

Ankara, 6 Kasım 1990

Sayın Mete Tuncay,

Size, Tanzimat'ın 150. yıldönümüne katkı niteliğinde bir eser hakkında bibliyografik bilgi vermek istiyorum:

Viktoriya G. Gukasyan,

Konstantinopol'skiye Armyane i Natsional'no - Prosvetitel'skoye Dvijenije 30 - 60-x godov XIX veka, (İstanbul Ermenileri ve 1830-60'lı yılların Ulusal - Aydınlanma Hareketleri,) Erivan, 1989, (8 to.,) 340 s. (İng. özet 272-276 ss., notlar, biblio., dizin), "Ermenistan Bilimler Akademisi Tarih Enstitüsü y." (ISBN 5-8080-0024-6)

Kitabın bölüm başlıkları şunlardır:

1. Yeni toplumsal düşün oluşümünün önkoşulları (1830-40)
2. Liberal - Eğitimci görüşün gelişimi ve 1840'ların basını
3. Batı Ermenilerinin Aydınlanma çağı: 1840-1850
4. Ulusal kurtuluşcu ideolojinin evriminde ana eğilimler ve Batı Ermenilerinin sosyal ve politik durumu problemi (1850-1860)
5. Anayasa hareketlerinin başarılı yıllarında sosyal hayat
  - 5a. Kültürel yaşamdaki atılım
  - 5b. Burjuvazinin ilerleme uğraşı ve 1860 Anayasasının ilanı
6. Anayasa sonrasında ideolojik mücadele (1860-3) ve tepkinin evrimi (1863-5)

Ekte eserin İngilizce özetinin fotokopisini gönderiyorum. Duyurulmasının yararlı olacağını düşünüyorum.

Saygılarımla,

M. Türkmen

АКАДЕМИЯ НАУК АРМЯНСКОЙ ССР  
ИНСТИТУТ ИСТОРИИ

В. Г. ГУКАСЯН

КОНСТАНТИНОПОЛЬСКИЕ  
АРМЯНЕ И НАЦИОНАЛЬНО-  
ПРОСВЕТИТЕЛЬСКОЕ ДВИЖЕНИЕ  
30—60-х ГОДОВ XIX ВЕКА

ИЗДАТЕЛЬСТВО АН АРМЯНСКОЙ ССР  
ЕРЕВАН

1989

## Summary

Historic formation and development of the West-Armenian liberal-enlightening and constitutional movement of the 30-s to 60-s of XIX c and the part played therein by the Armenians of Constantinople may be summarized in the following way. An outline has been presented of the process of developing the capitalist relationships in the extensive multinational Ottoman Empire of the early XIX c, an important role being played by the Christian nations displaying a certain degree of autonomy by virtue of their elevated level of social, economic and cultural organization. Social and economic progress of the country was being accompanied by the origination of liberal educational ideology aimed at countering the dominating backward standards and achieving national identity.

The 30-s to 60-s of XIX c mark a profound modification of the West-Armenian community and its social structure. Representatives of the intellectual strata showed a vigorous participation in forming a new way of public thinking, in the city of Constantinople in particular, which by virtue of historic circumstances had been transformed into the centre of culture and public policies for the Western Armenians. Notorious among them were writers on public affairs, publishers of periodicals, authors educated in Europe, teachers, doctors and economists. Leaning upon the artisans, democratic strata, casual workers, impoverished peasants filling the capital and coastal cities in search of work, the West-Armenian enlighteners strove to improve the popular well-being in the bourgeois sense and to achieve national unity and integrity thus facilitating the establishment of ideology of national liberation.

Reflected on the pages of the very first Constantinople Armenian papers published in the 30-s to 40-s of XIX c was the competition between the protagonists of the feudal-clerical ideology and those of the democratic public standards as well as a stressful social and legal situation with the oppressed nations and their aspirations to become liberated from the Turkish yoke.

The early 40-s of XIX c are characterized by a marked growth of the enlightenment movement in the West-Armenian community. It

was in that period that the Constantinople enlighteners of considerable stature gained prominence by promoting the idea of progress through enlightenment in which they saw the pledge for a total prosperity. They supported the ideas of freedom of individual, personal property and immunity—the major prerequisite of capitalist development.

Spurned by their own interests, the West-Armenian bourgeois ideologists both in press and in separate works were promoting the idea of economic and political autonomy of the Ottoman Empire in arms manufacture, national banks, resisting foreign investment, as well as understanding that Turkey's dependence on European powers paralysed local industries exposing them to unrestricted West-European expansion.

To push the Empire along the path of contemporary development, the West-Armenian liberal public figures and those of Constantinople in particular proposed to introduce advanced methods of farming, develop local industries, construct railroads and highways, and to establish banks using both Turkish and international capital. The situation in the country was being critically appraised by public-affairs writers and enlighteners widely known in Constantinople whose views are given a detailed analysis. N. Zoraiian, Kh. Voskanian, Servichen, G. Agaton, K. Utujan, Gr. Otian, A. Voskanian, G. Stimarajan, O. Jrasunian et al. In their writings they uttered discontent directly or indirectly towards the actual reality in the Ottoman Empire of the 40–60-s of XIX c.

In the course of shaping the liberal enlightening ideology efforts to establish democratic standards in managing national affairs also acquired more definite outlines. This trend has a very progressive meaning in the general development of the national-liberation movement of the West-Armenian people. By this reason the constitutional movement and the proclamation of constitution are regarded as significant political events in the public life of the Western Armenians in the 30-s to 60-s of XIX c. As to evaluating the practical significance of the constitution, this code of managing the West-Armenian people and its coordination with actual life, the subordinated Armenians making part of a backward despotic empire were not able to make a full use of the bourgeois constitution in the

complete sense of the word. The text of the constitution contained no definition of the civil and juristic codes, in no way touched upon the rights of Muslims or upon the voluntarism raging against the Christians in Turkey. The West-Armenian constitution enjoyed no support by the Turkish Government which strove for rapidly wearing out its efficiency. Under these conditions it largely remained a mere declaration. The whole presentation is made with an emphasis on great historical significance of establishing the constitutional assembly for the political struggle of the Armenian bourgeois-democratic enlighteners in re-structuring the society. The West-Armenian constitution is regarded as the highest stage in shaping the liberal ideology and differentiating the political trends among the Armenian population within the Ottoman Empire. By the definition of V. I. Lenin, a characteristic of bourgeois relations and anti-feudal development is the issue of national self-determination and formation of an independent national state (V. I. Lenin, *Polnoie Sobranie Sochinenii*, t. 26, p. 259), Combatting for transformation of feudal society, the West-Armenian liberals and democrats rallied alongside the movement of national liberation in Europe. While struggling for liberation from the foreign yoke they visualized freedom for the West-Armenian people. The course of events however had led the Armenian liberal ideologists to the idea that to shed the Turkish yoke their efforts alone would be insufficient. They turned their eyes to the West from where they hoped to get help. Such was the position of the Constantinople newspaper MASIS and the liberal ideologists of MEGHU in the 60-s of XIX c — the years of the advent of reaction.

The time between the endorsement of the 1860 constitution and its review in 1863 by the Turkish state is regarded in the history of public thought as a period of sharp ideological struggle among diverse political trends both in favour and against the current constitution. Having abandoned the democratic stand, the liberals continued their struggle against the conservatives who had started the offensive, while between the liberal and democratic trends there was sharpening of the internal principal differences. Having been disappointed in the activities of the General National Assembly, A. Svachian, a democrat, editor of the weekly MEGHU,

denounced the immoral conduct of the Armenian clergy, the retrograde policies of the Armenian liberals and their irresolute behaviour in the National Assembly. In the 60-s of XIX c the activity of the West-Armenian democracy, its internal autonomy was becoming more and more blatantly restricted by the Turkish government. Reviewing the 1861—63 national constitution was a significant step along this way.

Then followed an increased pressure upon the press. The West-Armenian progressive press fought the restrictions of the free word but to withstand „the new laws on the press“ introduced since Jan. 1 1865, it naturally could not. Many progressive publications were closed, including MEGHU, the belligerent spokesman of the West-Armenian democracy (June 1865).

The „New osmans“—ideologists of the Turkish bourgeoisie which had been shaping since middle 60-s of XIX c rejected participation of other nations in the struggle against the Ottoman despotic rule. The political program of the „New osmans“ was centered on the establishment of constitutional monarchy, while the national issue was eliminated by chopping off any rights of Christians to strive for independence. This situation became a hurdle blocking the way to further growth of the national-liberation movement of the West-Armenian nation.

Neither did the state-directed socially limited rules of tanzimat promote an effective development of the novel relations within the Empire. Numerous facts cited by the author bear witness to consolidation of the foreign powers' economic invasion of Turkey. Due to the expansion of this process and the economic stagnation the rules of tanzimat stayed outside life and could not improve the social and legal situation of the national groups populating the Empire. Considering the chauvinistic aspirations of the Turkish bourgeoisie and the absence of the bourgeois legal order in the Empire there was a sharp rise of the policy of voluntarism and persecution towards the Christian nations.

This policy was being corroborated by the assimilatory attitudes of the Great Powers dismembering the struggle of the subordinate nations against the Ottoman oppression. Especially abundant material witnessing the desperate situation of Western Armenians

is found on the pages of the paper MASIS. Armenians who campaigned for their own social rights used to be sanctioned in a very cruel fashion. Short of other alternatives, they often reverted to change of faith or emigration seeking asylum mainly in Russia.

It follows from what has been previously stated that the study of processes making up the West-Armenian liberal-enlightening movement of the 30—60-s of XIX c helps to regenerate an impartial picture of the social and legal situation of Armenians in Turkey; to provide a more adequate coverage of the development of West-Armenian public political thought and world outlook as well as to identify obstacles in the path of their general progress and liberation.

In contrast to the efforts of the present-day foreign turkologists denying the existence of the national question in the Ottoman empire, the current material helps to recreate the atmosphere of discrimination and persecution taking place ever since the time of the Turkish conquests and being transformed in the second half and around the turn of the XIX century into the state-sponsored policy of genocide against the suppressed Christian nations within the Ottoman Empire and the Armenian people in the first place.