

The State of Armenian Education in Brief

The fate of Armenia has been extremely harsh and exceptionally hard. Roman, Persian, Byzantine, Arabic, Seljuk, Mongol, and Ottoman invaders passed through Armenia spreading awe and terror around. They ruined and devastated Armenia, destroyed its cultural values. The Armenian people who left for distant countries continued their work there. Deprived of a statehood of any kind, Armenians developed their culture mostly beyond the borders of the country – in Russia, the Crimea, Georgia, Italy, Poland, France, India and elsewhere. The Western school has also an interesting history. Basically it developed out of Armenia. The Western school of Armenia was relatively organized in two cities – in Karin and Van.

In the early 19th century Constantinople with more than 200. 000 Armenians presented the mosaic of Western Armenians. In 1859 there were 42 and in 1901 - 40 Armenian elementary and secondary schools in K. Polis. Under the reign of bloody Abdul Hamid, the Armenian school was gradually formed and later became the victim of the Armenian Genocide in 1915.

The second city next to Constantinople with regard to its Armenian population was Zmurnia – Izmir, where in 1799 the Mesropian School – one of the famous and lasting educational institutions, was founded.

In 1877-1878 on the eve of the Russian-Turkish war, the number of Armenian schools in operation on the territory of Turkey reached 450. They had more than 24.000 pupils.

The academic life was relatively in a better state in Russia, where a great number of Armenians had found their homes. In 1813 Nerses Ashtaraketsi, the Catholicos of All Armenians, managed to reopen a school in Echmiadzin. At that time there were a few private schools in Yerevan.

By 1828 Eastern Armenia had become a part of Russia. Favorable conditions were created for the revival of the economic and cultural life in the country. Besides the schools in Moscow, Astrakhan, Teodossia, New Nakhijevan, schools were also set up in the cities of Transcaucasia. In 1874 Gevorgyan Chemarian was established in Echmiadzin, which aimed at training teachers and clergymen of the Armenian Church. The Gevorgyan Chemaran (college) greatly boosted the development of the Armenian culture, literature and the Armenian language, in particular. Besides Armenian, foreign languages were also included in the curriculum. Most of the graduates were engaged in pedagogy, social-political or scientific activities.

The number of national educational institutions kept on growing. Parish and elementary schools were opened one after another in rural areas. In 1830-1895, 208 elementary and secondary schools were set up in Eastern Armenia. Two systems of school education

were developed in the country – elementary single-form, two-form schools and state secondary schools where the teaching was conducted in Russian. State Secondary schools were financed by the Tsarist government and by the parents of the pupils. As far as Single-form, two-form schools and spiritual ones are concerned, the subjects were taught in Armenian and the schools were supported by the means of the population, various charities and partly by the church.

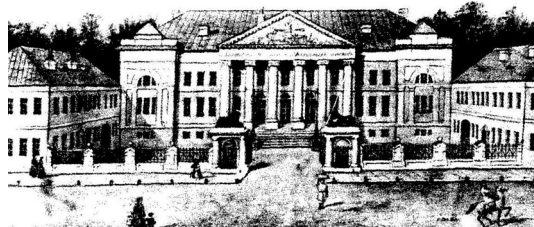


Gevorkian Chemaran (Academy)

The Tsarist government was seriously concerned about the alarming number of growing schools. This was the key reason why all Armenian churches and diocese-based schools were closed down in 1896. The situation partly changed in 1905-07, during the period of the First Russian Revolution when the Tsarist government permitted to open the Armenian schools. In rather a short period of time not only the old ones were reopened, but new schools were established, as well. In

1915-1916 there were already 12 state and 195 elementary schools with 36,544 pupils. The number of the secondary schools reached 12: the gymnasium, trade schools, parish school, Gevorkian Chemaran (Academy), teachers' seminary etc. where more than 4300 pupils studied. The situation changed drastically in 1916. The education in Armenia suffered a serious decline because of the First World War.

Lazarian Chemaran (Academy) in Moscow and Nersisian School in Tbilisi played a crucial role in the history of the Armenian culture and education. These institutions operated a whole century and played a most decisive role in the development of the national education and culture. Within 10 years this university gave the country more than 155 Armenian doctors and 230 lawyers.



Lazarian Chemaran (Academy)

Many Armenians graduated from many other higher educational institutions in Russia in addition to Moscow University.

Late in the 19th century the number of Armenians studying in European Universities increased, too.