

SERGEY GORODETSKY: UNFAILING DEVOTION TO ARMENIA



Among the representatives of Russian social-political, military, literary - cultural figures having displayed active work in Western Armenia and Transcaucasia during World War I and the following years, prominent poet, writer, publicist, translator and public figure Sergey M. Gorodetsky (1884-1967) deserves particular attention.

At the beginning of April 1916 the Russian poet was sent to Caucasian front as a figure of All - Russian Union of cities and a correspondent to "Russkoye Slovo". On April 10-12 in the Tiflis department of the Union of cities he was appointed to work in Van. Just at that time Gorodetsky happened to get acquainted with famous Armenian poet Hovhannes Toumanyan. Acquaintance and growing intimacy with him predetermined the direction of his activities in Western Armenia. On April 20 Gorodetsky went to Van as a representative of the Union of cities from Atrpatakan region and displayed vigorous activities rescuing orphans. After the Russian army's July retreat he was in Igdir, Bayazet, Tiflis and Yerevan. On the 22nd of September he again went to Van and till November of the same year took the place of the representative of the Union of cities there. The poet organized food - supply to population, medical assistance of refugees, saved from death and starvation hundreds of children, opened refuges.

Western Armenia – a "land of artistic life", fascinating by its nature, ancient material and spiritual values, spirituality of internal world of Armenians, won the poet just from the first days. Under direct impression of tragic reality, of what he had seen and gone through Gorodetsky wrote a large number of poems (headed "Songs of Paradise" and under the epigraph "Paradise in the Heaven and Van on the Earth"), articles and essays (under the general title "In the Country of Streams and Volcanos"), that were published in "Armyanskiy Vestnik", "Russkoye Slovo" and "Kavkazskoye Slovo". At the same time he was learning the Armenian language. The poet also painted a number of pictures, impressed by wonderful nature, architectural monuments of Western Armenia.

At the beginning of November Gorodetsky hurt his foot, and in connection with Russian army's retreat he left for Tiflis, and later, for the treatment of the foot – to Petersburg. In February 1917 he was again in Tiflis, from there he went to Iran, to the Army in the Field. These days, for the last third time he was in Van, that had become a kind of a sacred place for him. Events in Western Armenia gave birth to reappraisal of values in Russian poet's world outlook. Years later S. Gorodetsky

noted that he considered his activities in Van one of the most important stages in his life.

From the spring of 1917 S. Gorodetsky lived in Tiflis, where he worked at the Conservatoire, giving lectures in aesthetics, at the same time headed the department of literature and art in the newspaper "Kavkazskoye Slovo", worked at "Theatrical Commission" by the executive committee of workers and soldiers. In Tiflis the poet displayed great activities and assisted cultural - enlightening development of the region, international education and rapprochement of the peoples of Russia. It must be particularly stressed that in 1918, besides numerous lectures and articles he organized exhibitions "Children's Art", "Van - Erzurum - Trebizond", published anthology "Eaglet of Paradise", edited journal "Ars". With Gorodetsky's direct participation journals "Nart", "Orion", "Raduga", newspaper "Noviy Den" were published in 1919.

These years S. Gorodetsky's activities were connected with created and headed by him "Artel of Poets". The Artel was one of the branches of "Artisterium" union, created at the end of March 1918 by the journal "Ars". Constituent meeting of Artel took place on April 12, 1918. The participants gathered every Wednesday, read their works, listened to interesting lectures on various literary subjects. Readings and discussions of A. Blok's works, especially of the poem "Twelve", and the meeting dedicated to Hovh. Toumanyan were especially interesting. On "Wednesdays" there were always a lot of people there: besides the participants there were also guests - professor of the Conservatoire F. Gartman, musician N. Cherepnin, Georgian poets T. Tabidze, P. Yashvili, V. Gaprindashvili, the Tiflis futurists headed by A. Kruchyonikh. There is interesting information about Hovh. Toumanyan's participation in these meetings. At the end of April 1919 by S. Gorodetsky's efforts the first collection of poems of the members of Artel under the name of "Akme" was published. The book included works of 22 poets. Overwhelming majority of poems included in the collection was distinguished by humanism, aspiration for kindness and beauty, mutual understanding and friendship between people: S. Gorodetsky's and Al. Kulebyakin's works, directed against war and violence, were singled out.

At the beginning of March 1918 poet's poems written by him in Western Armenia were published by a separate book - "Angel of Armenia", including also new works. At the same time in the Tiflis press he wrote a lot of artistic - critical articles about fine arts, in particular, dedicated to exhibitions of the Union of Armenian painters (1917 and 1919).

Living in Tiflis, Gorodetsky also got acquainted with Armenian culture, widely associated with Armenian intelligentsia, in particular, became good friends with Hovh. Toumanyan. In February - March 1919 the Russian poet took the most active part and direct participation in organizing the celebration of Hovh. Toumanyan's 50th jubilee and also in celebrating D. Varuzhan's, Hovh. Abelyan's, N. Korganov's jubilees, dedicated an article to the memory of ashugh Jivani.

There wasn't a single question, touching upon vital interests of our people, that wasn't raised by Gorodetsky, not any notable event, that didn't have its reflection in his publicism. Permeated with great publicistic enthusiasm thematically integral articles ("An Answer to Hovhannes Toumanyán", "Rusty Feathers", "Pro Armenia", "New Wound", "Living Cemetery", "A Garland to Friends", "Disasters of Armenia", "Karabakh", "The Last Cry") and others are evidences of it.

During these years the Russian poet visited different towns of Armenia and Georgia. By invitation of Yerevan "Literary – Artistic Society" on April 24, 1919 S. Gorodetsky came to Yerevan from Tiflis for a week. There on the 25th and 27th of April he gave lectures for the public of the town on the themes "Shades of Van" and "Modern Armenian Lyrics". On returning S. Gorodetsky printed series of essays "Travel to Erivan" in the newspaper "Kavkazskoye Slovo". Both the lectures he gave and the published series of essays testified to the great love and also devotion of the Russian poet to Armenian culture and people.

At the beginning of July 1919 S. Gorodetsky left for Batumi. His talk on "The Art of Future and Woman" was organized by the "Society of Artists". On July 14 the Russian poet gave a talk on "The Armenian Question" in the hall of Public meeting. This talk, the initiator of which was Armenian club was planned to be organized in Trebizond, too. In the course of days of S. Gorodetsky's stay in Batumi Armenian publishing-house of the town prepared for publication edited by him literary collection in Russian "Jeyran" ("Gazelle"). The collection was published at the end of September.

At the beginning of October of the same year Gorodetsky moved to Baku. There he established close links with representatives of the Armenian community. Living in Baku, the Russian poet visited Tiflis from time to time, associated with Armenian figures of literature and art.

In the mid 1920s S. Gorodetsky moved to Moscow, however, till the end of his life he was on warm, hearty terms with the representatives of creative intelligentsia of Armenia.

By all his activities S. Gorodetsky left a good name of a true friend of Armenians in grateful memories of generations in hard times for them.

ANUSHAVAN ZAKARYAN

Doctor of Philology

patmhandes@rambler.ru