the imperialist powers. In their April 1979 press interview in West Beirut, reprinted in the *Armenian Observer*, ASALA spokesmen reiterated the usual slogans against America while praising the Soviet Union for having provided a homeland for the Armenians. They also called for the detachment of six Turkish provinces from Turkey and their reattachment to the Armenian S.S.R. Of course, they also stated that by killing Turkish diplomats (about 15 at that date) and by bombing Turkish property they would force the Turkish government to admit to the genocide of the Armenians in 1915.

An interesting insight into ASALA mentality may be gained from the article "What Does America Mean To Us?" in the February 1981 issue of *Armenia*, the official publication of ASALA. They explained their renewed activity in the United States as follows:

The reasons for the progressive activity within the Armenian community in the U.S. are quite similar to general reasons...Throughout the diaspora, however, other factors — special to the U.S. — exist, imperialism in general has been under attack throughout the world by national and class struggles. The Armenian people, as part of the world masses, has become aware of their past exploitation and are reacting in defense of their national rights...The Armenian struggle is part of the world revolution, and, therefore, as the world revolution strengthens, so does the Armenian struggle. The Armenian youth, like all American youth, were raised on the outrageous lies of the invincibility and purity of the U.S. regime. Not only has this invincibility and purity concept fallen flat, but the ability to weaken the U.S. regime by organized mass struggle has enlightened the Armenian youth and shown

them the correct approach to their national self-determination.

The article singles out the Communist, Bob Avakian, as a "U.S.-born Armenian and leader of worker-based resistance to U.S. internal exploitation," and continues:

Even more important than such individuals is the organization of progressive groups. Despite the increasing underground activity of the ASALA in the U.S., there evolved groups who work openly in the community. The most important of these is *Azad May* (Canada), and a group of politically educated revolutionary people. In Los Angeles, there was also the short-lived Armenian Revolutionary Movement. All over the United States, as in the rest of the diaspora, the Armenian people are organizing. The ASALA, already well-established in the U.S., calls our half-million comrades to arms.

The ASALA used young Armenians from the Lebanon as its assassins and bombers in the United States. Sent to the United States as immigrants in the late 1970s, they were responsible for all the killings and bombings in America between 1980 and 1982. Their methods of raising money and intimidating Armenian-American and Armenian-Canadian business people, threatening to kidnap and kill their children and wives in case of noncompliance and betrayal, proved fairly effective. In 1982, however, one wealthy Armenian businessman in Canada dared the terrorists and reported them to the Royal Mounted Police. Thus, he provided the first clues leading to the arrest of the blackmailers and the information American law enforcement agencies used to foil ASALA attempts to smuggle a suitcase laden with explosives on a Canadian airliner at Los Angeles.

Upon its establishment in West Beirut, ASALA members fanned out to France and other Western European countries and later to the U.S. Its anti-American, pro-Communist stance conflicted with the views of the Armenian youth in these countries, although open criticism of ASALA in the community remained rare.

The conventional Armenian political parties were, however, worried about the influence of the ASALA. They were not interested in joining death squad activities; but there were radical youth in the Dashnag Party who felt differently. They organized the Justice Commandos of the Armenian Genocide

(also in Beirut) and while Dr. Habash was the godfather of ASALA, these elements sought contact with the Phalange. This group, the Justice Commandos of the Armenian Genocide, was formed to provide a right-wing alternative for young Armenian extremists who would not want to submit to Marxist-Leninist party discipline. The Justice Commandos are the illegal offshoot of the youth section of the Dashnag Party which has vigorously denounced ASALA. The Dashnag Party played an important role in the short-lived Republic of Armenia (1918-1921). The party adheres to democratic socialist ideas.

The Justice Commandos are ideologically a mixture of socialism and nationalism, like the offshoot of the leftist Peronistas in Argentina, the Montoneros. The Justice Commandos are based mostly in English-speaking countries, although they retain ties to the Lebanon and to the Lebanese Phalange.

Recently, a third group has been claiming responsibility for assassinations — the Armenian Revolutionary Army. It is believed to be a splinter group of the ASALA with good connections to the Soviet Union.

Both the ASALA and the Justice Commandos are directed from the Middle East. ASALA and its offshoot, the Armenian Revolutionary Army, are completely dependent upon Syria and the Soviets who provide them safe haven, arms and cash.

The aims of the ASALA are parallel to those of the Soviet Union. The U.S.S.R. conceives of Turkey, which has 26 divisions, as the greatest obstacle to its drive toward a warm sea port and the Arab world. Destabilizing Turkey and blackening its international image are objectives of high priority to the Soviets. By playing up the memory of genocide, Armenian terrorists are trying to create an evil image for the Republic of Turkey. It matters little to them that whatever was done in 1915 was accomplished by the Ottoman Empire and not the present Turkish government. The ASALA demands the return of the "Armenian lands" — which are essentially the same provinces coveted by Marshall Stalin in 1945 — from Turkey. Stalin's pressure was only foiled by President Truman's resolute stand in favor of Turkey. These lands were mixed Armenian-Turkish even before 1915, and only a few thousand Armenians, but millions of Turks, live there today. Thus, the Soviet quest for the control of the strategic Lake Van region and the southern approaches to Batum in Transcaucasia coin-

cides with the Armenian call for a "homeland" in Turkey which would then be attached to Soviet Armenia.

The parallel objective, almost identical ideology, and Communist-type terrorist methods, are incontrovertible evidence of ASALA-Soviet contacts even though the Soviet Union, for external political reasons, does not permit the ASALA to operate from Soviet territory in its assassination attempts against Turkish diplomats.

Soviet involvement in ASALA and ARA activities is becoming increasingly evident to the Armenian communities of the diaspora. Yet denunciations of the terrorists remain restricted to their methods rather than their objectives. Age-old Armenian anger at the Ottoman Empire expresses the hatred of a people toward their former masters who had belonged to a different race and religion and who had committed atrocities against them.

However, using a terrorist campaign to force the Turkish Republic to admit to the atrocities, or even to the genocide theory in killing Armenians, is illogical. The Armenians allege the killing of 1.5 million Armenians in 1915-16, while no responsible historians in the 1920s and 1930s ever spoke of more than 600,000, a figure which the Turks even dispute. The terrorist campaigns and the strident demands of the Armenian communities in the West that Turkey admit to the genocide of 1.5 million Armenian lives (while keeping silent about Turkish losses at the hands of the Armenian guerillas) is no way to promote a reconciliation between the two communities. Will not the killing of Turkish diplomats and their families only further deter the Turkish Government from any reinterpretation of the events of 1915-1916?

Armenian terrorists will have to be closely observed by U.S. and Western law enforcement agencies because ASALA and Justice Commandos have infiltrated Western countries in the guise of immigrants. In 1982 the terrorists have killed two Turkish diplomats in the United States and since 1980 ASALA has been bombing Turkish private and diplomatic properties.

The numerical strength of the terrorist groups is small, and during the past year 34 of them have been arrested in North America and Europe. With France joining the other law enforcement agencies of the West in tracking down Armenian terrorists ASALA and the Justice Commandos will have increasing

difficulty in perpetrating their slayings. Estimates of ASALA strength range between 500 and 800. No estimates have been given for the Justice Commandos, but certainly their strength does not exceed that of the ASALA and ARA.

It is forecast that ASALA and ARA will attempt increasingly desperate bombing and assassination attacks and as a result more and more of their operatives will be captured or killed. If this forecast should prove correct, they should disappear in three or four years as a major international terrorists force. If they keep a low profile, they will lose face with their members. The question is: how many Turkish diplomats and their families, and how many innocent bystanders must die before the ASALA and Justice Commandos structure is sufficiently decimated, despite increased help from the KGB and Dr. Habash?



## FAILING SCHOOL SYSTEMS IN AMERICA AND ELSEWHERE

By Edwin G. West

Americans are becoming increasingly disturbed by widespread reports of the declining quality of their public (government) schools. In 1974 the schools were given an A or B rating by only 48 percent of the sample of the public that was interviewed by the Gallup Poll; in 1982 the ratio had declined to 37 percent. By 1980 most people knew that S.A.T. scores had been falling for about two decades. In 1983, the National Commission on Excellence revealed that about 13 percent of all 17-year-olds, and perhaps 40 percent of minority youth were functionally illiterate. Nearly 40 percent of today's 17-year-olds cannot draw inferences from written material and only a third can solve a math problem requiring several steps. The Commission reported a poor average quality of teaching; a widespread switching from academic studies into "general track" courses; only one year of math and one year of science required for a high school diploma in 70 percent of the states, and the absence of a foreign language requirement for a high school diploma throughout the states. The Commission concluded: "The tendency of succeeding generations to improve educationally over their predecessors appears to be at an end." (1)

Can we ever hope for governments that are liberal, in the original meaning of that term, to put their schools in order? Some new analyses conclude that the structure of any majority voting democratic government is inherently monopolistic. (2) If we accept this finding, then to expect governments to be "liberal" is to expect a monopoly to be liberal, which seems a contradiction in terms.

While it is difficult, therefore, to apply the term "liberal" to governments, we may proceed to attach it to selected individuals. In her prize-winning essay for the Mont Pelerin Society, Karen Vaughn has made the interesting distinction between the economic political entrepreneur and the ideological political entrepreneur. Unlike the former, the ideological entrepreneur in