

Anushavan Zakaryan

**WESTERN ARMENIAN REALITY
IN RUSSIAN PUBLICIST
T. OLGENIN'S ESTIMATION**

YEREVAN 2014

WESTERN ARMENIAN REALITY IN RUSSIAN PUBLICIST T. OLGENIN'S ESTIMATION

Zakaryan A. H.

Doctor of Sciences (in Philology)

Summary

At the beginning of the 20th century the Armenian Question entered a new stage. The defeat of Turkey in the Balkan war aroused expectancies in Armenian political circles of the quick decision of that issue. The Armenian Question turned out to be in the sphere of interests of great powers - Armenia was oftener mentioned in the diplomacy on different occasions. European, and particularly, the Russian press published articles about the hard and tragic fate of Western Armenians under the Turkish yoke, in which it appealed to save the nation close to extinction. Armenian social-political parties and various unions sent applications and statements to great powers with the aim of settlement of the situation in Western Armenia. In 1912-1913 a bitter diplomatic struggle began around the reform in Armenian provinces (vilayets), in which the great powers were involved. However, the real power, which could play a definite positive role in the fates of Armenia, was Russia, as before. With success in the Balkan wars the basis of pro-Russian orientation of the Armenians still more strengthened. There appeared a hope for Western Armenians to throw off the Turkish yoke.

In this atmosphere of general interest connected with the Armenian Question at the end of 1912 and the beginning of 1913 the correspondent of St. Petersburg newspapers "Novoye vremya" ("New Time") - then "Birzheviye vedomosti" ("Stock-exchange Bulletin"), well-known publicist Antuan Berezovsky-Olginsky (pseudonym - T.Olgenin) arrived in Tiflis. In Tiflis (January 3), later in Etchmiadzin (January 23) he gave lectures on the Balkan war, in which he touched upon also the Armenian Question, mentioning, that it became the next political question after the settled Balkan ones. From the end of January up to the middle of May Olgenin visited six provinces of Western Armenia - Erzurum, Van, Baghesh (Bitlis), Tigranakert, Sebastia, Kharberd. Travelling about these places, he thoroughly studied the social-economic and political situation of Western Armenians. The publicist published his impressions in "Birzheviye Vedomosti" in a series of correspondences under the title "Vanishing Armenia". These materials, written under the direct impression of what he had seen and experienced, have the importance of historical documents. In these articles T.Olgenin wrote, that a number of high-ranking Turkish officials, members of the parliament and representatives of local authorities set the Muslim population, particularly, the Kurds, against the Armenians, that there was a preparation for the mass, general pogroms through evident

patronage of the authorities. Olgenin came to the conclusion, that an awful crime was going to take place, which would bring to a great tragedy.

Soon the Turkish authorities, becoming seriously anxious about Olgenin's activities, blamed him for anti-Turkish propaganda and raised the question of his deportation from the country.

Returning from Western Armenia, Olgenin lectured on the theme "Vanishing Armenia" in Tiflis (May 27), then in Baku (June 8). He mentioned that Armenia was of immense importance for Russia, therefore "Russia had to take the initiation of deciding the Armenian Question. This came both from her state interests and moral obligation. Russia had to correct the errors of her past: if the Armenian Question were not resolved at that time, the Russian state would have great danger in the future. The delay of that issue would be a fatal blow both for Russia and the Armenians".

Materials presented by T. Olgenin supplement those widely known facts, from which we can draw the conclusion, that the Young Turks' expansionist pan-Turkic plans (shemed in 1910-1911, during their secret meetings, and at the Congress in Salonika), which became a state policy, were the basis of the realization of the Armenian Genocide.

Olgenin's travels in Western Armenia, the diversified study and wide coverage of hard situation of the Armenians along with the developed views and Russia's official position also influenced the attitude of the tsarist government and society towards the reforms in Western Armenia and her foreign policy in that issue.

Soon, on January 26, 1914, the Russian-Turkish agreement on reforms in Western Armenia was signed. It seemed, there was a progress in that issue, but with the outbreak of World War I Turkey not only refused to implement the terms of the agreement, but realized mass extermination of the Armenians with new strength. The state policy of the Armenian Genocide was clearly displayed on the night of April 24, 1915, when the Turkish authorities arrested in Constantinople, and then barbarously killed many well-known Armenians, falsely accusing them of "espionage" and "illegal keeping of weapons". Among them were Grigor Zohrab and Siamanto, Daniel Varuzhan and a great number of prominent representatives of Western Armenian intelligentsia...