MECHANISMS FOR TERRORIZING TURKEY'S MINORITIES

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The Capital Tax known as Varlik Vergisi, constitutes a black page in the history of modern Turkey. It was implemented by the Turkish Government under the pretext to control the prices of the goods and suppose to prevent the accumulation of capital, without taking care of the increase of the black market and the illegal profits. Then, in order to respond to the reaction of the people and suppose to tax the excessive profits and with this "innocent" reason implemented a heavy taxing of the non-Muslim minorities with the purpose to exterminate their economic and cultural existence, loot their properties and living means and in parallel to Turkify the economy of the Country. This tax is a continuation of the tradition of the Committee Union and Progress (CUP) and has the structure of an ethnic cleansing whip. The law of Capital Tax-Varlik Vergisi is entirely political and represents a pre-capitalist implementation of a social transformation.
The Government of that time, with a very devious way succeeded to divert the critics against her towards the non-Muslim citizens and through this law achieved to destroy the minorities economically and culturally in order to promote the ethnic homogenization. There was also the reason that ethnic homogenization was achieved in the other parts of the country and only in Istanbul Greeks, Armenians and Jews were not "diluted" yet.

By implementing the Law with an extremely unequal way between Muslims and non-Muslims the minorities were "targeted" to a such degree that when the President Ismet Inonu himself paid the tax was get upset, while Fevzi Cakmak (The Chief of the Armed Forces) asked himself "Am I a Giavour-infidel?" not being able to hide his rage and anger. According to the narration by Faik Okte, one of the architects conceiving and applying the Capital Tax, shows that for whose the Tax was designed. Fevzi Cakmak during the collection of the Tax said: "One of my aide came to my office and expressed his disapproval to the fact that he is obliged to pay tax together with the minority people who are black marketers and merchants".

Ferit Melen, one of the former prime ministers, who has been an undisputable factor of the non-ordinary periods, said that "through Varlik Vergisi all the anti-minority goals were aimed to be realized simultaneously". Varlik Vergisi, as a tradition of the Union and Progress, has been one of the most serious practices after the anti-Jewish pogroms of Thrace in 1934, the campaign "citizen speak Turkish" and the mobilization to work battalions during 1941-42 of the minorities. These political practices were aimed to show the minorities that they don't have a place to live in this land. Those they didn't understand this act the 6-7 September was applied, with a much more strength in order to "understand" it clearly. The only choice minorities had was to leave the country by abandoning their properties. Those Jews wanted to immigrate to the new established State of Israel, in getting permit of leave had to abandon all their properties. The Greek citizens which were "etablis" according to Lausanne Treaty, when were deported in 1964 had to abandon all their movable and real estate properties. The Greek citizens whose staying in Turkey were under the guarantee of the

Lausanne Treaty, when were deported couldn't receive anything from their properties with them. They were thanking God passing the border alive.

We can read the terrible writings of Fazil Ahmet Aykac, in the semi official state journal Ulus in the context of that times atmosphere: "We should know that this Tax more than a punishment to those have not understood their limits, it was a colossal warning for those who dare to forget". The events of the night of 6 - 7/9/1955 can be understood as an expression of this mentality. Akcaz notices that the Capital Tax it is the point of the path stared in 1915.

Sergati was not able to afford the exile conditions in Askale and tried to commit suicide and in the letter left to her wife expresses clearly the conditions of the minorities in Turkey: "I don't know if we will return to our homes, all the time death above of us, please take care of our children and go to a free country, here they will nothing more than slaves".

The signs of Capital Tax-Varlik Vergisi even today are deep. After so many years the victims don't want to speak about this tax. Still they haven't escaped of the fear of it. Because of this no research work can describe the level of barbaric act of this Tax. Not any statistics and analysis can reflect the pain of the victims totally. As a result of my research I arrived to the conclusion that any analysis is insufficient. This work is more concentrated on the political aspects of the Tax rather than the statistical analysis.

Capital Tax is the final point of 1915 genocide. As the 1915 genocide, it was implemented with the help of the opportunities presented by the war time conditions.

The other important factor that we need to point out is the fact that the 1915 genocide remained unpunished. If Malta could be a Nurenberg in 1920, there could be neither Jewish Holocaust nor the Capital Tax . Unfortunately, the facts that the state which implemented the Capital Tax was rewarded and remained unpunished due to real politics encouraged and promoted the pogrom of 6/7 September. The UK archival documents which have been recently found out indicate that UK consulate officials provoked 6/7 September events.

Discrimination and ethnic cleansing policies against non-Turkish subjects in the Ottoman Empire and its successor, the Republic of Turkey were implemented with the encouragement of the West for the sake of real politics. For this reason, the West and the United Kingdom which was the hegemonic power of the period owe an apology because of these policies against Armenians, Greeks and other people. The West should not forget that it welcomed these people who were expelled from their territories as cheap and insecure labor force, and it created capital accumulation by exploiting these people who were forced to leave their destinies. The West and UK have not paid this debt yet.

The pains and miseries of these people expelled from their historic territories were forgotten for a long time but they have been opened for discussions since 1965. The genocide which was made forgotten in Turkey would be started to be discussed beginning with 1980's. In these discussions, I

want to emphasize that the contribution of Belge International Publication, in which I took part as an editor despite the law suits that have been claimed and continue, has been very important.

"What happened in 1915: Denial and Confrontation" conference which we organized in Ankara under the leadership of Ankara Freedom to Thought Initiative and with the support of socialist circles showed how difficult and dangerous discussing this topic is. Despite the fact that we faced with tremendous obstacles, we as the socialists of Turkey discussed this question for two days with oppressed, socialists and poor people of Turkey and scholars from Turkey and abroad.

Thank you so much for giving me the opportunity to express these and for listening to me.