

**FROM LETTERS OF I.I. VORONTSOV-DASHKOV TO HIS IMPERIAL MAJESTY
EMPEROR NIKOLAY ROMANOV in the Caucasus (signed) April 17th 1909.**

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Your Imperial Majesty. The Armenian Cathalicos intended to leave for St. Petersburg at urgent requests of his congregation of both Turkish and Russian nationals, to personally apply to Your Majesty with an application for protection of Turkish Armenians from Kurdish attacks. I have taken the liberty of declining the Cathalicos' trip and suggested him to submit his application for the kind consideration of Your Imperial Majesty. Due to kind consent of the chairman of the Council of Ministers, whom I have notified about the Cathalicos' application, I consider it my duty to inform Your Imperial Majesty of my personal considerations concerning this application. Your Imperial Majesty is aware that throughout the history of our relations with Turkey on the Caucasus and until the Russian-Turkish war of 1877-1878, which resulted in annexation of the current Batumi and Kars oblasts to our territory, the Russian policy ever since the Peter the Great times was based at the friendly attitude to Armenians, who requited with active support to our troops during military activities. After the so-called Armenian oblast, including Echmiadzon - the cradle of Armenian Gregorianism, the Emperor Nikolay Pavlovich made serious efforts to transform the Echmiadzin patriarchy into a curator of Turkish and Persian Armenians, fairly desiring to enlist influence among Christian population of Minor Asia that our original positive movement to the southern seas was passing through. As we patronized Armenians, we found reliable allies, who always supplied important services to us.

Even if this policy did not always succeed due to confrontation of Turkey, which wished to put the religious influence over Turkish Armenians into the hands of the Constantinople patriarchy, we still followed it successively for nearly one hundred and fifty years. Last time it was clearly reflected in the San-Stefano treaty, in which article 16 obliged Porta, under the threat of maintenance of Russian troops in Armenia, to immediately arrange the improvements and reforms accordingly to local demands in areas with Armenian population and ensure protection of Armenians from Kurds. Porta's obligation was later confirmed in article 61 of the Berlin Treaty, this time without threats of the Russian weapons at consent of the great powers and against the will of Russia. Russia's policy towards Armenians changed abruptly during the Sosun massacre in the 90s of the last century, when Armenians were refused of protection from Turkey by prince Lobanov-Rostovsky. Your Imperial Majesty is well aware that such a change in our policy led to a very disappointing results and created anti-Russian tendencies among all Armenians, including nationals of Russia who were then involved into the revolutionary movement hostile to the Russian government. As I was appointed to the position of the Caucasian governor for the purposes of conciliation of provinces, which were enveloped by flames of the revolutionary fire, Your Imperial Majesty has found it necessary, at my presentation, to cancel all measures, which raised the murmurs among the Russian Armenians. The high monarchical confidence of Your Imperial Majesty notwithstanding the opinion of numerous state officials, who criticized my policy concerning Armenians, encouraged me to its steadfast implementation. In addition, I am happy now to report, Your Majesty that you not only have loyal subjects in the face of Russian Armenians, but also attract the attention of Turkish ones, who clearly realize that only Russia and its supreme leader can provide them with a real protection of their life, honor and properties from unending barbarities of the Kurds. I believe, Your Majesty that the time has come to return to the original Russian policy of patronizing Turkish Armenians and it is now necessary to find the best forms for that.

In my humble opinion, we must make a categorical statement to Porta with the reference to the Berlin treaty, concerning the protection of Armenians from the Kurds. I believe that we cannot let the initiative of patronizing Armenians go from our hands. In the meantime, some of the newspapers might have already published false reports on application of several Armenian political figures to prince Berchtold concerning Austria's interference. If we did not start the initiative and it was started by another power, it would have caused an irreparable injury to Russia's prestige among the Christians in Minor Asia and our silent response to applications of the Armenian nation at this time would be taken for the instruction to abandon hopes for the single crown-bearing protector - the Russian czar - and seek protection outside of Russia. We must also openly protect the Turkish Armenians, especially at the time being, to not push them away from us, but work with sympathetic population in those areas, which can be perforce involved into our military operations under the current situation.

While making this categorical statement, we must particularly stress that it is by no means caused by our territorial claims to Turkey, so that we would not confuse both Turks and Armenians, who wish to be annexed to Russia. In fact, the acquisition of the so-called Turkish Armenia, which is dominantly populated by wild Kurds, would be very harmful for us at this time and create serious problems with administration over a country with its mixed, hostile and fanatical population. To conclude with, I cannot hide from Your Imperial Majesty that my projected diplomatic protection of Turkish Armenians would fill the hearts of the Russian compatriots with the feelings of loyal love and devotion to their monarch, and they would frankly desire for welfare of the whole Armenian nation under your rule.

Loyal subject of Your Imperial Majesty

Prince Vorontsov-Dahskov

St. Petersburg, October 10th 1912