

GRIGOR JANSHYAN'S HELP TO THE WESTERN ARMENIANS DURING THE HAMIDIAN MASSACRES

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Abstract

The Armenian massacres in 1894-1895 and the national liberation movements of the Armenian people caused concern within the Russian government. The Armenian question posed difficulties for further Russian-Turkish rapprochement in foreign policy. The Russian government turned its back on the Armenian, considering the Armenian question to be the Sultan's internal affair. Russian progressive intellectuals sharply criticized the attacks on Western Armenians for political purposes and the latter's expressions, which misled the Russian society. Armenian intellectual, historian and public figure Grigor Janshyan published the collection "Brotherly Aid to the Armenian Victims in Turkey" with the financial help and active participation of pro-Armenian Russian intellectuals V. Golstrem, A. N. Sazanov, A. N. Greny, Nikolsky and others, the entire income of which was donated to refugees, as a material and moral assistance, fleeing the massacres and crossing the Russian border, in particular to thousands of orphaned children.

Keywords. *Grigor Janshyan, "Brotherly Aid to the Armenian Victims in Turkey", orphanages*

The Armenian massacres in 1894-1895 and the national liberation movements of the Armenian people caused concern within the Russian government. The Armenian question posed difficulties for further Russian-Turkish rapprochement in foreign policy, and the Armenian unrest in domestic policy could be dangerous in the Caucasus.¹ The authorities considered the Arab-Armenian refugees crossing the Russian border to be revolutionaries, fearing the spread of the liberation movement among the Armenians of the Caucasus. The Russian government turned its back on the Armenian, considering the Armenian question to be the Sultan's internal affair. Among them were the newspapers "Moskovskie vedomosti", "Novoe vremya", "Grazhdanin", "Kremlin", which unanimously launched a large-scale propaganda that the Caucasian Armenians wanted to restore the "Greater Armenia", which would include the main Russian territories.² By adopting its policy, the Russian government was eager to prevent the moral and material assistance to the Western Armenian refugees entering the Russian border by inciting hatred against the Armenians among the Russian people.³ In order to resist

¹ Novoe vremya 1896, № 7069.

² Moskovskie novosti 1896, № 56; Novoe vremya 1896, № 7069; Grazhdanin 1896, № 112.

³ Sankt Peterburgskie vedomosti 1896, № 341.

these baseless accusations of the Conservatives, the progressive press started large-scale pro-Armenian activities. And the Russian progressive intellectuals believed that helping the Armenian people was not only a moral issue, but also it was of great political and tactical importance for Russia.

Although Russia had adopted a cautious policy in the 1890s, the Western Armenians were considering their only salvation through the way of being liberated from the undeveloped Turkey with the help of Russia. Refugees who escaped the Kurdish and Turkish swords were shouting "we are saved" when setting foot on Russian soil.⁴

Russian progressive intellectuals sharply criticized the attacks on Western Armenians for political purposes and the latter's expressions, which misled the Russian society. And in this difficult moment of the Armenians of Russia, the Russian intellectuals assumed the "role" of a philanthropist.

And so, the Armenian intellectual, historian, publicist and public figure Grigor Janshyan⁵ published the collection "Brotherly Aid to the Armenian Victims in Turkey" with the financial help and active participation of pro-Armenian Russian intellectuals V. Golstrem, A. N. Sazanov, A. N. Greny, Nikolsky and others, the entire income of which was donated to refugees, as a material and moral assistance, fleeing the massacres and crossing the Russian border, in particular to thousands of orphaned children. The collection consists of 960 large pages, contains 118 articles, novels, poems and 114 images. The collection consists of three parts. The first part summarizes the articles written about the Armenian refugee orphans. The second part, in turn, consists of two parts. The first consists of general literary materials, and the second one of articles on the past and present history of Armenia. The most moving is the third part, which describes the Armenian massacres, the past of the unfortunate Armenian question, and the current situation. Only 128 pages long, it has a lot of heartfelt content.⁶ The progressive press considered it a call to the Russian people, the initiative of the collection was well received, which testifies to the rapid consumption of the collection. In 1897 23,000 francs received from the collection were transferred to the Embassy of Constantinople to provide assistance to orphans affected by the massacres.⁷

The collection was of great interest to the general public, which prompted the editorial board to publish a new edition. In 1898 the second edition of the collection "Brotherly Aid to the Armenian Victims in Turkey" was published in Moscow. The book was dealing with the description of the past and present life of an Armenian, depicting in vivid colors the horrible massacres and horrors of the Armenians in the years under question, which destroyed and turned Western Armenia into a heap. The book consists

⁴ Sankt Peterburgskie vedomosti 1897, № 38.

⁵ Gr. Janshyan was born in 1851 in Tbilisi (Georgia). After graduating with a gold medal from the Moscow Lazaryan Seminary, he entered the Faculty of Law, Moscow University. He dealt not only with law, but also with history, literature, art, economics and other issues.

⁶ Taraz 1897, 41.26.10, p. 651-653.

⁷ Brotherly help to the Armenian Victims in Turkey 1897:

of an extensive introduction and two sections. In the preface of the book, Janshyan describes the suffering of the Western Armenians with convincing facts, the condition of the orphaned children, trying in every way to move the pity of the most indifferent reader to the bitter condition of the poor Western Armenians. And in the second part of the book he brings up some sad realities from the actions of the Turks and the Kurds, noting that hundreds of girls threw themselves into the abyss to avoid falling into the hands of Turkish and Kurdish executioners. Citing factual materials, the author mentions that in Kharberd about 55 Armenian mothers threw themselves into the river with their children, defending their honor from the Turks.⁸ There are many cases when fathers killed their daughters for the same purpose. With these facts, Janshyan was trying to provide the Russian society with accurate information about the Western Armenians. 60,000 roubles were received from the second edition of the collection.⁹

The editorial board of "Brotherly Aid" carried out large-scale humanitarian activities not only for the Armenian orphans, but also for the Armenian refugees in Russia. The editorial board decided to open orphanages with a part of the proceeds from the books in Western Armenia, which was welcomed by the Russian Ambassador to the Ottoman Empire I. A. Zinoviev and M. Ormanyan, the Armenian Patriarch of Constantinople. And from the amount generated from the first printing, 13140 roubles and 65 kopecks were sent to Constantinople through the Russian Embassy to help Western Armenians. In addition, he sent 5,000 roubles to establish an orphanage. With that amount it was planned to take care of 25 children for 4 years. This calculation was based on the one planned by the Patriarch's father, according to whom the care of a child required about 50 roubles per year. M. Ormanyan planned to establish an orphanage in the city of Palu in Diyarbakir province, as, according to the patriarch, it is one of the most affected places, where 2250 orphans were gathered. The orphanage was to be established in the oldest monastery of the Sweet Mother Mary of God of Armenia.¹⁰ The orphanage was named "Armenian-Russian", founded through a donation made by the editors of the collection "Brotherly Aid to the Victims of Armenians in Turkey".¹¹

Gr. Janshyan did an invaluable, selfless work for the Armenian people. With the funds received from the book, seven orphanages were opened in Akhtamar and Palu, one in the Kaghtsrahayots Armenian Monastery, Mayravank in Sis, Kyurin, Charsanjak, and Hasan-Pey village.¹² Then Gr. Janshyan sent 2,500 roubles¹³ to Ormanyan to open the 8th orphanage. And since Babken, the vicar of Mush, thought it was necessary to open an orphanage for girls on the spot, it was decided that the money will be used for that purpose.¹⁴

⁸ Araks 1898: p. 110.

⁹ Hambaryan 2001: 225.

¹⁰ Araks 1898, Book 1: 110; Mshak 1898, 203.11.07, p. 2; Murch 1898, № 10-11, p. 1618-1619.

¹¹ Nor dar 1898, 203, p. 1.

¹² Arevelq 1900, № 4389, p. 2.

¹³ Murch 1900, № 2, p. 266.

¹⁴ Ararat 1900, 1, p. 24.

As a result of the publication of the valuable collection "Brotherly Aid to the Armenian Victims in Turkey", 12 orphanages were opened in Diyarbakir, Akhtamar, Palu, St. Bartholomew monastery in Aghbak, St. Astvatsatsin monastery of Frnuz, Alashkert, St. Salnapat of Grigor Monastery in Van, Sis, Kyurin, Charsanjak, Hasan Bey and Mush.¹⁵ In addition to these valuable books, Janshyan published the publicist-scientific study "The Armenian Question in Turkey" in 1893 in Moscow, which demanded that the Armenian question be resolved rightly. Invaluable is Gr. Janshyan's charity for the Armenian people and the Patriarch, M.Ormanyan, deservedly awarded his grateful son the honorary title of "sponsor of orphans".¹⁶

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Translated from the Armenian by Vahram Gharakhanyan

¹⁵ Arevelq 1900, № 4389, p. 2.

¹⁶ Simonyan 2003: 387.