

Russia's Political Steps in the "Armenian Question" And the Pact On 26 January, (8 February) 1914 Between Russia and Turkey

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Abstract: The main aim of this paper is to research the role of Tsar Russia in spreading of Armenian question which being artificial policy. It should be noted that Tsar Russia had played important role political revive in the community of Armenian living in the Ottoman Empire. Additionally, it is studied Great Power's economic and political policy in the Armenian question. Towards the latter part of the nineteenth century the decline of the Ottoman Empire became acute. The expansionist Powers, taking advantage of this decline, waited impatiently to share the carcass of dying "Sick Man of Europe". In order to hasten his demise, they encouraged the growing nationalist movements in that empire, particularly in the Balkans. As a result there were rebellions in Herzegovina and Bulgaria in the 1870s, with the covert or overt assistance of some of these Powers, who vied with one another for the control of the Near and Middle East, in general, of the Balkans, Istanbul and Straits, and later (through the Armenians), of the eastern provinces of the Ottoman Empire in particular, in order to satisfy their interests. The only impediment that kept them from delivering the final blow was the possibility that, if the Ottoman Empire did collapse, their rivalries would provoke a conflict of incalculable proportions. However, if that empire had to be maintained, it had to be kept weak; for a powerful empire might destroy the fabric of interests, commercial and otherwise, that the Powers wove out of the decline of the Ottoman State.

Keywords: Tsar Russia, Ottoman Empire, Church of Echmiedzin, Great Powers, Relations between Armenian and Russia.

Introduction

Expanding imperialistic aims between Great Power beginning from the middle of nineteenth century influenced to the Ottoman Empire, either. According to the Great Powers, the Ottoman Empire was a state to collapse. From this point of view, it is undeniable that Russia's policy in the area of his neighbour. According to Armenian historian V.A.Parsamyan, as a result of the rapid development of capitalist relations in Russia in the second half of the nineteenth century bourgeoisie played an active role, both domestic and foreign policy. Struggle for straits and the struggle for new markets was one of the main tasks of the foreign policy of the Tsarist regime.² As we can see from the notes of the author, Tsarist Russia's aggressive policy was clearly observed.

It is known that the gradual strengthening of the Russian Empire in the region from the nineteenth century, in accordance with its historic interests Russia began to implement some plans to create a reliable support which in seized areas. Among such plans are "Christian solidarity" was the first place. In fact, there were secret opportunities behind of "safe ethno-social partnership". It is known from historical issues, Russians considered this partnership would be real chance for realizing its economic and political aims which this partnership has entered to the form of "open cooperation" during Peter the Great. In front of such economic and political interests both Iran and the Ottoman Empire was considered an impassable barrier by

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² Парсамян В.А. История армянского народа. 1801-1900 гг. Ереван: Издательство Айастан, 1972, стр. 267.

Russia. For fighting the “total force” (meant Iran and Ottoman Empire-Z.A.) Russia began to implement long-term programs which thinking of used it, and would be created from the ethno-social base in this direction.³

Researching of Russian archival documents show that the tsarist government attached importance to the program called the “cooperation with Armenians” in the early twentieth century which tested as "successful policy" program in the early nineteenth century. For preventing of the escalating situation in the Caucasus in 1905, (meant Armenian-Moslem conflict between 1905 and 1906, -Z.A.) the tsarist government as returned as to the traditional policy with the restoration of Caucasus Governor by Nicholas II, also the newly appointed to Caucasus Vorontsov-Dashkov (Governor in the Caucasus in 1905-1915 years-Z.A.) restored the new political line with the Armenians as soon as his coming. Caucasus Governor I.Vorontsov Dashkov’s letter to Tsar Nicholas Romanov (Nicholas II) dated October 10, 1912 confirm our notions above mentioned: “...By appointed me to Caucasus Governor with the purpose of reassuring the flame of revolution in the provinces, Your Majesty, to my mind, would like to abolish the measures revoked displeasure among the Russian’s Armenians. Despite comments of some state leaders condemning my policy to Armenians, this Governor post appointed by Your Majesty, gave me brave confidence to realize it, but I’m pleased to inform His Majesty has a lot of loyalty citizens in Russia, and as well as attracting Armenians in the Turkey to Yourself.”⁴ After these ideas the Governor puts forward a plan of loyalty to Turkey Armenians and indicates that one of the main objectives is to ensure the loyalty of Armenians of Russia: “To my mind, according to Berlin Treaty, Porta (the Ottoman Government) has a commitment to protect Armenians from Kurds and Circassians. In this issue we should be decisive, and not to give this question to other Powers. Now newspapers are written that Turkey’s Armenians want to support from the government of Austria. If we can’t get this question into our hands, it will be result in the loss of Russian influence among the Christians of Asia Minor and it can be interpreted as our silence among the Armenians in the current situation. In the end, I can’t hide from Your Majesty that the project of diplomatic protection of Turkey’s Armenians by created me, intent to involve all Armenians under the tsarist Russia.”⁵

We can see clearly Armenian which tsarist government realized his economic and political interests in the monograph called “Eastern Question” in Russian’s foreign policy. End of the 18th century and beginning of the 20th century.” In this book private chapter is devoted to the Armenian Question. Chapter II, Section IV, is called “The crises in the Middle East in the 90s of the XIX century. In the work are interpreted as follows which had been in the 90s of nineteenth century in the Middle East.” In the mid of 90s, the struggle for the strengthening of the Far East, at the same time a new conflict in the Middle East emerged from the policy pursued by the government of the Sultan. Abdulhamid II, who had lost control over significant areas of the Balkan Peninsula, was trying to do own compensation (recovery) the persecution and the dictatorship of strengthening over the peoples of the Ottoman Empire. Sultan's policy is caused to protest not only among the Christians, but also the Muslim population. French Consul General travelling the European provinces of Turkey noted the “bankruptcy, the terrible increase in the incidence of begging” among the Muslims and Christians. Consul General noted “this” and "the others" would like to change management.⁶ Of course, would be an error to read something positive from this work written by the staff of the Russian authors. Therefore, in almost every sentence the authors justified expansionary policy of Russia in the region, and trying to explain it with the “Christian solidarity”. Interestingly, in the work has been acknowledged betrayals of Armenians during the Russian-Turkish war. We can read there: “The reforms of Berlin Treaty about the Armenians were not realized. The people of Macedonia, Crete and Fessaliya were waiting to change their life impatiently. Oppression regime was the Sultan’s moral norm for especially non-Muslim people. Armenian population of Turkey was particularly critical. The participation of Armenians on the side of Russia during Russian-Turkish war in 1877-1878 had been resulted repression of Sultan government against Armenians. Russia is trying to increase the rights of the Armenians and attained to put

³ Qlinka S. N. Azərbaycan ermənilərinin Rusiya hüdudlarına köçürülməsinin təsviri. Bakı: Azərbaycan nəşriyyatı, 1995, s. 8.

⁴ Krasniy Arxiv. 1928, №1 (26).

⁵ Krasniy Arxiv. 1928, №1 (26).

⁶ Восточный вопрос во внешней политике России. Конец XVIII-начало XX в. М.: Наука, 1978, p.259.

in Article XVI related to Armenians to the terms of the Treaty of San Stefano which intended to reform in Turkish Armenia without any delaying.⁷

One-sided approaching to the process and also in the form of distorted, subjectivism show itself while they respond to the internal policy of Ottoman Government in the work written by the authors. The book says: Non-regular cavalry detachments (Hamidiye) were created in 1891 in the territory of Asia Minor which consisting of Kurds and the Circassians and not under the control of local administration. Their definition was to organize the implementation of the rule-of-law while expressing any dissatisfaction “against the tyranny of the government in the provinces. Hamidiye demonstrated its cruelty against Armenians, and this was its main position. Also was seeing real way to their physical destruction.”⁸The book says then: “Ottoman Government was trying to deprive Armenian communities which they had a little independence in religious and internal affairs. While formed provinces in the Western Armenia, the Sultan government was trying to divide provinces that it doesn’t dominate Armenian population in any of the provinces. Armenians asked to support from the government of Europe.”⁹ Surprisingly, the authors writing these sentences don’t see to falsify the historical facts, I wonder...? However, these evidences were demonstrated itself in Russia.

On page 262, the authors basing to the documents of the French related to Russia's position on the Armenian question, writes: “The Russian government's policy on the Armenian question was complicated. In the French documents it was characterized as “the gentle and careful.” Russia was continueng its traditional policy which intended to protect the Christians in the Eastern crises in the 90s and demanded from Sultan to reform necessity which meant in San Stefano and Berlin Treaty.”¹⁰

Also, it is noted joyfully that, Russia took part in together with France who did not want a new war in the East.

Of course, the thoughts which contrary to the truth, for example, the difficult economic situation of the Armenians, as well as Abdulhamid II, who using the differences of opinion between the European countries, tried new Armenian massacres, we can’t agree with such opinions. Because, Armenians were behaving as the main organizers of the killing of the innocent people. From this point of view, British Consul in Erzurum Everettin report dated on June 25, 1880: “The weapons and ammunition coming from abroad had been arisen the Armenian revolutionary groups to the rebellion. Almost the Armenian houses were weapon storage.”¹¹

Thus, in the work which alleged “a peaceful demonstration of Armenians at the request of improving their lives lasted from September to Oct. 2 in 1895” is actually the “Armenian fanaticism” is something else.

Therefore, Russia’s policy in the Armenian question had been given by distorting of historical facts, Russia’s expansionist policy in the Middle East was analyzed as “Armenian fanaticism.”

It is known that till 1890, not being any desires from the Ottoman government, (Note: replacing article 16 of the Treaty of San Stefano in the Article 61 of the Treaty of Berlin related to Ottoman Armenians, stated: “Ottoman Government undertakes to implement the reforms local needs in the provinces inhabited by Armenians without any delaying and to protect the Armenians form the Kurds and Circassians. All issues realizing on this problem would be notified to Great Powers controlling these reforms.”)¹² Armenians began to revolt as “name of reform” from this time. The main goal of the Armenian Committees supporting by British and Russians was to found an autonomous Armenia and to achieve the intervention of the European states to Ottoman Empire. For this purpose, Armenians living in the various provinces of Ottoman Empire were killing of innocent Muslim-Turks, rebellion in many regions of Ottoman, such as Sasun, Zeytun, Mush, Bitlis, also trying to intervention of Great Powers as soon as possible. These revolts were ruled by Hncak Committee, Dashnaksutyun Party, as well as Caucasus Armenian religious leaders.

⁷ Ibid, p.259.

⁸ Ibid, p.260.

⁹ Восточный вопрос во внешней политике России. Конец XVIII-начало XX в. М.: Наука, 1978, 434 с. p. 260.

¹⁰ Ibid, p..262.

¹¹ William Langer. The diplomacy of imperialism. New-York.1956, p.157.

¹² Başbakanlık Osmanlı Arşivi (BOA), DUİT-74-2/2-10.

Researching of Russian archival documents show that rebellions during the years 1890-1896 in Turkey ruled by Caucasus Armenian religious leaders.¹³ These facts show the political interests of the Armenian Gregorian Church, struggle for secular power and the desire to maintain its position among the Armenians and also intention of a mission to create a state in the territory of the Ottoman Empire.

The facts show that in the 80s of the XIX century England, France and Russia were fighting with one another for control over the Ottoman Empire. There were a lot of reasons, such as natural resources, strategic and geographical position of Ottoman was a particular focus of attention. On the other hand, it should be noted that, in accordance with Article XVI of the Treaty of San Stefano, Russia had stepped a new policy related to Armenians which intended to remain within the empire not to the policy of resettlement of Armenians from Ottoman. These factors should be emphasized as the rebellion act of Armenians by ruled Armenian religious leaders against the Ottoman Empire.

However, Political and diplomatic victories of Russia over Ottoman was decreased with LXI Article of Berlin Congress later San Stefano Treaty. Now, England seized control over the Ottoman Empire. But tsarist Russia didn't take its intentions. Russia tried to realize all possible ways for its intentions. Of course, such a situation was considered as godsend by the Armenians resettled in the Caucasus from the beginning of the 19th century, as well as the Ottoman Armenians. They believed that they could found a state the both secret dealings with Russia and with rebellion in the Eastern territories of Ottoman, they could form a state.

The researching of Archive documents of Russia show that Vorontsov- Dashkov's views about Armenians benefiting from them to realize Russian policy in Russia, and also in the territory of Ottoman which intended in his letter to Nicholas II dated October 10, 1912, coincided the implementation of the Czarist government's activity in this area. Published by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in 1915, "Reforms in Armenia. November 26, 1912 - May 10, 1914 publication of diplomatic documents"¹⁴ clarifies on this issue. Girs, Russian Ambassador to Turkey from Istanbul reported that in a letter dated 8 June 1913, the first secretary of the embassy with his direction initial project (Avant - project) have been prepared by Mandelstam. The text of the project was attached to the letter. According to the first paragraph of the article, the province was created consisting of Erzurum, Van, Bitlis, Diyarbakir, Harpoot and Sivas (with the exception of some parts of). Next paragraphs governor-general's appointment, rights and other issues were dealt with. Some changes were made to the project after a series of diplomatic bickering and finally, on January 26, 1914 (February 8) in Istanbul, between Turkey and Russia was signed an agreement on the reform of the Armenian.¹⁵

It should be noted that the agreement was signed by Russian Empire Constantin Gulkevich and by Ottoman Empire, Deputy Foreign Minister and the Grand Vizier Said Halim. A comparison of the changes with the project of Avant-Project allows us to follow the changes. We can see that from the text of the agreement, the two regions were created in the Eastern Anatolia: the first region was consist of Erzurum, Trabzon and Sivas, the second region of Van, Bitlis, and Diyarbekir and Harpoot. To these regions was appointed 2 Inspector. Porta Majesty (Ottoman government) undertook the following commitments under Great Powers:

◆ In the management of two regions of the Eastern Anatolia should be 2 General Inspector by foreigners: first region combined Erzurum, Trabzon and Sivas, the second region of Van, Bitlis, and Harpoot;

◆ General Inspector had the rights judicial, police and administrative control;

◆ They had the rights on the appointment of senior officials of the government of the Sultan;

◆ Hamidiye forces were kept as a reserve force and their weapons should be given to military bases, which could only be used during mobilization;

◆ Laws, decrees, administrative decisions were written in the local language of the region. If necessary, by the decree of General Inspector, every region had their rights to use their own language in the local administrative authorities and in the meeting of the courts. The resolutions of the court should be modified to Turkish language, if necessary, the parties could be modified to the parties' languages...

¹³ RDTA (Russia Historical State Archive), F.821, Doc.286, L.7.

¹⁴ Сборник дипломатических документов. Реформы в Армении., p.165.

¹⁵ Ibid., p.165.

◆ The document was signed by Russian official Gulkevich and Said Halim by Ottoman official.¹⁶

Conclusion

As can be seen from the facts, Russia and Turkey came to an agreement on the Armenian reform. It becomes clear that from the Russian-language publications on the problem, and the documents of Russian State Historical Archive, in accordance with its historic interests Russia began to implement some plans to create a reliable support which in seized areas. Among such plans are ‘Christian solidarity’ was the first place. In fact, there were secret opportunities behind of “safe ethno-social partnership”. It is known from historical issues, Russians considered this partnership would be real chance for realizing its economic and political aims which this partnership has entered to the form of “open cooperation” during Peter the Great. Of course, the Armenians do not want to miss this opportunity, never, thought to establish a state on the eastern provinces of the Ottoman Empire. For this purpose, Armenians living in the various provinces of Ottoman Empire were killing of innocent Muslim-Turks, rebellion in many regions of Ottoman, such as Sasun, Zeytun, Mush, Bitlis, also trying to intervention of Great Powers as soon as possible. These revolts were ruled by Hncak Committee, Dashnaksutyun Party, as well as Caucasus Armenian religious leaders. They considered that, rebellions in the Ottoman Empire, the killing of innocent the Turkish - Muslim civilians is one of the most acceptable ways. However, with the start of the First World War the Armenians were “the de facto fighting nation” in the side of the Russian Empire and also have lowered the reform measures none.

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¹⁶ Сборник дипломатических документов. Реформы в Армении...р.164-165.