
POLITICAL SCIENCES AND INFORMATIONAL SECURITY

MYSTERY OF DARDANELLE OR THE TURKISH “BLACK HOLE” OF THE STRATEGIC PR

Levon Shirinyan

*Department of Politology,
Armenian State Pedagogical University
after K.Abovyan*

“Russia, depending on what is the position of Turkey in the issues of Straits towards Russia, it can be “either first friend of Turkey or its first enemy”. [...] Mostly, because of Straits’ traces, Russia was becoming either a friend or an enemy to European countries: Russia became friends with the ones being together with it in the Straits’ issue, and became enemies with the ones being against it. ...when they [European countries] wanted to ally with Russia, they became compliant in the Straits’ issues. And when the need for this friendship was not strongly felt, they got united to drown Russia in the water of the Straits”.¹

In the documentary is presented Vehib Pasha, the Turkish military-political figure of the World War I, and his memories and evaluations on the events related to the knots of the world’s political game of the “Turkish waterways”. From the bottom of the author’s Judgments the operating regularity in the nature and society is becoming vivid (everlasting aspiration of affirming balance) bringing one of the sides to death, giving happiness to the other one, even temporarily. Reliable words and expressions: balance, straits, Bosphorus, Dardanelle, England, France, Germany, Russia and Turkey.

With regard to the 100th anniversary of the First World War, in its context, in respect to the non-reimbursed crime of the Armenocide by Turkey, many events which took place (implemented) in the historical past are important: sometimes to uncover the historical truth and sometimes to reinforce the chain of distortions. Among those events there are actions developed around the “Turkish waterways”: the deep motives of Major (interested) Powers to possess waterways, including the victory of Turks, Entente alliance - studying the motives and causes of disastrous defeat of England and France.

In this regard, a lot has been written in the past, but, as we can suppose, it will be written more in the upcoming months, especially until April 23, 2015 - the Centennial of the Armenian Genocide (April 24, 2015). “The fact of victory, according to the Turkish traditions, will be distorted and speculated unlimitedly, even though substantiating objective inevitability of Armenocide (massacre of the Armenian people). And so on, and so forth. Therefore, considering the great importance of the question, we draw attention to one of the Turkish military-political figures of the period, Vehib Pasha's confession-monologue to the thoughtful reader posted and transmitted to the Historical science by unique Ruben’s interpretation as a documentary, a unique example in its kind, much more reliable, than any large-scale research.

¹ Navasardyan 1947: 125.

And so. Rotosto, a small, beautiful city made of sacred stones with modest and narrow streets reminding the past, yet is lost in the souls of the present. The ornament of the city is the sea, which is located as a mirror between Black and Archipelago seas. That sea is Marmara. One end of the sea is Bosphorus with its Constantinople, and the other end is Dardanelle with its hole. Marmara islands are risen up in the center of the sea looking at the straits of Bosphorus and Dardanelle and also looking at Tekir Tagh mountains risen along the European shore, on the top of which the city of Rotosto is located. If Marmara islands are in the center of the sea, Rotosto is also on the seaside center. Tekir Tagh chain will begin from that point, being included into the Archipelago sea occurring Gallipoli narrow peninsula and its eastern coast creates Dardanelle canal, and Xeros bay joining Archipelago through the western coast. Thus, Rotosto is a guard standing by the side of Dardanelle possessing the worldwide meaning with its Tekir Tagh Mountains. There is a middle ridge on the other side of Bosphorus and Dardanelle straits which can be found in the middle of the road. It takes to Chorlu and Chattha through the easy roads controlling Bosphorus holes and closing Europe and Asia's doors or opening them the way they want it.

In this regard, it is not odd to mention Vehib Pasha's unique views about Dardanelle fights in 1914. Esat Pasha, Vehib Pasha's elder brother, was the head of the upper military of Constantinople and Dardanelle during the First World War, and Vehib Pasha was the commander of Gallipoli and Xeros area. So, they led the Turkish heroic battle where Mustapha Kemal Pasha was heroized, and the whole Europe was defeated. When Vehib Pasha has been hosted by me for two weeks, I asked: "What was the main reason of the victory in Dardanelle and what was the reason of the defeat of Europe? May be your preparedness, the superiority of weapons, your courage, and quantity superiority? He replied:

"Either there is no need to answer you, or I should tell you the truth, as it is very difficult to lie to you. I will tell the truth, but probably, no one will like it. Our preparedness or the supremacy of weapons? No, certainly. That is a myth. The fortifications of Dardanelle are old and adjusted to ironclads of a century old. They would explode from the bombs of the new ironclads. Being an indication, they would be harmful, not beneficial. We did not have and do not possess fortifications adjusted to the new ironclads. The battle of Gallipoli became a war in trenches for us. "We disarmed their ironclads, as our cannons would not hurt theirs: our bullets would reach their ironclads, when armed forces had been approached close to us voluntarily ignoring us, they would approach close to our cannons. Yet, our bullets were not capable to shatter their armor. We possessed broadcast and murderous German weapons, when allied powers decided to leave Dardanelle and went away". Believe me, the reason of our success was not the superiority of our weapons. Quantity superiority? No, certainly. That is a legend as well. I told you that the battle of Gallipoli became a war in trenches. The space of Gallipoli is so small that it was possible to fill the trenches with maximum 40-50.000 people in troops there was neither space for army, nor opportunity for the reserving of food.

The enemy would be able to efficiently deploy the troops of the same amount, or may be less. Both of the sides would not be able to defeat each other taking into account the quantity advantage. Both sides possessed almost equal forces being able to tear each other apart, but it would be impossible to exterminate each other completely. Maybe the quantity was not important in Gallipoli, but it was necessary for both sides to always have 40.000 soldiers, and to bring new forces every day instead of killed and wounded ones. In this regard, each side had half of million victims in the battle of Dardanelle, if not one and a half million for both sides. "In this terrible massacre, the most terrible thing was when Englishmen were playing football during the break of every battle having pressing impression on us. "It is very hard to answer your 3rd question" smiled Vehib. "If I tell the truth, everybody will label us as both a hero and a betrayer". You would like to know which side did possess wisdom, heroism and courage during 147 battles of Dardanelle? Do not believe, if I tell you that our side didn't need wisdom, heroism and courage. All were necessary, but to our opponents: they did not possess such things".

Our conversation was held in winter. The fire of the Salamander was burning quietly. I apologized and went to add some coal. Vehib asked: "Is the Salamander stove a good one?" That's a wonderful stove. "Do you know its construction or the principle of its mechanism?" - I do not know its construction and I am not interested in its mechanism of burning, but I know in practice, that it works great. "But is it easy to manage?" - He asked. "There is nothing to manage. You should be attentive that there is enough coal, and you should put some coal, if there is a chance for it to run out". One more question: "Can the Salamander stove burn any kind of coal?" - "It burns any kind of coal" - I answered. One more question, and I would not have questions anymore. When you put some coal into the stove, has it ever happened that coals have rebelled, wanted to escape from the stove or complain from burning? When I looked at his face with a surprise, he laughed. Did you think that I have seen the stove for the first time? I know its construction better than you do. I have used it before. With my questions I wanted you to understand the answers of your questions about Dardanelle. But you did not understand. As a punishment, fill the glass with some brandy and I will explain.

He drank the glass of brandy and started explaining: "Notice, Gallipoli peninsula is a bottle. It is washed by the waters of Marmara and by the width of Murad Chai, through the hall of Dardanelle which is full of mines. The other side is washed by the waters of Archipelago and Xeros Seas that are full of French, English and other ironclads". The thin neck and mouth of the bottle connecting the land are Tekir Tagh Mountains hardly having few kilometers dimension widening over Xeros and being united with the land. They are comfortable for the battle and will open the path of the struggle for the surrounding. I was sitting right on that point: on one hand, I was waiting for every second that the enemy will do landfill and try to take away the mouth of Gallipoli, and on the other hand, I would fill the mouth with the bottle (Gallipoli) through the land, through the Marmara sea, 10-30.000 troops for a day to burn. The one being in the bottle, could not come back. He ought to be burnt, and the burnt ashes would come back as a corpse or a wounded one. The only happy ones are the ones being fallen in Gallipoli, as in case of getting severe wounds, they would be useless for the fight".

After a small time breathing fresh air and smoking a cigarette, he resumed his story strangling his emotions. "You seem to be delighted with the battle of Gallipoli and 148 heroes, especially with Kemal. I am not jealous, as they had been under my control and the attribution will come eventually back to me. But if we judge without any emotion, the one who is in the bottle, no matter how good or bad he is, cowardly or brave, smart or foolish, he is condemned to be equally burnt without any discrimination, the battle would not show any mercy. When it is predetermined where to sit, where to fight, how to fight, to kill and to be killed, it will turn into mechanical work, where no heroism, no sense, no courage is needed. All of this was necessary for those who were close to the armors: while our side holding the mouth of Gallipoli, and will wait for the landfill of Xeros, and we did not have a convenient moment to show any mercy while the enemy was lacking in it. Here is Gallipoli".

When I was looking at him with confusement, he said "Sure, my words would seem unbelievable and horrible for you", he smiled and smoked the cigarette. "Your words are not convincing, I am sorry, as it seemed to me as the drowned ironclads had been sunk on their own. It seems that you have brought 6 million troops in vain and scarified them without any purpose. It seems that England and France have not wanted to win and they have played a bloody game to their army as perpetrators. Have not you won them? Was it worthless to have half of million victims? Was the Dardanelle battle an incalculable crime for both sides? Vehib replied irritable: "Your first expression is right, but the second one is wrong. I have already told you that the allies acted foolishly, and even if they were not foolish, they were conscious perpetrators to their own army." Dardanelle was a closed door. In order to come into the straits, you should either break the door and enter, or you should find the key of the door, open and enter. There was no other way. Without the key, it was possible to break the doors and enter the straits, as we did not have expansive cannons. The enemy would be able to make us silent in faraway places and enter the straits, requiring removing the mines. The enemy knew that and tried it, after having every pledge of success, they failed their achieved success on their own. Firstly, they silenced our fortifications with centralized float fire, secondly, French armors luckily were the heads of the naval forces, and the British ones were behind theirs. Thirdly, taking forward French armors providing our success in Dardanelle. But, unexpected thing happened to us. During their success they left the straits with their armors. Do you know, why? The French leadership, as more sophisticated, would like to be the first owner of Dardanelle and to enter Constantinople first, and the English authority would treat with unrevealed intensions. When the French ironclads were damaged and became useless, - so much damage was inevitable, Englishmen immediately concluded that it is impossible to manage Dardanelle with fleet, though it has been managed with little efforts. "They ordered to be pulled off in contrast to the French's complaint that you put forward us leaving your cultivated program. The English army did not want to enter Dardanelle and Constantinople. Why should we own Dardanelle, as Constantinople and straits are promised to Russia? So, their sacrifice will serve to Russia's domination. Let me tell you more. Germans would

like the Englishmen as well to own Dardanelle and enter Constantinople, even though they were our companions. How many expansive cannons we wanted for Dardanelle, they would delay because of technical and other reasons. But when it was clear that Englishmen would no longer come, the cannons came abundantly. Do you know why? Germans hoped that there would be a gap between Russians and Englishmen because of English army's access to Constantinople". "One thing is clear: The impossibility of entering Dardanelle was spread being a legend and myth in the first period of time, and it was real when there was no one to attack using the sea. It was clear for us, that at least Englishmen would not like to enter Dardanelle via the sea. "And the Gallipoli peninsula was not the way to occupy Dardanelle via the land, but it was the top of the peninsula, where I was sitting guarding the sea breeze on the top of Tekir Tagh. It was the place by which it was possible to go through the land and own the Gallipoli peninsula, where our forces were centralized, as there was hidden the key of dominating. But I was waiting in vain on the fatal road for us. They would leave us alone. If they were not stupid, or more precisely, if they wanted seriously to possess Dardanelle, they would allocate these troops to Xeros bay attacking the top and neck of the peninsula instead of sacrificing 20-30.000 people in the Gallipoli peninsula. In that case, sending our troops there, our food provision ought to be impossible, and Gallipoli would be fallen on its own, and the straits ought to be opened. But I told that the main purpose of Englishmen is not to possess the straits, but to hold us destroyed there. We noticed that. I was convinced in that. That was the reason that we reduce our troops in the region of Dardanelle, and I wanted to leave to the new front, where it was possible to win and defeat. And I came to the Caucasus front for winning you and Russians". I tried to take out Vehib Pasha's mentioned judgments in order to mention the great significance of Rotosto for Constantinople and the straits.²

BIBLIOGRAPHY

1. Korbett Y. 1997. The operations of the English fleet in the World war, vol. 2, Moscow (in Russian).
2. Narochnitskaya N. 2014. "Eastern issue" and world politics (<http://nash-sovremennik.com/p.php?y=2004&n=10&id=3 / 07/07/2014 />)(in Russian).
3. Navasardyan V. 1947. Straits (Bosphorus and Dardanelle): Turkish waterways and Armenian National Committee. Cairo.
4. Ruben (Ter-Minasyan) 1982. Memories of the Armenian Revolutionary Activist, from Kars to Constantinople (1909), Teheran (in Arm.).
5. Shamlyan S. 1930. The War of Dardanelle, Constantinople (In Arm.).

² Additional literature about the operation in the Dardanelle - Korbett 1997: 470 (in Russian); Narochnitskaya 2014; Shamlian 1930 (in Arm.).