

## THE POLES IN THE RUSSIAN EMPIRE AND THEIR OPINIONS ABOUT THE ARMENIAN GENOCIDE

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The outbreak of the Great War brought Poles hope to reunite the Polish lands and regain the craved independence. Before it happened, though, they had had to endure four years of a war they had never experienced. Poles in Russia had to fight on multiple fronts, accept a throng of refugees and provide them with care, and struggle hard to internationalise the Polish cause despite opposition on the part of the tsar and later the Bolshevik government. Even though the Polish press discussed so many important issues it also published information about other nations in similar situation, among others about Armenians.

In the article titled “The Poles in The Russia Empire and their opinion about Armenian Genocide,” the press will be used to exemplify Poles’ opinions about the Armenian extermination: reasons, proceedings and effects.<sup>1</sup>

Firstly in my paper I would like to represent a common history between Poland and Russia since 1795 to 1921, and also talk about the fates of the Poles in the Russian Empire. After that I’m going to depict the Polish opinion about “the Armenian question” before WWI. Then I will talk about the articles published about the Armenian Genocide in the Polish press between 1914 and 1917, and specify the Polish attitudes to the genocide, how the Poles saw a common fate with the Armenians and the Armenian independence after the war.

### Poland and Russia

Poles’ opinions, beliefs, and history were strictly conditioned by the history of relationships between the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth and the Russian Empire. The turning point for the history of Poles in Russia was the period of 1772–1795. It is then that, on the basis of three partition treaties, the lands of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth were divided between Prussia, the Austrian Empire and Russia. The Russian Empire acquired the largest area (462,000 km<sup>2</sup>), populated by 3.3 million people. Moreover, Stanisław August Poniatowski, the king of Poland, abdicated the crown in favour of the Russian empress.<sup>2</sup> This moment marked the disappearance of Poland from the map of Europe for 123 years. Some hope appeared when Napoleon began his campaign against

<sup>1</sup> Armenian Genocide in polish public opinion has not extensively been studied by Polish historian so far. See Giza Antoni, “Kwestia Ormiańska na przełomie XIX i XX w. i jej odgłosy na ziemiach polskich,” in *Polacy w Armenii*, ed. Edward Walewander, Lublin: Redakcja Wydawnictw Katolickiego Uniwersytetu Lubelskiego, 2000; Macios Dominika Maria, “The Attitude of Poles to the “Armenian Issue” in Press, literature and Art from 1895-1939”, in *Художественная культура армянских общин на землях Речи Посполитой*, ed. Ирина Скворцова, Минск: Арт Дизайн, 2013.

<sup>2</sup> Jezierski Andrzej, ed., *Historia Polski w liczbach*, Warszawa: Główny Urząd Statystyczny, 1993, s. 20.

Russia. On the lands taken from Russia and the Kingdom of Prussia the French emperor established the Grand Duchy of Warsaw. After the Congress of Vienna, it was reformed into the Kingdom of Poland with its own government and army; Polish was also made the official language. The new law guaranteed personal liberty, the freedom of the press and the personal inviolability. The tsar remained the ruler of Poland with full legislative and executive power.<sup>3</sup> As the result of the November Uprising in 1830 and the January Uprising of 1863, the Kingdom lost its independence, administrative autonomy, and name, which was officially changed to Vistula Land. Nonetheless, Poles kept using the name "Kingdom of Poland."<sup>4</sup>

The Russian policy aimed at decreasing the importance of the former territory of Poland. Primarily, Poles were being removed from all state offices and given positions in central Russia, in the Caucasus, and in Siberia. Higher education institutions were closed down as well, which forced young people to study in the Empire. Also compulsory military service in garrisons in Russian cities was introduced.<sup>5</sup> This plan was designed to destroy the educated classes, who could potentially rise again to fight for the freedom of Poland. The situation improved after 1905, when certain civil liberties had been introduced; for example, censorship in the Polish press was relaxed.<sup>6</sup>

With the outbreak of World War I, hope arose again that Poland could regain independence. However, Poles serving in the Russian army were forced to fight on several fronts, often against their fellow countrymen serving in the armies of the Central Powers. Furthermore, the Eastern Front passed through the lands of the Kingdom of Poland, which inflicted substantial damage to the country; not only to its economy, but also to its people. In 1915, due to the advancing offensive of the Central armies, around 800,000 people were forcibly evacuated to central Russia. In August and September of the same year, the majority of Polish lands came under the rule of the Central countries.<sup>7</sup>

Since the beginning of the war, each of the occupying powers tried to gain support of Polish people in the fight against common enemies by promising concessions to establish a new Polish country. Already in 1914, Grand Duke Nikolay Nikolaevich issued a proclamation to the Polish nation, while on the 5<sup>th</sup> of November 1916, Germany and Austria proposed to found a new Polish country effectively beholden to Germany. In response, tsar Nicholas II declared the creation of free Poland on the partitioned lands as

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<sup>3</sup> Kieniewicz Stefan, *Historia Polski 1795-1918*, Warszawa: Państwowe Wydawnictwo Naukowe, 1996, s. 66-67.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid. s. 92-293.

<sup>5</sup> Okołowicz Józef, *Wychodźstwo i osadnictwo polskie przed wojną światową*, Warszawa: Ed. Urząd Emigracyjny, 1920, s. 386.

<sup>6</sup> Kmiecik Zenon and Myśliński Jerzy, *Prasa polska w latach 1864-1918*, Warszawa: Państwowe Wydawnictwo Naukowe, 1976, s. 60-61.

<sup>7</sup> Roszkowski Wojciech, *Historia Polski 1914-2001*, Warszawa: Wydawnictwo Naukowe PWN, 2002, s. 11-12.

a one of the goals of the war<sup>8</sup>. However, with time Poles began to realise that those were empty promises and that the only way to secure independence was a peace conference and the support of France, England, and particularly the United States of America. For this reason the “Polish problem” was propagated in the West by figures like Henryk Sienkiewicz, a Nobel Prize winner, and Ignacy Paderewski, a world-renowned pianist.<sup>9</sup> As the result of their actions, President Wilson included the erection of an independent Polish state among the “Fourteen Points.”<sup>10</sup> Poles’ concerns regarding the intentions of the occupying powers were confirmed by the provisions of the Treaty of Brest-Litovsk, according to which the “Polish problem” was only a German domestic affair. Germany also compelled the Bolshevik authorities to issue a decree of rescission of the partition agreements from the late 17<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>11</sup>

On the 11<sup>th</sup> of November, an armistice was signed at Compiègne and on the same day, Józef Piłsudski arrived in Warsaw and was proclaimed commander-in-chief. On the 22<sup>nd</sup> of November, Piłsudski signed a decree which recognised the existence of an independent state of Poland. The Western countries failed to adopt a consistent stance at the Paris Peace Conference, so the border between Poland and the Soviet Union was delimited only after the Polish-Soviet War, which began in 1919 and ended with the Treaty of Riga in 1921.<sup>12</sup> Polish independence did not last long, though: on the 17<sup>th</sup> of September 1939, USSR invaded Poland again.

### Poles in Russia

Ever since the invasion, Russia tried to diminish the importance of the territory of Poland and turn it into a peripheral province of the Empire. Afraid of Poles’ persistent striving for independence, up until 1914 Russian authorities deported those who opposed the official policy and struggled for freedom, mostly to Siberia or to the Caucasus.

Poles sent to the Caucasus were assigned to border fortresses where they fought against local tribes.<sup>13</sup> Most of them were young people, students unprepared for combat in Caucasian climatic and geographical conditions, unfamiliar with warfare customs of local highlanders. For this reason they deserted, were abducted, or taken captive very

<sup>8</sup> Władysław Pobóg-Malinowski, *Najnowsza Historia Polityczna Polski. Okres 1914-1939*, Gdańsk: Graf Oficyna Wydawnicza, 1990, s. 16, 80-81, 99.

<sup>9</sup> Handelsman Marcelli, ed., *Polska w czasie wielkiej wojny (1914-1918). Tom II. Historia społeczna i ekonomiczna*, Warszawa: Towarzystwo Badania Zagadnień Międzynarodowych, 1932, s. 198-199.

<sup>10</sup> Tyszkiewicz Jakub and Czapiewski Edward, *Historia Powszechna Wiek XX*, Warszawa: Wydawnictwo Naukowe PWN, 2010, s. 77, 85-86.

<sup>11</sup> The decree was issued on 29 VIII 1918 and applied only to the Polish lands belonging to the Central Powers after the Treaty of Brest.

<sup>12</sup> Roszkowski Wojciech, *Historia Polski*, 24. For further information on this issue see Norman Davies, *White Eagle, Red Star: The Polish Soviet War, 1919-20 and the miracle on the Vistula*, London: Pimlico, 2003.

<sup>13</sup> Caban Wiesław, “W niewoli u Szamila,” *Annales Universitatis Mariae Curie Skłodowska. Lublin – Polonia*, vol. LX, 2005, s. 55.

quickly. After finding themselves on the other side, some of them decided to join the highlanders in the fight against a common enemy: Russians. Few of them managed to join the “foreign command” of Iman Shamil, who, with time, became a symbol of the fight against the aggressor in the eyes of Poles.<sup>14</sup> However, in the Russian army there was a group of Polish volunteers who decided themselves to serve in the Caucasian garrisons, led by the desire of quick promotion and military career, romantic motives, as well as curiosity of the world.<sup>15</sup>

The situation of Poles in the Caucasus changed considerably in the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Some of the soldiers serving in the Russian army were granted amnesty by the emperor and came back to their homeland.<sup>16</sup> When they had returned, many of them published their memoirs as well as their works in the fields of ethnography, history, environment, geography, literature and so on.<sup>17</sup> These publications were very popular among Poles, who consequently ceased to perceive the Caucasus as “a warm Siberia” and saw an opportunity to become rich. Thanks to the rapid development of this region, more and more Poles came here from the Kingdom of Poland and so-called Western Krai<sup>18</sup> in search of gainful employment as administrative officials, engineers, physicians, architects, pharmacists, and technicians. Many of them assumed managerial positions in the petroleum industry, in the judiciary, and in communication (especially in private railway); they also conducted scientific research to increase the understanding of the region. Typically, Poles settled in large urban areas such as Baku and Tiflis, but they were also found in Yerevan, Alexandropol, or Nakhchivan.<sup>19</sup> Hipolit Jaworski, who spent eleven years in the Caucasus, wrote in his memoirs that: “[the Caucasus is] particularly close to us. After all, is there a family in Poland no member of whom lives in the Caucasus?” (“[Kaukaz jest] dla nas szczególnie bliski, - bo czyż jest rodzina w Polsce, coby kogoś ze swych członków nie miała na Kaukazie?”)<sup>20</sup> Most of them remained in constant contact with their compatriots in Poland, which contributed to the rapid exchange of knowledge about the region.

<sup>14</sup> Widderszal Ludwik, *Sprawy Kaukaskie w polityce europejskiej w latach 1831-1864*, Warszawa: Nakł. Towarzystwa Naukowego Warszawskiego, 1934, s. 222-227, 236.

<sup>15</sup> Piwnicki Grzegorz, “Losy Polaków –wojskowych, służących w armii carskiej na terenie Armenii w XIX i na początku XX w.,” in *Polacy w Armenii*, ed. Edward Walewander, Lublin: Redakcja Wydawnictw Katolickiego Uniwersytetu Lubelskiego, 2000, s. 237-238.

<sup>16</sup> Piwnicki Grzegorz, *Polscy wojskowi i zesłańcy w carskiej armii na Kaukazie w XIX i na początku XX wieku*, Toruń: Wydawnictwo Adam Marszałek, 2001, s. 215.

<sup>17</sup> Chodubski Andrzej, “Polacy w nurcie przeobrażania kulturowego Kaukazu w XIX i na początku XX wieku,” *Annales Universitatis Mariae Curie Skłodowska. Lublin –Polonia*, Vol. LX, 2005, s. 67-68.

<sup>18</sup> The Lithuania Governorate, The Byelorussia Governorate and The Ukraine Governorate.

<sup>19</sup> Mądziuk Marek, “Polacy w Armenii w latach I wojny światowej,” in *Polacy w Armenii*, ed. Edward Walewander, Lublin: Redakcja Wydawnictw Katolickiego Uniwersytetu Lubelskiego, 2000, s. 84.

<sup>20</sup> Jaworski Hipolit, *Wspomnienia Kaukazu*, Poznań: K. Żupański, 1877, s. 1.



Aside from the Caucasus, Poles emigrated to Russia, especially to Saint Petersburg and Moscow.<sup>21</sup> They were professors, members of the professions, deportees, and their descendants, military of different ranks, but also young people who came here to study and often stayed after graduating.<sup>22</sup> It has to be noted that according to the policy of the tsarism at that time, all officials were directed to work away from their place of birth in order to prevent revolutionary movements.<sup>23</sup> As a result, in both cities emerged a rather large Polish diaspora, who took a number of actions for Poles in Russia. They had to broaden the scope of their activities after the outbreak of World War I: due to the advancing frontline on the lands of the Kingdom of Poland, Russians began the resettlement of thousands of Poles far into Russia; many industrial plants and schools were also evacuated. The number of displaced people increased even more because of conscription of Polish citizens into the Russian army, a throng of Polish prisoners of war who fought in the armies of the Central Powers, and the internment of Poles who lived in the Austrian and Prussian partitions in special camps located in the Caucasus.<sup>24</sup> Seeing such a huge number of Polish refugees left on their own, the Polish diaspora founded the Central Aid Committee (*Centralny Komitet Pomocy*) and the *Society for Aid to War Victims* (*Towarzystwo Pomocy Ofiarom Wojny*). With time, branches of the Society were opened throughout whole Russia. These institutions provided financial support, arranged hospitals, orphanages, schools, and jobs; they also collected funds to help the Poles who remained in the Kingdom. They organised concerts, theatrical plays, and funds collections and co-operated with other institutions helping refugees.<sup>25</sup>

A large group of Poles in the Caucasus were soldiers. According to the so-called Army of the Caucasian Staff, there were about 450 officers and more than 17 thousand soldiers in 1917. The outbreak of the February Revolution helped them legitimize organization of the Polish associations and also intensified the desire to return to their homeland.<sup>26</sup> In addition, the Poles obtained permission to organize the Polish troops and their evacuation to the Polish lands.

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<sup>21</sup> It is estimated that by 1887 there were 30.000 Poles in St. Petersburg and 10.000 in Moscow. Pomykało Wojciech, *Polacy w Rosji wobec rewolucji październikowej: marzec 1917-listopad 1918r.: materiały i dokumenty*, Warszawa: Książka i Wiedza, 1957, s. 5-6.

<sup>22</sup> Kijas Artur, "Polacy w życiu społeczno-politycznym Moskwy na przełomie XIX i XX wieku," in *Cywilizacja Rosji Imperialnej*, ed. Piotr Kraszewski, Poznań: Instytut Wschodni Uniwersytetu im. Adama Mickiewicza, 2002, s. 213, 222.

<sup>23</sup> Okołowicz Józef, *Wychodźstwo*, s. 386.

<sup>24</sup> Kubiak Hieronim, ed., *Mniejszości polskie i polonia w ZSSR*, Wrocław: Zakład Narodowy im. Ossolińskich 1992, s. 20-21, 29.

<sup>25</sup> For further information on this issue see Mądzik Marek, *Polskie Towarzystwo Pomocy Ofiarom Wojny w Rosji w latach I wojny światowej*, Lublin: Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Marii Curie-Skłodowskiej, 2011; Mądzik Marek and Korzeniowski Mariusz, *Tułaczy los: uchodźcy polscy w imperium rosyjskim w latach pierwszej wojny światowej*, Lublin: Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Marii Curie-Skłodowskiej, 2007.

<sup>26</sup> Pobóg-Malinowski, *Najnowsza historia*, s. 95.

According to the population census conducted in 1897, there were 14,903 Poles living in the Caucasus. It is estimated that during World War I, this number was between 80,000 and 100,000. The majority of them returned to Poland after it gained independence and after the Polish-Soviet war. According to the census from 1926, only 6,324 Poles remained in the Caucasus.<sup>27</sup>

### Poles and the “Armenian Question” before 1914

The Armenian Genocide, back then called the “Armenian Question”, was well known to the Poles living on Polish lands integrated into the Russian Empire, Prussia, and the Austro-Hungarian Empire. Ever since the Congress of Berlin, articles on the situation of Armenians in the Ottoman Empire were published in Polish magazines. The dissemination of this subject was influenced by many factors. The most important of them was the Armenian diaspora, namely the Armenian Catholic Poles who inhabited the lands of the former Republic of Poland for generations and with time became a very influential social class.<sup>28</sup> The second crucial factor was the sympathy and respect which Poles shown to Armenians, which was gained by their contribution to the culture, history and national heritage of the former Republic of Poland.<sup>29</sup> The political situation of the time (absence of Poland on the map of Europe) made Poles feel compassion towards the oppressed nations who were fighting for independence. What is more, they carefully observed the international relations between the invaders and their politics, especially between the Tsarist Russia and the Ottoman Empire, waiting for a war which could help them regain lost independence.

The information about the situation of Armenians reached the Poles living in Russia and in the Kingdom of Poland in many ways. On the one hand, by the correspondents of Polish newspapers in the Caucasus, and on the other, through articles reprinted from Western, Russian, and Armenian press. Moreover, much information was passed by travelling Poles, who worked as physicians, architects, and engineers and conducted researches on the Caucasus, as well as by soldiers serving in Russian garrisons. In their memoirs published after their return they often mentioned Armenians and their situation.

When researching the Armenian Genocide as perceived by Poles, one must remember that the information published on the Polish lands depended primarily on the censorship

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<sup>27</sup> Zakrzewska-Dubasowa Mirosława, “Polacy na Zakaukaziu,” in *Polacy w kulturze i życiu społecznym Zakaukazia do 1918 roku*, ed. Mirosława Zakrzewska-Dubasowa, Lublin: Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Marii Curie-Skłodowskiej, 1990, s. 12-13.

<sup>28</sup> For further information on this issue see Krzysztof Stopka, *Ormianie w Polsce dawnej i dziś*, Kraków: Księgarnia Akademicka: 2000.

<sup>29</sup> For further information on this issue see *Ormianie polscy: odrębność i asymilacja*, ed., Beata Biedrońska-Słota. Kraków-Muzeum Narodowe 1999. Published in conjunction with the exhibition of the same name, shown at National Museum in Krakow, Poland; *Ars Armeniaca. Sztuka ormiańska ze zbiorów polskich i ukraińskich*, ed., Waldemar Deluga. Zamość: Muzeum zamojskie w Zamościu 2010. Published in conjunction with the exhibition of the same name, shown at The Zamosc Museum, in Zamosc, Poland.

of the invaders as well as their relations with and interests in Ottoman Empire.<sup>30</sup> Thus, in the Prussian partition, due to the construction of a railway line on Armenian lands, the “Armenian Question” was concealed. In the Russian partition, because of a conflict with Turkey and many research centres involved in research on the Orient and the Caucasus, the subject of persecution of Armenians was raised more willingly. Most often, though, the problem of the extermination of Armenians was touched raised in Galicia because of greater civil liberties and large groups of Polish Armenians living there.

The Polish public opinion was not indifferent to the massacres taking place in the Empire. First mentions of persecutions date back to 1894–1896. From this moment on, many articles were published concerning the situation of Armenians in Turkey, the policy of the Ottoman Porte in the context of the Congress of Berlin, the history of Armenia, and its role in spreading Christianity. The articles covered the imposition of high taxes on and robbing of Armenians, closing schools and theatres, banning publications in the Armenian language, censorship etc. They also included descriptions of riots or pogroms. One of the first reports is a very brief description of the events in Constantinople: “[...] a quarrel ensued and then a brawl, which turned into a bloody battle with daggers, bayonets and revolvers and fists. The Muslim mob rushed at the Armenians and perpetrated a gory massacre. [...] The authorities sent back nearly a hundred bodies to the patriarchate for burial, howbeit the fact remains that many of the killed and partially dismembered were thrown into the sea.”<sup>31</sup> (“[...] wynikła stąd sprzeczka, a następnie bójka, która rozwinęła się, następnie w krwawą bitwę na sztylety, bagnety i rewolwery i pięści.- Tłum muzulmański rzucił się na Ormian, i on to sprawił krwawą rzeź [...] Władze odesłały do patriarchatu blisko 100 ciał, do pochowania, atoli faktem jest, że wielu zabitych i w części poćwiartowanych wrzucono do morza.”)<sup>32</sup> In the press also appeared articles concerning Armenian orphans and widows.

Poles described the events in Turkey with expressions like: *massacre of Christians, the Armenian massacre, gory assaults, gory events, murdering Christians, gory battle and gory incidents*.<sup>33</sup> One of the first articles on the situation of Armenians published in the Polish press was a report from the journey of count de Cholei, in which he wrote: “The Armenians inhabiting this part of the Ottoman Empire are miserable indeed. Treated like pariahs, robbed, beaten by Kurds, often injured or killed for their attempts to resist this violence, they have no-one to turn to, no-one to call for help.” (“Ormianie zamieszkujący te części państwa Otomańskiego są istotnie pożałowania godni. Traktowani jak

<sup>30</sup> Kucharczyk Grzegorz, *Cenzura pruska w Wielkopolsce w czasach zaborów 1815-1914*, Poznań: Wyd. Poznańskie, 2001; Kucharczyk Grzegorz, *Pierwszy Holocaust XX wieku*, Warszawa: Stowarzyszenie Kulturalne Fronda, 2004, s. 166-167.

<sup>31</sup> “Polityka,” *Tygodnik Ilustrowany*, September 30, 1895, s. 249.

<sup>32</sup> Ibid.

<sup>33</sup> “Polityka,” *Tygodnik Ilustrowany*, November 11, 1895, s. 416; “Polityka,” *Tygodnik Ilustrowany*, October 7, 1895, s. 269; “Polityka,” *Tygodnik Ilustrowany*, September 30, 1895: 249; Ratuld-Rakowska Maria, *Podróż Polki do Persyi*, Vol.1, Warszawa: Drukarnia Aleksandra Tad. Jezierskiego, 1904, s. 47.

pariasi, odzierani, bici przez Kurdów, często opłacający ranami lub śmiercią, próby opiekania się tym gwałtom, nie mają komu oddać się w opiekę, żądać od kogo pomocy.”<sup>34</sup> A similar opinion can be found in Maria Ratuld’s memoirs from her journey to Persia: “Armenian villages penetrate Kurd properties; Kurdish settlements are surrounded by Armenian properties. The Kurd, in whose veins flows the bellicose blood of the ancient Medes, undaunted and fearless, imposing the rule of the stronger, ousts the Armenian from his land wherever he can. Should he fail to attain his end, he burns his house and strips him off his belongings. Therefore, throughout this whole border trail, the abjection of Armenians is immeasurable.” (“Wioski Armeńskie wżynają się w posiadłości Kursów, osady kurdzkie otoczone są przez posiadłości armeńskie. Kurd w którego żyłach płynie wojownicza krew dawnych Medów, nieposkromiony i nieustraszony, rządząc się prawem silniejszego, wyrugowuje Armeńczyka z ziemi wszędzie, gdzie mu się tylko to udaje. Gdy nie dopnie swego, pali mu chatę, uprowadza dobytek. To też na całym tym pogranicznym szlaku nędza Armeńczyków jest bezgraniczną.”)<sup>35</sup> Astonished, the author also pointed out the lack of sympathy on the part of the Europeans living in Asia Minor for the sad fate of Armenians. It was explained to her that they cannot gain the friendship nor ensure the sympathy of the people in the West with submissive behaviour.<sup>36</sup>

### The Armenian Question during World War I

Armenians and Poles were in a very similar situation at the outbreak of World War I, which evoked mutual sympathy. As soon as September 1914, just after the outbreak of the Great War, the newspaper *Mshak* published an Armenian appeal to Poles, later reprinted in Polish magazines *Dziennik Polski* and *Nowa Gazeta*. Its authors pointed out that Poland could regain freedom if it joined the fight under the rule of the tsar, the defender of all the Slavs, so that the Russian army would bring them freedom and civil rights.<sup>37</sup> For the authors of the appeal, the outbreak of the war was a chance to resurrect Poland: “Long live Poland! In this difficult, critical moment, you are reborn, as evidenced by the words of the Most Eminent Commander in chief” (“Niech żyje Polska! W ciężkiej krytycznej chwili odradzasz się, jak świadczą słowa Najdostojniejszego Wodza Naczelnego.”) Sympathy between the two nations is visible as well in the last paragraph: “From the foot of the venerable Ararat, we Armenians cordially salute you, Brothers Poles, and rejoice with you. Hail Poland! Long live Poland!” (“Z podnóża sędziwego Araratu, my Ormianie, serdecznie pozdrawiamy Was, Bracia Polacy, i radujemy się wraz z

<sup>34</sup> “Turcy i Ormianie,” *Tygodnik Ilustrowany*, December 2, 1895, s. 429.

<sup>35</sup> Ratuld-Rakowska Maria, *Podróż Polki*, s. 48.

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid.*, s. 49.

<sup>37</sup> Proclamation was maintained in accordance with the Russian political thought. In the August 14, 1914, duke Nikolai Nikolaevich issued a manifesto about “the Polish question” calling for a joint fight together with Russia, alongside Cara, whose slogan was “Poland free in their faith, language and self-government.”

Wami. Pozdrowienie Ci Polską! Żyj Polsko!”<sup>38</sup> Also, Ferdynand Goetel, a Polish writer interned by the Russians and sent to the camp in Tashkent, mentioned in his memoir *Przez płonący wschód* (*Across the Burning East*) that “the Armenians are the very first to establish good relationship with us, to conciliate us with special affection and interest in the Polish cause.” (“najpierwsi Ormianie zawierają z nami dobre stosunki, jednając nas szczególnym afektem i zainteresowaniem dla sprawy polskiej.”)<sup>39</sup>

Sympathy and interest in the Armenian cause on the part of the Poles was visible primarily in the Polish press. Articles and short mentions were published in the most popular Polish magazines printed in Russia: *Tygodnik Ilustrowany*, *Głos*, *Echo Polskie*, *Nowa Gazeta*, *Dziennik Petrogradzki* and *Kurjer Nowy*. Also there were published abstracts of articles from the Russian-language press: *Novoye Vremya*, *Birzhevyje Vedomosti*, *Rech*, *Den*, *Kavkazskoe Slovo*, and *Vecherniye Vremya*; in the Western press: *Le Figaro*, *L'Humanité*; and in the fromin Armenian press: *Mshak*, *Horizon*, *Van-Tosp*, *Arev*, *Hovit*, and *Hayeren Vyesnik*. Naturally, all articles were subject to censorship as was all the press in Russia, which is why Polish journalists did not include their commentaries under cited reprints, leaving the conclusions to the readers. In 1915, all information concerning the Armenian Genocide was published in the form of short press releases.

### First year of extermination

The first mention of the situation of Armenians was published in January 1915<sup>th</sup> in the morning issue of *Nowa Gazeta*. In a tiny article entitled “The Misery of Armenian Refugees” (“Nędza zbiegów ormiańskich”) it was said that as the result of Turkish military activities on the 14<sup>th</sup> of January in Tiflis, the number of Armenian refugees already surpassed 80,000. For this reason, the Armenian Committee requested help from all the Benevolent Societies in Russia as well as the Armenians living in the United States of America, France, Egypt, and England.<sup>40</sup>

Another commentary published in a Polish newspaper referred to the events of the night of 24–25 April in Constantinople, when Turks conducted mass arrests of Armenian intellectual elites, thus beginning the process of genocide. According to different sources, a total of 600 to 800 people had been arrested and subsequently deported and killed.<sup>41</sup> The newspaper *Dziennik Petrogradzki* described those events with one single phrase: “In Constantinople, 400 Armenians suspected of incitement to rebellion were arrested.” (“W Konstantynopolu aresztowano 400 Ormian, podejrzanych o podburzanie do buntu.”)<sup>42</sup> The subsequent persecution of Armenians in the Turkish capital was also described in

<sup>38</sup> “Odezwa Ormian do Polaków,” *Nowa Gazeta*. Wydanie popołudniowe, September 11, 1914, s. 2.

<sup>39</sup> Ferdynand Goetel, *Przez płonący wschód: wrażenia z podróży*, Warszawa: Gebethner i Wolff, 1924, s. 277.

<sup>40</sup> “Nędza zbiegów ormiańskich,” *Nowa Gazeta*. Wydanie poranne, January 15, 1915, s. 1.

<sup>41</sup> Ternon Yves, *Ormianie. Historia zapomnianego ludobójstwa*, trans. Wawrzyniec Brzozowski, Kraków: Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Jagiellońskiego, 2005, s. 214–215.

<sup>42</sup> *Dziennik Petrogradzki*, April 19 (May 2), 1915, s. 5.

an article published in the newspaper *Głos Polski* in August 1915. Referring to the French newspaper *L'Humanité*, the author wrote about the hanging of twenty Armenians, members of the Hunchakian Party, in the Sultan Beyazit Square on the 15<sup>th</sup> of June 1915: "[...] in Constantinople, 20 Armenian socialists were hanged, including the entire editorial staff of the Armenian Marxist newspaper *Gaidz* (*Light*). Among others, on the gallows died one of the youngest and most talented party leaders, the lawyer Vanigian, who just a year ago had graduated from the University of Constantinople. All the convicts had been accused of the intention of building an independent Armenia." ("[...] w Konstantynopolu powieszono 20 socyalistów Ormian, w tej liczbie cały personel redakcyi dziennika marksistów ormiańskich „Kaic” (*Światło*). Pomiędzy innymi zginął na szubienicy jeden z najmłodszych i najbardziej utalentowanych przywódców partii, prawnik Wani-kan, który przed rokiem dopiero uniwersytet konstantynopolitański ukończył. Wszyscy skazani oskarżeni byli o zamiar odbudowania niepodległej i samodzielnej Armenii.")<sup>43</sup>

Aside from the Constantinople events, in the Polish press appeared a mention of persecutions in Bitlis vilayet. Although the extermination of Armenians was being carried out since May, in Bitlis, then in Muş, and eventually in Sasun, 280,000 Armenians died in the province.<sup>44</sup> In late July, the newspaper *Dziennik Petrogradzki* published a short note: "In Bitlis vilayet, a massacre of Armenians has been in progress for five days; 8,000–10,000 people fell victim to it." ("W wilajecie Bittlijskim w ciągu pięciu dni trwa rzeź Ormian; padło ofiarą od 8-10 tysięcy.")<sup>45</sup> In the following issues of the newspaper, information on the patriarch and the government's stance on the patriarchate was published. On the 31st of July issue it was written: "The Armenian patriarch made a protest in the Sublime Porte against the Armenian massacres." ("Patriarcha ormiański złożył protest w Porcie przeciwko nowym rzezią ormiańskim.")<sup>46</sup> The next issue informed that the Turkish government had decided to abolish the patriarchates in Constantinople, Antioch, and Jerusalem,<sup>47</sup> and on the 26<sup>th</sup> of August, citing the sources from Bucharest, it informed about the abolishment of the secular council of the Armenian patriarchate.<sup>48</sup> In the same issue it was said that according to the Athenian press, "mass arrests in Turkey are still under way." ("Aresztowania masowe w Turcji trwają.")<sup>49</sup> The 4<sup>th</sup> of September issue referred to the events in Ankara Province: "The Armenian population in Ankara and the surrounding area were killed off, except for children, who were sold in Konya for one medjidie each." ("Ludność ormiańską w Angorze (Ankarze) i okolicach wybito, z wyjątkiem dzieci, sprzedanych w Kenju (Konji), po medzidju za dziecko.")<sup>50</sup>

<sup>43</sup> *Głos Polski*, August 23, (September 5), 1915, s. 16.

<sup>44</sup> Ternon Yves, *Ormianie*, s. 231-233.

<sup>45</sup> "Kronika Wojny," *Dziennik Petrogradzki*, July 29 (August 11), 1915, s. 4.

<sup>46</sup> "Kronika Wojny," *Dziennik Petrogradzki*, July 31 (August 13), 1915, s. 4.

<sup>47</sup> "Kronika Wojny," *Dziennik Petrogradzki*, August 1 (August 14), 1915, s. 4.

<sup>48</sup> "W Turcji," *Dziennik Petrogradzki*, August 28 (September 10), 1915, s. 4.

<sup>49</sup> Ibid.

<sup>50</sup> "W Turcji," *Dziennik Petrogradzki*, September 4 (September 17), 1915, s. 4.

In September, the article entitled “The Fate of the Armenians” (“Losy Ormian”), based on the information from the French press, was published in Poland. It related the story of Armenians hiding in Musa Dagh mountains, rescued by French and British ships and evacuated to Port Said:<sup>51</sup> “The French cruisers liberated 5,000 Armenians, who resisted the Turks in Musa Dagh mountains. They ran out of supplies. The Armenians were transferred to Port Said.” (“Krażownicy francuskie uwolniły 5,000 Ormian, którzy w górach Dżebel Muss bronili się przeciw Turkom. Zapasy ich wyczerpały się już. Ormian dostawiono do Port-Saidu.”)<sup>52</sup> In October, the newspaper reported that according to the Romanian press, “[...]the government of the Young Turks attempts to exploit the war to completely eradicate the Christians in Turkey.” (“[...] rząd młodoturecki usiłuje wykorzystać wojnę dla zupełnego wytępienia Chrześcijan w Turcji.”)<sup>53</sup>

### The Armenian issue of *Echo Polskie*

In March of 1916, the Poles living in Moscow published an issue of *Echo Polskie* devoted entirely to Armenians, which was the only such case in the Polish press. It opened with an article by Aleksander Lednicki, the editor-in-chief<sup>54</sup>, entitled “Nil Desperandum.” It was a description of the history of Armenia and of Armenians, “full of tragedy and true horror,” (“pełne tragizmu i grozy prawdziwej”) which should offer “consolation and a lesson” (“otuchę i naukę”) to every nation, because despite constant invasions “[...] the nation has not fallen. Encumbered with the burden of untold historical disasters, it is always ready to rise and courageously reach for the happiness of freedom.” (“[...] naród nie zginął. Przytłoczony ciężarem niesłychanych katastrof dziejowych, gotów on jednak w każdej chwili powstać i sięgnąć mężną ręką po szczęście swobody.”) Lednicki pointed out that spiritual support and help in those hard times were provided by the Church, which would lead the Armenians to “the dawn of liberation” (“świt wyzwolenia.”) The author also noted the failure of European politicians and the Congress of Berlin, which left Armenians “at the mercy of the Turkish anarchy and the most savage tribes of the falling Empire, for pillage and slaughter” (“na łasce i niełasce, na grabieżę i rzeź anarchii tureckiej i najbardziej dzikich plemion upadającego imperium.”) The events of 1915 were described in the following way: “The Turkish and Kurdish hordes had exiled hundreds and thousands of Armenians from their homeland and drove them through Mesopotamia on the coast of the Red Sea into unknown, foreign lands.” (“Hordy Kurdów i Turków wygnały setki i tysiące Ormian z ziemi ojczystej i pognały przez Mezopotamie na brzeg

<sup>51</sup> Zakrzewska-Dubasowa Mirosława, *Historia Armenii*, Wrocław: Zakład Narodowy Imienia Ossolińskich Wydawnictwo, 1977, s. 237-238.

<sup>52</sup> “Losy Ormian,” *Dziennik Petrogradzki*, September 10 (September 23), 1915, s. 4.

<sup>53</sup> “W Turcji,” *Dziennik Petrogradzki*, October 15 (October 28), 1915, s. 4.

<sup>54</sup> Aleksander Lednicki (1866-1934)-lawyer, social and political activist, philanthropist, politician of the Russian Empire. Member of the Constitutional Democratic Party (Cadets) in Russia. During World War I, he was involved in organizing the rescue of Poles in the East, became the head of the Polish Committee for War Victims.

morza Czerwonego w nieznane i obce kraje.”) The author also discussed the question of autonomy of Armenia and the Armenians’ right to self-determination, which should get the support of Poles because of their contribution to the Polish history and culture.<sup>55</sup>

The next article, entitled “Erzurum and Moush,” (“Erzerum i Musz”) was written by Aleksei Dzhivelegov, a journalist of *Hayeren Vyesnik*. It was written specifically for the issue of *Echo Polskie*. The author wrote about the Armenians’ hope for the liberation of the eastern provinces from the yoke of Turkey, aroused by the victories of the Russian army on the Caucasian frontline. He also raised the question of the future of Armenia, pointing out that despite “an enormous number of casualties of this methodical campaign of destruction” (“kolosalnej liczby ofiar tej metodologicznej akcji zniszczenia,”) many Armenians remained in eastern vilayets. He wrote that “never in the history and in such a short time did an entire nation disappear off the face of Earth” (“historia nie zna wypadku aby a tak krótkim przeciągu czasu znikł z powierzchni cały naród.”) Moreover, referring to the history of his nation, he stated that since Genghis Khan did not succeed at this, neither would Kaiser Wilhelm II. The second question was the future of the Armenian lands, which the author answered giving three possibilities: an autonomous state under the patronage of powerful neighbours, a province integrated with one of the great powers, or an autonomous country, previously annexed. He emphasised that most Armenians would like to see Armenia under the patronage of Russia, but due to their situation at the time, they would accept any decision of the allied countries.<sup>56</sup>

The next article, “25 centuries for freedom,” (“XXXV wieków walki o wolność”) was written by journalist Kazimierz Erenberg.<sup>57</sup> In this three page dissertation he described the whole history of the Armenian nation, but also pointed out the failure of the Congress of Berlin and the Treaty of San Stefano regarding the Armenian Question. In addition, he discussed the influence of the Turkish constitution on the “new massacres” (“nowe rzezie”) and devoted much attention to the German policy concerning Turkey.<sup>58</sup>

In this issue of *Echo Polskie* there was also an article by historian Jan Jakubowski entitled “The Polish Armenians” (“Ormianie Polscy,”) which described the contribution of Armenians to the history of the Polish nation and their influence on the orientalisation of the Polish culture.<sup>59</sup>

The newspaper also included Armenian folk songs translated into Polish: the Wedding Song, the Rebellion (Kurd) Song, and the Exile Song.<sup>60</sup> The editors pointed out in a

<sup>55</sup> Lednicki Aleksander, “Nil desperandum,” *Echo Polskie*, February 21 (March 5), 1916, s. 1.

<sup>56</sup> Dżiwelegow A. [Dzhivelegov Aleksei], “Erzerum i Musz,” *Echo Polskie*, February 21 (March 5), 1916, *Echo Polskie* 1916, s. 2.

<sup>57</sup> Erenberg Kazimierz, “XXXV wieków walki o wolność,” *Echo Polskie*, February 21 (March 5), 1916, s. 3.

<sup>58</sup> Ibid., s. 4-5.

<sup>59</sup> Jakubowski Jan Feliks, “Ormianie Polscy,” *Echo Polskie*, February 21 (March 5), 1916, s. 5-6.

<sup>60</sup> Pawłowski Franciszek Ksawery, “Pieśni Ludowe Ormiańskie,” *Echo Polskie*, February 21 (March 5), 1916, s. 7-8.



commentary that it was not high art, but that those songs described the history and fate of the entire nation the most accurately, so that the reader would be able to “[...] enter the pained soul of one of the most tragic nations in the world” (“[...] wniknąć w zboląłą duszę, jednego z najniezwyklejszych narodów na świecie.”)<sup>61</sup>

Also an Armenian press report was published in *Echo Polskie*. It was pointed out that not only did the Armenian society not lose heart, but also looked to the future with hope. The first example was the newspaper *Horizon*, which urged to unite and fight despite the suffering and loss that the Armenians sustained. The journalists of the newspaper also called for looking to the future positively.<sup>62</sup> Remaining in this tendency, *Mshak* mentioned that no nation ever suffered from such persecution as the Armenians did in 1915, but instead of yielding to grief, they should strive for rebuilding the country.<sup>63</sup> *Van-Tosp* stated: “we shall live, even though no tears are in our eyes, for our heart ceased to feel pain.” (“Będziemy żyli, pomimo że łez nie ma już w oczach naszych, bo serce przestało odczuwać cierpienie.”)<sup>64</sup> Finally, *Arev* said that the failure could be used for victory.<sup>65</sup>

The issue concluded with a short literary work by Tadeusz Miciński, a Polish writer,<sup>66</sup> entitled “Anahita’s Love” (“Miłość Anahity”), which told the love story of captain Stanisław Nazarjan (Nazarowicz), a Polish Armenian, and Anahita, a young Armenian. They met in the botanical garden in Tiflis. Afterwards, he had to return to his regiment while she came back to her home town in the vicinity of Lake Van. When the town had been attacked, Nazarjan did his best to save his loved one, who was abducted and held captive in a harem in Erzurum. For this reason, the young captain decided to join the assault on the city. His regiment took the stronghold, but he could not save Anahita: she had been locked in a tower set on fire by the Turks. He watched her burn alive. In an act of vengeance, Nazarjan slew her killer.<sup>67</sup>

The entire issue of *Echo Polskie* devoted to Armenians was supplemented with illustrative material. There were reproductions of photographs depicting the Catholicos Gregory V, the prominent writer Raffi, and Andranik, a fighter for the freedom of Armenia.<sup>68</sup>

<sup>61</sup> Ibid., s. 7.

<sup>62</sup> “Nastroje prasy ormiańskiej,” *Echo Polskie*, February 21 (March 5), 1916, s. 8.

<sup>63</sup> Ibid.

<sup>64</sup> Ibid.

<sup>65</sup> Ibid.

<sup>66</sup> Tadeusz Miciński (1873-1918)- Polish poet, playwright and gnostic. He was forerunner of Expressionism and Surrealism. He was also one of the writers Young Poland Period. His works are strong influence by Romantic gothic fiction and Dark Romanticism. Miciński was called a wizard poet and a worshipper of mysteries.

<sup>67</sup> Miciński Tadeusz, “Miłość Anahity,” *Echo Polskie*, February 21 (March 5), 1916, s. 9-13. Analyzing Miciński’s writing, we can notice his very good knowledge of the Armenian literature and the Armenian traditions. For Anahita’s Love, he translated Tumanian’s poetry and the traditional folk songs. Furthermore author known very well the Armenian situations in Eastern Anatolia. His description of the Armenian persecution are very realistic and resemble the eyewitness accounts of events.

<sup>68</sup> *Echo Polskie*, February 21 (March 5), 1916, s. 4.

The articles about the history of Armenia were supplemented with illustrative material in the form of reproductions depicting the Etchmiadzin Cathedral, the khachkars in Tsaghkadzor, and Armenian shops.<sup>69</sup>

In the context of the Genocide, the issue included a reproduction of the painting by Franz Roubaud entitled "Attack of the Kurds on an Armenian village." The painting depicted a unit of Kurdish troops crossing the river after plundering an Armenian village. In the foreground, among a running herd of cattle taken from the Armenians, there is a horseman on a white horse, holding a tied, fainted and naked Armenian woman. In the background there are buildings of the Armenian village.<sup>70</sup> The painting by Roubaud, one of the greatest painters of the Caucasus, was well known to the Polish readers. It was first published in the context of persecutions of Armenians in 1895 in the newspaper *Tygodnik Ilustrowany* as a commentary to the massacres of the 1890s.<sup>71</sup> Apart from the reproduction of the painting, there was also a photo with the caption "A group of Armenian exiles." In the foreground of the photograph, women and children sit on the ground. Behind them, between the trees, stand several men, including a Russian officer and a physician.<sup>72</sup>

The Armenian issue of the Polish newspaper received a lively response from the Armenian communities. A group of Armenians from Tiflis sent a letter to the editorial office, in which they expressed gratitude for devoting attention to the history, culture and situation of Armenia of that time. They also expressed understanding for the "Polish question": "From the sad valley of the grey Ararat, we send greetings to the tormented Poland, the distressed sister of the miserable Armenia." ("Ze smutnej doliny siwego Araratu ślemy zez swej strony powitania, wiele cierpiącej Polsce, nieszczęśliwej siostrzycy nieszczęsnej Armenii.")<sup>73</sup>

Thanking Poles for the issue devoted to Armenia, *Hayeren Vvestnik* published a summary of that issue and the entire text of "Nil Desperandum" by Lednicki. Later, in the sixth issue, the newspaper published a long article on the reasons of Poles' interest in the Armenian cause. According to the journalists, the main reason was the similar history of both nations, partitioned between three great powers and subjected to "desolation and inhuman violence" ("spustoszeniu i gwałtom nieludzkim.") "The same wounds are open in the chest, the same tears fall from our eyes." ("Te same otwarte są na piersi rany, te same z oczu płyną łzy.") The next argument was that both nations believed in winning the Great War, which would restore their right to self-determination, and the

<sup>69</sup> Ibid., s. 5-8.

<sup>70</sup> *Echo Polskie*, February 21 (March 5), 1916, s. 3.

<sup>71</sup> "Nasze Ryciny," *Tygodnik Ilustrowany*, March 28, 1898, s. 296-97.

<sup>72</sup> *Echo Polskie*, February 21 (March 5), 1916: 5. The author of photograph and the place where it was taken is unknown. However, in the Collections of the Armenian National Archive we can find one photograph which present Russian officer with the staff and refugees. That may be the same officer and photo was made by the same author before March 1916.

<sup>73</sup> "Z prasy. Echa numeru Ormiańskiego," *Echo Polskie*, March 27 (April 9), s. 20.

same dreams. The journalists also pointed out that even though Armenians' history is similar to that of Poles, the latter are in a better position thanks to their greater numbers. Furthermore, they should not worry about the provisions of the peace congress as much as Armenians. Despite these differences, Armenians hoped that at the peace conference they would be decided upon just as Poland would.<sup>74</sup>

The Armenian issue of *Echo Polskie* was also delivered by Rajmund Kucharski to the Armenian Committee in Paris. In gratitude for it, the Parisian Armenians referred to the common history and pointed to many analogies between the situation of the two nations: "Be blessed, for even though you are now so stricken yourselves and chased by fate, you were willing to take trouble and think about us, who seem to be no more on the Turkish border." ("Bądźcie błogosławieni, gdy dzisiaj sami tak bardzo dotknięci, przez los ścigani, chcieliście zadać sobie trud i o nas pomyśleć, których jak gdyby już nie ma na tureckiej granicy.")<sup>75</sup>

Not everyone appreciated the Armenian issue of the Polish newspaper, though. *Golos Rossii* accused the editorial staff of *Echo Polskie* of sympathising with the "collective of nations" ("związku narodowości") who turned to President Wilson, expressing protest.<sup>76</sup>

This issue of *Echo Polskie* was the first publication in the Polish press printed in Russia in 1914–1918 devoted entirely to the situation in Armenia. For the first time did the editorial staff express their own opinion in that matter, referring to their duty to a nation who had such a significant influence on the history and culture in Poland. The Armenians were presented as a strong nation looking into the future with optimism despite all the suffering they endured. The tragedy of the situation of the time was emphasised by describing the history of Armenia and publishing folk songs and fragments of Armenian literature. It was argued that the persecutions were caused by Turkish fanaticism, the failures of Western diplomacy, and Germany's support for Turkey's actions. Poles supported the right to self-determination for the Armenian nation.

### Deportation, refugees, relief

The subject of Armenia reappeared in the Polish press after Russians captured Trabzon in April 1916. On the 1<sup>st</sup> of May, *Echo Polskie* wrote about the extermination of Armenians in Trabzon based on an article which appeared in *Le Figaro*. The newspaper reported that 15,000 Armenians in the city were shot, tortured, or deported through mountains and deserts. Also included were reports by the Italian consul-general based in Trabzon: "If everyone saw what I saw with my own eyes, the entire Christianity would ask if all the cannibals and wild animals from the world had gathered here. To murder an entire nation little by little with guns, blades, fire, water, hunger, and disgrace is an abomination which, despite its reality, remains unbelievable, impossible to imagine even

<sup>74</sup> "Z prasy. Echa numeru Ormiańskiego," *Echo Polskie*, March 27 (April 9), s. 20.

<sup>75</sup> "Pro Armenia," *Echo Polskie*, May 8 (May 21), 1916, s. 16.

<sup>76</sup> "Co o nas piszą," *Głos Polski*, June 26 (July 7), 1916, s. 9.

for the least rational minds.” (“Gdyby widziano wszystko co ja widziałem na własne oczy, chrześcijaństwo całe zapytałoby, czy wszyscy kanibale i dzikie zwierzęta świata zgromadziły się tutaj. Mordować po trosze cały naród strzelbą, szablą, ogniem, wodą, głodem i hańbą, jest abominacja, która mimo swej prawdziwości pozostaje nieprawdopodobną, niemożliwością, nawet dla wyobraźni najmniej zrównoważonej.”)<sup>77</sup>

Then, in August, *Kurjer Nowy* informed that in Armenia, which was still under the Turkish rule, still under way were “mass displacements of Armenians, for the most part to the deserts of Mesopotamia” (“masowe wysiedlenia Ormian, po większej części do pustyń Mezopotamii.”) The article reported that Turks deported all the Armenian inhabitants of the city of Harput, where all the older women were drowned, and the younger ones shared among the soldiers. All men aged 19 and more from the city of Kirşehir were deported, “Armenian intelligentsia and the more prominent merchants” (“wybitniejszych kupców i inteligencję ormiańską”) from Constantinople, and 25,000 Armenians from the Kahramanmaraş Province to the Deir ez-Zor desert. The newspaper reported that in Kayseri 500 families were let live because they agreed to convert.<sup>78</sup>

In the same issue it was written that Armenians return through Persia to Van, where 2000 people arrive daily. According to the information provided by the chief representative for the refugees on the Caucasus frontline, 50 shelters for the children of the refugees were organised. Based on calculations, there were 93,147 people unable to work in Erivan Governorate alone, including 5,871 children.<sup>79</sup>

Two days later, *Kurjer Nowy* cited the Petersburg Agency in its report: “the Armenian Committee in Moscow received a message from its representative for İğdir Province, which said that due to the military actions in Muş and Bitlis Provinces, 25,000 refugees are coming to Bitlis from Van” (“Komitet Ormiański w Moskwie otrzymał od swego pełnomocnika na okręg Igdyrski depesze, iż w związku z wypadkami wojennymi w okręgu Muszu i Bitlisu- do Bitlisu przybywa ze strony Wanu 25.000 uchodźców.”)<sup>80</sup>

On the 6<sup>th</sup> of August the newspaper published a summary of the article “500,000 Armenians Await Rescue” (“500,000 Ormian oczekuje ratunku”) by Mr. Mikaeljan, which had appeared in the newspaper *Den* on the 5<sup>th</sup> of August. The author pointed out that “mainly women, children, and the elderly suffer bare-footed and hungry on the plains of Mesopotamia. Doomed to die of starvation, those poor people cry for help” (“głównie kobiety, dzieci i starcy, cierpią bosi i głodni na równinach Mezopotamii.”) He deemed the American help insufficient and accused his fellow countrymen living in Russia of indifference towards the fate of the suffering: “The rich Armenian bourgeois did very little for their compatriots, the Turkish Armenians, so now they should lend a hand, because there is great need and little willingness to help.” (“Bogata burżu-

<sup>77</sup> “Armenia,” *Echo Polskie*, May 1 (May 14), 1916, s. 17.

<sup>78</sup> “W Armenii,” *Kurjer Nowy*, September 3 (September 16), 1916, s. 3.

<sup>79</sup> Ibid.

<sup>80</sup> “Pomoc wygnańcom,” *Kurjer Nowy*, August 5 (August 18), 1916, s. 4.

azja ormiańska zrobiła bardzo mało dla swych rodaków, Ormian tureckich, teraz więc powinna ona przyjść z pomocą, gdyż potrzeba jest wielka, a ofiarność słaba.”)<sup>81</sup>

The second matter followed closely by the Polish press was the reunion of Russian Armenians, which took place in Saint Petersburg. The journalists of *Dziennik Petrogradzki* considered that one of the main causes why the Russian press showed interest in the Armenian cause.<sup>82</sup> On the 11<sup>th</sup> of August, the newspaper cited *Birzhevye Vedomosti*, according to which there were no Armenians in Turkish Armenia anymore, so the Armenian reunion should handle the issue of the return of Armenians to eastern vilayets. Also cited was the opinion of *Rech*, with the emphasis on the Armenian nationality of the author, that the Armenian reunion should not decide the fate of the refugees, but instead focus on the issue of Russian Armenians' help in the rescue action.<sup>83</sup>

On the other hand, in their reports from the reunion, Polish journalists emphasised that obsequious messages were sent to the tsar Nicholas II, Grand Duke Nikolay Nikolayevich, and the Armenian Catholicos. They also wrote about the Armenians' faith in the victory of the coalition, which would secure freedom for the Turkish Armenians with the dull support of the Russian Armenians. Also cited was Papadjanov, member of the Imperial Duma, in connection with the issue of the future of Armenia: “The political situation is somewhat unclear to us now, but our stand is to await the end of this war, in which we shall participate actively.” (“Koniunktura polityczna jest teraz dla nas nieco niewyraźna ale hasłem naszym jest czekać końca wojny, w której uczestniczyć będziemy czynnie.”) Attention was then brought to the committee of Grand Duchess Tatiana Nikolaevna, which was the first to provide help for the Armenians from the Caucasus, and to the harmonious action of the Armenian national associations in supporting the Turkish Armenians.<sup>84</sup> It was stated that there were 200,000 refugees and that the cost of rebuilding their homes would be 30 million roubles.<sup>85</sup>

## Armenia and Poland

Since the outbreak of the war, the situation of Poland was compared to that of Armenia by both Armenians and Poles, but also by Russians and Western politicians. Those opinions were eagerly published in the press. Already in 1915, the writer Victor Bérard gave the Polish diaspora in France an interview in connection with the Polish problem, in which he drew comparisons between the two countries. He stressed the fact that despite differences in the historical past, the degree of civilisation, and national characters, they were in very similar situations at the time. That is because in both cases their territories had been divided among three neighbours: Prussia, Austria, and Russia in the case of Poland and Turkey, Persia, and Russia in the case of Armenia. Furthermore,

<sup>81</sup> “W Armenji,” *Kurjer Nowy*, August 6 (August 19), 1916, s. 3.

<sup>82</sup> “Sprawa ormiańska,” *Dziennik Petrogradzki*, May 11 (May 24), 1916, s. 2.

<sup>83</sup> Ibid.

<sup>84</sup> “Zjazd ormiański,” *Dziennik Petrogradzki*, May 12 (May 25), 1916, s. 3.

<sup>85</sup> Ibid.

he compared Persia to Austria, since in both countries the Armenians have the greatest civil liberties. However, he stressed that despite this laxity, the Armenians knew that the only power capable of uniting the Armenian lands was Russia, which would do so in “its own interest,” (“własnym interesie”) and “with no exception do Armenians see their future in Russia” (“Ormianie bez wyjątku w Rosji widzą swoją przyszłość.”)<sup>86</sup>

The next newspaper to write about the analogies between the two nations was *Birzhevye Vedomosti*. In 1916, describing the tragic situation of Armenians, it referred to the comparison to Poland: “The fate of Armenians is unexampled. [...] In occupied Poland remained people bound to their homeland with age-old ties. They retained traits of sovereignty, they retained national and cultural values. In Armenia, nothing remained and in the occupied vilayets [...] there is no-one left.” (“Los Ormian jest bezprzykładny. [...] w okupowanej Polsce pozostała ludność związana z ojczyzną więzami odwiecznymi. Zostały cechy suwerenitetu, pozostały nietykalne “narodowo-kulturalne wartości innych. W Armenii nic nie zostało i w okupowanych wilajetach [...] – nikogo nie ma.”)<sup>87</sup>

Both countries were mentioned by Pope Benedict XV in one paragraph of his official note from 2 August 1917 addressed to the governments of the warring countries: “Also in this spirit of justice other territorial and political issues should be considered, namely related to Armenia, to the states and lands which constitute a part of the former Polish country.” (“Również w tym duchu sprawiedliwości należy rozpatrzyć inne terytorialne i polityczne kwestie, a mianowicie odnoszące się do Armenii, do państw i do ziemi, tworzącej część dawnego polskiego państwa.”)<sup>88</sup>

## Independence for Armenia

Since 1916, struggling to raise interest in the Polish cause in the West, Poles carefully watched the situation of other countries which were part of the Russian Empire. Armenia was within their sphere of interest as well. On the 8<sup>th</sup> of September 1916, *Kurjer Nowy* put on the front page an article entitled “The Armenian Question” (“Sprawa Armenii”), which was a polemic between the Russian and Armenian press in the context of the autonomy of Armenia. The journalists cited one of the articles published in *Kavkazskoe Slovo*, in which the autonomy of the Turkish Armenia was considered as a utopia even before the war, and it was the case even more in that time because of a small number of Armenians, “a mass of miserable refugees and deportees” (“masy nieszczęśliwych uchodźców i wysiedleńców,”) living in eastern vilayets. The newspaper discouraged Armenians from dreaming about sovereignty and advised them to focus on a policy based on co-operation with Russia instead, because this was the country they would belong to after the war. *Horizon* took it as a provocation since Armenians had nothing to say in this matter. *Arev* added that at the time Armenians could only carry out a rescue

<sup>86</sup> “Z wywiadów o Polsce,” *Głos Polski*, March 8 (March 21), 1915, s. 13.

<sup>87</sup> “Sprawa ormiańska,” *Dziennik Petrogradzki*, May 11 (May 24), 1916, s. 2.

<sup>88</sup> “Nota Papieża,” *Echo Polskie*, September 5 (September 18), 1917, s. 2.

action. *Mshak* stated that autonomy “has been and will be our lifetime goal,” (“była i będzie naszym życiowym celem,”) and *Avit* advised to calmly observe the course of action, and at the peace conference submit an appropriate project about the future of the Armenian nation. In the summary, the Polish journalists emphasised that *Kavkazskoe Slovo* reacted “exceedingly strongly” (“nader ostro”) to the opinions in the Armenian press, writing “about the internal poverty and helplessness of the Armenian nations” (“o wewnętrznym ubóstwie i bezsilności narodów ormiańskich”) and that “it is time to cease the conspirational deliberations in this matter” (“czas połączyć kres konspiracyjnym rokowaniom w tej sprawie.”)<sup>89</sup>

The next article concerning the fate of the Turkish Armenia after the war was also published in *Kurjer Nowy*. On the front page there was a summary of an article by Mr. Sibirski published in *Russkoe Slovo*. While on the Caucasus front, the author often talked with officers and privates on the topic of Armenian autonomy. In his dissertation, he presented several opposing views. He showed a Russian officer who opted for autonomy under Russia’s patronage, because Russians might not handle with the local climate and culture. Sibirski also spoke with a Cossack centurion who opted for integrating Armenia into Russia without any autonomy. Finally, a Turkish Armenian supported autonomy determined at the peace congress. This opinion was criticised by his compatriot from Russia who was sceptical about the matter and called him a “dreamer” (“marzycielem.”)<sup>90</sup>

Polish newspapers never commented on the issue of the Armenian right to sovereignty. Poles expressed their view just in August 1917 in an official note at the first congress of Polish organisations in the Caucasus, in which participated the representatives of around 50 Polish organisations along with the Polish military delegates from the Caucasus front, inter alia from Armavir, Maykop, Batumi, Kutaisi, Alexandropol, Kars, Sarykamysh, Enzeli, Karvin, Erzurum, Trabzon, Bayburt, and Bayazet. The congress adopted a resolution on “the position of the Polish emigration regarding the nations inhabiting Russia and the Caucasus” (“stanowiska emigracji polskiej wobec narodów zamieszkujących Rosję i kaukaz.”) Referring to the tradition of recognising and fighting for the freedom of other nations, as well as taking into account the situation of Poles, over a hundred years of their striving to regain independence, the Polish diaspora in the Caucasus expressed the view that “[...] all nations living in Russia shall be granted right to self-determination, including the rights of minorities, and thus it remains entirely in solidarity with their demands in this matter and shall support them.” (“[...] przyznania wszystkim narodom, zamieszkującym Rosję prawa stanowienia o sobie z uwzględnieniem praw mniejszości, i dlatego też w zupełności solidaryzuje się z ich żądaniami w tym kierunku, i popierać je winna.”)<sup>91</sup>

<sup>89</sup> “Sprawa Armenii,” *Kurjer Nowy*, September 6 (September 19), 1916, s. 1.

<sup>90</sup> “Sprawa ormiańska,” *Kurjer Nowy*, October 8 (October 21), 1916, s. 1-2.

<sup>91</sup> “I Zjazd polskich organizacji na Kaukazie,” *Echo Polskie*, September 29 (October 12), 1917, s. 3-4; Piwnicki, *Losy Polaków*, s. 254.

## Conclusion

In the analysis of the information concerning the extermination of Armenians during the Great War, one can see the influence of the Turkish blockade of information, tsarist and later Bolshevik censorship, and Russian imperial narrative.

As the causes of the extermination of Armenians, in the first period of persecutions the Polish press enumerated: suspicions of incitement to rebellion, plans of rebuilding the independent Armenia, exploiting the war to eradicate all Christians Turkey and Turkish fanaticism, as well as the failure of Western diplomacy regarding the Turkish policy. The Armenian Genocide was described with expressions like: “massacres of Armenians” (“rzezie Ormian,”) “extermination of the population” (“wybiciem ludności,”) “mass displacements” (“masowe wysiedlenia,”) and “methodical campaign of destruction” (“metodologiczna akcja zniszczenia.”) Poles were informed about arrests and deportations of people from Constantinople and eastern provinces, about hanging of twenty members of the Hunchakian Party, and about rescuing the Armenians in the Musa Dag mountains. Also the methods of extermination were described: arrests, selections based on gender and age made by Turks, executions by hanging or shooting, drowning and rapes, tortures, selling children to Muslim families, and forcing to convert. A confirmation of the knowledge of Poles regarding the Turkish methods of persecutions can be found in the literary description of the tortures in a harem in Erzurum by Tadeusz Miciński: “Naked gorgeous girls, raped, with their breasts cut off and arms stuck into the gaping wounds... Tied to trees, some swooned, others wailing like children with demented eyes.” (“Nagie, przepiękne dziewczyny, zgwałcone z obciętymi piersiami i rękami wbitymi w ziejące rany... Przywiązane do drzew, jedno omdłone, drugie z obłąkanymi oczyma kwilą jak dzieci. Twarze niektórych zakryte przepychem włosów.”)<sup>92</sup>

The main results of the extermination given by the Polish press were thousands of refugees – orphans and people unable to work, an equal number of Armenians starving to death on the deserts of Mesopotamia – and the responsibility of help them which fell on the Russian Armenians, as well as eastern vilayets depopulated of Armenians.

The press devoted little attention to Turkey and Turks themselves. It described the crimes, but never the oppressors. They were considered “a pampered child of Germany” (“wypieszczone dziecko Niemiec.”) A large portion of blame was attributed to Germany, which at first remained silent about the extremist policies of Turkey, and supported it entirely during the war in the name of the imperial A-B-C plan (Antwerp-Berlin-Calcutta).<sup>93</sup> On the one hand, this approach could be explained with the sympathy of Poles towards Turkey, which had not recognised the partitioning of Poland in the 18<sup>th</sup> century. On the other hand, Polish pro-Turkish communities were at that time more active in Constantinople, in the circles of Young Turks,<sup>94</sup> whereas the Poles who had direct

<sup>92</sup> Miciński, “Miłość Anahity”, s. 13.

<sup>93</sup> “Rozbiór Turcyi,” *Nowa Gazeta. Wydanie popołudniowe*, September 3, 1914, s. 1.

<sup>94</sup> Chmielowska Danuta, *Polsko-Tureckie stosunki dyplomatyczne w okresie międzywojennym*, Warszawa: Wydawnictwo Akademickie Dialog, 2006, s. 35-37.



contact with the Turkish extermination recalled that Turks “would spare no-one.”<sup>95</sup> It is more likely that the Polish press assumed the narrative of the coalition regarding the main enemy: Germany, to which much attention was given in the press in the context of both the Armenian Genocide and the “Polish question”. It was also related to the idea of Pan-Slavism, one of the principles of Russian politics.

The subject of the coalition of the Western countries and Russia and their accountability for the genocidal actions of Turkey was not discussed in the press. Only the positive side of the coalition was presented, with the emphasis that it is their decision that the Armenians’ fate depended upon at the future peace conference.

The polemics between the journalists of Russian and Armenian newspapers and the articles concerning the Armenian Question published in the press not only were supposed to report on the political situation and the stances of both sides, but also showed similar actions taken by Russian environments in regard to the Polish diaspora. Poles were accused of failure to care for Polish refugees and revolutionary movements against the authorities, emphasising that the Polish problem is not international, but only a Russian domestic affair.

The hereby article is merely an introduction to the research on how the Poles living in Russia perceived the Armenian Genocide. Yet to be explored remain the accounts of soldiers and memoirs of the Poles in the South Caucasus during World War I. Another matter worth investigating is the co-operation of both nations at the subsequent peace conferences, as evidenced by the documents in the Central Archives of Modern Records in Warsaw.<sup>96</sup>

<sup>95</sup> Bohdan Baranowski and Krzysztof Baranowski, *Polaków kaukaskie drogi*, Łódź: Krajowa Agencja Wydawnicza, 1985, s. 192.

<sup>96</sup> Documents about situation in Armenia, repatriation of Armenians from Turkey and Greece, League of Nations’ announcements, correspondence, memorandum. See Sytuacja wewnętrzna w Armenii, głównie sprawy repatriacji Ormian z Turcji i Grecji. Komunikaty Ligi Narodów, korespondencja, memorandum. 1920, call. 2/513/0/1/13, Delegacja RP przy Lidze Narodów w Genewie, Archiwum Akt Nowych w Warszawie.

1. Armenian issue of *Echo Polskie*, February 21 (March 5), 1916.





3. Catholikos Gregory V,  
*Echo Polskie*, February  
21 (March 5), 1916.



4. Raffi [Hakob Melik  
Hakobian], *Echo Polskie*,  
February 21 (March 5), 1916.



5. Andranik Toros Ozanian,  
*Echo Polskie*, February  
21 (March 5), 1916.



6. Old antique dealer's shop  
in Tbilisi, *Echo Polskie*,  
February 21 (March 5), 1916.



7. Stalls at the Armenian market, *Echo Polskie*,  
February 21 (March 5), 1916.



8. The Etchmiadzin Cathedral *Echo Polskie*, February 21 (March 5), 1916.



9. Khachkars in Tsaghkadzor, *Echo Polskie*, February 21 (March 5), 1916.



10. Franz Roubaud, "Attack of the Kurds on an Armenian village," *Echo Polskie*, February 21 (March 5), 1916.



11. Franz Roubaud, "Attack of the Kurds on an Armenian village",  
*Tygodnik Ilustrowany* 1898.



12. A group of Armenian exiles, *Echo Polskie*, February 21 (March 5), 1916.



13. A group of Armenian exiles, 1915-1916, The Armenian National Archive's collection.

### ԼԵՀԵՐԸ ՌՈՒՍԱԿԱՆ ԿԱՅՐՈՒԹՅՈՒՆՈՒՄ 1914 -1918ԹԹ. ԵՎ ՆՐԱՆՑ ԿԱՐԾԻՔՆԵՐԸ ՀԱՅՈՑ ՑԵՂԱՍՊԱՆՈՒԹՅԱՆ ՎԵՐԱԲԵՐՅԱԼ

*Դոմինիկա Մարիա Մացիոս*

#### ԱՄՓՈՓՈՒՄ

Ռուսական կայսրության տիրապետության տակ գտնվող լեհական տարածքներում բնակվող լեհերը լավատեղյակ էին Հայկական հարցին և Հայոց ցեղասպանությանը: Օսմանյան կայսրությունում հայերի վիճակի մասին բազմաթիվ հոդվածներ են տպագրվել մամուլում՝ սկսած 1878թ. Բեռլինի կոնգրեսից:

Լեհաստանում Հայկական հարցի վերաբերյալ հասարակական կարծիքի ձևավորման հիմնական գործոնը այնտեղ արդեն մի քանի սերունդ շարունակ բնակվող հայերն էին: Մյուս գործոնն, որն այս թեմային հնչեղություն է տվել, քաղաքական իրավիճակն էր: Կարևոր նշանակություն է ունեցել այն փաստը, որ այդ ժամանակ Լեհաստանը գոյություն չի ունեցել Եվրոպայի քաղաքական քարտեզի վրա: Հայերի բնաջնջումը տեղի էր ունենում Լեհաստանի բաժանման և երկրի անկախության համար մղվող պայքարի պայմաններում: Այսպիսով, Օսմանյան կայսրությունում տեղի ունեցող իրադարձությունների վերաբերյալ լեհերի մեկնաբանությունները հանգեցին բազմաթիվ նույնացումների, որի հետևանքով լեհերը հաճախ սկսեցին համեմատել երկու ժողովուրդների ճակատագրերը: Միևնույն ժամանակ, լեհերն ուշադրությամբ հետևում էին Ցարական Ռուսաստանի և Օսմանյան կայսրության հարաբերությունների զարգացմանը՝ սպասելով հնարավոր պատերազմի, որի օգնությամբ լեհերը կարող էին վերականգնել իրենց պետականությունը:

Լեհերը Հայկական հարցի վերաբերյալ տեղեկություններ էին ստանում տարբեր աղբյուրներից՝ լեհական թերթերի կովկասյան թղթակիցներից, ինչպես նաև ռուսական, հայկական և արևմտյան ամսագրերի հոդվածների արտատպումներից ու թարգմանություններից: Հայոց ցեղասպանությունը լեհական մամուլում նկարագրվում էր հետևյալ արտահայտություններով՝ «հայերի կոտորածներ», «բնակչության բնաջնջում», «զանգվածային տեղահանություններ» և «բնաջնջման

մեթոդական արշավ»։ Լեհերը տեղյակ են եղել հայերի բնաջնջման մեթոդներին՝ ձերբակալություններ, սեռի և տարիքի հիման վրա կատարվող ընտրովի սպանություններ, կախաղանի և գնդակահարության միջոցով իրականացվող մահապատիժներ, տեղահանություն, խեղդամահ, բռնաբարություններ, կտտանքներ, երեխաների վաճառք մուսուլման ընտանիքներին, հավատափոխություն։

**Բանալի բառեր՝** Հայկական հարց, Հայոց ցեղասպանություն, լեհեր, ցարական Ռուսաստան, պարբերական մամուլ։

## POLES IN RUSSIAN EMPIRE FROM 1914 TO 1918 AND THEIR OPINIONS ABOUT THE ARMENIAN GENOCIDE

*Dominika Maria Macios*

### ABSTRACT

Armenian Genocide, called “Armenian issue” at the time, was quite well known to the Poles who lived in the Polish lands under the control of the Russian Empire. A lot of articles about Armenian and their situation in Ottoman Empire was published in press since the Congress of Berlin in 1878. The main factor which caused the presence of the Armenian Issue in Polish public opinion were the existence of Armenians themselves who had lived in Poland for many generations.

Another factor that popularized the subject was political situation. The fact that Poland did not exist on the political map of Europe had profound meanings. The extermination of the Armenians took place in period of the partitions and during the continuous struggle for Polish independence. Thus, Poles’ interpretation of what took place in the Ottoman Empire resulted in many analogies and as a result Poles often began to compare the two nations. At the same time, the Poles closely observed the relationship between Czarist Russia and the Ottoman Empire, waiting for a possible war to break-up which could at the end help the Poles regain their homeland.

Poles were aware of the “Armenian Issue” from many sources. On the one hand there were the Polish newspaper correspondents residing in the Caucasus. On the other hand, articles reprinted from Russian, Armenian and western magazines were featured in Polish press.

The Armenian Genocide in Polish press was described with expressions like: “massacres of Armenians”, “extermination of the population”, “mass displacements” and “methodical campaign of destruction” Poles were informed about the methods of extermination: arrests, selections based on gender and age made by Turks, executions by hanging or shooting, deportation, drowning and rapes, tortures, selling children to Muslim families, and forcing to convert.

**Keywords:** Armenian question, Armenian Genocide, Poles, Tsarist Russia, periodical press.



## ПОЛЯКИ В РОССИЙСКОЙ ИМПЕРИИ С 1914 ПО 1918 Г. И ИХ ОТНОШЕНИЕ К ГЕНОЦИДУ АРМЯН

*Доминика Мария Маццюс*

### РЕЗЮМЕ

Поляки, проживавшие польских землях, подконтрольных Российской империи, были хорошо информированы об Армянском вопросе и Геноциде армян. Множество статей об армянах и их положении в Османской империи были опубликовано в прессе со времени Берлинского конгресса в 1878 году.

Главным фактором, обусловившим место Армянского вопроса в общественном мнении поляков, было наличие армян, живших на территории Польши на протяжении многих поколений. Другим фактором, который популяризировал эту тему, была политическая ситуация. Тот факт, что Польши не существовало на политической карте Европы, имел глубокое значение. Истребление армян имело место в условиях раздела Польши и непрекращающейся борьбы поляков за восстановление независимости. Таким образом, интерпретация поляков событий, происходящих в Османской империи, привела к проведению многих аналогий, в результате чего поляки стали часто сравнивать судьбу двух наций. В то же время поляки внимательно наблюдали за отношениями между царской Россией и Османской империей, ожидая возможной войны, перелом в которой мог бы помочь полякам восстановить свою государственность.

Поляки получали информацию об Армянском вопросе из многих источников – от корреспондентов польских газет на Кавказе, а также из перепечаток и переводов статей русских, армянских и западных журналов. Геноцид армян в польской прессе описывался следующими выражениями: «резня армян», «уничтожение населения», «массовые депортации» и «методическая кампания уничтожения». Поляки были проинформированы о методах истребления армян: аресты, селективные убийства по полу и возрасту, казни через повешение или расстрелы, депортации, утопления и изнасилования, пытки, продажа детей в мусульманские семьи, принуждение к перемене веры.

**Ключевые слова:** Армянский вопрос, Геноцид армян, поляки, царская Россия, периодическая печать.