



**WESTERN ARMENIANS ON THE TARGET OF
THE INTELLIGENCE OF THE OTTOMAN EMPIRE
(1878-1923), YEREVAN, NATIONAL SECURITY
SERVICE OF RA, YEREVAN, 2016, 275 P. (IN
ARM.)**

by Hatikyan Hakob

A book review by Ruben Sahakyan

The history of intelligence, that is special services, their structure, behavior and operations had been the goal of studies in different countries. Indeed, special services do not advertise their activities, and consequently their archives are out of reach of scholars. Anyway, periodically some studies had come into presence which focus on the activities of special services in the past, especially the methods used in the course of their struggle against hostile forces.

In the memoirs, studies, archival and other documents dealing with the struggle of Armenian national-liberatory movement against the Ottoman tyranny are referred to considerable number of examples regarding the activities of the Turkish intelligence, which were aimed to jeopardize the undertakings of Armenian organizations. The study of Hakob Hatikyan discusses this problem from the time span between the beginning of the Armenian Question until the creation of the Turkish republic.

H. Hatikyan stresses that the modern «Turkish National Intelligence Service» («Milli İstihbarat Teşkilatı») is a direct heir of the two Ottoman special services - «Yıldız İstihbarat Teşkilat-ı Mahsusa» and «Teşkilat-ı Mahsusa».

The author focuses on the elucidation of several problems:

1. Forms and methods of the struggle of different Armenian organizations (secret societies, groups, national parties) against the Ottoman intelligence and secret police, and also to demonstrate their successes and failures, analyze their causes and consequences.
2. The structure of the Ottoman secret service, forms and methods of their activities.
3. The structure of the network of special services and peculiarities of their activities.
4. Activities of «Yıldız İstihbarat Teşkilat-ı Mahsusa» during the reign of Sultan Abdul Hamid II.
5. The organization of «Teşkilat-ı Mahsusa», its structure, network and role in the Armenian Genocide, etc.
6. Armenian-Kurdish cooperation in 1920s.

One of the main valuable and important characteristics of the monograph is that the author had made use of Russian and Turkish archives recently opened for public.

In the National Archive of Armenia the author had find unic documents elucidating the activities of Armenian spies in the Russian-Turkish (Caucasian) front of World War I. This is mentioned by Russian general Nikolay Morel (1869-1920) who was the commander of the Armenian I special infantry brigade (memoirs are unpublished). He presents valuable information about the secret network created by Sebastatsi Murad (Murad Khrimyan), Chakhalyan, Ter-Vardanyan (both officers of the Armenian army) and others, and the information collected by them. The author especially stresses the activities of Tigran Devoyants, professional intelligence officer.

Studying the activities of the Armenian Intelligence Service H.Hatikyan concludes that in 1920, before the Turkish aggression the Armenian spies had collected and transferred to the government valuable information, which «due to some reasons either reach the government with delay or did not receive appropriate attitude by the government» (p.49).

The author pays special attention to the operation aiming at the penetration into Cilicia of Mari (Mikayel Ter-Martirosyan) organized by the ARF. According to him, Mari had successfully organized his undercover bypassing the Turkish police, in order to participate in national-liberatory activities in the territory occupied by the enemy. But consequently he was arrested by police due to betrayal.

H. Hatikyan mentions that the Ottoman intelligence had passed two phases in its development at the beginning and middle of the XIX century. This was achieved partly by France and Germany still in the XIV century. It is well-known that some European countries and the Ottoman empire had instigated the uprising of Yemelyan Pugachev in Russia (1773-1775). On this fact points the correspondece between F.Voltaire and Catherin II, Russian empress. During several wars between Russia and the Ottoman empire the intelligence of the latter mainly operate in the adjacent Russian provinces and Turkestan in Central Asia.

Until Abdul Hamid II the Ottoman special service does not have name; only from this time it was called «Yıldız». First reference to «Yıldız» goes back to 1891, when a book was published by order of the Sultan (later confiscated and destroyed by Enver Pasha). Fortunately, one copy of it was found in the French National Library. The content of this book shows that «Yıldız» was created by the Great Britain. Probably, this was one of the cases when Great Britain from time to time showed enmity towards national minorities of the Ottoman empire, Armenians in this list, and aided the Ottoman government.

«Yıldız» had a wide network of agents. They were looking for the members of the Armenian national-liberatory organizations (they called them revolutionaries). For example, in March 22, 1891, member of the staff of the Russian consulate in Karin (Erzurum) reports that 70 Armenians were arrested who were eager to become Russian subjects, and that the person who traited these people, was called to «Yıldız» and given some office.

Some documents and memoirs give an impression about the structure of «Yıldız». The latter consists of three departments. The main department, standing above two others was that led by Fehmi Pasha. He actually experienced unlimited authority. Fehmi Pasha have had a right to search the house of any person, regardless of his office and social rank.

The Berlin congress of 1878 seriously stimulated the Armenian liberatory movement. After the Congress secret organizations and parties had come into presence. Initially they were far from professionalism, due to which sometimes the Ottoman secret agents were inserted into their structures. By the time these organizations became more experienced, uncover spies and even insert their own into the Ottoman police. This is recorded in the memoirs of Nazim Bey, Ottoman Interior minister. Besides this, members of the Armenian national-liberatory movement enter from Eastern Armenia to Western Armenia supplied with trustworthy legends.

Armenian liberatory forces also were relying upon the enemies of the Ottoman Empire. It is well known that after the Berlin congress Bulgaria was regarded as the vassal state of the Ottoman Empire and thus supporting anti-Turkish forces. Bulgarians supply Armenians with false passports, their baggages were never checked. Moreover, the Bulgarian government secretly lets the Armenians to organize a school for military officers first in the region of Dubnitsa, then in Rodomet in November 1906. Becoming aware of it the Turkish intelligence demanded from Bulgarians to close the school. The Russian consul in Bulgaria acted likewise. It is worth to say that early in the XX century Russia had demonstrated anti-Armenian policy, which could be seen in the context of the first Russian revolution of 1905-1907 (anti-Russian activities of Armenians, Armenian-Tartar confrontation in the Caucasus etc.). And finally the Bulgarian government was forced to close the school.

Analyzing the causes of the officers school' closing H. Hatikyan explains it by 1) inner-party confrontation, 2) a lack of conspiracy, 3) wide resources of the Ottoman intelligence and secret police (they use the resources of the Turkish enclave in Bulgaria). Besides that, the Ottoman intelligence and secret police gain their information about the Armenian liberation forces from their diplomatic services in different countires.

It is also well known that the World War I became a fine opportunity for the Young Turk Ottoman government to fulfill its program of the Armenian genocide. In this undertaking an important role was played by the "Special organization" whose first victims were Russian Armenians living in the districts of Kars and Batumi (November-December 1914). This fact is evidenced by the Russian authorities.

The Ottoman intelligence which had established contacts with Russian Bolsheviks, in 1918-1922 constantly receives information from them and even supplies the Muslim bands acting against the Republic of Armenia with arms (p. 228).

After World War I ARF had succeeded to secretly organize the operation "Nemesis". Turkish intelligence was unaware of it and could not warn the leaders of the Young Turks who had escaped to Europe and other countries.

H. Hatikyan discusses the activities of the Armenian intelligence and counterintelligence of the First Republic and also the Armenian-Kurdish cooperation against the Kemalist Turkey.

H. Hatikyan's monograph was evaluated positively by colonel N. Minasyan, head of the Veteran's Council of the National Security of RA and Prof. V. Virabyan.

Concluding our review some considerations are worth to present.

1. The monograph is not supplied with indices.
2. It lacks the mention and the role of Alexander Parvus, a well-known German and Ottoman agent, who acted against Armenian liberatory movement.
3. The cooperation of German and Ottoman intelligence during World War I services is omitted.
4. The author did not discuss also close cooperation of Kemalist and Bolshevik intelligence which lasted well through the early 1930s.
5. The author did not use the documents kept in the archive of the National Security Service, RA.

It should be stressed that further studies of H. Hatikyan may benefit by using more special literature, for example, M.K. Baskhanov, The Armenian Question in Turkey in the materials of the General staff of the Russian empire, Ankara, 2013 (in Russian); A.A. Kolesnikov and M.K. Baskhanov, Before World war I: the Russian military intelligence on the Turkish front: Documents: Commentary, Tula, 2014 (in Russian); N.K. Ter-Oganov, From the history of the SCMD in Turkey and Iran (1870-1918), Tel Aviv, 2015 (in Russian).

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