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German Eyewitnesses of Armenian Genocide (Armin Wegner, Heinrich Firkbucher)

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Annotation: *From the witnesses of the vandalism realized towards West Armenians by Turkish powers the evidences of German humanists A.Wegner and H.Firkbucher are presented in this article who convicted those terrible actions demanding retribution from the leaders of the indifferent world as well.*

I am neither an accuser nor protector. Facts will speak themselves.

Y.Lepsius

The beginning of the 20th century was noted in Armenian history by tragic events, when Armenian Genocide was planned and realized by Ottoman powers.

In 1915-1916 huge bulk of literature was created about Armenian Genocide in the territory of Ottoman Empire. Writers, journalists, historians, publicists, officials touched upon these activities unprecedented in their forms and area, books, articles, memoirs, collections and scientific researches were published on the basis of witnesses of survivors and foreign evidence.

Being already created this huge and significant literature comes to prove that during the years of the World War I the actions realized towards Armenians living in the territory of the Ottoman Empire were nothing but Genocide (from Greek γένος - gene and Latin caedo - kill), according to UNO convention of December 12, 1948, "To prevent the crime of Genocide and to punish for it", completely or partially intended planned massacre of any national, ethnic or religious group in the following way: killing group members, causing group members physical or mental bad injuries, intended creation of such vital conditions for special group which are accounted for their complete or partial, physical abolition, obligating such actions which will prevent the birthrate of the group, the forced transportation of children of the group (1). According to the same convention Genocide is considered to be an international crime).

Including factually capacious materials Armenian Genocide was reflected also in German Literature. The special interest of German sources to Armenian Genocide was conditioned by the circumstance that German Empire was the ally and cooperator of Ottoman Turkey and

witnesses of the following authors either official - service reports or evidences of those years will hardly stand a doubtful behaviour towards Turkey.

Yet during 1894-96 Armenian massacres in the territory of Ottoman Empire arose the anger and irritation of outstanding intellectuals in different countries. A group of famous characters of time convicted Turkish brutal policy towards peaceful Armenian population, expressed themselves in defence of Armenian widows and orphans.

Connected with this Armenian Beneficial Associations were organized in Germany which were later united and in 1914 "German - Armenian Company" social organization was created at the head of Y. Lepsius. German - Armenain Company in the face of Y.Lepsius worked greatly by collecting and publishing documents about the plight of Armenians in Turkey, Genocide, the role and position of Germany in this case.

Young German expressionist and poet Armin Theophil Wegner (1886-1978), witnessing the vandalism of the Turkish powers towards West Armenians, was among the first who represented conviction in "Horrible actions in Mesopotamian deserts". True documents of this were A.Wegner's diary notes and letters to his relatives during 1915-16 (he was working in Turkey in the sanitary service of German military missionary of the time).

A part of Wegner's letters written in 1915-1916 was still printed during war years for what the author was deported from Constantinople. All the letters were published as separate book in 1919 entitled "Way without return" (martyrdom in letters). The historical - literary value is not only that it is a real witness of Turkish vandalism towards West Armenians, written down under the direct impressions of events, but also that the author revealed the psychology of Turkish and Armenian nations in the conditions of war and peace.

In the book open with following lines "These letters tell about death..." the protector of suppressed nations' right of self-determination, describing the terrors of the World War I, wrote. "All the valleys and banks of rivers are full of sorrow camps. Through crossings of Tavross the uncontrolled stream of destroyed town is flowing, hundred thousands of condemned throw themselves from the mountains, uncountable lines of people, thickening more and more, were solving in the fields, disappearing in the deserts. Where? Where? This is the way without return" (2).

In 1919 Wegner published his famous "Open letter" to the USA president Woudro Wilson, in which, as one of the few europeans who eyewitnessed the terrible extermination of Armenians and their poor remains, he represented the horrible scenes of pain and horrors. "I saw mads who ate the muck of their bodies, women, who boiled their new-born babies, girls, who sliced hot bodies of mothers to find the gold swallowed by the fear of marauders" (3, p. 22).

Understanding deeply the suffered soul of Armenians, their unheard sufferings, addressing Wilson with bitter reproofs, Wegner claimed "to save Europe's honour" and help christian nation of "high culture, with rich and glorious history, with valuable services in the sphere of art, literature, science, outstanding and talented, with deep religious spirit, rich with high piety" (3, p. 26).

Printed in "New generation" special edition journal , 1922, "Cry from above Ararat" article is author's reflexion of serial crime towards Armenians of Izmir, which was nothing but complete disclosure of political and diplomatic intrigues of the countries victorious during the World War I.

"What did western victorious countries do to save that small, tortured for its spirit and belief nation?... Brian...De Shanelle...Orlando....Soninyo...Wilson..there are so many glorious names which pass over us like the official uniforms of the parade leaving only the echo of empty giggle of desperation after them" (4, p. 2), -Wegner lashed the criminal indifference of western countries.

A short description of Armenian deport and massacres is Wegner's "Taleat Pasha's trial". In introduction of steneography the author proved the fact of genocide organized and realized by Young Turk villains. In the history of trials in the place of accused was the victim for the first time, main accuser was the killer. And that trial was marked in the history as Taleat Pasha's trial, but not as S.Tehleryan's. "In the surprising storm of events it happened so that the victim, suffering under factual burden and being silent, unwillingly became an accuser and instead of accused there was no Soghomon Tehleryan, but a bloody shadow of deceased, such a deep confirmation of mysterious situation when the accuser is not the killer, but the victim" (5).

During the trial in Berlin, 1921, great friend of Armenian people Wegner was figured as eyewitness and evident showing the photos of Armenian massacres taken by him.

One of outstanding faces of Pacifistic movement (Germany, 1920-30ies), Heinrich Firbucher (1893-1939) was the interpretor of Marshall Liman Otto Von Sanders in Turkey during the World War I. Under the circumstances witnessing the "greatest organized massacre that humanity has ever seen" (6, p. 95) towards the Armenians, he published his book of "What royal Germany hid from German-Armenians. Extermination of civilized nation by Turkey" (1930), where the thoughts of humanist writer about Armenians and the intrigue organized against them are gathered.

Taking into account the position of Firbucher it is not necessary to discuss his being well informed of the political events in Turkey of those days, a circumstance which makes the evidence of eyewitness important. The same can equally be accredited to factual materials brought by the author, their analyses and evaluation. The book which consisted of small parts and the way of thinking is written down skillfully and with frank feeling of sympathy, the highest criterion is the truth. The "feast" of Armenian extermination in Turkey the author often named with such expressions which, being already popular, described the event naturally and the best. Thus, "Hell of Danthe", "The bloodiest massacre", "The most horrible tortures of christians in human history" etc. Speaking about the author considered it as being his "duty" because he was sure that "if we want to keep in our soul the ability to love, we must hate that horrible brutality which occurred around us" (6, p. 101). "And let,- the author continues, - according to our opportunities this work become a small cross on the cemetery of

brotherhood in the mountains of Caucasus". This is more important, let the blind see it as "under the shelter of old thinking new germs of new crimes are covered" (6, p. 54).

German author shamefully remembered the amity of Turkish leaders and Wilhelm the Second thus openly accusing Germany for it hid Turkish brutality behind curtains. Furbucher thought that 1915 in Turkish history was not by chance, because Turk is criminal by nature, and the massacres of Armenians were the "apogee of brutality". In the book the essence of Turkish history is revealed. "Violence, violence and again violence", and as proof of already said Furbucher added. "Turkish people are stupid in the very meaning of this word...Indifferent and unable for art, culture, they are masters of "fighting, fighting and only fighting". These beks and effendies are in their rudiments there, where power of brute force, fist, fear and aim to destroy is ruling, but not intelligence and thinking" (6, p. 72).

Parallely with overall description of Turkish nation H.Furbucher also characterized Armenians to reach the readers the relations between these two nations thus focusing especially the fact that Armenians were sure that Turkish powers will not be so short-sighted because they will lose the most hard-working part of society so leading the country to the poverty.

Y.Lepsius was also thinking so while meeting Enver Pasha, he reminded him "Armenians are the stomach of your country. You cut your stomach and suppose that other parts of it - turkomen, lazes, kurds and circassians can play its role. This is delusion" (7).

Furbucher couldn't also miss from his viewpoint Soghomonyan Tehleryan's trial, touching upon Tehleryan's "exploit", Furbucher gave the details of the 2-days trial of national revenger in Berlin, June, 1921, analyzing and evaluating it as "this verdict is one of the most glorious pages of German justice" (6, p. 19).

According to all these, the author is optimistic, speaking about the crying injustice H.Furbucher believed, that the world didn't completely lose its understanding and even seeing "brutality of humanlike beast", it can't be considered that struggle against the beast was meaningless. "We have no right to despair. Yes, we have no right. We have no right to doubt the income of kindness, which is unavoidable, which we must find, rise up and confirm... And we must know, that we just start this hard work only", - wrote Furbucher (6, p. 56).

The meaning of the book is great, because, in the face of Europe, it is a serious accuse against Turkey and the surrounding who "carefully hid from nations" the historical facts of Armenian Genocide and who tried to deny the greatest tragedy of the last century. "Modesty was not without reason. It was the most eloquent proof of that Europe realized perfectly the fact of its cooperation in this shame, and it means its responsibility as well" (6, p. 58-59),- the author wrote. And only uniques, one of them was Furbucher, overcoming the circumstance of meeting obstacles and persecution, broke conspiratious silence and widespread the terrible truth.

The struggle for international recognition of Armenian Genocide is continuing and here evidence and unbiased evaluations of best representatives of German social-political mind

have significant importance, which prepared a peculiar basis that during the ceremony devoted to the 100th years of Armenian Genocide in Berlin Mother Cathedral the president of Germany Joackim Gauk named Armenian massacres by Ottoman Turkey in 1915 “Genocide” thus becoming the first head of the country who pronounced the term “Armenian Genocide”. “Armenian fate as such is a clear example of mass extermination, massacres, yes, Genocide, by which the 20th century is remembered terribly” (8),- the president mentioned in his speech.

The literary heritage of those humanist writers is lasting to be actual, and it is for the simple reason that toay, on the 100th years of great Genocide towards Armenian people the subject of speculation have become not the previous attempts to return the refugees to their historical homeland under the protection of international arena, but also the recognition and retribution of Genocide.

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