

THE ARMENIAN GENOCIDE

A Complete History

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It was also on 14 May that the Muslim population and Ottoman forces began to evacuate Van. The last troops left the city on 16 May after burning down their barracks. According to Nogales, Halil had ordered Cevdet to abandon Van and link up with Halil's Expeditionary Corps by way of Khoşab.⁹² The Armenian sources report the besieged Armenians' joy upon learning that the Turks had left, but also, with consternation, how the inhabitants of Van pillaged and sacked the city's deserted Turkish neighborhoods.⁹³ The vali had clearly anticipated the 18 May arrival from the north of the Russian vanguard, with the volunteer battalion under Vartan's command at its head. The next day, Major-General Nikolayev's division arrived. To avoid a political vacuum, the Russian commander appointed Aram Manukian provisional governor of Van and authorized him to create a local administration. It functioned to the end of July.⁹⁴