

THE ARMENIANS AND TSARIST RUSSIA
(1870-1906)

A Master's Thesis

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September 2009

To my family

THE ARMENIANS AND TSARIST RUSSIA
(1870-1906)

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of
Bilkent University

by

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ABSTRACT

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The Armenians of Tsarist Russia was in a promising situation with their immense impact on economic, cultural and political affairs of Transcaucasia until the last two decades of the 19th century, which saw major changes as regards to their position in the Russian Empire. This thesis examines the dynamics of this difficult period for the Armenians by investigating the Tsarist policies, which produced a complex picture for the Russian Armenians. In addition, another important factor, the influence of the Russian revolutionary movement on the Armenian revolutionary groups on theoretical and organizational levels is explained.

By 1880's, the combination of these factors caused the emergence of an unfavourable Tsarist treatment of its Armenian subjects in line with the general Russification policy. In the specified period, Russian foreign policy interests about the Armenian Question made things even worse for the Russian Armenians. The study explores this downward trend, which was to be culminated in the Tsarist decision to confiscate the Armenian Church properties in 1903. The Armenian response to this, intermingled in the broader course of the 1905 Revolution, was an important dimension for the fates of not only the Russian Armenians but also the Ottoman Armenians.

Keywords: Armenian Revolutionary Parties, Tsarist Nationalities Policy, Transcaucasia, Russification, the Armenian Question.

ÖZET

ERMENİLER VE ÇARLIK RUSYASI

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Çarlık Rusyası Ermenileri, 19. yüzyılın ikinci yarısının büyük bir bölümünde Transkafkasya'nın ekonomik, kültürel ve siyasi meseleleri üzerinde muazzam bir etki sahibiydiler. Bu yüzyılın son yirmi yılında ise, Ermenilerin Rusya imparatorluğu içindeki etkin pozisyonları büyük değişikliklere uğradı. Bu tez, Rusya Ermenileri için karmaşık bir durum ortaya çıkaran Çarlık politikalarını inceleyerek Rusya Ermenileri için oldukça zorlu geçen bu dönemin dinamiklerini araştırmaktadır. Ayrıca, bir diğer önemli faktör olarak, Rus devrimci hareketinin Ermeni devrimci gruplar üzerindeki teorik ve örgütsel düzeydeki etkisi açıklanmaktadır.

1880'lere gelindiğinde bu etmenlerin birleşmesi, genel Ruslaştırma siyasetine paralel olarak Çarlık Ermenilerine karşı olumsuz bir tutumun ortaya çıkmasına yol açmıştır. Bu dönemde, Rusya'nın Ermeni Meselesi ilgili dış politika çıkarları Rusya'daki Ermenilerin durumunu daha da kötüleştirmiştir. Bu çalışma, 1903'te Çarlık rejiminin Ermeni kilisesinin mallarını müsadere etme kararı ile sonuçlanan bu kötüye gidişi incelemektedir. Buna karşı gelişen ve 1905 Devrimi'nin dinamikleri ile iç içe giren Ermeni tepkisi, sadece Rus Ermenilerinin değil aynı zamanda Osmanlı Ermenilerinin kaderleri için de önemli bir boyut idi.

Anahtar kelimeler: Devrimci Ermeni Partileri, Çarlık Milliyetler Politikası, Transkafkasya, Ruslaştırma, Ermeni Meselesi.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

This is not a story with a happy ending. In 1918, the Armenians tried to set up an independent Armenia, the successor to a shadowy mediaeval kingdom, with borders on the Black Sea and the Mediterranean. Its capital would have been Kars. Ten thousand Turks arrived outside the place in October 1920, and the Armenians, 25,000 of them, left in a hurry.¹ It was the end of a dream, yet another disappointment in the history of the nation. From that day to this, Armenians have blamed the West for letting them down.

However, we have to move on from nationalist mythology. The Armenians of the Ottoman Empire had lived for a thousand years quite comfortably, and were known as *millet-i sadıka*, the Christians you could rely on. They built the palaces, staffed the embassies, did the theatre and the opera, and even bank-rolled the Turkish nationalists in 1919.

¹ For a detailed account of this scene, please see Richard G. Hovannisian, *Between Crescent and Sickle: Partition and Sovietization*, vol.4 of *The Republic of Armenia* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1996).

Something then went badly wrong, and it all ended up with the disaster of Kars in 1920. The Turkish general who took the place in October 1920 could not even find anyone to accept the surrender because the Armenian generals were all hiding. And yet, the Armenians are people of enormous intelligence and adaptability. Why did they end up in disappointment?

A good part of the story ends up with Tsarist Russia. It was Tsarist Russia that created Armenia, and this is a side of things that deserves exploration. For the Russian Armenians there is the further peculiarity that they were influenced inevitably by developments, economic or intellectual, in the late-Tsarist period. It is the subject of the present thesis. We have had to look in essence at three big subjects. The first is the extraordinary commercial success of the Armenians in Russia. Especially, as oil grew in the later nineteenth century, they were all over the place. Baku and Tiflis were really Armenia. The next question is difficult: why did Armenians have various problems with their neighbours and the Russian bureaucracy. The Tsar closed down their church, top officials prepared hostile reports, Georgians and Azeris put an anti-Armenian element to their national identity. Our third question is as to how the Armenians developed a Russian revolutionary consciousness.

There is a considerable difficulty in this subject, in that the literature is partial. Major exceptions to this are Ronald Grigor Suny's *Looking Toward Ararat: Armenia in Modern History* and Manuel Sarkisyanz's *A History of Transcaucasian Armenia*, both of which describe the social, economic and cultural lives of the Russian Armenians in the second half of the 19th century.² More specifically, the Armenian impact on late imperial Tiflis has been put into perspective again by Suny and several

² Ronald Grigor Suny, *Looking Toward Ararat: Armenia in Modern History* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1993); Manuel Sarkisyanz, *A Modern History of Transcaucasian Armenia: Social, Cultural, and Political* (Leiden, Netherlands: E.J. Brill, 1975).

other scholars, as well as various travellers' accounts.³ For Baku and Armeno- Azeri relations, the major works are those of Suny, Swietochowski, Mostashari and Altstadt, who also managed to describe the ethnic tensions between these two groups.⁴

It is an interesting point that the bulk of the Armenian revolutionary movement originated in the Russian Empire, whereas the major focus of the Armenian revolutionaries had always been the Armenians of the Ottoman Empire. As such, the Tsarist dimension of the Armenian national awakening and its transformation into an active revolutionary movement has been less emphasized than what happened to the Ottoman Armenians.

In this sense, Vartan Gregorian's article is very useful as a general survey on the Russian impact on the Armenians, including the revolutionary tradition.⁵ The ideology of the Armenian revolutionary tradition, especially its nationalist dimension, has been explained very thoroughly by scholars such as Louise Z. Nalbandian, Anahide Ter Minassian and Gerard J. Libaridian.⁶ A comprehensive history of Dashnaksutiun by Hratch Dasnabedian is also very useful.⁷ Thus, one has still to look

³ Ronald Grigor Suny, *The Making of the Georgian Nation* (London: Tauris, 1989); Stephen F. Jones, *Socialism in Georgian Colours: The European Road to Social Democracy, 1883-1917* (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard UP, 2005); James Bryce, *Transcaucasia and Ararat: Being Notes of a Vacation Tour in the Autumn of 1876*, 4th ed. (London; New York: Macmillan and Co. Ltd., 1896); Harry Finnis B. Lynch, *Armenia: Travels and Studies*, 2 vols. (London: Longmans, Green and Co., 1901).

⁴ Ronald Grigor Suny, *The Baku Commune 1917-1918: Class and Nationality in the Russian Revolution* (Princeton, N.J: Princeton Univ. Pr., 1972); Tadeusz Swietochowski, *Müslüman Cemaatten Ulusal Kimliğe Rus Azerbaycanı 1905-1920*, trans. Nuray Mert (İstanbul: Bağlam, 1988), Firouzeh Mostashari, *On the Religious Frontier: Tsarist Russia and Islam in the Caucasus* (London: Tauris, 2006); Audrey L. Altstadt, *The Azerbaijani Turks: Power and Identity under Russian Rule* (Stanford, CA: Hoover Institution Press, 1992).

⁵ Vartan Gregorian, "The Impact of Russia on the Armenians and Armenia," in *Russia and Asia: Essays on the Influence of Russia on the Asian Peoples*, ed. Wayne S. Vucinich (Stanford: Hoover Institution Press, 1972).

⁶ Louise Ziazan Nalbandian, *The Armenian Revolutionary Movement: The Development of Armenian Political Parties* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1963); Gerard J. Libaridian, *Modern Armenia: People, Nation, State* (New Brunswick, N.J.: Transaction Publishers, 2004); Anahide Ter Minassian, "Nationalism and Socialism in the Armenian Revolutionary Movement (1887-1912)," in *Transcaucasia, Nationalism and Social Change: Essays in the History of Armenia, Azerbaijan, and Georgia*, rev. ed., ed. Ronald Grigor Suny (T. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan, 1983).

⁷ Hratch Dasnabedian, *History of the Armenian Revolutionary Federation Dashnaksutiun (1890-1924)* (Milan: OEMME Edizioni, 1989).

into the general characteristics of the Russian model to analyze the process in which Armenian revolutionary movement draws on from Russian tutelage.⁸

The fate of the Russian Armenians was also affected by the general policies initiated by the Tsarist regime. Thus, the extension of the Great Reform process into Transcaucasia, the modernization drive of Witte or Tsarist nationality policies changed the lives of all subject nationalities and the Armenians were no exception.⁹ Being the major Russian policy that affected the fate of the Armenians, the Russification policies were delicately discussed in various works, though the Armenian dimension was often taken as a part of a broader picture.¹⁰

Another chief determinant of the Tsarist policy towards the Russian Armenians was the foreign policy dimension. Being a question of international diplomacy in the Berlin Congress, the discussions of autonomy or reform for Armenia was on the Russian foreign policy agenda. Thus, Russian foreign policy interests in the Armenian Question had their implications for the Russian Armenians. Owing to its international character, the foreign policy dimension has been scrutinized by several scholars in detail.¹¹

⁸ Franco Venturi, *The Roots of Revolution: A History of the Populist and Socialist Movements in Nineteenth Century Russia*, trans. Francis Haskell (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1960); Tibor Szamuely, *The Russian Tradition* (London: Fontana Press, 1988).

⁹ Andreas Kappeler, *The Russian Empire: A Multiethnic History*, trans. Alfred Clayton (Harlow, UK: Longman, 2001); Richard Pipes, *The Formation of the Soviet Union: Communism and Nationalism, 1917-1923*, rev. ed. (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Pr., 1964); Hans Rogger, *Russia in the Age of Modernization and Revolution: 1881-1917* (London: Longman, 1983).

¹⁰ Ronald Grigor Suny, "The Empire Strikes Out," in *A State of Nations: Empire and Nation-Making in the Age of Lenin and Stalin*, eds. Ronald Grigor Suny and Terry Martin (Oxford; New York: Oxford University Press, 2001); S. Frederick Starr, "Tsarist Government: The Imperial Dimension," in *Soviet Nationality Policies and Practices*, ed. Jeremy R. Azrael (New York: Praeger, 1978); Geoffrey Hosking, *Russia, People and Empire, 1552-1917* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1997).

¹¹ William L. Langer, *The Diplomacy of Imperialism, 1890-1902*, 2nd ed. (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1956); Akdes Nimet Kurat, *Türkiye ve Rusya: XVII. Yüzyıl Sonundan Kurtuluş Savaşına Kadar Türk-Rus ilişkileri 1798-1919* (Ankara: Ankara Üniversitesi, 1970); Arman J. Kirakossian, *British Diplomacy and the Armenian Question: from the 1830s to 1914* (Princeton, NJ: Gomidas Institute Books, 2003); Manoug Joseph Somakian, *Empires in Conflict: Armenia and the Great Powers, 1895-1920* (London: I.B. Tauris, 1995); M. S. Anderson, *The Eastern Question, 1774-1923* (London: Macmillan, St Martin's Press, 1966); B. A. Borian, *Armeniiia, mezhdunarodnaia diplomatiia i SSSR*, vol. 1 (Moscow: Gosudarstvennoe Izdatelstvo, 1928).

For the confiscation of the properties of the Armenian Church by the Tsarist administration, Paul Werth's article along with others is very instructive.¹² The next critical phase for the Russian Armenians was their participation in the 'dress rehearsal to the Revolution' in 1905 and its aftermath. Again, the works of Libaridian, Suny, Minassian are very informative about the Armenian ingredient, while the classic works of Pipes, Figes and Ascher illuminates the broader course of the Revolution.¹³

Therefore, I will try to look into the position of Armenians and their national movement in Tsarist Russia by starting with a general survey of the Armenian national awakening in the first chapter. Then, in the second chapter, I will describe the political, economic and cultural realities of the Russian Armenians by 1870, when hopes were high due to the Great reform process in the imperial Russia. The other major phenomenon that influenced not only Russian but also Armenian lives was the Russian revolutionary movement. In the third chapter, I will try to analyze the Russian legacy on the Armenian revolutionary movement. Next, I will describe how the series of anti-Armenian policies of the Tsarist administration in last two decades of the 19th and foreign policy interests influenced the Armenian revolutionary movement. In the last chapter, the final confrontation of the Armenian revolutionaries with the Tsarist regime in the revolution of 1905 and its results will be explained.

¹² Paul W. Werth, "Glava Tserkvi, Poddannyi Imperatora: Armianskii Katolikos na Perekrestke Vnutrennei i Vneshnei Politiki Imperii, 1828-1914," *Ab Imperio*, Issue: 3 (2006): 99-138.

¹³ Richard Pipes, *The Russian Revolution 1899-1919* (London: Collins Harvill, 1990); Orlando Figes, *A People's Tragedy: the Russian Revolution, 1891-1924* (New York, N.Y.: Penguin Books, 1998); Abraham Ascher, *The Revolution of 1905: Russia in Disarray* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1988); Abraham Ascher, *The Revolution of 1905: Authority Restored* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1992).

CHAPTER 2

THE ARMENIAN NATIONALIST REVIVAL IN THE NINETEENTH CENTURY

2.1. The Challenge of Secular Elements to the Domination of the Clergy in the Ottoman Empire

It is surprising to note how the attitude of the Tsarist regime vis-à-vis its Armenian subjects changed during the last quarter of the 19th century. A great productive force with their abilities in commerce and vital Diaspora networks stretching from India to Italy, Armenians were fairly desirable elements for the Russian Empire, which was trying to increase its control over Transcaucasia. With their Catholicos as their spiritual, and to a certain extent political leader, Russian Armenians were considered to be beneficial and peaceful allies of Tsarist Russia. In fact, the deal went on quite well until 1870's, when the intellectual phase began to incorporate revolutionary features borrowed from their Russian counterparts. One must look into the process of this national awakening, which took its early steps in the Ottoman Empire and then flourished in the Russian Empire.

The Ottoman Armenian community was administered by the regulations of *millet* system, in which the Armenian Patriarchate and the Armenian elite (*amiras*) dominated affairs. The Armenian Patriarch was not only the religious leader; he also administered education, tax collection and cultural affairs.¹⁴ On the other hand, *amiras* were very influential in financial life of the Empire and assumed important bureaucratic posts. Particularly, *sarraf* (money changer) *amiras* had immense economic power as their credits were the backbone of the *iltizam* system.¹⁵

This system worked quite well; the general situation of the Ottoman Empire did not. When it was decided to respond to the decline of the Empire by increased centralization and modernization with the *Tanzimat* reforms of 1839, the fate of the Armenians was also to change. “This religious-communal system gradually gave way to a national oriented one due to modernization efforts, changes in the *iltizam* system and the economic rise of secular elements within the Armenian *millet*.”¹⁶ In this sense, the *Tanzimat* reforms ultimately undermined the prestige of the Armenian Patriarchate by paving the way for secular elements.

Although there always was a certain degree of interaction between the Armenians and Europe mainly due to the diaspora Armenians and merchant links, the nineteenth century definitely saw an intensification of this. In turn, increased interaction with the West provided Armenian intermediaries with more financial power; and a more secular outlook. Armenian merchants, artisans and eventually

¹⁴ Roderic H. Davison, *Reform in the Ottoman Empire, 1856-1876* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1963), 13.

¹⁵ Hagop Barsoumian, “The Dual Role of the Armenian *Amira* Class within the Ottoman Government and the Armenian *Millet* (1750-1850),” in *Christians and Jews in the Ottoman Empire: the Functioning of a Plural Society*, vol.1, eds. Benjamin Braude and Bernard Lewis (New York: Holmes & Meier Publishers, 1982), 172-173. *Miltezims* needed to have a certificate from an Armenian *sarraf* to be included in the auction. Barsoumian, 173.

¹⁶ Kemal H. Karpat, “Millets and Nationality: The Roots of the Incongruity of Nation and the State in the Post-Ottoman Era,” in *Christians and Jews in the Ottoman Empire: the Functioning of a Plural Society*, vol. 1, eds. Benjamin Braude and Bernard Lewis (New York: Holmes & Meier Publishers, 1982), 141-143.

intelligentsia began to consider the clergy as an inert institution and later openly challenged its leadership in the affairs of the community.¹⁷

As the financial power of the *sarraf amiras* deteriorated as they lost their privileges in credit provision, smaller artisans (*esnafs*) and merchants found support from reform minded bureaucratic *amiras*.¹⁸ The efforts of the government to increase centralization and the sense of citizenship further benefited this group. As the Armenian Church was now expected to pay taxes for its holdings except for the ones in Istanbul, the lower classes stepped up to contribute in the way of taxes, which in turn gave them the opportunity to play an active role in the politics of the Armenian community.¹⁹

The final challenge of these secular elements to the Armenian Patriarchate and *amira* bloc was realized with the manifestation of the Armenian National Constitution (*Nizamname-i Millet-i Ermeniyan*) in 1863, according to which the Civil Council had dominated the Religious Council in the civil management of the Armenians.²⁰ Since these councils were elected by the Armenian *millet*, the power of the high clergy and the *amiras* was seriously curtailed.²¹ The Patriarch even lost his power to dismiss spiritual leaders.²² Thus, the reform movement in the Ottoman Empire strengthened the secular elements of the Armenian *millet*, which would assume the pioneering role in the national awakening process.

It is also important to note that in this secular challenge to Armenian clergy and *amiras*, the official recognition of Armenian Catholic in 1831 and the Armenian

¹⁷ Karpap, 158-159. Ronald Grigor Suny, *Looking Toward Ararat: Armenia in Modern History* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1993), 10.

¹⁸ Barsoumian, 180. Davison, 120.

¹⁹ Vartan Artinian, *The Armenian Constitutional System in the Ottoman Empire, 1839-1863: A Study of its Historical Development* (İstanbul, 1988), 53-54.

²⁰ K. V. Sarkissian, "The Armenian Church," in *Religion in the Middle East*, vol. 1, ed. A. J. Arberry (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1969), 501.

²¹ Mesrob K. Krikorian, *Armenians in the Service of the Ottoman Empire 1860-1908* (London: Routledge, 1977), 3-5.

²² Esat Uras, *Tarihte Ermeniler ve Ermeni Meselesi*. 2nd ed. (İstanbul: Belge, 1987), 150.

Protestants in 1850 as separate *millets* played a vital role. As the flock of the Armenian Patriarchate was now divided, the missionaries arrived in to benefit from this division. In the first place, missionaries in the Ottoman Empire provided a serious opportunity for the Armenians; particularly for the provincial ones, in terms of educational progress, which was increasingly demanded due to increased contacts with the West and the need for modernization.²³

This demand was to be provided especially by the Protestant missionaries who rapidly expanded their networks at the expense of the power of the Armenian Patriarchate. From the accounts of Protestant missionaries, it is understood that they supported lower classes to undermine the dominance of the Church and the *amiras*, who were traditionally the allies of the regime.²⁴ The missionary efforts were not limited to educational enterprises. By the mid 19th century, missionary scriptures in Armenian and Armeno-Turkish, mainly published in Smyrna, reached considerable distribution levels, which contributed to the Armenian revival by increasing mass literacy.²⁵

Moreover, as the students of these missionary schools could embrace Western ideas more quickly, this was an important dimension of the Armenian national awakening.²⁶ Apart from the ideas, the Western impact on the Ottoman Empire was rising and naturally they established close economic ties with the Armenians as intermediaries since they were more open to this sort of influence in terms of culture

²³ Uygur Kocabaşoğlu, *Anadolu'daki Amerika: Kendi Belgeleriyle 19.Yüzyılda Osmanlı İmparatorluğu'ndaki Amerikan Misyoner Okulları*, 3rd ed. (Ankara: İmge, 2000), 57-59.

²⁴ Ibid., 56.

²⁵ Robert Mirak, *Torn Between Two Lands: Armenians in America, 1890 to World War I* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1983), 23. It is also worth noting that it was an American missionary, Dr. Elias Riggs, who first translated the Bible into vernacular Armenian in 1847. Harry Jewell Sarkiss, "The Armenian Renaissance, 1500-1863," *The Journal of Modern History* 9, no. 4 (December 1937): 444-445.

²⁶ Mirak, 26-27.

with the sons of better-off Armenians going to European universities and their mastery of Western languages.²⁷

Therefore, the first phase of the Armenian national awakening in the Ottoman Empire started with a challenge to the Armenian clergy by the secular elements. This process went on with the discussions of language reform, education policies and the emergence of a national Armenian literature, which produced very complex outcomes for the Armenians on the other side of the border.

2.2. The Russian Armenians Before the National Awakening

With the Treaty of Turkmenchai of 1828, the Russian Empire acquired a considerable number of Armenian subjects. The Armenian population went up with immigration from Ottoman Empire and Persia from 1828 onwards.²⁸ Walker, quite rightly, thinks that the settlement of these Armenian immigrants in the *Armianskaia oblast* (Armenian district) was an important step for the future national awakening since this would provide a territorial basis for a collective identity.²⁹ There was also a strategic consideration in this. The Russians were very eager to settle those Armenians to Christianize the region and to form a buffer region against two neighbouring Muslim empires.³⁰

²⁷ Bernard Lewis, *The Emergence of Modern Turkey*, 2nd ed. (London: Oxford University Press, 1968), 62.

²⁸ Christopher J. Walker, *Armenia: the Survival of a Nation*, rev. 2nd ed. (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1990), 54, John F. Baddeley, *The Russian Conquest of the Caucasus* (1908; repr., Richmond, Surrey: Curzon Caucasus World, 1999), 223. It is also important to keep in mind that many Muslims of Transcaucasia left the region for Ottoman Empire after the 1828, which also changed the demographic balance in favor of Armenians.

²⁹ Walker, 55.

³⁰ Firouzeh Mostashari, *On the Religious Frontier: Tsarist Russia and Islam in the Caucasus* (London: Tauris, 2006), 41-42.

As a part of the administrative reforms of Nicholas I, Russian Armenians were put under the *Polozhenie* (Statute) in 1836. According to this, the Armenian Church was granted the right to control parish education network, exemption from taxation and ownership of the land for income in return for the supervision of the Church by a *prokurator* (procurator) appointed by the Holy Synod.³¹ Moreover, the Tsar had the authority for the final decision to appoint the Catholicos. Although this system resembled the treatment of Armenians in the Ottoman and Persian Empires, as the Armenian community was defined in religious lines and the Catholicos was considered as their head, there were crucial differences. According to this arrangement, the influence of the laity in the organization of the Armenian Church was relatively less than it was in the arrangements in the Ottoman and Persian Empires. In line with the Byzantine tradition of State-Church relationship in the Russian Empire, the role of clergy in the affairs of the Church remained dominant until the abolition of the *Polozhenie*.³²

The Catholicosol Synod and dioceses were completely controlled by the Armenian clergymen, under Russian supervision; there was no laity.³³ Apart from the administrative supervision of the Armenian Catholicosate by the Holy Synod, there was also a religious aspect. In the official documents, the Russians always used the term ‘Gregorian Church’ not to highlight the apostolic character of the Armenian Church, which was always a source of bitterness for the Armenians.³⁴

³¹ Razmik Panossian, *The Armenians: From Kings and Priests to Merchants and Commissars* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2006), 123.

³² K. V. Sarkissian, “The Armenian Church”, 495. In the Catholicos election of 1843, only 5 of 26-men council were laity. Manuel Sarkisianz, *A Modern History of Transcaucasian Armenia: Social, Cultural, and Political* (Leiden, Netherlands: E.J. Brill, 1975), 55.

³³ Malachia Ormanian, *The Church of Armenia: Her History, Doctrine, Rule, Discipline, Liturgy, Literature and Existing Condition*, trans. G. Marcar Gregory (London: A.R. Mowbray, 1955), 155. Being a former Patriarch, Ormanian believes that the idea of giving liberties, efforts to increase participation of lay elements in the affairs of Armenians was a mistake.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, 158.

Nonetheless, the Catholicosate of Echmiadzin was also considered by the Tsarist regime as a useful agent that would influence not only the Russian Armenians but also Ottoman Armenians. Thus, being severely obedient to the Tsarist lines, the Catholicosate was officially honored by various ways to bolster its prestige.³⁵ With the establishment of *Kavkazskoe Namestnichestvo* (Caucasian Viceregency) in 1844, the limits of the Armenian Church in the Tsarist administrative mechanism were redrawn. While *namestnik* (viceroy) Prince Mikhail S. Vorontsov made the Armenian bourgeoisie of Transcaucasia allies of the regime, severe limitations on to the Armenian Catholicosate were put. With the law of 1856, the Catholicos was put under strict jurisdiction of viceroy to a point in which he was forbidden to approach the Tsarist ministries directly.³⁶

Still, it would be fair to say that the Armenian Church was the dominant element in the affairs of the Russian Armenians by mid 19th century. From then on, secular elements among the Russian Armenians became a real factor on drawing from the experiences of Ottoman Armenians. Their first target was to break the monopoly of the Armenian Church on the Armenian language.

2.3. The Transformation of the Armenian Language

By the early 19th century, religion was the defining quality of the Armenian both in the Russian and Ottoman Empires. However, the emerging ideas of nationalism from the West began to infiltrate into the empires of the East as the idea

³⁵ Paul W. Werth, "Glava Tserkvi, Poddannyi Imperatora: Armianskii Katolikos na Perekrestke Vnutrennei i Vneshnei Politiki Imperii, 1828-1914," *Ab Imperio*, Issue: 3 (2006): 106-109. In 1837, Nicholas I visited Echmiadzin himself. Werth, 107.

³⁶ V. V. Cherkasov, ed., *Institut general-gubernatorstva i namestnichestva v rossiiskoi imperii*, vol. 1 (Saint Petersburg: Yuridichesky Center Press, 2003), 268.

of common language and history gradually became the themes which Armenian intellectuals began to take up. The emergence of this sort of national revival, though fiercely opposed by the Armenian Church, had been very influential in the Armenian politics. Being one of the critical components of such a revival, the language had an immense importance in this.

The Armenian language was created as a literary language, much different from the vernacular to keep the nation away from assimilation by surrounding Empires.³⁷ Thus, written classical Armenian was confined to a very limited group of people, namely to the clergy of the Armenian Church. On the other hand, the vernacular of Western Armenians had been influenced by Turkish and Arabic, while the Eastern Armenian dialect borrowed a great deal from Russian and Georgian.³⁸ For instance, by the first half of the 19th century, Turkish words constituted 85% of Western Armenian vernacular.³⁹ The events succeeding the French Revolution and the need to mobilize the masses by education eventually led Armenian intellectuals to think what to do about the duality of classical and vernacular Armenian.

In order to understand the background of this process of the rediscovery of the Armenian language, one must turn to the efforts of the Mekhitarists, the Catholic Armenian order, as the main driving force of the Armenian renaissance (*Veradzmunt*) period which preceded the national awakening (*Zartonk*).⁴⁰ In the 18th century, based on Venice and Vienna, these Armenian monks published various books ranging from

³⁷ Levon Boghos Zekian, "Christianity to Modernity," in *The Armenians: Past and Present in the Making of National Identity*, eds. Edmund Herzig and Marina Kurkchian (Oxford; New York: Routledge, Curzon, 2005), 58.

³⁸ Ronald Grigor Suny, "Eastern Armenians under Tsarist Rule," in *Armenian People from Ancient to Modern Times*, vol. 2, ed. Richard G. Hovannisian (New York: St. Martin's Press, 2004), 118.

³⁹ Panossian, 134, n.7.

⁴⁰ The periodization of *Veradzmunt* (1700-1840) and *Zartonk* (1840-1915) owes to Zekian's scheme. Zekian, 55-56.

Armenian grammar books to the first complete history of the Armenians.⁴¹ The efforts of the order were to continue with regards to the Armenians of the Russian Empire. When the Armenians were trying to set up their schooling in accordance with the Russian education system, it was a Mekhitarist, Minas Bzhshkian, who published his *Kerakanutiun ruserenhayeren Rossiisko-Armianskaia grammatika* (Russian-Armenian Grammar) and *Kerakanutiun haykazian lezvi batsadreal i rusats barbar Armiano-Rusaskaia grammatika* (Grammar of the Armenian language explained in the Russian language).⁴²

As the Mekhitarists formed the foundations of the interest in Armenian language, the secular intellectuals stepped in. In this aspect, Khachatur Abovian was one of the scholars, who contributed to the transformation of the language. Having assisted the German scholar, Friedrich Parrot on his visit to Transcaucasia in 1829, he was invited by the professor to study at Dorpat University, where Abovian realized the importance of the vernacular and the literacy for the masses in the way of national consciousness.⁴³ Moreover, with the increased importance of the printing press, the need to standardize the Armenian language so as to reach the masses became obvious.⁴⁴

Hence, between 1840 and 1870, the conflict between the advocates of classical Armenian and those of the vernacular went on. Understandably, the Armenian clergy did not want to lose their monopoly on language. Classicist linguists, mainly the Armenian clergy and the Mekhitarists, claimed that employing the Classical

⁴¹ Panossian, 104. It was Mikayel Chamchian (1738-1823), who wrote the three-volume history of Armenians up to year 1784. This was the first complete attempt since the days of Moses Khorenatsi. Kevork B. Bardakjian, *A Reference Guide to Modern Armenian Literature, 1500-1920* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 2000), 92.

⁴² Rouben Adalian, *From Humanism to Rationalism: Armenian Scholarship in the Nineteenth Century* (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1992), 21.

⁴³ Walker, 55-56. Nonetheless, Bardakjian argues that Abovian was not a fervent advocate of vernacular; he thought it as a transitory phase to Classical Armenian, Bardakjian, 136. Sarkisyanz, 74-75.

⁴⁴ Adalian, 41.

Armenian was a better choice, although they realized that their plan was socially unfeasible given the dispersed condition of the Armenians and the differences between the classical and the vernacular.⁴⁵ Even a Mekhitarist abbot, who had major works on Armenian grammar, Arsen Aytenian, had to admit by the 1860's that vernacular Armenian should be the standard language although it indicated the end of the monopoly of Church on the Armenian literature.⁴⁶

Finally, for the Tsarist Armenians, the transition to the vernacular was complete by 1860, easier than their Western counterparts perhaps due to the lack of culturally strong *amiras* and the existence of a more advanced printed press.⁴⁷ The Ottoman Armenians followed the pattern and by 1870's, the triumph of vernacular over the classical Armenian was certain and parallel to that the Armenian literature began to acquire a more secular character.

2.4. The Golden Age of Armenian Literature

In line with an increased interest in the Armenian language, literature began to flourish in the 1840's. The Ottoman Armenians produced a number of translations of Western literature and books expressing the love of land and nation. The first Armenian theatre in Istanbul, where plays often touched on Armenian national subjects and figures, was opened in 1856.⁴⁸ On the other side of the border, the literature that the Russian Armenians produced differed from the Western, mainly because of the influence of German and Russian currents of thought. While the works

⁴⁵ Ibid.

⁴⁶ Ibid., 78.

⁴⁷ Bardakjian, 102.

⁴⁸ Panossian, 139- 141.

of German romantics led Armenian students and intellectuals to think about a common Armenian history and fatherland, the writings of Alexander I. Herzen, Mikhail A. Bakunin and Vissarion G. Belinsky created a growing interest in the exploitation of the ordinary Armenian.⁴⁹

Bardakjian asserts that Armenian writers admired Russian literature, especially the *narodnichestvo* (populism) phase which inspired Armenian intellectuals to formulate the Armenian identity by depicting the common Russian peasant and his sorrows.⁵⁰ As a primary example in vernacular, *Verk Hayastani* (The Wounds of Armenia), the famous novel of Abovian, demonstrated the sufferings of the Armenians under Turkish and Persian rule.⁵¹ The devotion to the Armenian fatherland, virtues of the common man and the need to act against the foreign rule were pivotal themes of the novel.⁵² Another good example of *narodnik* (populist) literary influence could be found in the writings of Perch Proshian, who idealized the common people of Armenian village.⁵³ Thus, this romantic phase of Eastern Armenian literature between 1860 and 1890 had certainly to do with the Russian populist ideas of the time since both dwelled on similar themes regarding the common man.⁵⁴

This period (from 1840's on) also witnessed an immense spread of Armenian journals. *Masis* (Ararat) (1852-1908) in Istanbul; *Hiusisapail* (Northern Lights) (1858-62, 1864) in Moscow and *Mshak* (The Tiller) (1872-1921), *Nor dar* (New Century) (1883-1916), *Murj* (Hammer) (1889-1907) in Tiflis were some of these

⁴⁹ Ibid., 155.

⁵⁰ Bardakjian, 108.

⁵¹ Although it was written in 1840, it was published in 1858.

⁵² Sarkisyanz, 76, Bardakjian, 137.

⁵³ Bardakjian, 144.

⁵⁴ Vahe Oshagan, "Modern Armenian Literature and Intellectual History from 1700 to 1915," in *Armenian People from Ancient to Modern Times*, vol 2, ed. Richard G. Hovannisian (New York: St. Martin's Press, 2004), 163.

Armenian journals.⁵⁵ This expansion of secular Armenian literature was in some aspects anti-clerical. For example, Mikayel Nalbandian's newspaper *Hiusisapail*, which was published in *ashkharhabar* (vernacular Armenian) in Moscow between 1858 and 1864, had an anti-clerical tone.⁵⁶

The articles criticizing the Church and supporting the language reform were points of interest not just for the Armenians but also the Tsarist officials, who arrested Nalbandian, perhaps on the insistence of the Armenian clergy.⁵⁷ The heritage of Nalbandian was followed by *Mshak*, which was founded by Grigor Artsruni in Tiflis in 1872 and survived till 1920. Considering the dispersed condition of Armenians, "the expansion of these journals, later continued with the revolutionary ones, provided a vital connection between dispersed Armenian communities."⁵⁸

Hence, the novels of Abovian, Proshian and secular journals contributed to the development of national identity and made the minds of Armenian community ready for a nationalist resurgence in the years to come.⁵⁹ According to Panossian, on the whole, "the Eastern Armenian literature was more effective in creating a collective Armenian identity among the common Armenians than its Western counterpart with its emphasis on themes such as liberation, nation and exploitation of the Armenian."⁶⁰

⁵⁵ Bardakjian, 103.

⁵⁶ Suny, "Eastern Armenians under Tsarist Rule", 119.

⁵⁷ Ibid., 120.

⁵⁸ Anahide Ter Minassian, "1876-1923 Döneminde Osmanlı İmparatorluğu'nda Sosyalist Hareketin Doğuşunda ve Gelişmesinde Ermeni Topluluğunun Rolü," in *Osmanlı İmparatorluğu'nda Sosyalizm ve Milliyetçilik, 1876-1923*, eds. Mete Tunçay, Erik Zürcher, trans. Mete Tunçay (İstanbul: İletişim, 1995), 181.

⁵⁹ Louise Ziazan Nalbandian, *The Armenian Revolutionary Movement: the Development of Armenian Political Parties* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1963), 57- 65.

⁶⁰ Panossian, 145- 146.

2.5. The Growth of Schools

The Russian expansion in the Caucasus naturally resulted in a rise of the Armenian population in the Russian Empire, which encouraged Armenians to consider their education system. Prior to the annexation of the region by the Russians, the Armenians of the region did not have a proper schooling system, perhaps with the exception of a few parish schools of the Armenian Church.⁶¹ At the basic level, parish schools were very important since it was in those institutions where Armenians learned their language, religion and culture. As the Armenians made their integration into the political and economic life of the Tsarist Empire, their schooling system improved. By 1836, the number of Armenian parish schools in the Russian Empire reached 21.⁶²

The other aspect of the educational development was related to the establishment of higher education institutions. After finishing the district parish school, a bright Armenian student had limited choices. Although the Russian state *gimnazii*s (high school) and universities were accepting Armenians, it was the seminaries, which took the burden of handling the Armenian higher education in Transcaucasia. An important institution in this sense was the Nersessian Seminary in Tiflis, which was named after the Catholicos Nerses Ashtaraketsi as he led the establishment of it in 1825.⁶³ Along with the Gevorkian Seminary, which was founded later in 1874 in Echmiadzin, these seminaries produced the bulk of Armenian intellectuals of the Russian Empire.⁶⁴

⁶¹ Suny, "Eastern Armenians under Tsarist Rule", 117.

⁶² Ibid.

⁶³ Sarkissian, "The Armenian Church", 497. Suny, "Eastern Armenians under Tsarist Rule", 117.

⁶⁴ Sarkissian, "The Armenian Church", 496- 497. The same was true for Georgians, especially in the case of the Tiflis seminary. Stephen F. Jones, *Socialism in Georgian Colours: The European Road to Social Democracy, 1883-1917* (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard UP, 2005), 51-57.

Considering the fact that the seminaries were, in effect, the only means of higher education and a critical source of revolutionaries in Transcaucasia, the products of these Armenian seminaries would be important in the political life of their fellows in Tsarist Russia. Another important one was the Lazarev Academy in Moscow, which functioned as an institution for higher education for Armenians, and produced important characters like Mikayel Loris-Melikov. It was transformed into Lazarev Institute of Oriental Languages in 1827 and by 1850's, and the courses taught in the academy mainly included oriental studies and Armenology.⁶⁵

The expansion of educational facilities of the Russian Armenians also affected the Ottoman Armenians. Mkrtich Sanassarian, also a product of Nersessian Seminary and a Tiflis Armenian bourgeois, set up one of the most influential Armenian colleges in the Ottoman Empire: the Sanassarian College in Erzurum.⁶⁶ The impact of Russian Armenians went on as many graduates of these Armenian seminaries in Transcaucasia found their ways as teachers in the Sanassarian College.⁶⁷

The alliance of the enterprising Armenian bourgeoisie of Transcaucasia with the Russian regime was important in this. "In return for a better treatment by the Tsarist regime, the Armenian bourgeoisie supported the regime by being loyal to it, sending their children to Russian *gimnazii*s and adopting Russified surnames."⁶⁸ The alliance was further strengthened with the advent of Vorontsov in 1845 as the first

⁶⁵ Oshagan, 149. Vartan Gregorian, "The Impact of Russia on the Armenians and Armenia," in *Russia and Asia: Essays on the Influence of Russia on the Asian Peoples*, ed. Wayne S. Vucinich (Stanford: Hoover Institution Press, 1972), 199.

⁶⁶ Pamela J. Young, "Knowledge, Nation and the Curriculum: Ottoman Armenian Education (1853-1915)" (PhD diss., The University of Michigan, 2001), 127-128.

⁶⁷ Ibid., 158.

⁶⁸ Suny, "Eastern Armenians under Tsarist Rule", 114. Suny, *Looking Toward Ararat*, 23.

viceroy of Caucasus when the education system of the region began to be fully incorporated to the Imperial system and state district schools were founded.⁶⁹

In 1850, three year elementary schools of which the language of instruction was Armenian were opened by the Armenian Church and within ten years the number of such schools reached 29.⁷⁰ In addition, the *gimnazii*s in the region included Armenian, Georgian and Turkish courses in their curriculums.⁷¹ In line with their skills, a commercial *gimnazia*, mainly for Armenians, was opened in Tiflis in 1851.⁷² Then came the period of Great Reforms, which included a general expansion of primary school network in the Russian Empire; the Armenians were no exception. Under Catholicos Gevork IV, who was the Catholicos between 1866 and 1882, new parish schools, with new curriculums, were opened.⁷³

Of course this trend created new types of Armenians in Tsarist Russia. Among the products of this growth of education were influential Armenians such as Abovian and Stepan Nazarian⁷⁴, who challenged the influence of the Armenian Church by means of language and literature. Having being educated in Moscow, Abovian was surely influenced by the lively debates in the Russian *kruzhki* (circle) and Western literature. These sorts of secular men were a source of irritation for the Armenian Church, which tried to impose a strict control over their acts and publications with the help of the Russian police.⁷⁵

⁶⁹ Anthony L. Rhineland, "Viceroy Vorontsov's Administration of the Caucasus," in *Transcaucasia, Nationalism and Social Change: Essays in the History of Armenia, Azerbaijan, and Georgia*, rev. ed., ed. Ronald Grigor Suny (T. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1983), 98-99.

⁷⁰ Suny, "Eastern Armenians under Tsarist Rule", 118.

⁷¹ Rhineland, "Viceroy Vorontsov's Administration of the Caucasus", 98- 99.

⁷² Laure Hamilton Jr. Rhineland, "The Incorporation of the Caucasus into the Russian Empire: The Case of Georgia, 1801-1854" (PhD diss.: Columbia University, 1972), 330.

⁷³ Sarkissian, "The Armenian Church", 497.

⁷⁴ Also a product of Nersessian Seminary, then universities of Dorpat and Lausanne. Nalbandian, 52-53.

⁷⁵ Suny, "Eastern Armenians under Tsarist Rule", 118.

Another influence regarding the national awakening had to do with the Armenian students in the other parts of the Empire. In the Russian Empire, having no universities in Transcaucasia, Armenian students went to Russian universities to study where Russian and European ideas of the time made their impact.⁷⁶ Coupled with the local conditions, the Eastern Armenians became more prone to the revolutionary cause than their Ottoman brethren. On the other hand, the Ottoman Armenians, who were sent abroad, mostly to France and Italy, was advocating for reforms and constitutionalism.⁷⁷

With the efforts of modernizing the language, development of a patriotic literature and the growth of schools, the emphasis on the nationality began to prevail over that of religion. The momentum of the time was perhaps best described by the words of Stepan Vosgan: “Rally around the concept *Haistan* (Armenia) not that of religion.”⁷⁸ This was an indication that the preparation phase of the Armenian national awakening had made a huge progress. However, by 1870, this national revival was confronted with the Tsarist reforms and various responses from their neighbours in the region.

⁷⁶ Sarkisyanz, 72.

⁷⁷ Panossian, 130- 132. Suny, *Looking Toward Ararat*, 63.

⁷⁸ Quoted in Suny, *Looking Toward Ararat*, 10.

CHAPTER 3

ARMENIAN LIFE IN TSARIST RUSSIA IN THE 1870'S

By 1870, the Armenian national revival had mainly a cultural and intellectual character. In the era of nationalism, experiences of other nations were borrowed as Armenian intellectuals contemplated their common Armenian history, language and mass literacy. Not surprisingly, this was the work of a small group of urban Armenians, who had to reach their fellow-Armenians in their villages in *Erevanskaia guberniia* (Erevan province) or the Armenian bourgeoisie of Tiflis, who prospered under the Tsarist administration. It is the economic primacy of these Tiflis Armenians that created a lively cultural atmosphere, which helped the formation of men like Kristapor Mikaelian.

This decade was also one of great economic and social changes with the advent of railways, increased monetarization of economy and foreign trade. In addition, the Tsarist government introduced municipality and land reforms by 1870's into Transcaucasia. It was the combination of expanding Armenian national awakening and these massive political and economic changes in Tsarist Russia that produced the bulk of revolutionary cadres of future Armenian revolutionary parties.

It is also important to note that these changes also brought up a new dimension with the relationship of Armenians with their neighbours. Georgians, with their traditional capital dominated by the Armenians, added an anti-Armenian element to their national demands. The fiery polemics between Ilia Chavchavadze and Grigor Artsruni in this period were no coincidence.⁷⁹ On the other hand, Azeris were no happier to witness the educational, economic and cultural level of their Armenian neighbours. Therefore, it is worth looking into the life of Russian Armenians and the changes occurred from 1870 on, which complicated their relationship with the Tsarist regime and their neighbours.

3.1. Erevan

By the early 19th century, Erevan was a middle-sized town with 10.000-20.000 inhabitants, mainly Muslim.⁸⁰ It was both important in terms of strategic and economic considerations. Since the Erevan Fortress controlled the Aras Valley, which would block any possible advance from Kars, and there were grazing areas around, the city had always been a vital factor for armies.⁸¹ In addition, the city functioned as a trade centre between the Russian, Ottoman and Persian Empires.⁸² However, the Russian control of the region gradually culminated in an increase in tariffs, which

⁷⁹ B. A. Borian, *Armenia, mezhdunarodnaia diplomatiia i SSSR*, vol. 1 (Moscow: Gosudarstvennoe Izdatelstvo, 1928), 307.

⁸⁰ George A. Bournoutian, *The Khanate of Erevan under Qajar Rule, 1795-1828* (Costa Mesa, CA: Mazda Publishers, in association with Bibliotheca Persica, 1992), 171-173. The Muslim population had mainly Azeri and Karapapakhs elements.

⁸¹ W. E. D. Allen and Paul Muratoff, *Caucasian Battlefields: A History of the Wars on the Turco-Caucasian Border 1828-1921* (Cambridge: At the University Pr., 1953), 9.

⁸² Bournoutian, *The Khanate of Erevan under Qajar Rule*, 176.

necessitated the reactivation of the Tabriz-Trabzon trade route for the Persian trade.⁸³

This damaged the position of Erevan as a major trade link between Persia and Russia, and it was not restored until the advent of railway in the region in the 1870's.⁸⁴

Demographically, immigration from the Persian and Ottoman Empires to Transcaucasia from 1828 on changed the balance in the favour of Armenians.⁸⁵ By 1829, the regions of Erevan and Karabagh welcomed roughly 100.000 Armenian immigrants.⁸⁶ The process of Armenian immigration from the Ottoman Empire to Transcaucasia went on throughout the second half of the 19th century and gradually became a real factor in the demography of the region.⁸⁷

Thus, by 1870, the extension of railways into Transcaucasia, monetarization of economy⁸⁸ and the impact of Emancipation were more of interest to the majority of Armenians, peasants, than the Armenian nationalist revival. Although generally stereotyped as an urban type, the population of Armenians in the Russian Empire comprised mostly peasants at the time.⁸⁹ Geographically, these peasants did not have the most productive lands so communal ownership and labour were common in the

⁸³ Charles Issawi, "The Tabriz-Trabzon Trade, 1830-1900: Rise and Decline of a Route," *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 1, No. 1 (January 1970): 23. Ronald Grigor Suny, *The Making of the Georgian Nation* (London: Tauris, 1989), 91.

⁸⁴ Here, the emphasis is on the general developments in railway system in Transcaucasia not Erevan *per se*, as the city had its railway only by 1902.

⁸⁵ Apart from the Ottoman-Russian wars, the impact of the tax obligations was important. A British consul's report stated that if Russian Armenia had more arable lands, a mass Armenian immigration across the Russian border was very likely due to huge tax differentials between the Ottoman and Russian rates. Inclosure in Consul Taylor to the Earl of Clarendon, 19.03.1869, *Turkey No.16 (1877), No 13*, in Bilâl N. Şimşir ed., *British Documents on Ottoman Armenians*, vol. 1, 2nd ed. (Ankara: T.T.K, 1989), 63.

⁸⁶ Firouzeh Mostashari, *On the Religious Frontier: Tsarist Russia and Islam in the Caucasus* (London: Tauris, 2006), 41.

⁸⁷ By 1897, the Armenian immigrants from the Ottoman Empire comprised the largest share of the Armenian population in the Georgian *guberniia*. Jones, 18.

⁸⁸ In the region, taxes began to be paid in cash rather than in kind starting from 1850's. Mostashari, 55.

⁸⁹ Richard Pipes, "Demographic and Ethnographic Changes in Transcaucasia, 1897-1956," *The Middle East Journal* 13, no.1 (Winter 1959): 44. According to 1897 census, 71.2 % of Armenians were peasants.

region.⁹⁰ Like the Russian family, the Armenian family was the primary unit of production in the countryside and it could be an extended one or a nucleus family depending on the need for communal labor and the agricultural quality of the region.⁹¹

The implementation of reforms had to wait until 1870 in Transcaucasia. As such, the Russian Armenians were trying to adapt to the changes caused by these reforms and the transformation of the economy in the region. Of course the main problem for the Armenian peasantry was the agrarian one. The emancipation reforms did not meet the expectations of land-hungry Armenian peasants who had to work hard with the relatively unproductive lands of Erevan.⁹² The Tsarist regime clearly favoured the landlords in the arrangement of Transcaucasian lands in the post Emancipation period.⁹³ Thus, the position of state peasants, 86% of Armenian peasants, in the region did not change much as they had to pay their obligations to the state.⁹⁴

The arrangement after the emancipation was more or less the same: unable to pay their redemption dues, land hungry peasants were either hired by their landlords or paid rents to use the land. In addition to these problems, a further challenge in the way of land and economic competition emerged due to Russian sectarian settlement into Transcaucasia which was carried out after 1830.⁹⁵ The competition with Armenians for land and business was reflected in the memoirs of sectarians of the

⁹⁰ Sarkisyanz, 41-42. A useful data to illustrate this point is that territories of the Armenian SSR had only 58.2% arable land. Peter Ivanovich Lyashchenko, *History of the National Economy of Russia: to the 1917 Revolution*, trans. L. M. Herman (New York: Macmillan, 1949), 621.

⁹¹ Susie Hoogasian Villa and Mary Kilbourne Matossian, *Armenian Village Life Before 1914* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1982), 22-25.

⁹² Gregorian, 185.

⁹³ Geroid Tanquary Robinson, *Rural Russia under the Old Regime: A History of the Landlord-peasant World and a Prologue to the Peasant Revolution of 1917* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1967), 86.

⁹⁴ Robinson, 90. Sarkisyanz, 90. Slavery was not common among Armenians as it did among Georgians. A partial explanation lies within the lack of a traditional Armenian nobility. Nicholas B. Breyfogle, *Heretics and Colonizers: Forging Russia's Empire in the South Caucasus* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2005), 339.

⁹⁵ Breyfogle, 174-176. These sectarian groups in Transcaucasia were mainly Dukhobors, Molokans and Subbotniks.

region as they described the Armenians as “deft fleecers and exploiters of the simple Russian population.”⁹⁶

As usual in the remaining parts of the Empire, perhaps with the exception of the enterprising landlords of the Western frontier, the level of agricultural development and mechanization were very low among the Armenian peasants. A traveler in 1871 observes that in Erevan province corn production and husbandry were conducted with very primitive instruments.⁹⁷ Even worse, poor communication and unsanitary conditions caused by the marshes around Erevan countryside made life more difficult for the Armenian peasant.⁹⁸

Moreover, the peasants also had to deal with bandits, who were very active in the Erevan countryside.⁹⁹ Under these circumstances, some of the Armenian peasants might be tempted to immigrate into the major cities of Transcaucasia if their landlord sold the land, which was a sensible thing to do considering the decreasing returns of agricultural enterprise in the last decades of 19th century. Similar to the general trend in the Russian revolutionary parties, many Armenian revolutionaries were recruited from the ranks of these immigrants.¹⁰⁰

Therefore, this low level of prosperity and lack of proper communications hindered the extension of national awakening to the Armenian peasantry. The parish priest was their only contact for direction in terms of administration, education and culture. However, with the expansion of railways into the region, the affairs of commerce and agriculture became complicated. In order not to perish, education was

⁹⁶ Quoted in Breyfogle, 181, 188.

⁹⁷ Arthur Thurlow Cunyngame, *Travels in the Caucasus, on the Caspian and Black Seas, especially in Daghestan and on the Frontiers of Persia and Turkey during the Summer of 1871* (1872; repr., London: Elibron Classics, 2005), 274.

⁹⁸ Ibid, 291.

⁹⁹ James Bryce, *Transcaucasia and Ararat: Being Notes of a Vacation Tour in the Autumn of 1876*, 4th ed. (London; New York: Macmillan and co. ltd., 1896), 174.

¹⁰⁰ Anna Geifman, *Thou Shalt Kill: Revolutionary Terrorism in Russia, 1894-1917* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1993), 11-13.

the key. Thus, the growth of schooling, printed press and the standardization of vernacular made Armenians more aware of their fate. Apart from the educational perspective, there was also a political side to this.

An ordinary Armenian now had more access to the secular Armenian works of Abovian, Nalbandian or Raffi (Hagop Melik-Hagobian) and think about the Armenian fatherland and the achievements of Armenian heroes. Alternatively, he could read descriptions of other Armenian towns in the pages of *Mshak*, which also promoted Russian classics.¹⁰¹ As the Armenian Question became more important after 1878, some of those Armenians ventured into the streets of Tiflis and Baku in the hope of revolution.

3.2. Tiflis

The cosmopolitan aspect of Tiflis by 1870's struck James Bryce at first sight, so far that which he compared the city's 'melting pot' dimension to America's.¹⁰² Indeed, the composition of the city included Georgians, Persians, Azeris, Armenians and even a German dissenter colony from Württemberg.¹⁰³ Although Tiflis was a traditionally Georgian city, the impact of Armenians on Tiflis during the nineteenth century was immense.

Coupled with their skills in commerce, artisanship and given their diaspora links, Armenians began to be more influential in the city of Tiflis, while the

¹⁰¹ Lisa Khachaturian, "Cultivating Nationhood in Imperial Russia: The Periodical Press and the Formation of a Modern Eastern Armenian Identity" (PhD diss.: Georgetown University, 2005), 286.

¹⁰² Bryce, 119.

¹⁰³ Ibid., 149.

countryside remained overwhelmingly Georgian.¹⁰⁴ The Armenian influence became even more intense with the advent of Vorontsov as the viceroy, which signaled a shift in the general policy of the Tsarist regime. Rather than trying to impose uniform imperial administration system, the elites of the region started to be accommodated, as they were recruited into the ranks of Russian bureaucracy and as the State pursued more flexible policies.¹⁰⁵

The Armenian bourgeoisie of Tiflis benefited from this, especially in economic terms. Having acquired the title of *pochetnye grazhdane* (honoured citizens) in Tiflis circa 1850's, they were exempt from military service and enjoyed other privileges.¹⁰⁶ The use of Armenians by the Russians as middle-men improved their relative position to Georgians and Muslims, which was apparent in the rise of Armenian merchants and industrialists.

While Vorontsov was trying to create his Paris of the Caucasus in 1845, many of the smaller Georgian nobles could not catch up with changes in economy and match the extravagant spending required to fit with the Russian noble ways.¹⁰⁷ Not surprisingly, particularly after the emancipation of serfs in 1861, the smaller Georgian gentry began to promote hostility to the Russian rule and their Armenian allies in Tiflis, which was gradually acquiring an Armenian character.¹⁰⁸ On the other hand, the inefficient agricultural enterprise forced many Georgian peasants to immigrate into Tiflis, where they saw that it was the Armenians who were running the place and enjoying several privileges.¹⁰⁹

¹⁰⁴ Ronald Grigor Suny, "Tiflis," in *The City in Late Imperial Russia*, ed. Michael F. Hamm (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1986), 251.

¹⁰⁵ Suny, *The Making of the Georgian Nation*, 73-75.

¹⁰⁶ George A. Bournoutian, *A Concise History of the Armenian People*, 5th ed. (Costa Mesa, CA: Mazda Press, 2006), 282-283. Suny, *Looking Toward Ararat*, 39. Honoured citizen was the highest urban estate in the imperial system.

¹⁰⁷ Suny, *The Making of the Georgian Nation*, 98.

¹⁰⁸ *Ibid.*, 115.

¹⁰⁹ Suny, "Tiflis", 253.

This national stratification was also exacerbated by the fact that the owners of the factories preferred their fellow country-men as workers for practical linguistic purposes, which in the end promoted certain divisions among the population.¹¹⁰ A typical example of this process was to be Stalin's father, who under difficult economic circumstances, left Gori to work in an Armenian shoe factory in Tiflis, Adelkhanovs', where traditionally Armenians were preferred as labourers over other nationalities.¹¹¹

In this nascent antagonism, the differences between the Georgian nobles and the Armenian bourgeoisie were becoming more acute as the Tiflis trade considerably increased during the second half of the nineteenth century. While the Armenians had an important role in Turkish and Persian trade and urban crafts, Georgians, both nobles and peasants, were badly hit by the diminishing returns on the agriculture.¹¹² Thus, according to Suny, the post-emancipation period witnessed an increased Georgian migration to Tiflis, where the confrontation with the better-off Armenian, who had the control of most of the guilds, trade contracts and the mayor post, paved the way for the formation of a certain Georgian national character.¹¹³ The economic basis was followed by the efforts of the Georgian intelligentsia, with Ilia Chavchavadze in the lead, to promote vernacular Georgian, public education and national themes.¹¹⁴

By 1870, the Armenian economic dominance of Tiflis was overwhelming and this was bolstered with the advent of railways and telegraph into the region as it facilitated the trade between Persia and Russia, which were traditionally in Armenian

¹¹⁰ Suny, "Tiflis", 260.

¹¹¹ Ibid.

¹¹² Suny, *Looking Toward Ararat*, 38.

¹¹³ Suny, *The Making of the Georgian Nation*, 115-117.

¹¹⁴ Jones, 36-37.

hands.¹¹⁵ The line between Poti and Tiflis was completed in 1873 and the Baku-Tiflis railway was to be completed by 1883, later it reached Kars in 1900. Armenian families such as Mantashevs, Avetisians and Arzumanovs were the oil tycoons while Tumanians, Kevorkovs and Pitoevs handled the commerce of the city.¹¹⁶ In addition, the establishment of Tiflis Commercial Bank, the Mutual Credit Society and Tiflis Gentry Bank between 1871 and 1874 enabled Armenian entrepreneurs to consolidate their economic primacy in the city.¹¹⁷

Due to their power in the economic sphere, the Armenian bourgeoisie of Tiflis also had a strong say in municipal matters of the city.¹¹⁸ Thus, by 1870's, the Armenians had created a strong presence in economic sphere and a good understanding with the Russian rulers, who were happy to use the Armenian bourgeoisie of Tiflis as the middle-men in administration and commerce of the region. This cordial relation was to be strained by the rise of an Armenian revolutionary movement under Russian tutelage, increased hostility from the neighbours and the changing dynamics of the Armenian Question in the international arena.

3.3. Baku

On the verge of the oil boom in the 1870's, the Armenians of Baku, situated near to industrial district of the city had an important role in the economic affairs of

¹¹⁵ David M. Lang, "Russian Impact on Georgia," in *Russia and Asia: Essays on the Influence of Russia on the Asian Peoples*, ed. Wayne S. Vucinich (Stanford: Hoover Institution Press, 1972), 225.

¹¹⁶ Suny, "Tiflis", 258.

¹¹⁷ Jones, 28.

¹¹⁸ Suny, *Looking Toward Ararat*, 20. The Tsarist regime preferred property tax rather than income tax, which could have further strengthened the professional classes, including the Armenians of Tiflis. Hugh Seton Watson, *The Decline of Imperial Russia, 1855-1914*, repr. ed. (London: Methuen, 1958), 51.

the city, though less than Tiflis. As in Tiflis, with their share in the guilds of the city, Armenians had an important role in the economy of the city.¹¹⁹ This trend went on with the oil boom as many of skilled workers and technicians in the oil sector were of Armenian origin.¹²⁰

Evidently, these relationships got more complicated with the transformation of economy, particularly with the boom of oil industry in Baku. In the period of 1850-1872, when the Tsarist monopoly on oil production was in force, Armenians such as Ter-Gukasov and Mirzoev were the main contractors.¹²¹ Then, in 1872 the Tsarist government allowed entrepreneurs to conduct large scale oil business by abolishing the state monopoly on oil.¹²² This was good news for foreign entrepreneurs such as Nobels and Rothschilds as well as the strong Armenian bourgeoisie of the region to increase their scale of production.¹²³

It was true that the giant foreign companies gradually captured the lion's share but a group of Armenian oil magnets such as Mirzoev and Mantashev appeared as a great force as they had the advantage of their local networks.¹²⁴ For instance, during the period of oil boom, Mantashev's revenues grew such an extent that he could arrange the most lavish parties in the city with the most beautiful women from Eastern

¹¹⁹ Audrey Altstadt, "Baku" in *The City in Late Imperial Russia*, ed. Michael F. Hamm (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1986), 289.

¹²⁰ Altstadt, "Baku", 289.

¹²¹ Ronald Grigor Suny, *The Baku Commune 1917-1918: Class and Nationality in the Russian Revolution* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton Univ. Pr., 1972), 4.

¹²² Daniel Yergin, *The Prize: the Epic Quest for Oil, Money, and Power* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1992), 58. Dmitrii Mendeleev, the famous Russian chemist, was one of the most influential figures of the party that pressed for the Tsarist government's decision to abolish the oil monopoly due to its inefficiency. John P. McKay, "Baku Oil and Transcaucasian Pipelines, 1883-1891: A Study in Tsarist Economic Policy," *Slavic Review* 43, no. 4 (Winter 1984): 606.

¹²³ Tadeusz Swietochowski, *Russia and Azerbaijan: A Borderland in Transition* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1995), 22.

¹²⁴ Anahide Ter Minassian, "Nationalism and Socialism in the Armenian Revolutionary Movement (1887-1912)," in *Transcaucasia, Nationalism and Social Change: Essays in the History of Armenia, Azerbaijan, and Georgia*, rev. ed., ed. Ronald Grigor Suny (T. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan, 1983), 163.

Europe and Asiatic Russia, dancers and unlimited wine.¹²⁵ On the other hand, Armenians also comprised a good deal of Baku's labor force. Along with the Armenians of Baku *guberniia*, Armenian immigrants from Karabagh were an influential part.¹²⁶

While the Armenians were primarily playing the role of middle-men in the markets of Tiflis and Baku, the Muslim (Azeri) element was in a complicated situation.¹²⁷ After the annexation of the region by the Russian Empire, the rights of Muslim landlords of Transcaucasia, who were seen as allies by the Tsarist regime, were retained, though they were not equal in rank with the Russian nobility.¹²⁸ However, as the oil business began to develop, the differences between the Muslims and the Armenians sharpened. Although, there were some Azeri oil men and some other industrialists, their relative share was smaller compared with Armenians.¹²⁹ As for the laborers, Muslims comprised the bulk of the unskilled work force. Similar to the situation in Tiflis, industrialists of each nationality preferred their fellow men as labourers, which further breed intra-nationality hostilities.¹³⁰

Although the introduction of municipal self-government into Baku in 1878 seemed to be a promising development for the Muslims, the Muslim franchise was restricted to 50 % irrespective of the demographic indicators.¹³¹ Hence, the critical Armenian influence in the *gorodskaiia дума* (city council) of Baku becomes more

¹²⁵ Ralph Hewins, *Mr. Five Per Cent, the Story of Calouste Gulbenkian* (New York: Rinehart, 1958), 49.

¹²⁶ Suny, *The Baku Commune*, 10.

¹²⁷ In the context of Baku, the terms 'Azeri' and 'Muslim' are used more or less interchangeably for the sake of convenience although there were non-Azeri Muslim peoples in the city.

¹²⁸ Andreas Kappeler, *The Russian Empire: A Multiethnic History*, trans. Alfred Clayton (Harlow, UK: Longman, 2001), 177.

¹²⁹ Audrey L. Altstadt, *The Azerbaijani Turks: Power and Identity under Russian Rule* (Stanford, CA: Hoover Institution Press, 1992), 21. In the first auction, Azeri oil men could only purchase 5 out of 51 oil plots.

¹³⁰ Suny, *The Baku Commune*, 20.

¹³¹ *Ibid.*, 8. This was to be reduced to one-third with 1892 counter-reforms.

significant, especially given the Muslim demographic dominance in the city.¹³² Thus, the affairs of Baku rested on giant foreign oil-companies, Russian bureaucracy and the Armenian bourgeoisie of the city, which gradually paved the way for a reaction among the Azeris in the way of increased national consciousness. This development naturally had a strong anti-Armenian character and affected the Tsarist policies vis-à-vis Armenians in the years to come.

The general factors that helped the formation of an Armenian national awakening inevitably affected the fate of Muslims. The introduction of telegraph lines in 1860's and the Baku-Tiflis-Batum railway line increased communication facilities.¹³³ The general expansion of public schooling and the differences between the Azeris and their neighbours in terms of national identity and economic prosperity forced preeminent Azeri think about what needs to be done. Thus, the establishment of first Azeri newspaper, *Ekinci*, in 1875 and the efforts of eminent Azeri industrialists in cultural affairs were surely an indication of this.¹³⁴ Coupled with the general developments among the Muslims of the Russian Empire such as the influence of İsmail Bey Gaspıralı on the modernization of language and Muslim schooling or the intellectual efforts of Kazan Tatars, the basis for an Azeri national movement was founded.¹³⁵

Nevertheless, the formation of an Azeri national consciousness lagged behind the Armenians. In addition to their weaker economic prospects and low rates of schooling, Azeri printed journals were far less than Armenians.¹³⁶ This uneven growth

¹³² Altstadt, "Baku", 300.

¹³³ Altstadt, *The Azerbaijani Turks: Power and Identity under Russian Rule*, 23.

¹³⁴ *Ekinci* was published by Zerdabi Hasan Bey, a Moscow University graduate, who had been influenced by the *narodnik* movement of the time. Two years later, the newspaper was closed by the Tsarist officials. Tadeusz Swietochowski, *Müslüman Cemaatten Ulusal Kimliğe Rus Azerbaycanı 1905-1920*, trans. Nuray Mert (İstanbul: Bağlam, 1988), 47-48.

¹³⁵ For more on the impact of İsmail Bey Gaspıralı, please see Hakan Kırımlı ed., *İsmail Bey Gaspıralı için* (Ankara: Kırım Türkleri Kültür ve Yardımlaşma Derneği, 2004).

¹³⁶ Mostashari, 133. By 1889, there was only one Azeri journal in circulation.

of national consciousness and the emergence of sharp differences in their role in the economy gradually influenced the way in which Armenian nationalist development took its shape. As the Armenian bourgeoisie, generally called by travelers as the ‘Jews of the East’¹³⁷ were breeding the material and cultural dimension of the Armenian national awakening, the virtues of the deed was to be carried out by the Armenian revolutionaries, who were learning from their Russian teachers at the time.

¹³⁷ Augustus H. Mounsey, *A Journey Through the Caucasus and the Interior of Persia* (1872; repr., London: Elibron, 2005), 47. This similarity was pointed out by some other visitors to the region: “Armenians are like Jews: They are economically adept but they live in a scattered manner which makes them a target for their neighbours.” Quoted in Swietochowski, *Müslüman Cemaatten Ulusal Kimliğe Rus Azerbaycanı*, 66.

CHAPTER 4

THE IMPACT OF RUSSIAN RADICALISM ON THE ARMENIAN REVOLUTIONARY MOVEMENT

“Fortresses would be more useful than the convents, arms more useful than sacred vases and the smoke of gunpowder more agreeable than incense”.¹³⁸ This line was produced by Raffi, one of the most famous men of letters of a community, which was known by their distinct religion and skills in commerce. Although the ferocity in these lines was not directed to the Tsarist regime, not until 1903, there was a Russian element in this. It was the Russian revolutionary movement, which helped its Armenian counterpart transform their nationalist movement into a revolutionary one. The integration of the Armenians into the economic, educational and political life of the Empire brought them into closer contact with the Russians, whose influence on the Armenians became complicated. One of these complexities was obviously demonstrated in the rise of a revolutionary movement which accelerated in the second half of the nineteenth century. In this period, according to Suny, social mobility and

¹³⁸ Quoted in William L. Langer, *The Diplomacy of Imperialism, 1890-1902*, 2nd ed. (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1956), 154-155.

Western affiliation were more intense among the Armenians of Tsarist Russia than it was in the Ottoman Empire.¹³⁹ As the literary and educational preparation phase of the Armenian national awakening got under way, general developments regarding reforms and modernization in Tsarist Russia made Armenians more open to radical ideas in this period.¹⁴⁰

At the ideological level, the ideas of the Russian intelligentsia such as Sergei G. Nechaev, Pyotr L. Lavrov and Pyotr N. Tkachev made a considerable impact on the foundations of Armenian revolutionary thinking towards the end of this century. The Russian legacy had also its mark on the practical level: *Khozhdenie v narod* (Going to the People) movement and the methods adopted by *Narodnaia Volia* (The People's Will) provided a valuable guidance for the Armenian radicals.¹⁴¹ Thus, it is worth explaining the Russian legacy over the Armenian revolutionary movement by focusing on the ideological and operational level.

4. 1. The First Classes of Russian Tutelage

In the first place, it is worth thinking on the position of Armenians under the Russian rule. From 1828 onwards, Transcaucasia had been integrated into the administrative and economic structure of the Empire. The breach of capitalism into the Russian Empire got pace with the second half of the nineteenth century as the markets of Tiflis and Erevan were flooded with Russian manufactured goods, while

¹³⁹ Suny, *Looking Toward Ararat*, 18.

¹⁴⁰ Ibid., 19.

¹⁴¹ Richard G. Hovannisian, *Armenia: On the Road to Independence 1918* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1967), 17.

raw materials of the region were sent to Moscow and St. Petersburg.¹⁴² The case of Baku was even more complicated as the oil industry boomed, which totally changed the picture of the city. There was also a demographical dimension to a degree in which the population of Baku increased tenfold, Tiflis threefold and Erevan twofold between 1865 and 1897.¹⁴³ Therefore, increased urbanization levels brought about social changes in centers such as Tiflis, Baku and Batum. In the eyes of the Russians, hence, “the period roughly between 1840 and 1880 witnessed the image of the Armenians shifting from a fellow Christian to a merchant type.”¹⁴⁴

The economic and political integration of the Armenians into the Empire was naturally followed at educational and cultural level. Increased number of universities and *gimnazii*s, which was indeed a critical aspect of Russian revolutionary movement, naturally affected the Armenian youth. Although the backbone of the Armenian education network was controlled by the Armenian Church via parish schools, many Armenians who were enrolled into Russian schools to benefit from the Tsarist regime. Soon they found themselves affected by a relatively secularized system, which in the end had a role in the emergence of Armenian intelligentsia full of ideas concerning social change, anti-secularism and national liberation.¹⁴⁵

Another obvious reason for rising Armenian affiliation with the Russian radicals was the fact that there was no university in Transcaucasia. Therefore, parallel to the rise of the Armenian bourgeoisie in the region, a considerable number of Armenian youth found their ways to Russian and European universities. In no time,

¹⁴² Minassian, “Nationalism and Socialism in the Armenian Revolutionary Movement (1887-1912)”, 161.

¹⁴³ Gregorian, 186.

¹⁴⁴ Suny, *Looking Toward Ararat*, 39. The changing Armenian image in Russian minds, used here and elsewhere in the thesis draws from Suny’s discussion. *Looking Toward Ararat*, 31-51.

¹⁴⁵ Gregorian, 198.

the universities of Moscow, St. Petersburg, Dorpat and Berlin had their Armenian students.¹⁴⁶

Russian universities welcomed the sons and even the daughters of the lower classes, who comprised a vital proportion of not only the intelligentsia but also many important bureaucratic positions, more than its European counterparts.¹⁴⁷ These future members of the Russian intelligentsia were in total opposition to the Tsarist regime as they contemplated on the injustices of serfdom, the ideal patterns of governance, and most importantly the responsibility to act to correct these.¹⁴⁸ These ideas also affected the students from borderlands, including Armenians, particularly via *zemliachestvos*, where students from the same provinces gathered and discussed the ideas of the time.¹⁴⁹

One such an example was Mikayel Nalbandian. Educated in the universities of Moscow and St. Petersburg, he became interested in European radicals as well as Russians as he went abroad. Thus, his close connections with Herzen and Bakunin enabled him to be a part of *Zemlia i Volia* (Land and Liberty), which urged him to write on social and national liberation for Armenians.¹⁵⁰ He wrote that “all people should preserve their national features freely, which would only give strength and soul to the common toil of the peoples.”¹⁵¹

The immediate influence of these Russian radical circles was reflected in Nalbandian’s works and his journal, where he severely questioned the benefits of the

¹⁴⁶ Ibid., 199.

¹⁴⁷ Tibor Szamuely, *The Russian Tradition* (London: Fontana Press, 1988), 197-98.

¹⁴⁸ Ibid., 198.

¹⁴⁹ Szamuely, 370. James C. McClelland, *Autocrats and Academics: Education, Culture, and Society in Tsarist Russia* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1979), 98.

¹⁵⁰ Nalbandian, 58-59, Gregorian, 207, Franco Venturi, *Roots of Revolution: A History of the Populist and Socialist Movements in Nineteenth Century Russia*, trans. Francis Haskell (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1960), 264.

¹⁵¹ Quoted in Sarkisyanz, 83.

Russian imperial rule.¹⁵² Similar to the Russian populist literature, he criticized the system of serfdom and the exploitation of the Armenian peasant.¹⁵³ Later in 1862, he was caught by the Russian secret police due to possession of illegal literature and causing anti-Tsarist sentiments among the Russian Armenians. He died just after he was released from the jail in 1866, causing further skepticism about the benefits of Russian imperial rule among his fellow Armenian radicals.¹⁵⁴

As Szamuely notes, an important ideological legacy of the Russian revolutionary movement for other variants was its creation of the cult of ‘revolutionism’, for which the revolutionary fighter could sacrifice himself and the idealization of the revolutionary hero.¹⁵⁵ Themes such as martyrdom, self-sacrifice or suffering were used widely in the Russian revolutionary circles.¹⁵⁶

These ideas were not limited to the discussions of Russian radicals; they began to disseminate with the publication of novels such as Nikolai G. Chernyshevsky’s *What Is To Be Done*. This pattern of Russian revolutionaries would be an important guide for the ideological preparation phase of their Armenian counterparts. Particularly, Armenians educated in Russian universities were influenced by this messianic vision of Russian intelligentsia.¹⁵⁷

¹⁵² Walker, 57.

¹⁵³ Bardakjian, 138. In addition to his focus on peasantry, Nalbandian’s works reflected the rising national sentiments. Later, his poem *Mer Hayrennik* (Our Fatherland) became the national anthem of the Armenian republic. Bardakjian, 139.

¹⁵⁴ Ibid., 138.

¹⁵⁵ Szamuely, 203.

¹⁵⁶ Ibid., 213.

¹⁵⁷ Anahide Ter Minassian, “1876-1923 Döneminde Osmanlı İmparatorluğu’nda Sosyalist Hareketin Doğuşunda ve Gelişmesinde Ermeni Topluluğunun Rolü”, 167-168.

4.2. The Imprint of Russian Populism on the Armenian Revolutionaries

The formation of the Armenian revolutionary movement, especially at the ideological level, was heavily influenced by Russian populist movement throughout 1870's and 1880's.¹⁵⁸ One of the important influences in this sense stemmed from Nechaev's ideas on the mentality of revolutionary movement in the Empire. Having defined the ideal type of a revolutionary, he set the framework in which the future revolutionary organizations should operate. "Those who join the organization must give up every possession, occupation or family tie, because families and occupations might distract the members from their activities."¹⁵⁹ Other than the traits of the ideal revolutionary, Nechaev also wrote on the categorization of the enemies and the methods to deal with them.¹⁶⁰ His ideas were to be put into practice later by Armenian revolutionaries, who murdered non-collaborators in several places, including a major one in a church in Moscow.¹⁶¹

Back from the days of the Decembrists, the Russian revolutionary tradition had been full of themes of sacrifice, messianism and revolutionary responsibility.¹⁶² According to this tradition, the Russian revolutionary had a special role to save people and country and would do his task whatever the costs. These themes of absolute devotion and self-sacrifice for the ultimate cause had a profound imprint on the Armenian revolutionaries in the years to come. An evident example of Armenian revolutionaries' embracing such ideals occurred with the Gugunian Expedition of 1890.

¹⁵⁸ Gregorian, 208-209.

¹⁵⁹ Szamuely, 339.

¹⁶⁰ Ibid., 345-347.

¹⁶¹ Uras, 452.

¹⁶² Venturi, 2.

A small armed unit of Armenian volunteers led by Sarkis Gugunian, who was educated in St. Petersburg, began their campaign to help the Armenians on the other side of the border. Yet, the insufficient means of the party and their unrealistic objective brought a debacle, in which most of them were killed by Ottoman forces while the ones who could make it to the Russian border were immediately arrested by the Tsarist police.¹⁶³ Therefore, the Nechaev spirit had found an embodiment with the self-sacrificial attitude of these revolutionaries of the Gugunian Expedition. Likewise, the Dashnaks, depicted their revolutionaries as the Archangel Gabriel, who was to execute 'the will of on high'.¹⁶⁴

As the Russian reform process came to a standstill and the pressure on the revolutionaries increased after the Polish uprising and the unsuccessful assassination attempt on the Tsar by Dmitrii V. Karakozov in 1866, there was a moment of change in the Russian revolutionary movement, which in turn, affected the mentality of the Armenian revolutionary movement. With the influence of Lavrov's teachings, a daring campaign of 'Going to the People' was initiated between 1874 and 1877 in order to educate the peasantry as the basic sources of revolution. Lavrov believed that "the revolution should be made not only for the people but also by the people."¹⁶⁵ Although the lack of immediate results in countryside and harsh police measures on these idealists were the signals for disappointment, the idea had deeply affected the Armenians. It is also important to note that the idealization of the Russian peasant by Russian populists played a vital role in the development of national consciousness among other nationalities of the Empire. As Pipes asserts, "increased interests of the

¹⁶³ Ronald Grigor Suny, "Eastern Armenians under Tsarist Rule", 132.

¹⁶⁴ Quoted in Guenther Lewy, *The Armenian Massacres in Ottoman Turkey: A Disputed Genocide* (Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press, 2005), 55-56.

¹⁶⁵ Szamuely, 376.

customs of the peasants, their customs, language accelerated national awakening of various peoples”, also Armenians.¹⁶⁶

Modeled on the idea of ‘Improve yourselves and then improve your people’ of Lavrov, Armenian revolutionaries launched the movement of *Depi Yerkir* (To the Fatherland). The rationale of this drive was to call the Armenian intelligentsia, professionals and students into the revolutionary struggle to pay their ‘debts to the people’.¹⁶⁷ These educated and better-off Russian Armenians were urged to go to the fatherland, to “Ottoman Armenia”, where the Armenian peasant needed the help of their Armenian brethren.¹⁶⁸ The logic of their channeling all energies to “Ottoman Armenia”, instead of Russian proper; basically stemmed from their argument that the Ottoman Armenians were far worse than the ones in the Russian Empire.¹⁶⁹ This campaign was also supported by the writings of nationalist Armenian writers, most prominent of them being Raffi. In his work, *Kaytzer* (Sparks), he depicted Armenian students from Russia going to “Ottoman Armenia” to observe their brethren’s condition.¹⁷⁰

Hence, the responsibilities of these urban Armenians were not only to aid Armenian peasantry in economic terms but also to stimulate their national identity, of which they were largely unaware at the time. One can not fail to notice the similarity between ‘Going to the People’ movement of Russian populists in 1870’s and ‘To the Fatherland’ campaign of Armenians.¹⁷¹ Both attempts aimed to educate and make conscious peasants for a change, with slight shift of the emphasis on a national

¹⁶⁶ Richard Pipes, *The Formation of the Soviet Union: Communism and Nationalism, 1917-1923*, rev. ed. (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Pr., 1964), 8.

¹⁶⁷ Minassian, “Nationalism and Socialism in the Armenian Revolutionary Movement (1887-1912)”, 156. Suny, *Looking Toward Ararat*, 67.

¹⁶⁸ Nalbandian, 136-137.

¹⁶⁹ Walker, 62.

¹⁷⁰ Bardakjian, 146.

¹⁷¹ Suny, *Looking Toward Ararat*, 67.

revolution rather than a social one. Moreover, participants of both Russian and Armenian versions of the movement turned to violence as their peaceful methods failed to realize their goals.

With the failure of ‘Going to the People’ campaign, the Russian populists decided to act more firmly as revolutionary parties generally do when they fail. The level of intimidation was not limited to Tsarist officials. For instance, Rostov section of Land and Liberty put up several posters in which were lines such as “Such is the fate that awaits every Judas”, to threaten traitors to the party.¹⁷² It is interesting to note that in first issues of *Droshak* (The Banner), Dashnaks’ official journal, there were very similar threats to the betrayers to the cause.¹⁷³

4.3. The People’s Will and Its Legacy

In effect, increased police repression, mass arrests and political trials of populists led the members of Land and Liberty to think about restructuring.¹⁷⁴ However, there was disagreement over the tactics and the organization split into two groups in the summer of 1879. Those advocating a policy of terror established the People’s Will, while others, emphasizing agitation and propaganda among the people, and formed *Chernyi Peredel* (The Black Partition). The leading ideologue of the latter, Georgii V. Plekhanov argued that “terror would produce another sort of domination of the will and the needs of the majority by a minority and instead,

¹⁷² Venturi, 600-601.

¹⁷³ Lewy, 15

¹⁷⁴ Venturi, 624.

advocated intense propaganda and education.”¹⁷⁵ Still, Plekhanov did not rule out the fact that terrorism might help to damage the Tsarist machine but the excessive emphasis on terrorism put by the People’s Will was tactically wrong.¹⁷⁶

In that respect, the Armenian revolutionary movement had definitely preferred the tactics of the People’s Will people not only due to their reliance on terror but also the party structure as well. “The People’s Will, the structure of which had been a source of inspiration for all subsequent organizations of this sort, was formulated as a hierarchical, centralized body, in which the Executive Committee was responsible for the decision making process and designing party policies.”¹⁷⁷ The number of members of the organization, who served in this Executive Committee, was fewer than fifty.¹⁷⁸ The party favoured small detachments over mass membership so as to fight more efficiently and avoid arrests. As such, it is estimated that total membership to the party never exceeded 500.¹⁷⁹

Their choice might have been based on their emphasis on the discipline and secrecy within the party at the expense of the active support of the masses. This vanguard party characteristic, also an important aspect of the Bolsheviks, was a main feature of both Hinchaks and Dashnaks, at least until the Tsarist decision to confiscate the Armenian Church in 1903. One can easily observe the vanguard party type of Hinchaks and Dashnaks as figures for their membership numbers were very low until 1903.¹⁸⁰

¹⁷⁵ Hans Rogger, *Russia in the Age of Modernization and Revolution: 1881-1917* (London: Longman, 1983), 142.

¹⁷⁶ Anna Geifman, *Thou Shalt Kill: Revolutionary Terrorism in Russia, 1894-1917* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1993), 85.

¹⁷⁷ Richard Pipes, *Russian Revolution 1899-1919* (London: Collins Harvill, 1990), 142-143.

¹⁷⁸ Avrahm Yarmolinsky, *Road to Revolution: A Century of Russian Radicalism* (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1959), 233.

¹⁷⁹ Ibid., 233-234.

¹⁸⁰ Panossian, 212.

The myth of the people and the revolutionaries' responsibility to act for them was a Russian revolutionary tradition. For many revolutionary ideologues, "the Russian intelligentsia was the main actor in the making of history in the name of the people".¹⁸¹ In that respect, Tkachev's ideas on the importance of the vanguard party might have influenced the Armenian revolutionary movement. According to Tkachev, "the people were already ready for the revolution, but did not know it, so that the initiative should be maintained by professional revolutionaries".¹⁸² It was the responsibility of the revolutionary to reach the masses, which was more or less the case in the Armenian context as the peasants of both Russian and Ottoman Empire were not that interested in revolutionary politics in general.

4.4. The Learning Curve: The Armenian Revolutionaries in Action

Of course, the core of Armenian revolutionary movement was Tiflis. This had to do with the cultural development of the city, a part of which was Armenian money. The establishment of an Armenian theater in late 1860's, where national themes were performed and the expansion of bookstores in the city (5th in the whole Empire in 1890) surely helped the development of Armenian revolutionary movement.¹⁸³ A young Armenian immigrant, a son of an artisan or a seminarian in Tiflis could access to Raffi's works, which portrayed the social injustice in the city and the

¹⁸¹ Szamuely, 208.

¹⁸² Venturi, 413- 414. Orlando Figes, *A People's Tragedy: the Russian Revolution, 1891-1924* (New York, N.Y.: Penguin Books, 1998), 137.

¹⁸³ Bardakjian, 104, Jeffrey Brooks, *When Russia Learned to Read: Literacy and Popular Literature 1861-1917* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1985), 110. The increasing number of bookstores also enabled the circulation of thick journals, which had a considerable number of readers. These journals provided a space for ideological discussions, from which many revolutionary theoreticians benefited. Szamuely, 194-195.

revolutionaries' role to assume the burden.¹⁸⁴ This could have been further strengthened with the general immigrant psychology, in which “the lack of his roots in the city was compensated with the party comradeship.”¹⁸⁵ Naturally, all of these populist revolutionary organizations had their local branches in Tiflis, the hotbed of Armenian radicalism, which taught Armenians various revolutionary methods. For instance, the Executive Committee of the People's Will in the Tiflis branch had three Armenian and three Georgian members.¹⁸⁶

However, as the organization gradually disintegrated after the assassination of the Tsar in 1881, the affiliated Armenians began to form their own organizations based on the model of their Russian counterparts. One of those groups was Moscow based *Hayrenaserner Muiitun* (The Union of Patriots), which made use of illegal press and advocated socio-economic liberation of the Armenians.¹⁸⁷ For their operational scheme, the tactics of propaganda, agitation and most importantly, armed resistance were adopted.¹⁸⁸ Later, this group published *Azadutian Avedaper* (Messenger of Freedom) circa 1883-4, which contributed to the national revolutionary movement.¹⁸⁹ Meanwhile, several small revolutionary cells were founded in Tiflis and Erevan and began to distribute revolutionary literature and tried to assist the revolutionaries in the Ottoman Empire, their main area of focus.¹⁹⁰

The next critical phase for the Armenian revolutionaries began in 1887 with the foundation of Hinchak Revolutionary Party in Geneva. The Russian legacy was more than obvious. Even the name of the party was a tribute to Herzen's journal

¹⁸⁴ Bardakjian, 144-45.

¹⁸⁵ Figs, 120-121.

¹⁸⁶ Gregorian, 208. Nalbandian, 137.

¹⁸⁷ Minassian, Nationalism and Socialism in the Armenian Revolutionary Movement (1887-1912)", 156.

¹⁸⁸ Gregorian, 210.

¹⁸⁹ Nalbandian, 142.

¹⁹⁰ Hratch Dasnabedian, *History of the Armenian Revolutionary Federation Dashnaksutiun (1890-1924)* (Milan: OEMME edizioni, 1989), 23.

Kolokol.¹⁹¹ Unsurprisingly, all of the founding members of the organization¹⁹² were educated in Russian universities, where they familiarized themselves with the Russian revolutionaries. The leader of the party, Avetis Nazarbekian and his fiancée, Maro Vardanian had certain connections with the Russian revolutionary parties.¹⁹³ As they left Russia for Europe, the future leader cadres of Hinchaks had been in close touch with influential Russian émigrés in Geneva including Plekhanov and Vera I. Zasulich.¹⁹⁴

The Russian influence could be also observed at the organizational level. Similar to the strategy and highly centralized structure of the People's Will, Hinchaks adopted a program, which included extensive clandestine operations and propaganda until the tyranny had been destroyed.¹⁹⁵ As in the Russian tradition, terror would be a tool to awaken the passive masses.¹⁹⁶ Moreover, the emphasis of Russian populists on the potential role of Russian peasantry for a social change was shared by these Armenian revolutionaries.¹⁹⁷ Yet, the tyrant that Hinchaks aimed to topple was the Ottoman not the Russian one.

According to the Hinchak scheme, only after the Ottoman Armenians had been saved, could a federal democratic republic come about, consisting of Russian, Persian and Ottoman Armenians.¹⁹⁸ Although using Marxist rhetoric, Somakian argues, Hinchaks still had a nationalist character, which by looking the examples of

¹⁹¹ *Hinchak* means bell in Armenian so does *Kolokol* in Russian.

¹⁹² The founding members of Hinchak Party were Avetis Nazarbekian, Maro Vardanian, Gabriel Kafian, Gevork Garajian, Ruben Khanazatian and Christopher Ohanian, Levon Stepanian. Nalbandian, 115.

¹⁹³ Libaridian, "Revolution and Liberation in the 1892 and 1907 Programs of the Dashnaksutun," 189.

¹⁹⁴ Nalbandian, 113-114.

¹⁹⁵ Gregorian, 211.

¹⁹⁶ Nalbandian, 110.

¹⁹⁷ Gerard J. Libaridian, "Revolution and Liberation in the 1892 and 1907 Programs of the Dashnaksutun," in *Transcaucasia, Nationalism and Social Change: Essays in the History of Armenia, Azerbaijan, and Georgia*, rev. ed., ed. Ronald Grigor Suny (T. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan, 1983), 189.

¹⁹⁸ Nalbandian, 112.

Greek and Bulgarian counterparts, was useful in attaining autonomy.¹⁹⁹ Still, their impact was limited. One of the causes of their ineffectiveness was the lack of appeal of their socialist leanings both among some party members and possible cooperative elements, such as the Great Powers and the Armenian bourgeoisie.²⁰⁰ After their participation to Zeitun uprising in 1895, Hinchaks lost their eminence in the Armenian revolutionary movement, which was to be taken over by another group.

This party was Dashnaksutiun (Armenian Revolutionary Federation), which emerged as an association of several Armenian revolutionary groups. The party was founded in Tiflis in 1890 by Russian Armenians and its main aim was to liberate “Ottoman Armenia”, while the methods of the party, again, had much in common with the People’s Will.²⁰¹ All of the members of the leader cadre, Kristapor Mikayelian²⁰², Stepan Zorian and Simon Zavarian were educated in Russian universities. As their Russian predecessors, Dashnaks used various forms of tactics including armed rebellions, assassinations, propaganda and agitation.²⁰³ For that purpose, an armory was built in Tabriz in 1891.²⁰⁴

Moreover, the programme of the party had been clearly influenced by the manifesto of the People’s Will. Rather than the Marxist rhetoric, which Hinchaks employed to a certain extent, the tone of the Dashnaks resembled mostly the populist doctrine, stressing the importance of the peasantry for the future society.²⁰⁵ In effect, the core programmes of both parties aimed at destroying the tyrant by whatever

¹⁹⁹ Manoug Somakian, *Empires in Conflict: Armenia and the Great Powers, 1895-1920* (London: I.B. Tauris, 1995), 16.

²⁰⁰ Nalbandian, 129.

²⁰¹ Gregorian, 213.

²⁰² Mikaelian and Zavarian were former *Narodnaia Volia* members. Nalbandian, 139.

²⁰³ Ironically, this intensive affiliation with violence brought about the death of Mikaelian by the explosives prepared for the assassination of Abdülhamid II. Hovannisian, *Armenia: On the Road to Independence 1918*, 28.

²⁰⁴ Houri Berberian, “The Dashnaksutiun and the Iranian Constitutional Revolution, 1905-1911,” *Iranian Studies* 29, no. 1/2 (Winter - Spring 1996): 9. A major portion of the skilled workers (36 of them between 1891 and 1905) in this arms factory came from Tula arms factory, 9.

²⁰⁵ Gregorian, 213.

means necessary and used populist terms to get the attraction of masses. In line with the People's Will, the reliance on terrorist acts was accepted as legitimate by the Dashnaks in the sense that "terror was a necessity where collective action was missing."²⁰⁶

In that aspect, Dashnaks were luckier than their Russian teachers as they could appeal to the rising nationalist sentiment among Armenians whereas the Russian peasants mourned the murder of their Tsar in 1881, certainly not a sign of appreciation of what the members of the People's Will tried to achieve. Similar to Hinchaks, the Dashnaks aimed to liberate "Turkish Armenia", and there was no direct address to the needs of Russian Armenians.²⁰⁷

To sum up, the impact of Russian radicalism in the second half of the nineteenth century made a profound impact on the development of the nascent Armenian revolutionary movement in the way of mentality, structure and the methods employed. Beginning from the radical ideas regarding the revolutionary cause of Nechaev, themes of self-sacrifice and utter devotion to the cause entered into the vocabulary of Armenian radicalism as it was carried out in the Gugunian Expedition in 1890. Being another important revolutionary ideologue, Lavrov's contribution to the Armenian revolutionary thinking had been exercised in the 'To the Fatherland' movement. In order to enlighten and help the Armenian peasantry, that campaign urged several urban Armenians in the Russian Empire to go to their fatherland, "Ottoman Armenia".

Nevertheless, the most striking influence of the Russian revolutionaries on their Armenian successors was the practical methods they adopted. In that respect, the

²⁰⁶ Manfred Hildermeier, "The Terrorist Strategies of the Socialist-Revolutionary Party in Russia, 1900-14," in *Social Protest, Violence and Terror in Nineteenth and Twentieth-century Europe*, eds. Wolfgang J. Mommsen and Gerhard Hirschfeld, (London: Berg Publishers, 1982), 82.

²⁰⁷ Suny, *The Baku Commune*, 21.

methods of the People's Will had been borrowed by various Armenian revolutionary groups. By legitimizing the use of intensive terror, propaganda and agitation for achieving the ultimate cause of eliminating the grand tyrant, the Tsar, the People's Will had been a perfect example for the Armenian cause, which considered the Ottoman rule as a tyranny for the time being. Furthermore, both Dashnaks and Hinchaks adopted a similar organizational structure to the People's Will in the sense that they operated as vanguard parties with certain restrictions on the membership qualifications due to reasons of discipline and the risks of having a wider base. With this learning process, the pupils of the Russian radicalism would shake the bars of this 'prison of nations' in the years to come.

CHAPTER 5

RUSSIFICATION AND CONFISCATION

While formulating their initial strategies, the Dashnak leaders assumed that “Russia would welcome their activities due to her historic enmity with the Ottomans.”²⁰⁸ The last two decades of 19th century showed that they were somehow mistaken in their calculations. With the coronation of Alexander III as the new Tsar in 1881, virtually all nationalities suffered from severe limitations in the way of political and cultural matters due to Russification policies; and Armenians were no exception. However, problems got worse as Armenian revolutionary parties went into action. Although these parties refrained from acting in the Russian Empire, they contributed to the change of their perception by the Tsarist regime as potential trouble makers.²⁰⁹

The Russian response to the Armenians massacres of 1894-96 in the Ottoman Empire was also in line with her domestic policies as regards to the Armenians. Owing to the changes of priorities in her foreign policy, there was a certain understanding with the Ottoman Empire. Armenian cries for Russian intervention found no reply but instead more repression. The limitations on Armenian schooling

²⁰⁸ Libaridian, “Revolution and Liberation in the 1892 and 1907 Programs of the Dashnaksutun”, 193.

²⁰⁹ Suny, *Looking Toward Ararat*, 43.

regulations increased, interestingly by the order of the minister of Education, Ivan D. Delianov, an Armenian himself.

Meanwhile, relations with the Armenians' fellow-Caucasians were no better. Noe Zhordania was talking of "a Georgian take-over of Tiflis from the 'alien culture of Armenians'." ²¹⁰ Ethnic antagonisms were also exacerbated by the competition for jobs, especially in a period of population boom. ²¹¹ These were indeed difficult times for Russian Armenians especially given the hostile attitude of the Tsarist administration, which was evident in Prince Grigorii S. Golitsyn's outburst: "The only Armenian to remain in Tiflis will be the scarecrow of an Armenian in the Museum of Tiflis." ²¹²

5.1. The Russian Perception of Armenians in the Late 19th Century

The Russian perception of Armenians began to shift. As Suny puts it, they were increasingly seen, not so much as mercantile fellow-Christians but as rebellious and disloyal, a process starting in the early 1880's and continuing up to the first decade of the 20th century. ²¹³ Nevertheless, this needs further elaboration. In this aspect, the relations of Armenians with other nationalities of Transcaucasia and the doubts of the Tsarist administration regarding the revolutionary activities of Armenians in the Ottoman Empire were influential. ²¹⁴ In the first place, it would be useful to analyze the dimension of interrelations between Armenians, Georgians and

²¹⁰ Jones, 68.

²¹¹ Altstadt, "Baku", 309.

²¹² Borian, 327. Sarkisyanz, 142.

²¹³ Suny, *Looking Toward Ararat*, 43.

²¹⁴ Ibid., 43-44.

Muslims of Transcaucasia as regards this growing anti-Armenian perception by Tsarist authorities.

In the second half of 19th century, the position of the Armenians in Transcaucasia vis-à-vis Georgians and Muslims gradually improved. The prestigious position of Loris-Melikov as the Minister of Interior certainly raised the Armenian expectations.²¹⁵ Moreover, demographic, economic and political factors were on the side of Russian Armenians at the time.

Particularly in Tiflis and Baku, Armenians dominated industry and trade. A British traveler, Lynch, on a visit to Transcaucasia in 1894, saw the Armenians as the major productive force as builders, wine producers or public servants.²¹⁶ By 1900, 4206 of 7929 commercial houses in Tiflis, 44% of the largest industrial firms were Armenian owned.²¹⁷ As a sign of their domination of economy in the city, goods coming from Tiflis to Russian cities were called *armianskie tovary* (Armenian goods).²¹⁸ As for Baku, the Armenian share in the oil industry reached as much as 30% and most shares of Transcaucasian Banks were owned by Armenian businessmen.²¹⁹ In Batum, where shipment of oil was important, Armenians controlled 25% of the shipping industry.²²⁰

Another important factor was the increased strategic importance of the region and the rising Russian interest in Eastern Anatolia. Following the 1877-78 War, Russia opened four military vice-consulates in Rize, Erzurum, Van and Hami to monitor the developments, especially among the Armenians and Kurds, for the

²¹⁵ Bournoutian, *A Concise History of the Armenian People*, 289.

²¹⁶ Harry Finnis B. Lynch, *Armenia: Travels and Studies*, vol.1 (London: Longmans, Green and Co., 1901), 467-468.

²¹⁷ Jones, 18. Suny, *The Making of the Georgian Nation*, 118.

²¹⁸ Suny, "Eastern Armenians under Tsarist Rule", 109.

²¹⁹ Bournoutian, *A Concise History of the Armenian People*, 284. Gregorian, 187.

²²⁰ Gregorian, 188.

Asiatic Department.²²¹ The activities of Armenians were not only important for foreign policy; Russia had to think of her own Armenians, who were getting ready with increased national consciousness and the influence of Russian radicalism. The Russian authorities were right to be concerned as the Armenian revolutionary cells began to spread in the Russian Empire, especially in the borderlands to assist their fellows across the border. In the next decade, the Kars and Erevan committees of the Dashnaks would play a key role in the training of revolutionaries, especially in the way of smuggling arms.²²²

On the other hand, the Georgian and Muslim nobility of the region were impoverished due to their lack of compatibility with the new economic conditions. The contrast with the Armenians was considerable. Not only had they a substantial Diaspora heritage; the fact that they had experienced a national awakening earlier than their neighbours gave a certain advantage as far as the formation of a middle class was concerned.²²³ The completion of Tiflis-Baku railway line in 1883 further fuelled the economic transformation of the region. As a result, vanishing feudal ties forced Georgian and Muslim peasants and their landlords to change and head for cities where they came across the economically adept Armenians.²²⁴

During the 1880's, this negative Armenian image was also shared by the top Tsarist officials of the region. Prince Alexander M. Dondukov-Korsakov (a veteran of the Crimean and 77-78 Wars), the High Commissioner of the Caucasus²²⁵ between 1882 and 1890, complained about the Armenians' economic domination at the

²²¹ Alex Marshall, *The Russian General Staff and Asia, 1800-1917* (London: New York: Routledge, 2006), 110.

²²² Dasnabedian, 65-69.

²²³ Suny, "Eastern Armenians under Tsarist Rule", 128.

²²⁴ Suny, *Looking Toward Ararat*, 81.

²²⁵ The post of *namestnik* was abolished in 1882. Between 1882 and 1905, the High Commissioner of the Caucasus post was used.

expense of their neighbours in his correspondence to the Tsar.²²⁶ The complaints of Dondukov-Korsakov were not restricted to economic; he also wrote that “the secular Armenian intelligentsia, who had ‘dreams of a future independent existence for Armenia’, was the most politically problematic element of the region.”²²⁷

By 1897, 47% of Tiflis population was Armenian, which meant that in municipal affairs under the existing franchise, there was an Armenian majority of the seats in the Tiflis city council.²²⁸ However, the proportion of Armenians in Tiflis was going down mainly due to the rise of the Georgian and Russian populations in the city, and the Armenian share declined to 38%, a plurality.²²⁹ Nevertheless, due to their high urbanization rates and merchant base, the Armenian dominance of the economy still held.

These developments formed a major anti-Armenian sentiment among Georgians, which was soon to be shared by the Russian officials headed by Golitsyn, the successor to Dondukov-Korsakov, who first took the Armenian-dominated Tiflis council to court for corruption and then carried out the confiscation of the Armenian Church.²³⁰ In Baku, apart from dominating the oil industry and high finance, Armenians also formed the majority of the skilled labor force, which was a source of bitterness for the Muslims, who were mostly unskilled laborers.²³¹

Therefore, reaction against the Armenians was in the air as they were better-off economically and dispersed in the region. This economic perspective caused the Russians to conclude that the Armenians were complicating their relations with the

²²⁶ Mostashari, 43.

²²⁷ Quoted in Mostashari, 43.

²²⁸ Gregorian, 188. In this aspect, the effect of 1892 municipality law, which increased the power of property owners and Christians, must be noted. Suny, “Tiflis”, 271.

²²⁹ Suny, *The Making of the Georgian Nation*, 116.

²³⁰ Ibid., 142.

²³¹ Swientohowski, *Müslüman Cemaatten Ulusal Kimliği Rus Azerbaycanı 1905-1920*, 67.

Georgians and Muslims, and this is perhaps one reason for their harsher treatment of Armenians in the Russification process.

5.2. The Impact of Russification on the Armenians

One of the major challenges to the Russian Empire always involved the issue of nationalities. The rapid territorial expansion of the empire absorbed a variety of peoples, each of which proved different problems. The Tsarist regime, Pipes argues, never formulated a consistent policy towards these peoples; instead it used eclectic methods depending on the location, religious differences or the level of national consciousness.²³² Keeping the principle of autocracy intact, Tsarist nationalities policy allowed these people to keep their cultural and religious rights if they proved to be useful for the interests of the Empire.

Suny asserts that the term Russification could also mean the previous attempts of administrative standardization by Catherine II and Nicholas I or the nationalities' self- adaptation process to the Russian rule.²³³ Proponents of this approach, like Baron Pavel I. Hahn in 1840's, even hinted on linguistic assimilation of Georgians and Armenians to prevent 'dreams of false nationalisms', though this project did not materialize.²³⁴ However, the later Russification drive of Alexander III proved to be

²³² Pipes, *The Formation of the Soviet Union: Communism and Nationalism*, 4-6.

²³³ Ronald Grigor Suny "The Empire Strikes Out," in *A State of Nations: Empire and Nation-Making in the Age of Lenin and Stalin*, eds. Ronald Grigor Suny and Terry Martin (Oxford; New York: Oxford University Press, 2001), 53.

²³⁴ Mostashari, 34. Baron Hahn was the leading *chinovnik* (Tsarist official) regarding the administrative reforms in the Caucasus in the late 1830's.

the more systematic than any other attempt to curb the national and religious freedoms of the minorities of the Empire.²³⁵

Another factor that determined the relationship between the Russian center and the Armenian periphery was the difference of religion, the principle distinctive feature in effect in Tsarist Russia at least until 1905. During the second half of 19th century, many Russian officials believed that the strengthening of Orthodoxy; whether by Russian colonization or conversion was the surest way to Russify the borderlands.²³⁶ This sort of aggressive Russification also affected Transcaucasia since it increased Russian settlement in the region and increased the pressure on the national churches of Armenia and Georgia. Despite this sort of pressure was less effective than the cultural and administrative one, it was displaying the imperial mentality towards religious differences. Thus, “either cultural or religious pressure was the driving features of this Russification wave in the quest to create a sense of belonging to the Empire.”²³⁷

Still, the degree to which the Tsarist regime responded also had to do with demographic and economic realities. As Starr notices, the population increase in the borderlands and their rising economic importance and consequent intellectual flourishing alerted St. Petersburg.²³⁸ As the census of 1897 demonstrated, the population of Transcaucasia had a high fertility rate; especially the youth population was rapidly rising.²³⁹ In the whole Russian Empire, Transcaucasia had the lowest

²³⁵ Pipes, *The Formation of the Soviet Union: Communism and Nationalism*, 6-7.

²³⁶ Suny, “The Empire Strikes Out”, 41.

²³⁷ Geoffrey A. Hosking, *Russia, People and Empire 1552-1917* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1997), 367.

²³⁸ Frederick Starr, “Tsarist Government: The Imperial Dimension,” in *Soviet Nationality Policies and Practices*, ed. Jeremy R. Azrael (New York: Praeger Pub., 1978), 3.

²³⁹ Pipes, “Demographic and Ethnographic Changes in Transcaucasia”, 42-43.

average age, which provided revolutionary parties many recruits.²⁴⁰ The fertility rates of Armenians and Azeris were above those of Georgians and the Russians.²⁴¹

Given these realities, the Armenian image in Russian eyes deteriorated and this became obvious with the Russification campaign of Alexander III (1881-1894), which followed the advice of the Procurator of the Holy Synod, Konstantin P. Pobedonostsev. The assassination of Alexander II marked a change of direction of the Russian policy towards nationalities- notoriously a matter affecting the Jews. The main rationale of this change was to increase the degree of administrative centralization by abolishing local privileges, which in the end affected the fate of Armenians in the Tsarist Russia negatively.²⁴² As a part of this policy, the post of viceroy was abolished in 1882 to increase the control of the center. Apart from the conservative tendencies during the reign of Alexander III, demographic realities might have alarmed Russian authorities as the Russians became a minority in their own empire. By 1897, non-Russian people comprised 55.7 % of the population, as a threat to ‘one and indivisible rhetoric of the imperial tradition’, which was an important motivation for the Russification policy.²⁴³

In the process of their integration to the Russian Empire, the Armenians of Tsarist Russia voluntarily adapted themselves to the imperial structure. However, the Russification drive in the last two decades of the century was certainly not voluntary, nor was it an agreeable business for the Armenians. In this period, the initial phase of the campaign basically aimed at an increased centralization of administration and legal structures. Nevertheless, the decisive effect of Russification on the Armenians was carried out in the way of culture and education. In general, this aspect brought

²⁴⁰ Ibid., 43.

²⁴¹ Ibid., 46.

²⁴² Hosking, 367.

²⁴³ Rogger, 182-183.

about an intensification of Russian language, history and culture in the curriculums accompanied by pressure against the use of local languages in the education.

The Armenian case proved to be different in line with their worsening image in the Russian eyes. The Russian government decided to close down Armenian parochial schools in 1885. Although the decree was partially abrogated in 1886, it took effect in a more strict way a decade later. A famous Armenian publicist, E. Aknouni (Khachatur Malumian) recalls that Tsarist police arrests, house searches were common in Erevan during 1884-5 and many Armenians were either sent to prison or to Siberian exile.²⁴⁴ Particularly, activist Armenians including Grigor Artsruni and Raffi were interrogated by the Tsarist police.²⁴⁵

Russian instruction in *gimnazii*s and even seminaries was intensified to such a degree that every Armenian teacher was required to pass a Russian language examination.²⁴⁶ A British observer in Tiflis, Hardinge, also noted that compulsory universal military service was introduced in 1887, with all of its implications for the Armenians. According to him, although educated Armenians and the intelligentsia thought that military service would help the nation train itself, ordinary Armenians found it vexatious and this was shown in several riots: “Why should we fight for a country which is not ours?”²⁴⁷

By 1892, these misfortunes of Russian Armenians in this period also brought about a change in the image of Russia as a benevolent patron. In a private conversation with a British official, Minas Cheraz, (also a member of the Armenian delegate at the Berlin Congress) the editor of *L’Armenie*, claimed that “Russian

²⁴⁴ E. Aknouni, *Political Persecution Armenian Prisoners of the Caucasus* (New York: 1911), 11.

²⁴⁵ Ibid.

²⁴⁶ Inclosure in Sir R. Morier to the Marquis of Salisbury, 10.08.1888, FO 424/145, No 76, in Şimşir, *British Documents on Ottoman Armenians*, vol. 2, 570. Lynch, 220-221.

²⁴⁷ Inclosure in Sir R. Morier to the Marquis of Salisbury, 10.08.1888, FO 424/145, No 76, in Şimşir, *British Documents on Ottoman Armenians*, vol. 2, 572.

patronage was not preferable as Russia would oppress the Armenian people if she annexed the whole region.”²⁴⁸ He cited the conversion of an Armenian Church into a Russian Orthodox one in Kars in 1878 as an example, and indeed the oldest Armenian Church, that of the twelve apostles, was turned over for the use of the garrison.²⁴⁹

In January 1896, as some diaspora Armenians were petitioned for British backing about the Armenian massacres, the Tsarist officials informed them that all Armenian parish schools would be shut down, which was indeed to be carried out very harshly.²⁵⁰ In addition, the pressure on Armenians by Tsarist censors escalated, which saw the prohibition of using words ‘Armenian nation’ in publications by 1898.²⁵¹ Far from curbing radicalism, this policy increased nationalist sentiments among Armenians as the pamphlets written by the future leader of Dashnaksutun, Kristapor Mikayelian demonstrates: “Our schools are being closed with the help of bayonets, so let each Armenian family become a school and let that Armenian who meets another Armenian and does not speak to him in Armenian be cursed.”²⁵²

The Russification campaign also brought about an increased colonization of Transcaucasia by Russian settlers. For Russian conservatives, the permanent solution to the problems of Transcaucasia, settled by nationally conscious peoples, would be settling more Russians in the region, which would strengthen the imperial rule.²⁵³ Golitsyn also favoured the sending away the immigrant Ottoman Armenians who had fled after the 1894-96 massacres, as this would be in the Tsarist interest, by creating

²⁴⁸ Arman J. Kirakossian, *British Diplomacy and the Armenian Question: from the 1830s to 1914* (Princeton, NJ: Gomidas Insitute Books, 2003), 156.

²⁴⁹ Kirakossian, 156. For more on the Russian policy in Kars, including the Tsarist conversion of this Armenian Church, please see Georg Kobro, *Das Gebiet von Kars und Ardahan: Historisch-Landeskundliche Studie zu Einer Grenzregion in Ostanatolien/Transkaukasien* (München: Neimanis Verlag, 1991).

²⁵⁰ Suny, *Looking Toward Ararat*, 46-47.

²⁵¹ Ibid, 47.

²⁵² Ibid. 69.

²⁵³ Suny, *Looking Toward Ararat*, 48. Firuz Kazamzadeh, *The Struggle for Transcaucasia, 1917-1921* (New York: Philosophical Library, 1951), 22.

space for Russian colonists.²⁵⁴ In this sense, Borian thinks that Russification drive had also an economic rationale; the confiscation and other difficulties would pave the way for securing sources to support Russian colonists in the area.²⁵⁵

For the purpose of Russifying the region biologically, the settlement of sectarians in Transcaucasia went on after the 1877-78 War.²⁵⁶ Although this project lost pace as demonstrated by the 5 % of Russian population in whole Transcaucasia by 1897, it still gives a clue about the doubts about the problems that might have been created by the national movements in the region.²⁵⁷

This policy also necessitated taking away the lands of impoverished Georgian and Muslim landlords and transferring them to Russian colonists. This was to be carried out via the establishment of a Land Bank of Caucasus, which would prevent Armenians, who owned most of capital in the region, from taking over the lands.²⁵⁸ There were also limitations on the number of Armenians admitted into the bureaucracy in those times, especially after 1896.²⁵⁹

There was also a foreign policy perspective at work as regards Tsarist Russia's harsher treatment of Armenians during this drive. The Russian rapprochement with the Ottoman Empire evidently necessitated winning over the Muslims of Transcaucasia and downplaying the Armenian Question.²⁶⁰ A clear indication of this is the change of the city council election regulations, which had been based on a one-third non-Christian quota. In Baku, this law was modified favorably to Muslims in 1900, most probably as a part of the Tsarist anti-Armenian campaign.²⁶¹

²⁵⁴ E. K. Sarkissian, *Politika Osmanskogo pravitelstva v zapadnoi Armenii i derzhavy v poslednei chetverti XIX i nachale XX vv.* (Erevan: Izdatelstvo Akademiia Nauk ASSR, 1972), 205-206.

²⁵⁵ Borian, 339-340.

²⁵⁶ Breyfogle, 135.

²⁵⁷ Kazamzadeh, 23.

²⁵⁸ Gregorian, 184.

²⁵⁹ Sarkisyanz, 97. Mostashari, 100.

²⁶⁰ Tadeusz Swietochowski, *Müslüman Cemaatten Ulusal Kimliğe Rus Azerbaycanı 1905-1920*, 68.

²⁶¹ Altstadt, "Baku", 301.

5.3. Armenian Dreams Shattered: The Russian Foreign Policy Dimension

Armenians had to wait until 1878 to be included in an international document in modern history.²⁶² Consequent San Stefano Treaty and the Berlin Congress were very influential in the fate of both Ottoman and Russian Armenians. The Russian victory in the 1877-78 war encouraged the Armenians to such extent that Patriarch Nerses told the British ambassador Layard that “if Great Powers failed to create an autonomous Armenia, then they would immigrate to Russia en masse.”²⁶³

Under article 16 of the San Stefano Treaty, the Russian army would be the guarantor of the reform process, which would have changed the course of history for the Armeno-Russian relations. However, other major powers, despite the lamentations of Patriarch Nerses, who showed up in Berlin Congress to win the hearts and minds of the Great Powers, blocked the Russian designs. Instead, an interesting substitution, article 61 of the Berlin Congress stated that the reform process would be monitored by an international commission.²⁶⁴

In general, post-Crimean Russian foreign policy had been a careful one due to the poor position of the Empire vis-à-vis her rivals both economically and militarily.²⁶⁵ In order to reverse this with a rapid drive for modernization, a status-quo approach in foreign policy recommended itself easily enough. According to Rogger, it was this weakness of the Russian Empire that caused the Tsar not to act firmly over the Bulgarian and Afghan crises of the 1880's and to seek French Alliance in 1894.²⁶⁶ The change of attitude becomes more obvious if we compare the Loris-Melikov

²⁶² Kirakossian, 67.

²⁶³ Quoted in Kirakossian, 68.

²⁶⁴ For more details on the changes of articles 16 and 61, please see Anita L. P. Burdett, ed., *Armenia: Political and Ethnic Boundaries 1878-1948* (Slough, U.K: Archive Editions, 1998), 109-111.

²⁶⁵ Barbara Jelavich, *A Century of Russian Foreign Policy, 1814-1914* (Philadelphia: Lippincott, 1964), 127.

²⁶⁶ Rogger, 168.

project of an autonomous Armenia circa 1878 under Russian protection (by uniting Russian and Ottoman Armenians) and the Russian attitude towards the 1894-96 events.²⁶⁷

Another element which affected the changing Russian attitude towards the Armenians was the Bulgarian example. Having secured the Bulgarian autonomy after the 1877-78 Russo- Ottoman Wars, Russia confronted serious resistance, which she saw as treachery, from her protégé. It was of course a great shock for Alexander III to see his nephew, Alexander of Battenberg, the Bulgarian Prince, preferring Austria to Russia. Although Alexander was forced out by a Russian-backed coup d'état, another Austrian-backed German prince, Ferdinand of Coburg was elected as Prince of Bulgaria in 1887.

Here was a small Balkan country, with vital Orthodox and Slavic connections, insisting on its independence, at the expense of Russian patronage. Hence, with the increased importance of the Armenian cause in international relations, it was sensible for Russians to reflect more deeply as to what they were doing, and this was not helpful for the Armenians inside Russia. The Russian perspective as to Armenian autonomy in the 1890's was well shown in a remark by the Foreign Minister Nikolai K. de Giers: "We do not intend to create a second Bulgaria within our borders".²⁶⁸

It followed that in 1890's; the Russian Empire came to a certain understanding with the Ottoman Empire regarding the Armenian Question. Alexander III and Abdülhamid II tended to see things in much the same light.²⁶⁹ From the Ottoman

²⁶⁷ Somakian, 10. Robert F. Zeidner, "Britain and the Launching of the Armenian Question," *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 7, no. 4 (October 1976): 474.

²⁶⁸ M.S. Anderson, *The Eastern Question, 1774-1923* (London: Macmillan, St Martin's Press, 1970), 254. Ottoman ambassador to London, Safvet Pasha produced a similar line to his German counterpart about the Russian attitude as regards to Armenian reforms that "Russia would not make the same mistake as she did in Bulgaria". Yusuf Hikmet Bayur, *Türk İnkılabı Tarihi*, vol. 1, pt. 1 (Ankara: Türk Tarih Kurumu, 1983), 79.

²⁶⁹ Akdes Nimet Kurat, *Türkiye ve Rusya: XVII.Yüzyıl Sonundan Kurtuluş Savaşına kadar Türk-Rus İlişkileri 1798-1919* (Ankara: Ankara Üniv., 1970), 101.

point of view, this was a reasonable policy considering British pressure for the Armenian reform project since 1878. Moreover, apart from the increasing importance of the Far East in Russian foreign policy designs, another aspect of this shift was rooted in the Anglo-Russian rivalry in Asia.²⁷⁰ These problems in Afghanistan and Far East could have been complicated with an autonomous Armenia with British support, who in early 1890's continuously pressed on the Sultan for reforms. This must have alerted the Russians since an autonomous Armenia with close ties to Britain would be a serious nuisance for Russian designs in the Transcaucasia and the Middle East.²⁷¹ In this sense, the signing of the Cyprus Convention was also an important dimension of the Russian policy in Armenian Question as the Russian foreign minister, Alexei B. Lobanov-Rostovskii revealed during Tsar Nicholas' coronation ceremony.²⁷²

After the massacres of 1894-96, the Great Powers pressed the Ottoman government for reform scheme in Eastern Anatolia. From the beginning of reform discussions among the Great Powers, the Russians were not in a hurry as the British were. When the French and the British decided to increase pressure on the Sultan by presenting an ultimatum in June 1896, Lobanov-Rostovskii firmly refused to be associated with it, asserting that "the Russian government would not adopt coercive measures or consent to the creation in Asia Minor of a district in which the Armenians would have exceptional privileges."²⁷³ Lobanov-Rostovskii added that "a joint

²⁷⁰ Jeremy Salt, *Imperialism, Evangelism and the Ottoman Armenians, 1878-1896* (London; Portland: Frank Cass, 1993), 136.

²⁷¹ Musa Şaşmaz, *British Policy and the Application of Reform for the Armenians in Eastern Anatolia, 1877-1897* (Ankara: Turkish Historical Society, 2000), 141-142.

²⁷² Kirakossian, 195.

²⁷³ Langer, 163. Also quoted in Sarkissian, "Concert Diplomacy and the Armenians 1890-1897," in *Studies in Diplomatic History and Historiography in Honour of G. P. Gooch* (London: Longmans, 1961), 69.

intervention by all major powers would give ‘too much encouragement’ to the Armenians”, something of which the Russian Government was not in favor.²⁷⁴

A possible motive for Russian unwillingness for joint action might be related to the long-term policy of capturing Istanbul. A joint action for the reforms could also lead to an international control of the Straits, which would make it more difficult to realize the Russian dream.²⁷⁵ Greece, increasingly close to Great Britain, might even be advanced in the Levant. Moreover, it could also mean a total control of Ottoman economic resources by the major powers.²⁷⁶

The attitude of the imperial family was not more promising. The Tsar even refused to give an audience to the Catholicos Khrimian, who went there to ask for Russian support for intervention in early 1895.²⁷⁷ To make things worse, the Russian dowager Empress refused to send money to the Red Cross for charity projects regarding the Armenians.²⁷⁸ In general, Somakian argues that this Russian opposition to Armenian reforms in “Ottoman Armenia” was based on the Russian suspicion that reform talks would spread to Russia and hinder Russification efforts of the Tsarist regime.²⁷⁹

Nevertheless, there were some Russians, who dreamed of capturing *Tsargrad* and the Armenian massacres of 1895-6 gave them a valid excuse. With the approval of the British and the death of Lobanov-Rostovskii in late 1896, talk of intervention in Russian circles grew, but the weakness of the navy and the fragility of the economy prevented such an enterprise.²⁸⁰ Although this war party, mainly consisting of

²⁷⁴ Somakian, 27.

²⁷⁵ Anderson, 256.

²⁷⁶ Langer, 336.

²⁷⁷ Somakian, 23.

²⁷⁸ Roy Douglas “Britain and the Armenian Question, 1894-7,” *The Historical Journal* 19, no. 1 (March 1976): 126.

²⁷⁹ Somakian, 24.

²⁸⁰ Kurat, 117-120. Douglas, 127.

Ambassador Alexander I. Nelidov, the minister of War and the Tsar, emerged after the massacres in Istanbul in 1896, Sergei I. Witte and others strictly opposed the plan- it was abandoned later.²⁸¹

Although revolutionary fears might have played a certain role in Russian concerns, there was also the British interest in Armenian Question from 1878 on. For the British, main reasons for supporting the reform scheme were basically designed to prevent a possible annexation of Eastern Anatolia by the Russians, which would endanger British interests in the Suez Canal and eventually in India.²⁸² Layard thought that if the Russians captured Armenia, then northern Persia, Central Asia and eventually India would be under Russian threat.²⁸³ It was the liberator image of Russia among the Armenians of border *vilayets* that bothered the British most so they decided to press the Sultan in order to win the hearts of the Armenians.²⁸⁴ Nevertheless, British efforts were in vain as they found a unilateral intervention too risky and other Great Powers, especially Russia rejected to carry out forceful measures.²⁸⁵

As for the other major powers, Langer thinks that the French were not too enthusiastic on the reform proposal due to their investments in the Ottoman Empire²⁸⁶ and Austria- Hungary and Germany were more in favour of status-quo.²⁸⁷ The

²⁸¹ Sergei Witte, *The Memoirs of Count Witte*, trans. Avrahm Yarmolinsky (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, Page, 1921), 186-189.

²⁸² Salt, *Imperialism, Evangelism and the Ottoman Armenians, 1878-1896*, 137. Şaşmaz, 18.

²⁸³ Mr. Layard to the Earl of Derby, 04.12.1877, FO 424/63, No 77, in Şimşir, *British Documents on Ottoman Armenians*, vol.1 (Ankara: T.T.K, 1982), 135-140.

²⁸⁴ Şaşmaz, 33. Somakian, 5.

²⁸⁵ Jeremy Salt, "Britain, the Armenian Question and the Cause of Ottoman Reform: 1894-96," *Middle Eastern Studies* 26, no. 3 (July 1990): 323-324.

²⁸⁶ Langer, 332. By 1894-86, 70 % of direct foreign investment to Ottoman Empire was French. Vahakn Dadrian, *The History of the Armenian Genocide: Ethnic Conflict from the Balkans to Anatolia to the Caucasus*, 3rd ed. (Providence, RI: Bergahn Books, 1997), 76.

²⁸⁷ Langer, 209.

German ambassador to Austria, Prince Philipp Eulenburg, even echoed these views by telling the French Chargé that “the Armenian Question does not exist for us”.²⁸⁸

5.4. The Confiscation of Armenian Church Property

The advent of Alexander III brought about a firmer approach in the Tsarist administration in Transcaucasia. Being a part of this, The Armenian Church was still suspected of pursuing nefarious designs, so the High Commissioners were given the authority to regulate Armenian affairs very closely.²⁸⁹ In particular, High Commissioners, Dondukov-Korsakov and Golitsyn were very eager to do so. As such, the report on the Armenians prepared by Golitsyn in 1898 was a harbinger of what was to come. In this report, he blamed the Armenian Church for accommodating revolutionaries, who were pursuing the cause of an independent Greater Armenia.²⁹⁰ He even hinted at a transfer of the properties of the Armenian schools to the Ministry of Education, and introduction of some check as regards Armenian dominance in the city councils.²⁹¹

When the time came in mid-1903 for a final decision about the Armenian Church, the Committee of Ministers had a majority which opposed the idea of confiscation since it would be an extreme act, which might radicalize the Armenians.²⁹² However, given the poor perception of the Armenians in the Tsarist Russia, upon the recommendation of the Golitsyn and the minister of interior, Viacheslav K. von Plehve, Tsar Nicholas II approved the decree which annulled the

²⁸⁸ Dadrian, 69.

²⁸⁹ Cherkesov, 279-280.

²⁹⁰ Uras, 369-370.

²⁹¹ Ibid., 371-372.

²⁹² Werth, 125. The majority was 12 to 5, Witte on the side of non-confiscation, 125.

Polezhenie of 1836 and initiated the process of confiscation of the properties of the Armenian Church.

In June 1903, the Armenian Church was deprived of its rights to supervise its parish schools, which were transferred to the Ministry of Education. Furthermore, properties of the Armenian Church were to be transferred to the ministries of Interior, Agriculture and State Properties.²⁹³ This was a fatal blow to the preservation of national Armenian culture as the Church was the most important element of Armenian identity. The devastating impact on the language and education would be evident since the majority of Armenians enrolled children in the parochial schools of their Church.

The rationale of this act in Russian perspective was twofold. From the Tsarist perspective, the negative image of the Armenians as revolutionary was worsened by a series of rebellions and terrorist attacks carried out in the Ottoman Empire throughout the 1890's. In line with the general understanding with the Ottoman Empire, the activities of Echmiadzin on the Ottoman Empire were to be seen as a potential source of trouble by some Tsarist officials.²⁹⁴ For instance, the Catholicos was blamed for accommodating Armenian revolutionaries, with the ideas of an 'independent Armenia'.²⁹⁵

Thus, this blow to the Armenian Church was conceived as a precaution against Armenian radicalism in the Russian Empire. The general situation was already problematic in Transcaucasia due to student and worker unrest so the Armenian Church, as the largest landowning Armenian institution, was an obvious target for Tsarist officials due to its economic and educational importance. Moreover, the

²⁹³ Hovannisian, *Armenia: On the Road to Independence 1918*, 18. Even the act of confiscation of Church properties was offending- the police broke the safe of Echmiadzin and captured the title deeds. Hosking, 387.

²⁹⁴ Werth, 118-119.

²⁹⁵ Ibid.

properties of the Armenian Church could be used to fund State schools, which would curb Armenian radicalism to a certain extent.²⁹⁶

Prior to 1903, the active involvement of the Armenian Church in revolutionary activities in Russia was minimal, and this was severely criticized by Armenian revolutionary groups. They claimed that “the Armenian Church was an inert institution, which barely contributed to the progressive Armenian revolutionary movement.”²⁹⁷ Moreover, another important element of the community, the rising Armenian bourgeoisie, was not that interested in the Armenian revolutionary movement due to their economic interests. In order to retain their share in the booming Transcaucasian economy, the Armenian bourgeoisie of Tiflis and Baku preferred to get along with Russian authorities rather than cooperating with revolutionaries.²⁹⁸ The majority of the Armenian bourgeoisie even refrained from protesting at closure of Armenian schools in 1885.²⁹⁹ In return, Armenian revolutionaries often use terrorist means to extort funds from wealthy Armenians for their activities.

Meanwhile, the position of the Armenian peasantry regarding the disturbances is also important. By 1897, 70% of Armenians were peasants though the stereotype of Armenian was often an urban middle-man.³⁰⁰ As such, Armenian peasants were experiencing huge economic difficulties towards the end of 19th century. The prices of agricultural products were falling globally while Russian and European manufactured goods were flooding the markets of Transcaucasia. As Pyotr A. Stolypin’s agrarian reform against semi-serfdom did not reach Transcaucasia until 1912, the majority of

²⁹⁶ Rogger, 195.

²⁹⁷ Libaridian, “Revolution and Liberation in the 1892 and 1907 Programs of the Dashnaksutiun”, 194.

²⁹⁸ Minassian, “Nationalism and Socialism in the Armenian Revolutionary Movement (1887-1912)” 159.

²⁹⁹ Libaridian, *Modern Armenia: People, Nation, State* (New Brunswick: Transaction Publishers, 2004), 15.

³⁰⁰ Gregorian, 189.

the Armenian peasantry remained in bondage.³⁰¹ In this framework, the peasants most of the time were inactive politically and revolutionary Armenian parties had to stand in for them. That the Hinchaks and Dashnaks were in effect vanguard parties was shown by the very low figures for their membership until 1903.

On the other hand, the main focus of Armenian revolutionary parties was Ottoman Armenians and not the Russian Armenians. “The struggle against the ‘surplus blood’ that was being extracted from the Ottoman Armenians had priority over the struggle against “surplus value” being extracted from Russian Armenians”.³⁰² This statement of Kristapor Mikayelian, one of the founders of Dashnaksutiun, clearly showed that his party preferred to avoid acting in the lands of the Tsar. In line with this policy, Dashnaksutiun even discouraged Armenian workers from participating in the worker strikes held in the Russian Empire prior to 1903.³⁰³

Thus, after the act of confiscation, an Armenian Central Assembly was called by the Catholicos to discuss what to do next. In the assembly, the revolutionary elements out-weighted the clergy, who basically wanted to restore Church properties, not more.³⁰⁴ As the assembly was taken over by the revolutionaries, it was soon to be disbanded by the Tsarist police, though the Armenian discontent went on.³⁰⁵ With the manifestation of ‘The Plan of Action for the Caucasus’ Dashnaks openly declared their opposition to the Tsarist regime. Moreover, they began to emphasize the liberation of the Armenians of the Tsarist Russia as a part of federal system in Transcaucasia.³⁰⁶

³⁰¹ Suny, “Eastern Armenians under Tsarist Rule”, 123-124.

³⁰² Libaridian, “Revolution and Liberation in the 1892 and 1907 Programs of the Dashnaksutiun”, 195.

³⁰³ Suny, “East Armenians under Tsarist rule”, 133.

³⁰⁴ Kazamzadeh, 17-18. Libaridian, *Modern Armenia: People, Nation, State*, 17.

³⁰⁵ Kazamzadeh, 18.

³⁰⁶ Dasnabedian, 43.

Yet, the unique importance of the Armenian Church determined the degree of Armenian response to the Russian decision. Soon, all Armenian elements came together to form the Committee of Self- Defense, led by the Dashnaksutiun in the defense of their Church. With this initiative, several demonstrations were held by the Committee in Tiflis, Baku, Kars and Batum, some of which were suppressed by the Russian police, killing many Armenian protestors.³⁰⁷ As a response, Dashnaksutiun reinforced its opposition to the Tsarist regime by a series of violent measures. Being an obvious target for such measures, Golitsyn was wounded in a bombing assault by Hinchaks in October 1903.³⁰⁸

In addition, the Tsarist act also caused a significant number of Russian Armenians to immigrate to the United States, Egypt, Greece and Bulgaria.³⁰⁹ Although it should also be noted that the problems regarding the oil business in Baku played a vital role in Armenian immigration to US, the act of confiscation clearly increased the numbers, as Mirak demonstrates.³¹⁰ The degree of the outburst was such that the Catholicos even suggested moving the Catholicosate from Echmiadzin to Ottoman domains but it was rejected by Abdülhamid II, possibly so as not to complicate the relations with Tsarist Russia.³¹¹

³⁰⁷ Suny, *Looking Toward Ararat*, 92.

³⁰⁸ Evidently a long-sighted man, Golitsyn wore a chain-mail, which prevented a bigger damage in this assassination attempt. Geifman, 111.

³⁰⁹ Mirak, 49.

³¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 58.

³¹¹ Ali Arslan, "II. Meşrutiyet Öncesinde Osmanlı-Eğmiyazın Katogigosluğu İlişkileri," in *Ermeni Araştırmaları 1. Türkiye Kongresi Bildirileri*, vol. 1, eds. Şenol Kantarcı et al, (Ankara: ASAM, Ermeni Araştırmaları Enstitüsü Yayınları, 2003), 353.

CHAPTER 6

ARMENIANS AND THE REVOLUTION OF 1905

Towards the end of nineteenth century, the transformation of the Russian Empire came to a critical point. On the one hand, the reform process and the economic growth were sources of hope. Nearly doubling its industrial output, the Russian economy became one of the largest economies in the world by 1905. The efforts of the intelligentsia and increased interaction with Europe also produced a lively intellectual atmosphere. On the other hand, there was the Russian autocracy, which was anxious to modernize as fast as possible while ignoring the political implications of these developments. The general Tsarist position in this aspect could be described by Witte's words: "Autocracy is the most efficient way of reform and economic modernization and it is the only way to keep a large illiterate peasant population of various languages and nationalities, if the Tsarist regime falls, you will see a total chaos in Russia."³¹² Although the difficulty of holding this diverse population is and was obvious enough, the Tsarist authorities clearly made a mess of

³¹² Rogger, 34.

the situation and managed to alienate almost all of the elements forming the Empire towards 1905.

Being one of those elements, the role of Armenians of the Tsarist Empire in the Revolution of 1905 could hardly be ignored when one realizes the common denominator of the 1905 Russian, 1906 Persian and 1908 Young Turk revolutions as pointed by Libaridian.³¹³ The Russian case has its roots mainly in the shifting position of the Eastern Armenians during the 1880's and 1890's. As the Tsarist regime's own perception of the Armenians gradually shifted from a Christian-ally to a revolutionary enemy, from 1880's onward, the imperial authorities' treatment of Armenians became oppressive. In this change, fears of the spread of Armenian radicalism in the Ottoman Empire, the status-quo preserving Russian foreign policy and the superior position of the Armenians vis-à-vis other nationalities of Transcaucasia were key factors.

This period also saw the emergence of Armenian revolutionary parties. Although the political and cultural restrictions of Russification were a source of irritation both for revolutionaries and other segments of the Armenians of Russia, it was not until 1903, when the Tsarist regime decided to confiscate the properties of the Armenian Church that the Armenians joined the general opposition to the autocracy en bloc. The Tsarist attack on this institution which was a central part of the Armenian identity historically not only caused the Armenian revolutionaries to reverse their policy of avoiding operating in the Russian Empire but also increased the Armenian ingredient in all Russian political parties.

In fact, the Armenian resistance was not just confined to the revolutionaries. At all levels, ranging from the Church to the once pro-Tsarist bourgeoisie, the Russian Armenians were at work to defeat Tsarist authority in Transcaucasia in the pre-1905

³¹³ Libaridian, *Modern Armenia: People, Nation, State*, 156.

period. As general unrest in the empire was worsened by the failures of the war with Japan, the Armenians were determined to make an impact.

6.1. The Empire on the Verge of Explosion

The transformation of Russian economy was accelerated with Witte's industrialization drive in the last decade of the nineteenth century. Observing the catastrophic results of the excessive pressures put on the countryside in the famine of 1891, Witte favored attracting foreign capital to finance railroad construction and heavy industrial build-up.³¹⁴ This modernization process inevitably contributed to the social and national movements of the nationalities of the Empire.³¹⁵

Meanwhile, the Empire was also experiencing a population boom in pre-1905 period, one of the highest growth figures in Europe at that time.³¹⁶ Her European counterparts could deal with this phenomenon with rapid industrialization and emigration both of which Russia could not manage. More importantly, the population growth obviously had a negative impact on the average allotment of a peasant in the Empire, which gradually fell towards 1905.³¹⁷

In addition to the general population boom in the Russian Empire, many Armenians from the Ottoman Empire found their ways to Tiflis, Baku and Batum, especially after the 1894-96 massacres.³¹⁸ Not surprisingly, this agrarian problem was one of the most critical items on the agenda of the opponents of autocracy prior to

³¹⁴ Richard Pipes, *The Russian Revolution*, 77.

³¹⁵ Kappeler, 283.

³¹⁶ Pipes, 101-103.

³¹⁷ Ibid. 101.

³¹⁸ Anahide Ter Minassian, "The City of Van at the Turn of the Twentieth Century," in *Armenian Van/Vaspurakan*, ed. Richard G. Hovannisian (Costa Mesa, California: Mazda Publishers, 2000), 182.

1905, as well as that of the Dashnaks, whose definition of nation was changed to include only peasants and workers.³¹⁹ Although the price of grain remained generally stable between 1885 and 1900, increased tax obligations and increased prices of land probably cancelled out any gains from the stability of grain prices.³²⁰

As Witte began to realize his economic objectives, this naturally brought about the emergence of a labor movement in industrial centers including Transcaucasia beginning from 1890's. In this period, it would be reasonable to consider the movement as one demanding basic worker rights such as higher wages and reasonable working hours. However, by the early twentieth century, worker dissent began to merge with peasant and student demonstrations in a more complex political phenomenon. Although the workers comprised a tiny fraction of the population (1.28 % by 1900), their general strikes, 1902 in Rostov and 1903 in the Caucasus, made a considerable impact as the general mood of the Empire was very grim at many levels.³²¹

6.2. Armenian Collaboration with Other Political Parties

Armenians were also a part of this unrest in the Empire. It is no coincidence that this chaotic environment also witnessed the rise of various political parties, which combined to shape Russian politics. Thus, the fate of the Armenians in Russia was to be affected not only by the Armenian Dashnaksutiun but also by such parties as the Russian SRs, Kadets, Russian Social Democratic Workers' Party (RSDWP) and others.

³¹⁹ Libaridian, *Modern Armenia: People, Nation, State*, 97.

³²⁰ Robinson, 102.

³²¹ Rogger, 109.

However, an interesting feature of Armenian revolutionary movement up to 1903 was its sole focus on the Ottoman Empire while avoiding acting in Russian Empire. This could be partly explained by their lack of power and the logic of channeling their energies to a single domain, Ottoman Empire, where the position of Armenian lot was supposed to be much worse than the ones under Russian rule.³²² Yet, if the ideal is to get rid of autocracy, then Russian autocracy had to be challenged as well. This was partially expressed by Karl Liebknecht, when he called the Armenian revolutionaries “the tools of Russian expansionism since they were striving for an Armenian homeland in Anatolia, and not against the Tsarist autocracy.”³²³

Finally, with the Tsarist decision to confiscate the properties of the Armenian Church in 1903, the Armenian opposition to the regime started. In this process, while Armenian revolutionary parties intensified their relations with other parties, a certain number of Armenians joined the ranks of these parties, both of which meant more Russian revolutionary tutelage.

Being the descendants of Russian populist movement, the SR Party was a very influential party, which carried out systemic terrorist attacks and agitation like Dashnaks on the eve of 1905 Revolution.³²⁴ For instance, the assassination of the notorious minister of Internal Affairs, Plehve in July 1904 by SR terrorists was welcomed by various groups including Hinchaks and Dashnaks.³²⁵ Moreover, a general tendency of the Russian revolutionaries of the day, expropriations was also conducted by the SRs. Dashnaks were not unfamiliar with these techniques. As early

³²² Hovannisian, *Armenia: On the Road to Independence 1918*, 17-18.

³²³ Minassian, “Nationalism and Socialism in the Armenian Revolutionary Movement (1887-1912)”, 153.

³²⁴ Gregorian, 214.

³²⁵ Hovannisian, *Armenia: On the Road to Independence 1918*, 19. Plehve himself knew that he was the one of the top targets of the terrorists and as a precaution, his physician wrote prescriptions to his servants’ name. Abraham Ascher, *The Revolution of 1905: Russia in Disarray* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1988), 54.

as 1901, in order to overcome their financial difficulties, they accepted as a principle the extortion of money, mainly from wealthy Armenians.³²⁶ With the start of opposition to Tsarism, this process, called ‘operation *Potorig* (Storm)’ by the Dashnaks, accelerated and produced a considerable amount of funds, nearly 160.000 roubles by 1904.³²⁷ Likewise, the two parties actively cooperated in Baku during the 1905 events. SRs formally declared that they would assist Dashnaks in their struggle with Tsarist forces.³²⁸

Under these circumstances, Armenian collaboration with other disgruntled groups accelerated towards 1905. An important event in that aspect was that in November 1904, Dashnaks joined the conference in Paris, where the representatives of the Kadets, the SRs, the Polish National League, the Finnish Active Resistance Party, the Georgian Socialist-Federalist Party and the Latvian Social Democratic Labour Party met so as to form a coordinated body to resist the Tsarist regime.³²⁹ Most Social Democrats boycotted this gathering fearing that the liberals would dominate a coordinated movement.³³⁰ Nevertheless, the Dashnaks approved the decisions taken at this congress, which called for the overthrow of the autocracy and the self-determination principle.³³¹

Until 1903, different brands of Marxism had relatively little influence on the Armenians. With its romantic aspect and focus on the importance of the peasantry, the Russian populism seemed to be more suitable to the Armenian revolutionaries than the Marxist doctrine, which considered nationality as a false consciousness or perhaps

³²⁶ Dasnabedian, 62. They even had a standard tax rates to be extracted from the wealthy Armenians. Geifman, 24.

³²⁷ Dasnabedian, 63.

³²⁸ Geifman, 185.

³²⁹ Gregorian, 214.

³³⁰ Rogger, 154. Pipes, *The Formation of the Soviet Union: Communism and Nationalism*, 18-19.

³³¹ Minassian, “Nationalism and Socialism in the Armenian Revolutionary Movement (1887-1912)”, 175.

as a useful idiocy.³³² In a sense, the urgent target of liberating the fatherland could not wait the transition to bourgeois capitalism and then to socialism, and for some it was only feasible in the industrialized West.³³³ Another reason for the initial failure of Social Democracy among the Armenians was that it was mainly considered as a Georgian phenomenon, as evidenced by the example that the Tiflis branch of RSDWP had only Georgian members in 1899.³³⁴ In addition, the emancipation of the worker rather than the emancipation of Armenians did not make an effective appeal to the Armenians as a whole.³³⁵

The origins of Marxist movement among Armenians could be traced back to the Marxist Armenian Worker's Group, which was founded in 1898 in Tiflis and disbanded in 1901.³³⁶ The main contribution of this group was its critique of Dashnaks and Hinchaks on their emphasis on nationality and the Ottoman Armenians.³³⁷ As they were disbanded, Marxist groups began to be more effective among the Armenian community as the dissent of Armenians was further complicated by the general problems in the Empire.

From then on, the Marxist movement among Armenians was mainly carried on by two groups. The first of these was the Specifists, who believed in the uniqueness of the Armenian case, and used Marxist paradigm to resolve the problems of Armenians.³³⁸ Most of these people were former RSDWP members, who had left

³³² Suny, *Looking Toward Ararat*, 71.

³³³ Minassian, "Nationalism and Socialism in the Armenian Revolutionary Movement (1887-1912)", 152.

³³⁴ Suny, *Looking Toward Ararat*, 90.

³³⁵ Panossian, 211.

³³⁶ Minassian, "Nationalism and Socialism in the Armenian Revolutionary Movement (1887-1912)", 164.

³³⁷ Ibid.

³³⁸ Hovannisian, *Armenia: On the Road to Independence*, 19. Minassian, "Nationalism and Socialism in the Armenian Revolutionary Movement (1887-1912)", 168-169.

the party due to its lack of emphasis on the Armenian Question.³³⁹ Specifists argued that “the Ottoman Empire would disintegrate and that Western Armenia would fall to Russia’s share.” In such a case, a socialist Russia on federalist lines would be the salvation for Armenians as well as other nationalities.³⁴⁰ Their proposed solution was not unlike that of the Jewish Bund, who advocated extra-territorial autonomy on Austro-Marxist lines.³⁴¹

Other group was the Union of Armenian Social Democrats, which had already established its local branches in Tiflis, Baku and Batum by 1899. Later, in 1903, it merged into the Caucasian Union of RSDWP. Led by Stepan Shahumian and Arshak Zurabian, this group adopted a more orthodox Marxist point of view and criticized both Specifists and Dashnaksutiun for falling into the nationalist trap.³⁴² For them, the focus should have been on the class struggle not nationality. Still, after 1903, the emergence of a Transcaucasian labor movement had attracted more Armenian element into their ranks. As the split in RSDWP became acute in 1903, Armenians more tended to side more with the Bolsheviks as opposed to Georgians, who generally preferred the Menshevik faction.³⁴³

Contrary to the expectations of socialists, however, the Armenian proletariat was mostly hired by the Armenian firms at the demand of the Armenian Church.³⁴⁴ These national divisions among the workers were further strengthened by the Dashnak strategy. Their emphasis on the national demands, with a view to deterring

³³⁹ Minassian, “Nationalism and Socialism in the Armenian Revolutionary Movement (1887-1912)”, 168.

³⁴⁰ Libaridian, *Modern Armenia: People, Nation, State*, 98-99.

³⁴¹ Minassian, “1876-1923 Döneminde Osmanlı İmparatorluğu’nda Sosyalist Hareketin Doğuşunda ve Gelişmesinde Ermeni Topluluğunun Rolü”, 202.

³⁴² Hovannisian, 19.

³⁴³ Suny, *Looking Toward Ararat*, 92.

³⁴⁴ Minassian, “Nationalism and Socialism in the Armenian Revolutionary Movement (1887-1912)”, 163.

any possible defection by some Armenian elements to other political parties could be the main reasons for this.³⁴⁵

Therefore, even on the eve of 1905 Revolution, when the labour movement was at its peak, Suny notes that Armenian, Georgian and Muslim labourers did share little in terms of class fraternity, while national and religious bonds were still prevalent.³⁴⁶ Class solidarity was hardly the right term. Thus, the solution for all parties in Transcaucasia was to add national and socialist tones into their programme since national conflict went together with the social one, as Figes asserts.³⁴⁷

Not surprisingly the Dashnaks also followed the pattern. By early 1905, the Dashnaks declared their 'Plan of Action for the Caucasus', which included increased socialist content in line with the general tendency of the day.³⁴⁸ By participating in the Caucasian Platform of 1905, Dashnaksutun officially allowed its party cells to cooperate with other socialist groups.³⁴⁹ Based on the general economic difficulties and the position of the Church, this move enabled the party to increase its appeal among youth and Armenian workers.³⁵⁰ In Baku, Dashnaks managed to form ten trade unions, with a total membership number of 2000 by 1905.³⁵¹ Thus, other socialist groups, the SRs and RSDWP, were able to recruit only smaller numbers of Armenians into their ranks in the years around 1905.³⁵²

An interesting aspect of the Caucasian Union of RSDWP certainly lies with Stalin's involvement in revolutionary affairs.³⁵³ Although the union was formed in

³⁴⁵ Dasnabedian, 70.

³⁴⁶ Suny, *The Baku Commune*, 14.

³⁴⁷ Figes, 70-71.

³⁴⁸ Dasnabedian, 79.

³⁴⁹ Libaridian, "Revolution and Liberation in the 1892 and 1907 Programs of the Dashnaksutun", 195.

³⁵⁰ Ibid.

³⁵¹ Suny, *The Baku Commune*, 22.

³⁵² Jones, 86.

³⁵³ For a more detailed account of the early revolutionary career of Stalin, see Simon Sebag Montefiore, *Young Stalin* (London: Wiedenfeld & Nicolson, 2007).

March 1903, Stalin could not join until 1904 since he was in jail at that time.³⁵⁴ As soon as he came to Baku, he challenged Shahumian for the leadership of Bolshevik groups in Transcaucasia, but he failed for the time being. Ulam thinks that Shahumian's education at the universities of Riga and Berlin as well as his familiarity with Marxist doctrine gave him an advantage for leadership of the Bolshevik movement in Transcaucasia.³⁵⁵

These developments were complicated by general problems in the Empire. Nearly all parts of the Russian Empire were suffering from serious economic troubles. There was inflation, accompanying the bad news from Tsushima. Worker strikes went together with peasant unrest in the countryside. The ultimate defeat of the Russian army at the hands of the Japanese in 1904-05 War further diminished the Tsarist regime's credibility in the minds of her subjects.

6.3. Armenian- Azeri Clashes

While Armenian participation in the general revolutionary movement in the Empire had a certain impact on Russian politics, the chaotic atmosphere leading up to 1905 Revolution produced tragic results for the Armenians. In February 1905, Armenian-Azeri clashes began at many points in Transcaucasia. Mutual massacres took place in both sides roughly until the spring of 1906. Starting in February 1905, clashes spread to Nakhichevan, Shusha and at last Tiflis and Baku in November.³⁵⁶ The clashes ended in the destruction of both Armenian and Muslim villages,

³⁵⁴ Adam Bruno Ulam, *Stalin: The Man and his Era* (New York: Viking Press, 1973), 56.

³⁵⁵ Ibid.

³⁵⁶ Altsdart, *The Azerbaijani Turks: Power and Identity under Russian Rule*, 40.

especially in the Karabagh region.³⁵⁷ Moreover, monarchists groups of Baku also beat the Armenians as they disliked them for not being Orthodox Christians and for their revolutionary image, killing 60 of them.³⁵⁸

The inefficiency of the Russian administration in these clashes was criticized by both Azeri leaders and Dashnaks.³⁵⁹ This was clearly claimed by an Azeri deputy in the first state Duma in June 1906, when he asserted that the Russians were intentionally provoking inter-ethnic clashes.³⁶⁰ Soviet sources, not unsurprisingly, blame the Tsarist administration, the governor of Baku, Prince Nakashidze, in particular.³⁶¹

While there might be a motive for the Russian authorities to have a divide and rule policy, it must be also noted that the Tsarist administration in Caucasus was chronically understaffed and underpaid. During 1905-1906, while other regions were given 20 million roubles for pacification efforts, the Caucasus got nothing.³⁶² Accordingly, the number of trained policemen and their salaries were very low, which partially explains the Tsarist forces' failure to act effectively to end the clashes.³⁶³ At some point, the governors and the Okhrana were so desperate that they put all their hopes in the efforts of janitors for the gathering of intelligence about revolutionary movement.³⁶⁴

Finally, in August 1905, Nicholas II annulled the 1903 decree, as new governor Count Illarion I. Vorontsov-Dashkov suggested. This move, it was hoped,

³⁵⁷ Tadeusz Swietochowski, *Russia and Azerbaijan: A Borderland in Transition* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1995), 40.

³⁵⁸ Abraham Ascher, *The Revolution of 1905: Russia in Disarray*, 254.

³⁵⁹ Altsdadt, *The Azerbaijani Turks: Power and Identity under Russian Rule*, 67.

³⁶⁰ Hüseyin Baykara, *Azerbaycan İstiklal Mücadelesi Tarihi* (İstanbul: Azerbaycan Halk Yayınları, 1975), 141-142.

³⁶¹ Sarkissian, *Politika Osmanskogo pravitelstva v zapadnoi Armenii i derzhavy v poslednei chetverti XIX i nachale XX v.*, 282.

³⁶² Jones, 174.

³⁶³ Ibid.

³⁶⁴ Ascher, *The Revolution of 1905: Russia in Disarray*, 13.

would help the conservative element in the Armenian Church to curb the dynamism of the Armenian revolutionary movement.³⁶⁵ Another consideration was related to the Muslim demographic majority and a possible alliance with Ottoman Empire. In a letter to Tsar, Vorontsov-Dashkov wrote that “Armenians and Georgians would not go for separatism in the midst of Muslims but support the Russian rule while Muslim separatism would be the most problematic option for Russia”.³⁶⁶

6.4. The End of the Revolution

With the October Manifesto and the annulment of the decree regarding the confiscation of the Church property, the Armenian revolutionary movement lost pace towards the end of 1905. By then, the Armenian bourgeoisie and the clergy were ready to cooperate with the Tsarist system while peasants organized demonstrations of demonstrations of gratitude and loyalty.³⁶⁷

Overall, the legacy of the 1905 on the Armenian revolutionary movement was twofold. In the first place, by incorporating socialist themes in their programme and making tactical alliances with the Social Revolutionaries and Social Democrats, the Dashnaks, in a sense, moved away from their strict national party character, which was still more dominant.³⁶⁸ As such, in January 1906, they found themselves publishing *Harach* (Forward) in Tiflis, in which they translated Russian socialist and

³⁶⁵ Hovannisian, *Armenia: On the Road to Independence*, 20.

³⁶⁶ Kazamzadeh, 15-16.

³⁶⁷ Ibid. 21.

³⁶⁸ Minassian, “Nationalism and Socialism in the Armenian Revolutionary Movement (1887-1912)”, 180-181.

populist literature into Armenian.³⁶⁹ The socialist influence was to increase in Armenian circles, which ultimately ended in Dashnak participation in the congress of the Second International in 1907.

Another consequence of this change caused Armenian revolutionaries, Dashnaks in particular, to be more flexible in their relations with the Young Turks organizations abroad. An influential Dashnak, Aknouni had undertaken talks with Young Turks in May 1905, even while the Armeno-Azeri conflict went on.³⁷⁰ In effect, a prominent Young Turk, Abdullah Cevdet himself went so far as to appeal to the Muslims to end the fighting.³⁷¹

Around 1905, even loyal supporters of the Tsarist regime saw that the system was not working. Almost all segments of the Empire, both in socio-political and national terms, had problems of their own and the only response of the Russian autocracy was to intensify police-state character and declare war on Japan. Armenians were unquestionably one of these discontented groups in this multi-national Empire.

It was the Confiscation of the Armenian Church by Tsarist regime, which determined the role of Armenians in the making of 1905 Revolution. Since the Armenian Church was the institution which preserved the Armenian identity both in religious and linguistic terms, the Russian take-over was perceived as a threat to the essence of the Armenian community, which ended up with in mass opposition to the autocracy.

Led by the Dashnaks, the Armenian resistance made things worse for the Tsarist authorities in Transcaucasia. Using their experience in the Ottoman Empire, Armenian revolutionaries assassinated many Tsarist officials. In addition, the

³⁶⁹ Minassian, “1876-1923 Döneminde Osmanlı İmparatorluğu’nda Sosyalist Hareketin Doğuşunda ve Gelişmesinde Ermeni Topluluğunun Rolü”, 194.

³⁷⁰ Şükrü M. Hanioglu, *Preparation for a Revolution: The Young Turks, 1902-1908* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2001), 95.

³⁷¹ Ibid.

Dashnaks cooperated with other influential Russian political parties to organize general strikes and protests. This contribution of the Armenian groupings becomes quite significant, given the context of 'Bloody Sunday'.

Apart from the activities of Dashnaks, Armenians also joined other parties, which ultimately produced crucial figures like Shahumian. As the upheaval in the country was worsened by the news of the debacle in the Far East and the inability of Tsarist regime to respond, the Armenians were learning how to make revolution, which would be a decisive factor a few years later in the fate of neighboring empires.

The 1905 experience for the Armenian revolutionary movement demonstrated that terror and armed resistance formed a useful way to force a mighty Empire to make concessions.³⁷² Moreover, Hovannisian claims that Armenian national consciousness and organization skills were strengthened by the struggle with the Azeris, despite the heavy toll.³⁷³ This was an important factor in the behavior of Armenian revolutionaries in their activities in Russia and the Ottoman lands in the years to come, particularly when the prospects of the collaboration with the Young Turks finally withered away. Armenian revolutionaries had now an idea what to do.

³⁷² Geifman, 249.

³⁷³ Hovannisian, *Armenia: On the Road to Independence 1918*, 21.

CHAPTER 7

CONCLUSION

By 1907, matters had developed between Tsarist Russia and the Armenians in a manner very different from what had been hoped by the Armenian political leaders, churchmen and intelligentsia back in the days when Russian liberators, entering the fortress of Kars with Armenian generals in 1878. By 1907, the revolutionary Armenians were being subjected to a mass-trial. Armenian writers, lawyers, doctors and even the closest allies of the Tsarist regime, the merchants, were included in this trial, which dragged on from 1907 to 1912. Their defence lawyer was the future Premier Alexander F. Kerensky.³⁷⁴ Very early on, the speech of Arshak Zurabian, a former Dashnak, in which he criticized the Tsarist Army, was to create a serious crisis, ending with the Stolypin coup d'état in June 1907.³⁷⁵

³⁷⁴ Aleksandr Fyodor Kerensky, *The Kerensky Memoirs: Russia and History's Turning Point* (London: Cassell, 1966), 80-81.

³⁷⁵ Abraham Ascher, *The Revolution of 1905: Authority Restored* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1992), 314-316.

A curious and in its way beneficent side-effect of the Tsarist-Russian collision with Armenian revolutionaries in this period came in a Turkish context: there was, for the first time, a joint Armenian-Turkish opposition to Abdülhamid's regime a year later, in 1908, when a group of angry Armenian and Muslim women raided a wheat granary and broke the windows of the sub-prefects's office in Arapgir, in the province of Ma'muret el-Aziz as a protest against grain prices.³⁷⁶ However, these cordial relations would not last long. Some twelve years later, the fortress of Kars would witness a different drama for the Armenian revolutionaries. They fled, and a treaty in 1921 confirmed new borders to the east of the town.

The Tsarist factor in this disappointment was important. The process of the Armenian national awakening period was the result of a combination of political, economic and cultural developments within the nation. Along with the Ottoman Armenians, it was the Armenians of Tiflis, Baku or Erevan who made the awakening possible. While the reform of the language, the expansion of schools and the creation of a vigorous new literature was made possible through the efforts of Russian Armenian intellectuals, the industrious Armenian bourgeoisie of Transcaucasia provided the material basis for this.

While the Tsarist administration was trying to extend its reforms into this 'warm Siberia' – as they termed the Caucasus – by the 1870's, it was in fact the Armenians who ran the place, and all travelers noticed this. The advent of the railways, telegraph and the boom of the oil industry not only empowered the Armenian bourgeoisie but also tempted the Armenian villager from the countryside of Erevan to try his chances in Tiflis or Baku, where he would read about Raffi's national heroes, of whom he might never before have heard. On the other hand, other

³⁷⁶ Hanioğlu, 208.

major inhabitants of the region, Georgians and Azeris, were forming different thoughts as to their neighbours. They could hardly be ignored, even in the fine flush of the Armenian renaissance.

Some Armenians fell under the influence of the Russian revolutionary movement. While the works of Nechaev, Lavrov or Tkachev provide a theoretical basis, it was the People's Will, which inspired some Armenians to put theory into practice. Soon, the Armenian national awakening had found its environment to flourish in Tsarist Russia by drawing on the experience of the Russian revolutionaries, especially after the assassination of Tsar Alexander II in 1881.

However, the machinations of these Armenian revolutionaries became complicated as a series of Tsarist domestic and foreign policy priorities blocked their ways. As the Russification measures brought about restrictions on Armenian cultural sphere, there were also Tsarist suspicions about the Armenian Catholicosate. The activities of Armenian revolutionaries in the Ottoman Empire made the Tsarist regime even more anxious, especially at a time when Russia had a certain understanding with the Sultan.

Coupled with the hostilities related to the competition in demography, jobs and political primacy with Georgians and Azeris, the Russian Armenians were depicted negatively by the top Tsarist officials in Transcaucasia, which eventually resulted in an extreme measure of the confiscation of the properties of the Armenian Church in 1903. While this created an immense opposition from the Russian Armenians at all levels, the problems of the Empire grew as general strikes were almost constant and bad news poured in from the Far East.

It was the course of the Revolution of 1905 that added a new dimension to the Armenian revolutionary movement, which gained support from its Russian

counterpart. The tactical alliances with other revolutionary parties, along with the social problems, forced Armenian revolutionary parties to add more socialist themes such as the Austro-Marxist extra-territorial autonomy or a Transcaucasian federation into their agenda instead of a sole emphasis on the ‘Turkish yoke’.

However, the aftermath of the Revolution was a massive disappointment. In 1906, Stolypin was complaining about the annulment of the act of confiscation that it gave Echmiadzin the opportunity to be the center for Armenian revolutionary movement in the Tsarist lands.³⁷⁷ The situation of Armenian revolutionary parties was no better; many members were arrested; some, like Aknouni, thought that they had to try to reach an agreement with the Turks, which they did soon although it was not to last very long.³⁷⁸

The later nineteenth century was a period of enormous promise for the Russian Armenians, and the purpose of this thesis has been to demonstrate as much. However, this bright prospect of the Russian Armenians was shattered as the Tsarist domestic and foreign policy perspectives changed and confronted the Armenian national awakening, which produced complicated results as the Armenian affiliation with the Russian revolutionary movement intensified. With the act of confiscation and the chaotic atmosphere of the 1905 Revolution, the reversal of the Armenian fortunes in Tsarist Russia completed most of its course, making the Armenian revolutionaries think on what needs to be done next.

³⁷⁷ Werth, 127-128

³⁷⁸ Hanioglu, 193.

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