

THE ARMENIAN QUESTION AT THE PRESENT STAGE AND TURKISH FALSIFICATIONS

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Various characterizations are being made on the Armenian Question. Thus, for example, it is noted that the Armenian Question has gone through alterations at the present stage and is regarded as a matter of recognition and condemnation of the Armenian Genocide. According to another approach, the Armenian Question has two phases; the first one is the stage of recognition and condemnation of the Armenian Genocide and the second, the elimination of the genocide consequences, that is to say, the stage of the territorial demands. The adherents of this standpoint urge that Armenians should make all their efforts to overcome successfully the first stage, namely to deal solely with recognition and condemnation of the Armenian Genocide and only then, after the successful end of this struggle, to turn to the issue on elimination of the genocide consequences.

In our opinion, these two viewpoints cannot be the landmark of our struggle. We think that now, as in the past, the Armenian Question has not lost its traditional perception and stands out as the realization of the right of the Armenian people to living and having statehood in the Western and Eastern parts of its historical cradle, Armenia. Thus, the recognition of the Armenian Genocide is a part of the Armenian Question, but it doesn't substitute the very problem and should not be considered as the first stage of the stepwise solution of the Armenian Question. We believe that there is a need to struggle simultaneously for recognition and condemnation of the Armenian Genocide and the elimination of its consequences as well as for the fair solution of the Armenian Question.

Now, we'll present the perception of the official standpoint's supporters in Turkey in general terms and briefly on the Armenian Question.

The official point of view toward the Armenian Question in Turkey took shape by the founder of the republic, Mustafa Kemal Atatürk. At first, in 1920, when the war against Armenia was still going on, he believed Armenia should be exterminated "politically and essentially". As it was not possible to carry out that program, Mustafa Kemal declared that the Armenian Question no longer exists, since it had been solved by the treaties of Moscow, Kars and Lausanne. According to Atatürk and his successors, those few Armenians, residing in Turkey as a religious minority, are Turks, who merely profess Christianity, that is, they are "Christian Turks". The term *Western Armenia* was removed from official usage and was replaced by the meaningless phrase "Eastern Anatolia". "The Turkish Historical Society" that had been established under the guidance of Atatürk proposed the interpretation of history in his terms, thus reducing to

silence the theme of the Armenian Genocide. In fact, such an approach was the continuation of the Young Turks' anti-Armenian policy and had an intention of fixing the favorable "results", obtained as a result of the Armenian Genocide.

However, despite Turkey's efforts, at any price, to consign to oblivion the Armenian Question, it was reopened by the Soviet Union as a matter of international diplomacy at the end of WW II, the solution of which would mean a loss of a part of the Armenian territories by Turkey and their inclusion in the Soviet Union. Indeed, the Soviet interpretation of the Armenian Question did not correspond to the age-old claims of the Armenian people to reestablish the unified nation state in its cradle, the Armenian Highland, but it was perceived as a partial restoration of justice, at least, in the political situation of the time.

Seeing that the Armenian Question was reopening regardless of its will, Turkey changed the accents in its approach. In 1946 the memories of Talaat pasha (one of the Young Turk leaders and chief initiators of the Armenian Genocide) were published under the official sponsorship in the distorted and revised way, where a separate chapter was "dedicated" to the Armenian Question. It was presented as terrorist acts, organized by the Armenians against the Ottoman Turkey's authorities with the support of Russia, thus the government had to deport Armenians. This approach took its final shape in the voluminous book «Armenians and the Armenian Question in History», published in 1950 by Esat Uras, a former member of the Young Turks Party and an officer of the Turkish secret services, whose principal targets were Armenians, living in Turkey. The official position of Turkey toward the Armenian Question was formulated in that book.

Thus, after WW II, when it became clear to the Turkish official circles that it is no longer possible to conceal the existence of the Armenian Question, an attempt was made to present it not as a regional problem or the question of the Armenian people to have an independent statehood in its homeland, but, falsifying facts, as a question of quite "legal displacement" carried out by the Turkish authorities because of terrorist and anti-state activities of the Armenian people.

The Turkish authorities were fully conscious then and continue to be as such at present, that the Sevres Treaty, preceding the treaties of Moscow, Kars and Lausanne, will be placed again on the table and become a subject of international discussions once more, which can lead to the reopening of the problem of annexation of a significant part of Armenia by Turkey.

Closing eyes to the truth it is "possible" to dispute the issue of the Armenian Genocide; falsifying the history, to describe the genocide as a "displacement"; to draw into a dispute as whether there was or was not; to require disclosure of new facts; to urge for the formation of joint committees of historians, who should examine this issue; and so on. In addition, at the present stage the international law doesn't still enable completely to require restoration of the Armenian statehood as an elimination of consequences of the crime of genocide in Western Armenia, where Armenians were

continuously living for thousands of years, and where took place the Armenian Genocide and deprivation of the Homeland.

The Turkish official circles keep using this line of the denial of the Armenian Genocide, drawn after WW II, without major changes up to the present time.

I have to emphasize that a special commission was established by the resolution of the Turkish government more than a decade ago, which goes into all the possible processes that can be applied both to avoid responsibilities for genocide and to deny the very fact of genocide. The said commission operates under the guidance of a deputy prime minister, heads of various ministries and government departments, university rectors, historians, legists and others. In due time we gave our attention to the activities of this commission, pointing out that it was discussing in secrecy in “the legal field” the possible ways to escape from all the responsibility for the Armenian Genocide. Evidently proposal packages on potential operations have been prepared.

A notorious article by İdris Bal was issued recently in Turkey. Besides being both a historian and a political expert, this person represents also the law enforcement authorities of Turkey as did Esat Uras in his time. The author of the paper states that the Armenian Question in its classic concept is even more dangerous for Turkey than the issue of responsibility for the Armenian Genocide. We think such an approach expresses the real fear of the “official Turkey” toward reopening the Armenian Question.

Finally, I would like to weigh up briefly another circumstance. The Middle East is entering a new phase of its history as evidenced by recent events, particularly the “Arab Spring”, and, we think, no one can assure that the question of either reshaping the borders of the Middle East countries or the birth of new nations won't arise. The world's great powers will be interested in the Treaty of Sevres in such a situation, since it has rather assisted in shaping the political map of the modern Middle East. This turn of events will provide a chance to modernize the international discussions on the Armenian Question. So, we should be ready.