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## **From the History of the National-Separate Propaganda of the Armenian Press of the Caucasus on The Eve of World War I**

Birinci Dünya Savaşı Arifesinde Kafkasya  
Ermeni Basınının Ulusal Propaganda Tarihinden

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### ***Abstract***

Due to the Armenian History, it can be obvious that the Armenian nationalists lead to broad nationalist propaganda before committing large sabotages and do not hesitate to reach their goals in different ways. We can show a lot of examples concerning this issue. In this regard World War I eve can be characterized as a period of new “movement” of Armenian nationalistic propaganda, as well. As at that time Western Countries’ aggressive policy aimed to destroy Ottoman Turkey and the Armenian nationalists who were ready to be part of it in order to achieve the realization of the their dream about independency they brought the Armenian nationalists’ propaganda machine into action with all its strength, involving in its propaganda circle Western and Russian Authorities, Military and Political circles, as well as Society and they tried to form an opinion that “a fair” solution of “Armenian Issue” raised by western politicians in the II half of the XIX Century associated with the reforms in the West of Ottoman Turkey, in other words it is related to the establishment of Armenian autonomy where it is claimed to be the majority of Armenians.

**Key words:** *World War I, South Caucasus, Ottoman Turkey, Armenian Media, Separatism*

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## **Özet**

Ermeni Milliyetçilerinin büyük sabotajlar yapmadan önce geniş milliyetçi propagandalara yöneldikleri ve amaçlarına farklı yollarla ulaşmaktan çekinmedikleri Ermeni Tarihi açısından açıkça görülmektedir. Bu konuyla ilgili pek çok örnek gösterebiliriz. Bu bakımdan I. Dünya Savaşı arifesi, Ermeni milliyetçi propagandasının yeni bir “hareket” dönemi olarak da nitelendirilebilir. O dönemde Batılı ülkelerin saldırgan politikası, Osmanlı Türkiye’sini ve onun parçası olmaya hazır Ermeni milliyetçilerini yok etmeyi amaçladıklarından, bağımsızlık hayallerini gerçekleştirmek için Ermeni milliyetçilerinin propaganda makinesini tüm güçleriyle harekete geçirdiler. Gücünü propaganda çemberine dahil ederek Batılı ve Rus yetkilileri, askeri ve siyasi çevreler ile toplumu da dahil ederek, II. yarıyıldan itibaren batılı politikacılar tarafından gündeme getirilen Ermeni Sorununun “adil” bir çözümünün olduğu kanaatini oluşturmaya çalıştılar. 19. Yüzyıl Osmanlı Türkiye’sinin batısındaki reformlarla, yani Ermenilerin çoğunlukta olduğu iddia edilen Ermeni özerkliğinin kurulmasıyla ilişkilidir.

**Anahtar Kelimeler:** *Birinci Dünya Savaşı, Güney Kafkasya, sözde Ermeni Soykırımı, Ermeni Medyası, Ayrılıkçılık*

## **Introduction**

Historically, it can be concluded that Armenian nationalism is based on three directions. They are: 1) Armenian extreme nationalism; 2) Armenian terror and 3) Armenian propaganda. It is possible that during the Armenian aggression in this period of history, these issues may show some differences in the scope of their investment, the scale of the means used and the implementation in general. However, the picture of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict once again showed that the Armenian aggression preserves its historical tradition. Armenian newspapers and magazines published in the Caucasus were also particularly active in strengthening the propaganda of the Armenian approach and introducing it to the wider circles. On the eve of World War I in Baku have published some newspapers-“Baku” (in Russian), “Arev” and “Areq” (in Armenian)more over –“Droshak” journal, “Mshak” , “Orizon”, “Qaxapara”, “Ovita”, “Van-Toska” newspapers in Tiblisi(1)

These media organs were controlled by nationalist-aggressive Armenian parties such as Dashnaktsutyun, Gnchak, and Ramkavar, and their pages did not include views outside of Armenian nationalism. Concrete work was being done by the Armenian nationalists and, in particular, the Dashnaktsutyun party, the main representative of the Armenian nationalists. After the 4th congress of the Dashnaktsutyun party in 1907, a special mass of propagandists was organized in the field, and cultural and propaganda societies and press organizations were established in large cities. Although the above-mentioned institutions were opened under the name of socio-cultural institutions with the consent of the authorities, their main purpose was to prepare Armenians for national massacres against Turks and Azerbaijanis. (2).

The mentioned media organs were not a complete list of propaganda tools owned by the Armenian nationalists. A small number of materials of these Armenian newspapers and magazines remain in the archives of Azerbaijan. However, a review of these few materials and the attitude of other media organs to them shows that even on the eve of World War I, Armenian nationalist propaganda was characterized by its intensity and ethnic provocation.

The main topic of the Armenian press of this period was national incitement, nationalist-separatism and territorial claims against another state. This was not random.

Because the efforts of Western countries and Russia to divide Ottoman Turkey gave new hope to Armenian nationalist and they believed that the independence of the western provinces of Ottoman Turkey could be achieved by taking advantage of the historical situation. It is true that in the Armenian press, this issue is presented more as reforms in the Armenian-populated provinces of Ottoman Turkey. But in fact, these reforms were seen as a major step towards ethnic independence and the disintegration of Ottoman Turkey.

To achieve this goal, a new page of Armenian propaganda was opened to encourage Western countries to disintegrate Ottoman Turkey. Armenian propaganda on the need for reforms in the Armenian provinces was significantly expanded. When the Armenian nationalists did not end the massacres they had begun with their classical method with the desired results, they skillfully used it for their propaganda. The British journalist S. Liddell rightly noted that at that time, Armenians, on the one hand, raised the issue of pressure and persecution as an ethnic group, and on the other hand, used the Armenian losses in the propaganda campaign, victims of their nationalism. S. Liddell was able to observe very accurately that the killed Armenian nationalist is a very valuable propaganda material for the Armenian propaganda. He added that if the issue is approached as needed, the death of an Armenian could be of great benefit to Armenian propaganda. (3)

Armenian and Russian-language newspapers published in the Caucasus also reported about it. The Tbilisi-based *Zakavkazya* newspaper reported that a special delegation had been set up at the behest of the Armenian Catholicos, and that the delegation was to raise the issue of Western countries' fulfillment of a promise made by Western countries to establish an Armenian province in Eastern Anatolia. The delegation included Bishop Yugyuchyan, head of the Armenian diocese in Europe Pogos Nubar, Yagub Artin Pasha, Minas Cherez, Harutyun Mostichyan. In addition, A. Agoronyan and Bishop Ayvatyan from Constantinople were sent as a separate delegation to

carry out Armenian propaganda in Europe. Agoronyan met with the French leadership and managed to report to him on the situation of Ottoman Armenians (4)

Another delegation was organized by the Dashnaktsutyun party and sent to Europe. The delegation had the opportunity to meet with Prime Minister Lukacs in Hungary and was asked to assist in the independence of the Armenians (5).

The Mshak newspaper reported that an Armenian delegation led by Pogos Nubar Pasha, one of the leaders of Armenian nationalism, was in Paris in January 1913 and would be sent to London after the end of its activities in Paris. In Paris, Pogos Nubar Pasha discussed the issue of reforms in the Armenian-populated provinces of Ottoman Turkey with both political circles and the Armenians living there (6). Baku, the newspaper of the Baku Central Committee of the Dashnaktsutyun party, wrote that the Armenian delegation in Paris had prepared a program of political reform in "Turkey-Armenia" (?) So that it could be based on this program when the western countries started it. Although not a complete program, it was considered a comprehensive program (7). According to another report of the Baku newspaper, the head of the Armenian delegation to Britain, Pogos Nubar Pasha, was received by King Gevorg of England and promised to keep the Armenian issue in the spotlight and draw the attention of representatives of major powers to it (8).

As a result of the propaganda of the Armenian nationalists in Europe, committees of Armenian patrons were established in Germany, France, England and Switzerland, and these committees also had to work on reforms in "Turkey-Armenia" (?) (9). On April 19, 1913, a joint conference of these committees was held in London. Pogos Nubar Pasha, who is engaged in Armenian propaganda in European countries, also attended in the conference. It is clear from the Mshak newspaper that the conference participants adopted a project submitted by Pogos Nubar Pasha on the establishment of Armenian autonomy in Ottoman Turkey. The conference also agreed that participants should submit the project to their governments and the Ministries of Foreign Affairs of their countries. The essence of the conference's decision was that the provinces inhabited by Armenians in Ottoman

Turkey should be united as a separate body, and the ruler of this body should be appointed by a European person with the consent of the sultan (10). According to the Baku newspaper, on the eve of the London conference, the Gnchak party addressed an appeal to the leaders of major European countries, which also called for a solution to the Armenian issue, ie to ensure the independence of Armenians (11). In Paris, a booklet entitled “Appeal to the Great Powers and the Peoples of Europe” was prepared and distributed among European political circles. “Baku” newspaper published the main content of this appeal on its pages. The appeal commented on the intolerable living conditions of Armenians living in Ottoman Turkey, various projects proposed to improve the living conditions of these Armenians, and then proposed a new program to resolve the Armenian issue. This program also highlighted the need to establish an Armenian province in the territories inhabited by Armenians. The program specifically noted that the number of Muslims in these provinces is extremely small. In other words, Armenians make up the majority of the population in those provinces. It was stressed that the Christian governor-general of the Armenian autonomy, established on the basis of the Armenian provinces, should be appointed by the great powers. Then the details of the management of the Armenian autonomy were proposed, and the authors of the program themselves acknowledged that the proposed details would ensure the superiority of the Armenians in governance. The authors of the program then added that Islam is not capable of cultivating a class with religious and racial tolerance. It was stated that the transfer of power in the “Armenian provinces”(?) To Christian Armenians could allegedly be beneficial for the welfare of the country as a whole (12).

There are many articles in the Armenian press of the time about the propaganda of the Armenian nationalists in Europe. It is possible to expand the information about these articles. But one point in this information is more important. This is a matter of their number in the territories claimed by Armenians in Ottoman Turkey. It is true that, as mentioned above, the Armenians claimed that there was an absolute majority of Armenians in those provinces.(13) However, as is clear from the writings of the Armenian press, these claims of the Armenians were not convincingly accepted in the Western countries. For example, in its February 9, 1913 issue, No. 33, the Baku newspa-

per quoted A. Arakelyan, who was conducting Armenian propagan-da in Europe, as saying that the number of Armenians in the Ottoman provinces was in front of all programs in Europe.

Because in order to implement these programs, Armenians should have formed a majority in the claimed provinces. Europeans, on the other hand, were skeptical of the Armenian majority in those prov-inces. Therefore, the French friend of the Armenians, public figure Victor Berar, stated that if the reforms in the provinces claimed by the Armenians were carried out by voting, then the Armenians could become sad (14).

The Iqbal newspaper, a representative of the Azerbaijani press, also reported that the number of Armenians in Ottoman territory was small. One of the newspaper's articles said that in the late 19th cen-tury, Ottoman Armenians began to create chaos in their territories with the intention of becoming independent, and the Turkish gov-ernment was soon able to put out the fire ignited by the Armenians. Unable to achieve their goals, the Armenians made a big fuss in the West about being sentenced to deprivation in Ottoman territory. After this uproar, representatives of Western governments came to Turkey to investigate the number of Armenians living in Turkey's eastern provinces, and Western officials learned that the number of Armenians in those provinces was extremely small. The Iqbal news-paper also published on its page the percentage of Armenians in the provinces claimed by Armenians. The percentage was as follows:

Erzurum and its environs 22%

Van 28%

Bitlis 29%

Diyarbakir 13%

Sivas 31%

Harput 17% (15)

It should be noted that this information of the Iqbal newspaper was published on the page of the Baku newspaper, the Baku branch of the

Dashnaktsutyun party. It is true that the members of the Baku newspaper did not agree with the information of the Iqbal newspaper and protested against the newspaper's use of the word "Turkey-Armenia", but they had to reprint the article of Iqbal. The Iqbal newspaper, on the other hand, reacted very harshly and decisively to the arbitrariness of the Armenian nationalists and their aggression, which led to national massacres. Referring to the nonsensical statements of Armenians claiming the mentioned provinces of Turkey, "Iqbal" wrote that it is unthinkable to call a country with 80% Muslim population and only 20% Armenian Armenias. The newspaper added that there is no reason to name the alleged territories according to their population, area or other characteristics, and these territories were named Armenia according to imaginary ideas.

Iqbal advised Ottoman Armenians to try to live peacefully with their Muslim neighbors instead of making baseless rumors about themselves. Therefore, let them give up their nonsense. Because, according to Iqbal, the Ottomans will not agree to the fact that these provinces are Armenian, regardless of what fires and bloodshed the Armenians in the mentioned provinces (16)

This fact was well known to the socio-political circles of the time, and it was clear that the Armenians did not form a majority in any province of Ottoman Turkey. From this point of view, the report sent by the Caucasian successor Vorontsov-Dashkov to the Russian tsar can be a fairly reliable source. Although Vorontsov-Dashkov generously praised Armenians in his report, he made it clear that Armenians were not in the majority in any of the provinces in Turkey, Armenia, or the Caucasus (17).

In its February 9, 1913 issue, the Baku newspaper referred to a French source on the number of Armenians. In a book published in Paris in the late 19th century, Boden d'Allosha stated that the total number of Armenians living in Ottoman Turkey was 600,000 (18). Issue No. 27 of the Mshak newspaper, dated February 5, 1913, also showed figures that differed from the Armenians' claims about the number of Armenians living in Ottoman Turkey. Armenian writers first referred to Ottoman officials' data on the number of Armenians. According to the newspaper, Ottoman officials stated that the number of all



Armenians living in Ottoman Turkey was 800,000. The newspaper noted that the information provided by other independent sources did not differ much from the Ottoman information. For example, the newspaper mentions an author named Vilal Kiney and states that the number in his book about the number of Ottoman Armenians is the same as the official Ottoman number. Then the newspaper refers to the research of an Armenian author signed by A-Do and states that this Armenian author believes that only 600,000 Armenians live in the Ottoman territory.

The newspaper goes on to say that 7-8 months ago, on the instructions of the French government, one of the French consuls visited the Armenian-populated provinces and prepared more accurate statistics on Armenians living in those provinces. According to these statistics, the total number of Armenians in the provinces was 1.2 million. According to the newspaper, this figure was the same as the results of the statistics conducted by Bishop Ormanya (19). It is known that one of the main inspirers of the Armenian nationalist-separatist movement was Tsarist Russia. Tsarist Russia has traditionally used the Armenians as a tool in the implementation of eastern policy. This tradition was also used in the implementation of Russia's policy towards Ottoman Turkey. Because the aggression of the Armenians aimed at the disintegration of Ottoman Turkey was also in the interests of Russia. Armenian nationalists themselves did not hide the fact that the "independence" of the Armenians could take place only with the support of Russia. In this regard, the Mshak newspaper wrote in its issue No. 27 of February 5, 1913 that the Armenian issue could be resolved only with the grace and initiative of Russia (20).

In other words, even though Russia used Armenians as a tool in its eastern policy and fully supported them, some Russian newspapers were forced to admit that Armenians were unjust and that their numbers were small in the Ottoman provinces. In this regard, the Tbilisi-based newspaper *Zakavkazskaya Rech* referred to the St. Petersburg newspaper *Russkaya Molva*. The St. Petersburg newspaper wrote that it was impossible to give autonomy to Armenians in Turkey. Because Armenians are a minority in the claimed provinces (21). Another article by *Ruskaya Molva* was reprinted in the April 7, 1913

issue of the *Golos Kavlaz*a newspaper in Tbilissi (Georgia). The article also said that it was impossible for Armenians to become an autonomous province in Turkey. Because, on the one hand, Armenians live in a minority in the claimed provinces. Then, after gaining autonomy in Turkey, Armenians will try to become independent in the South Caucasus, which is dangerous for Russia (22). The *Golos Kavlaz*a newspaper itself, in its May 23 issue, sharply reacted to the Armenians' dreams of independence. The article "Armenians are not allowed autonomy" gives a convincing answer to these absurd claims of the Armenians, and he saw one of the reasons for the impossibility of such autonomy in the small number of Armenians in the Turkish provinces. According to the newspaper, the number of Armenians in the claimed provinces did not exceed 30% of the total population (23).

The information about the number of Armenians living in Ottoman Turkey published by Armenians and other media outlets in the Caucasus on the eve of World War I proves the invalidity of not only the claims of Armenians to independence, but also the claims of the so-called Armenian genocide. Armenians now tell the whole world that 1.5 million Armenians were subjected to genocide in Ottoman Turkey during World War I. However, none of the above-mentioned Armenian and Russian data indicate that the total number of Armenians living in Ottoman Turkey was 1.5 million. Some demographic studies prove that fewer than 1.5 million armenians lived in the entire Ottaman Turkey. Dr. Justin McCarty of the University of Louisville calculates losses slightly less than 600.000. (24)Boghos Nubar, head of the armenian delegation at the Paris Peace Conference , indicated the large number of armenians survived the war. He noted that after the war 280.000 armenians remained in the Anatolian portion of the occupied Ottoman Turkey while 700.000 armenians had emigrated to other countries.

To claim that so many people were killed in Ottoman Turkey without 1.5 million Armenians is nothing but the product of a sick Armenian imagination.

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