# CANNON FODDER--AGAIN

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**Category:** Opinions

**Prof. Khatchatur I. Pilikian,** London UK, 2 August 2015

Dragging people through conscription to serve as cannon fodder has a long and infamous history. Armenians served as such during the Crimean War. Early in 1850s, a Prince Leo, the mysterious pretender to the so-called crown of the Armenian Kingdom who was residing in London, issued the following proclamation to drag the Armenians into the Crimean War by exploiting their religious and patriotic sentiments.

No less than Karl Marx realized the importance of the proclamation and exposed the hypocrisy of colonial powers. To make his point with greater punch, he quoted Leo's proclamation in its entirety in an article in the *New York Daily Tribune (*July 1, 1853--No. 3809). Here is Leo's proclamation as presented by Marx:

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> **"It may be of interest to your readers to become acquainted with a document concerning the Eastern question, which was recently published in a London newspaper. It is a proclamation issued by the Prince of Armenia, now residing in London, and distributed among the Armenians in Turkey:**
>
> **'Leo, by the grace of God, sovereign Prince of Armenia & c., to the Armenians in Turkey:**
>
> **'Beloved brothers and faithful countrymen. Our will and our ardent wish is that you should defend to the last drop of your blood your country and the Sultan against the tyrant of the North . Remember, my brothers, that in Turkey there are no knouts, they do not tear your nostrils and your women are not flogged, secretly or in public. Under the reign of the Sultan, there is humanity, while under that of the tyrant of the North there are nothing but atrocities. Therefore place yourselves under the direction of God, and fight bravely for the liberty of**

> **your country and your present sovereign. Pull down your houses to make barricades, and if you have no arms, break your furniture and defend yourselves with it. May Heaven guide you on your path to glory. My only happiness will be to fight in the midst of you against the oppressor of your country, and your creed. May God incline the Sultan's heart to sanction my demand, because under his reign, our religion remains in its pure form while, under the Northern tyrant, it will be altered. Remember, at least, brothers, that the blood that runs in the veins of him who now addresses you, is the blood of twenty kings, it is the blood of heroes-- Lusignans---and defenders of our faith; and we say to you, let us defend our creed and its pure form, until our last drop of blood.'" (**Karl Marx, Frederick Engels, *Collected Works*, Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1979, Volume 12, p. 138. First appeared in *The Daily News*, No.2207, June 17, 1853. Cited by K. Marx in his article written on June 17, 1853, first published in the *New York Daily Tribune*, No 3809, and the *New York Semi-Weekly Tribune,* No 845, July 1, 1853. )

Thanking Marx for having "saved" Leo's proclamation, it is tempting to brush it aside with classical British "no comment". Only that it reminds me of the British colonel, Fenwick Williams, RE, who was then modernizing the Turkish army (before the German military takeover of the same job) and fortifying the citadel of Kars. In March 1855, addressing the populace and their notables, among them their Christian leaders, Col. Williams declared:

> **'The time has come when you may shake off your thralldom, and take your place as free citizens; . . . you will fight, then, for us; take your spades and come and dig with us at the batteries; we will welcome you as brothers.'**

Then, we are told what the archbishop answered:

> **'Oh! English Pasha, we are your sacrifice, we will work, dig, fight, and die for you.'**

The chronicler then observes:

> **"The next morning the Turks were astonished at the crowd of Christians assembled with spade and mattock, and still more, at the good will with which they worked and the endurance with which they continued their labours.** (Christopher J. Walker, *ARMENIA, The Survival of a Nation*, London: Croom Helm, 1980, pp. 58-59.)

I wonder if Col. Williams had the blood of the Lusignan Leos in his veins... The Armenians fighting with the Russians against the British, French, Turks and their own compatriots Turkish-Armenians must have had different blood in their veins. It might well be argued whether the "new blood" of the Young Turks was "holier" than Leo's...I am sure *they* thought so, to be able to contemplate the enactment of the tragedy of total terror upon the Ottoman Armenian population…

The First World War set the stage for the Final Solution of the Armenians.