

The Armenian Weekly

MAY 2018

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ON THE COVER: Segment from the "Republic of Armenia Centennial" logo, by the ARF Eastern U.S./The Armenian Weekly. Photo of Sardarabad Memorial used in logo taken by photographer Matthew Karanian.

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The Armenian Weekly

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Anna Aleksanyan holds a bachelor's and a master's degree in History. She is a PhD candidate at the Strassler Center for Holocaust and Genocide Studies at Clark University. Her dissertation explores gendered aspects of the Armenian Genocide in the experiences of its female victims. Before starting her PhD, Anna worked at the Armenian Genocide Museum-Institute as a scientific researcher for seven years. She has published widely both in academic journals and in non-academic publications in Armenian, Russian, French, Turkish, and English.



Jano Boghossian is a resident podiatric surgeon in Los Angeles. He studied Physiological Sciences and Armenian Studies at the University of California, Los Angeles, and his interests lie at the intersection of sports, medicine, history, and language. His roots are in Yozgat, Garin, Bayazid, and Aintab.

Hayk Demoyan is Director of the Armenian Genocide Museum-Institute (AGMI) and a U.S. Fulbright visiting scholar at the Davis center for Russian and Eurasian Studies of Harvard University, where he researches identity transformation processes in the South Caucasus. He is also the head of the scientific council of the AGMI and the chief editor of the *International Journal of Armenian Genocide Studies*. He is a graduate of Yerevan State University (1998) and received his degree of doctor of historical sciences from the Armenian National Academy of Sciences in 2012. From 2011 to 2015, he was the Secretary of the State Commission on the coordination of the events dedicated to the commemoration of the 100th anniversary of the Armenian Genocide. He is the author of 12 books and more than 40 academic articles. In 2018, he published *Armenian Legacy in America: 400-Year Heritage*, a volume dedicated to the arrival of the first Armenian in Virginia back in 1618.



Lerna Ekmekcioglu is McMillan-Stewart Associate Professor of History at MIT, where she is also affiliated with the Women and Gender Studies Program. She graduated from Getronagan Armenian High School in Istanbul and majored in Sociology at Bogazici University. She received her PhD at New York University's joint program of History and Middle Eastern & Islamic Studies in 2010. She held a one-year Manoogian post-doctoral fellowship at the University of Michigan's Armenian Studies Program. Together with Melissa Bilal, Ekmekcioglu is the co-editor of the 2006 book in Turkish titled *A Cry for Justice: Five Armenian Feminist Writers from the Ottoman Empire to the Turkish Republic (1862–1933)*. Her first monograph, *Recovering Armenia: The Limits of Belonging in Post-Genocide Turkey*, came out from Stanford University Press in 2016. Currently she is collaborating with Melissa Bilal on a book and digital humanities project titled *Feminism in Armenia: An Interpretive Anthology and Digital Archive*, which focuses on the life and works of 12 pioneering women intellectuals from the 1860s to 1960s.

Richard G. Hovannisian was one of the founders of Armenian Studies as a discipline in the United States. He is the author of *Armenia on the Road to Independence*, the four-volume history *The Republic of Armenia*, and he has edited and contributed to more than 35 books. A member of the UCLA faculty since 1962, he was the first holder of the Armenian Educational Foundation Chair in Modern Armenian History, which is today renamed in his honor. He is at present an adjunct professor at USC, advising the Shoah Foundation on its Armenian Genocide testimony collection. He is also a presidential fellow at Chapman University. The Richard G. Hovannisian Armenian Genocide Oral History Collection was officially announced earlier this year.



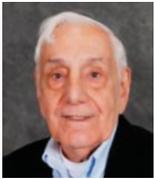
Rupen Janbazian is the editor-in-chief of the Armenian Weekly since 2016. His English translation of Andranik Tzarukian's *Tught ar Yerevan* ("Letter to Yerevan"), which he completed in collaboration with Tatul Sonentz Papazian, will soon be published by the Hairenik Press.



Varak Ketsemanian is a graduate of the American University of Beirut (AUB) and the University of Chicago's Center for Middle Eastern Studies (2014–2016). His master's thesis, titled "Communities in Conflict: the Hunchakian Revolutionary Party 1890–1894," examines the socioeconomic role of violence in shaping inter-communal and ethnic relations by doing a local history of the Armenian Revolutionary Movement in the Ottoman Empire. Ketsemanian's work tackles problems such as the development and polarization of mainstream historiographies, inter-communal stratifications, nationalism, and the relationship of the Ottoman State with some



of its Anatolian provinces. He is completing a PhD at Princeton University, where his doctoral dissertation will focus on the social history of the National Constitution of Ottoman Armenians in 1863, and the communal dynamics/mechanisms that it created on imperial, communal, and provincial levels. Ketssemanian's research relates to the development of different forms of nationalism in the 19th and 20th centuries, revolutionary violence, and constitutional movements.



Michael Mensoian is professor emeritus in Middle East and political geography at the University of Massachusetts, Boston, and a retired major in the U.S. army. He writes regularly for the Armenian Weekly. He holds a juris doctor degree and a PhD.

Khatchig Mouradian is a lecturer in Middle Eastern, South Asian, and African Studies (MESAAS) at Columbia University in the City of New York. He earned his PhD from Clark University, Worcester, Mass. Previously, he has taught courses on imperialism, mass violence, urban space and conflict in the Middle East, the aftermaths of war and mass violence, and human rights at Worcester State University in Massachusetts, Rutgers University and Stockton University in New Jersey, and California State University—Fresno. Mouradian is the author of articles on genocide, mass violence, and unarmed



resistance, the co-editor of a forthcoming book in late Ottoman history, and the editor of the peer-reviewed journal *The Armenian Review*. Mouradian is the recipient of a Calouste Gulbenkian Research Fellowship to write the history of the Armenian community in China in the 19th and 20th centuries (2014). He is also the recipient of the first Hrant Dink Justice and Freedom Award of the Organization of Istanbul Armenians (2014). Mouradian served as the editor of *The Armenian Weekly* from 2007 to 2014.



Vahram Ter-Matevosyan is an assistant professor at the American University of Armenia and the head of the Turkish Studies Department at the Institute for Oriental Studies at the National Academy of Sciences of Armenia. He received his PhD from the University of Bergen (Norway), master's degree from Lund University (Sweden), candidate of historical sciences degree from the Institute of Oriental Studies and Yerevan State University (Armenia). He was visiting professor at Duke University, N.C. (2016), Fulbright Scholar at the University of California, Berkeley (2009–2010), and visiting doctoral student at the University of Washington, Seattle, Wash. (2005). He authored an award-winning monograph, *Islam in the Social and Political Life of Turkey, 1970–2001*, in 2008 and co-authored *History of Turkish Republic* in 2014. His research articles have been published in several publications, including *Europe-Asia Studies*, *Turkish Studies*, *Middle Eastern Studies*, *Insight Turkey*, *Eurasian Geography and Economics*, *Turkish Review*, and *Diaspora Studies*. □



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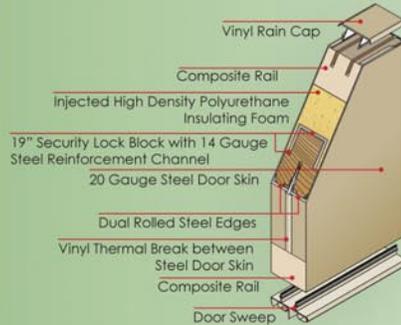
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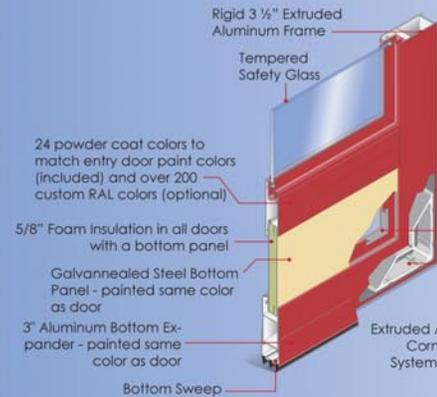


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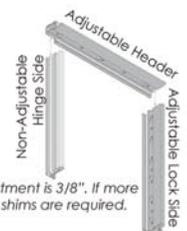
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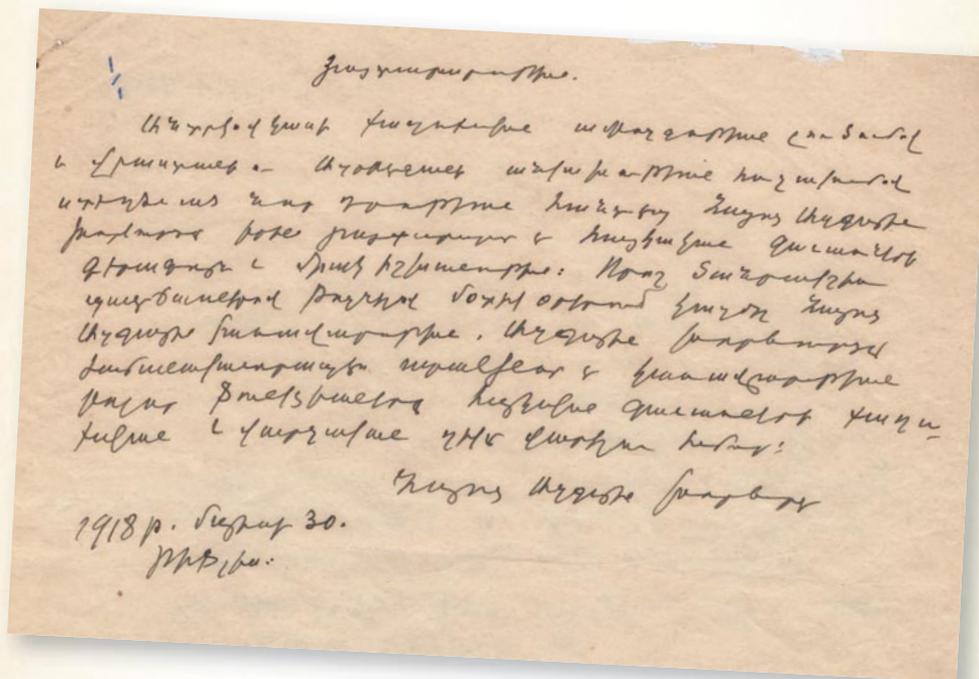
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A Glimpse *into the* First Armenian Republic Archives

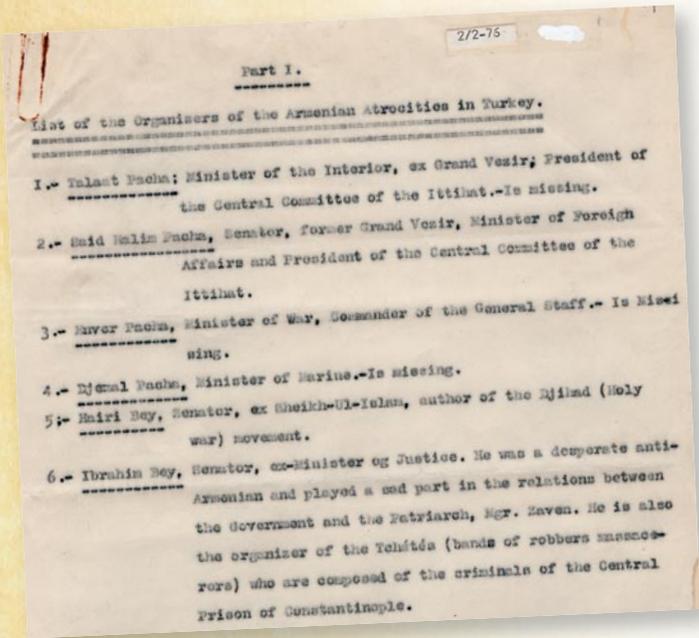
By George Aghjayan

Director of the Armenian Historical Archives



The Declaration of Armenia's Independence, dated May 30, 1918 and effective retroactively to May 28, 1918 (Document: File HH 1/1-1, Armenian Historical Archives)

This special magazine issue of the Hairenik newspapers is dedicated to the 100th anniversary of the First Armenian Republic (1918–1920). Other contributors to this issue will supply fascinating details, commentary, and context regarding the legacy of the Republic. Here, I wish only to broadly comment on some of the circumstances under which the government of the Republic functioned, as indicated by documents in the archives located in the Hairenik building.



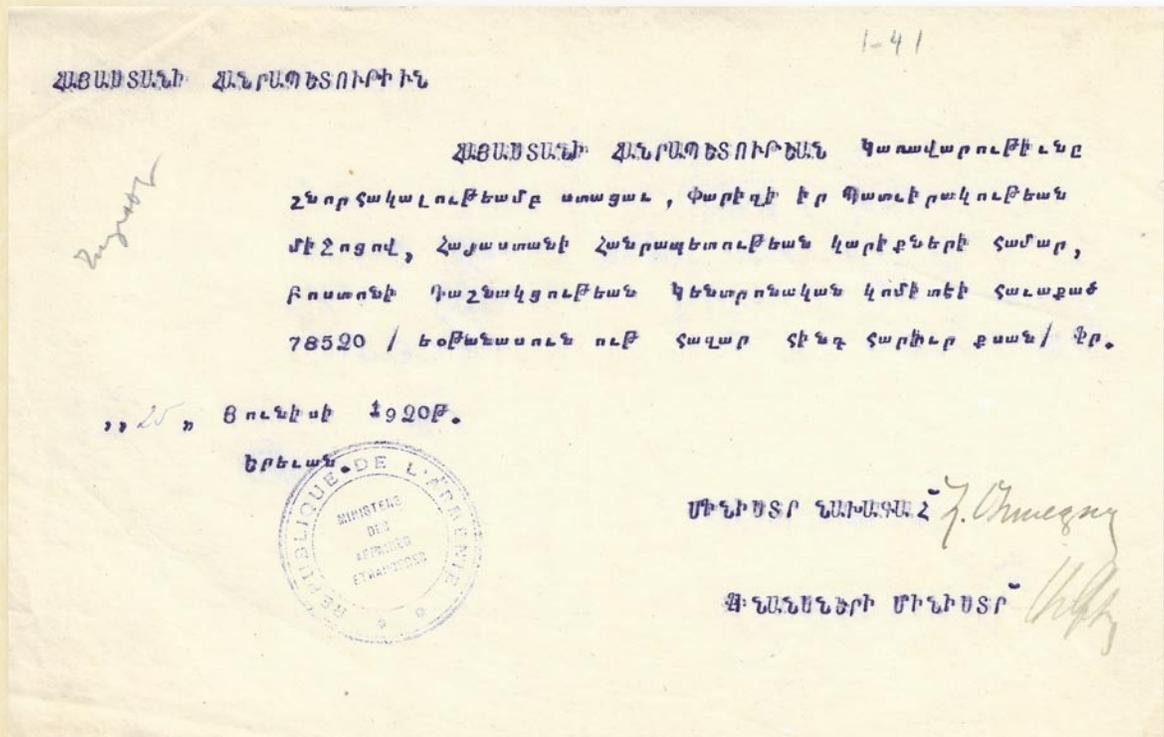
A list of Armenian Genocide perpetrators. Talat Pasha's name is at the top of the list. (Document: File HH 2/2-76, Armenian Historical Archives)

independent Armenia was declared during one of the most desperate times in Armenian history, via a simple statement issued in Tiflis (Tbilisi) by a representative body: "The Armenian National Council declares itself the supreme and sole administration of the Armenian provinces."

Having been left to its own devices by both Georgia and Azerbaijan, and with the complete annihilation of Armenians barely forestalled by the victories of Armenian military and volunteer forces against the Turkish army at the battles of Sardarabad, Bash-Abaran, and Gharakilisa, Armenia was compelled to accede to the harsh provisions of the Treaty of Batum with Turkey.

The birth of the First Republic was marked by an immense refugee crisis stemming from the Armenian Genocide, with the remnants of the massacred populations of Turkish (Western) Armenia having found refuge in Russian (Eastern) Armenia.

The government of the First Republic, though preoccupied with ameliorating the harsh conditions confronting the population, was not consumed solely with humanitarian concerns. Many early documents in the archives also contain survivor testimony and criminal complaints against the perpetrators of the Armenian Genocide. Of course, that process was not merely a documentation of past crimes but also of the ongoing victimization of the Armenian people.



Receipt for 78,520 Francs donated to the Republic of Armenia from the ARF Central Committee—Boston (Document: File HH 19/19-1-41, Armenian Historical Archives)



This photograph, which is stored in the ARF Archives and has never been published previously, shows the "Heroes of Vaspurakan" (L to R) Mesrop of Maku, Haroutiun, Aram Manoukian, Ishkhan, and Sogho of Akhalksxa (Photo: ARF Archives)

The Republic faced insurmountable financial challenges, as well. Money was needed both to feed the population and to acquire weaponry to protect it. Accordingly, there are numerous reports on Armenia's resources (military, mineral, water, agriculture, etc.), as well as the demographic composition and socioeconomic condition of the population.

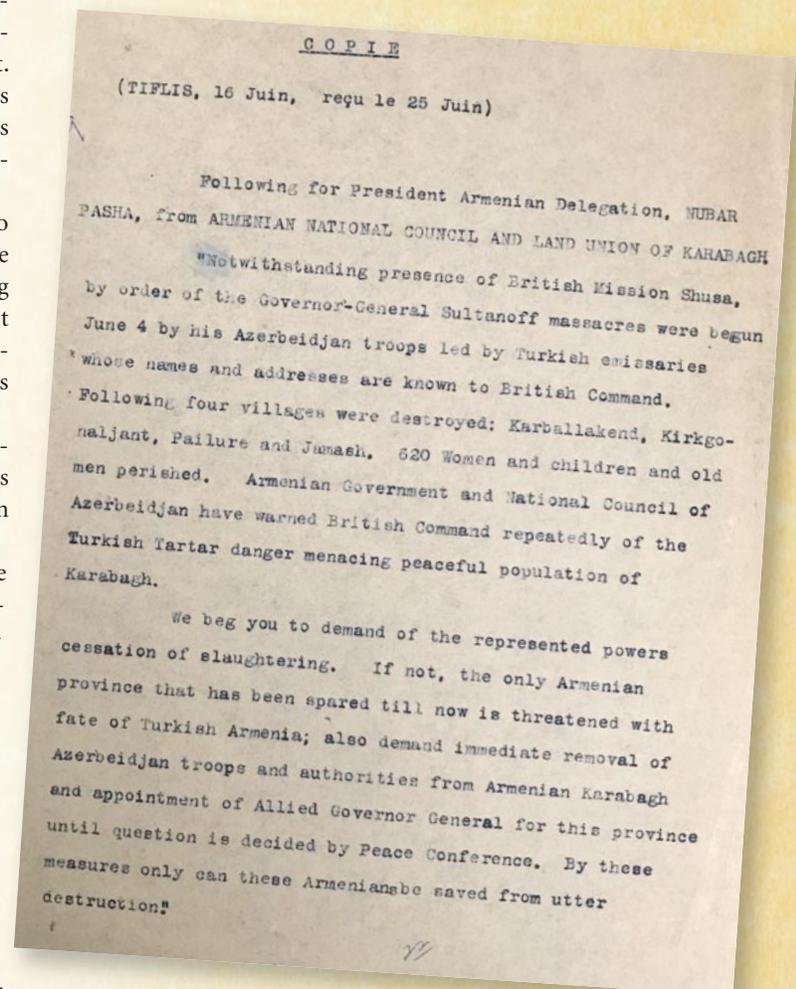
The hopes, aspirations, and desperation related to the negotiations at the post-World War I Paris Peace Conference are palpable in the correspondence, meeting minutes, and the diaries of key actors. The government of the First Republic played a role in the issues and aspirations of Western Armenians, viewing those concerns as integral to the survival of the Republic itself.

Moreover, references to the ongoing disputes regarding Nakhichevan, Zangezur, and Artsakh (Karabagh), as well as threats confronting their indigenous Armenian populations, can also be found in these documents.

Viewing those documents in their totality, one clearly understands how the leading figures and statesmen of the Republic considered themselves a government for all Armenians.

One cannot but hold immeasurable respect for those who formed a functioning government under unimaginably difficult conditions in 1918. Though facing significant challenges today, the current independent Armenian Republic (1991) has, in comparison, significant advantages unavailable during the dark days of the First Republic.

Still, appropriately recognizing, honoring, and emulating the legacy of the First Republic would afford today's Armenia an invaluable opportunity to further consolidate its own independence, placing it on a more democratic and secure footing. □



Report of massacres of Armenians in Artsakh (Karabagh)
(Document: File HH 9/9-87, Armenian Historical Archives)



We bow to and revere the memory of the heroes and heroines who through sacrificial struggle and martyrdom created the first independent Armenian Republic in 1918, restoring centuries lost statehood to the nation.

We praise God for the resurrection of our homeland.

Our yoke, beyond monuments and statues, is to preserve, nurture and ingeniously develop in perpetuity what has been inherited for the benefit of generations to come.



Celebrating THE REPUBLIC

By Hayk Demoyan

Director of the Armenian Genocide Museum-Institute



A postcard from 1919 reads "Long Live Free Armenia" in Armenian (Postcard: ARF Archives)



A procession on the central Astafian (now Abovyan) Street in Yerevan, on May 28, 1920. Featured are two floats and rows of Armenian soldiers on one side of the street and rows of orphans on the other. (Photo: ARF Archives)

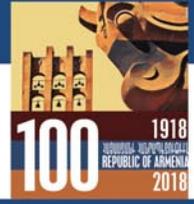
The establishment of the First Armenian Republic took place at one of the most crucial periods of the Armenian nation's history. Having just suffered genocide, and in the midst of a humanitarian crisis, the Armenian people and its leaders were forced to confront a massive new challenge—in the form Ottoman-Turkish Army advancing toward Yerevan.

The crucial battles at Sardarabad, Bash-Abaran, and Gharakilisa in May 1918 stopped the advance of the Ottoman forces and pushed them back, thus creating a safe haven for both the survivors of the genocide and for the Russian Armenians in Yerevan and surrounding territories. Both populations were in desperate straits after the fall of czarist regime in Russia and the subsequent political and military chaos in the Caucasus. Heroic Armenian resistance



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and Turkish defeat resulted in the opportunity for Armenian leaders to proclaim an independent Armenian Republic after similar proclamations by the Georgians and Azerbaijani Turks.

After the defeat and withdrawal of the Ottoman Army from the Caucasus, a relatively calm period ensued, helping to foster state-building and the strengthening of the Armenian Army. Despite all odds and numerous hardships, the leadership of newly created republic, along with Armenian communities worldwide, celebrated the establishment of Armenian statehood.

As one might imagine, creating a festive atmosphere in a newly independent state overwhelmed with refugees and a population on its last legs was extremely difficult. And though Armenia and the Diaspora celebrated the first two anniversaries of the independent Republic, after its Sovietization the people of Armenia no longer could, for decades thereafter.

Some unique memorabilia of the First Republic period, as well as photographs showing the parades and other celebrations that took place in Armenia, have survived. One of those interesting photos was taken on May 28, 1920, when Armenia was proclaimed “United and Independent.” The procession on the central Astafian (now Abovyan) Street in Yerevan, the capital of the hunger- and war-stricken republic, featured two floats and rows of Armenian soldiers on one side of the street and rows of orphans on the other. Among the flags representing the diplomatic and military missions in Armenia, the U.S. flag is visible. The woman standing in the front car is dressed in black, symbolizing the past and suffering of Armenia, while another, younger woman dressed in white stands on the other car, symbolizing the future and national rebirth of Armenia, with two children at her side. The children, holding hands, are dressed as Turkish and Russian Armenians. Posters surround “New Armenia” bearing the names of the cities and regions of Armenia, such as Van, Mush, Ani, and Tigranakert.

Another fascinating photograph depicts a triumphal arch in Yerevan, on Astafian Street, crowned with the coat of arms of the new republic, and *HH-Hayastani Hanrapetutiun* (RA—Republic of Armenia) and



A photograph of the triumphal arch in Yerevan, on Astafian Street (Photo: ARF Archives)

Ketseh Miatsial yev Ankakh Hayastanuh (Long Live United and Independent Armenia) written on either side. Armenian army detachments would have paraded through that arch.

A photograph preserved at the Mekhitarist Monastery in Vienna depicts Mekhi-



"The twilight of a united, free Armenia" reads this postcard (Photo: ARF Archives)

tarist clergymen with a young lady holding an Armenian tricolor. The flag used during the same celebration is displayed in the congregation's museum.

Rare memorabilia—posters, anniversary programs, fundraising receipts, and other rare glimpses into the First Republic—continue to be preserved in museums and private collections, giving us an important understanding of the mood and sacrifices our people in those crucial years.

The postcards and various ephemera of the time bore images of Mother Armenia as a seated, mourning woman amid the ruins of Armenia. Today, she has become a young heroine calling for struggle and the revival of a nation. □



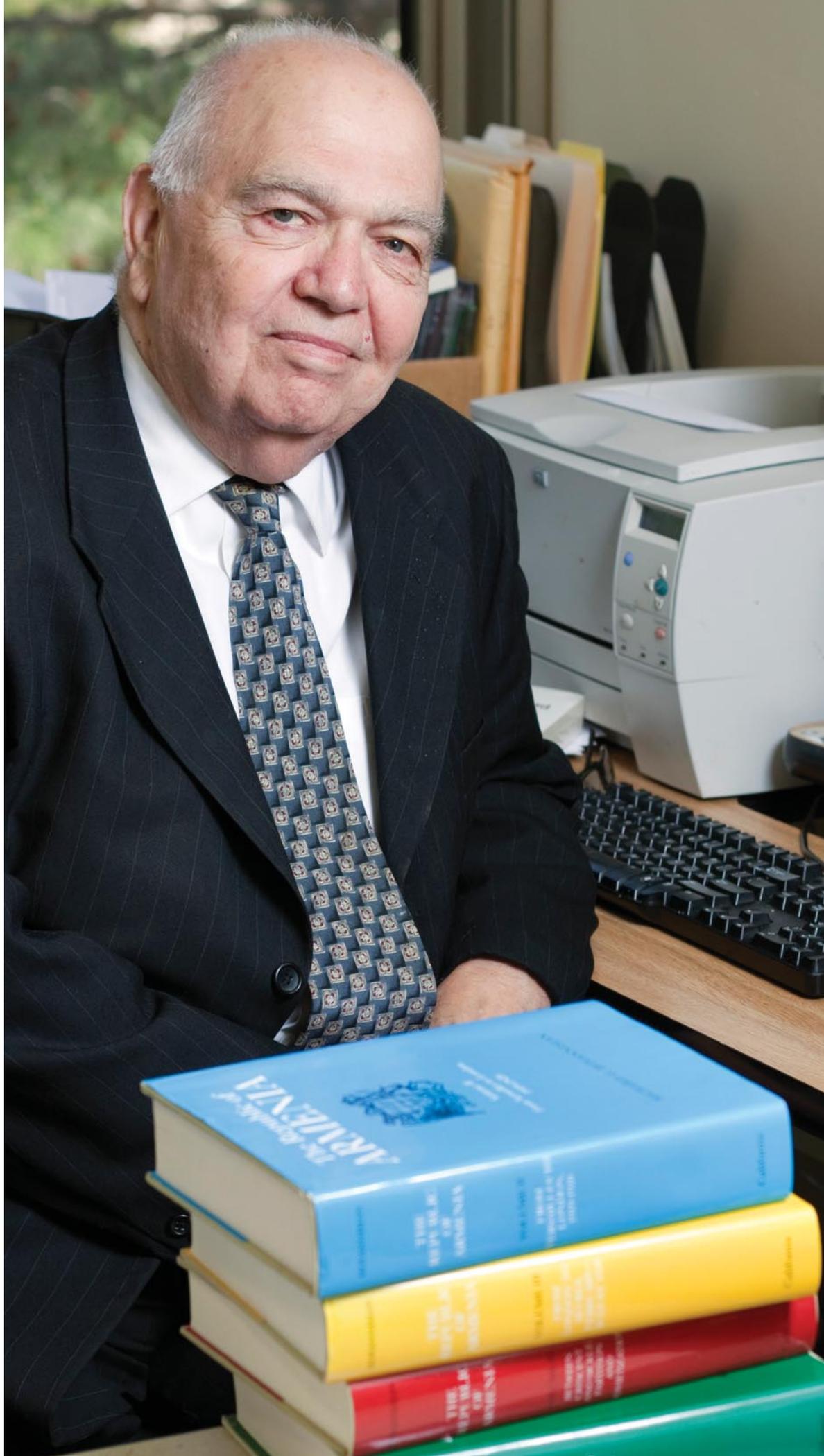
Mekhitarist clergymen with a young lady holding an Armenian tricolor. The flag used during the same celebration is displayed in the congregation's museum. (Photo: Mekhitarist Monastery, Vienna)

“

With all its shortcomings, the Republic had put Armenia on the map and became a symbol for generations in the Diaspora, which preserved the ideal of an independent Armenian homeland.

”

Professor Richard G. Hovannisian
(Photo: Lexy Atmore)



The First Republic as Turning Point for the Armenian Nation

A Conversation with Richard G. Hovannisian

Professor Richard Hovannisian is often asked about the First Armenian Republic. He is, after all, an authority on the subject of the short-lived state. His *Armenia on the Road to Independence* and four-volume *The Republic of Armenia* stand as foundational works in the study of modern Armenian history and as exceptional contributions to the field of Armenian Studies.

When queried about the now century-old republic, the professor recalls a statement by His Holiness Catholicos Vazgen I of blessed memory. Even as the pontiff guided the Church during a time of Soviet rule—when the history of the independent Armenian Republic was either ignored or denounced in Soviet Armenia and the USSR—the *Vehapar* had eloquently summed up the essence of the First Republic: “He said the Armenian Genocide was the crucifixion of the Armenian people... and May 28, 1918, was their resurrection,” the professor explained.

For Catholicos Vazgen, just as Jesus had risen from the dead three days after his crucifixion, the Armenian people found their

resurrection from the horrors of genocide three years after the slaughter had begun—when the Armenian people created what Hovannisian calls “a little nucleus of a state near Yerevan, which would become the hope and focal point of the Armenian people who had suffered so much.” That historic episode has stayed with the professor for decades.

In reality, there was little serious scholarship on the First Republic, both within and outside of the Soviet Union—something Hovannisian sought to change with his scholarly work. Today, after more than five decades since the publication of his *Armenia on the Road to Independence*, and more than four decades since the publication of the first volume of *The Republic of Armenia*, those five volumes have stood the test of time.

For Hovannisian, back in 1918, the little Armenian state became a turning point in modern Armenian history: “Without its establishment, the Armenian people would not have had a Soviet Armenia,” he explained. “And without Soviet Armenia, we surely would not have the present Republic of Armenia.”

Below is the Armenian Weekly’s interview with Professor Hovannisian, in its entirety.

The Armenian Weekly How do you assess the development of the historiography of the First Republic after more than five decades since the publication of your *Armenia on the Road to Independence*, and more than four decades since the publication of the first volume of *The Republic of Armenia*?

Richard G. Hovannisian There was, in fact, aside from repetitive and skewed Soviet publications, very little serious scholarship on the Republic. There were valuable memoirs and interpretations of the officials and participants in the former Armenian government or its agencies, but these were almost all written long before I began my research into unexplored archives in Boston, Washington, New York, London, Paris, and beyond. This is perhaps the reason that my five volumes have stood the test of time and remain widely regarded as the most authoritative history of the Republic.

To make them available to the current readership in Armenia, I worked for several

years to have the four volumes of the Republic series translated into the reformed Armenian orthography that had been introduced in the Soviet period, and which predominates in the new independent state. It was a real challenge because I had to compare the text word for word with the original to be sure that the translators had caught the spirit and nuances of the words. And it was also a struggle to insist, whenever possible, on the use of Armenian terminology rather than the Russian- and other foreign-language-laced historical language that had come to prevail in Soviet and post-Soviet publications in Armenia.

Fortunately, there is now a generation of younger scholars in Armenia who are paying serious attention to the Republic and exploring areas that were closed to me. In a recent conference on the 100th anniversary of the Republic, sponsored by the Catholicosate of Cilicia in Antelias [Lebanon], a strong delegation from Armenia demonstrated the new and deeper directions in which these scholars are moving.

It is my hope that they will also explore the Russian archives, especially military archives, to reveal and explain the differences between the diplomatic overtures by Soviet Russia toward the Republic of Armenia and the contradictory, aggressive military maneuvers that the Red Army undertook in 1920. And what details are there of the negotiations between the Kemalists and the Soviets during the summer of 1920 just before the Turkish invasion of the Kars province and the disastrous resulting Treaty of Alexandropol? These are just examples of what hopefully will be elucidated.

A.W. Were Armenian leaders surprised by the fall of Russia in 1917–18 and independence, considering that the Armenian independence arrived on May 28, after Georgia and Azerbaijan?

R.H. Almost everyone and every ethnic group was surprised by the dizzying course of events in 1917–18. For the Armenians, it was particularly chaotic, as the Russian armies withdrew from the occupied portions of Western Armenia, followed by the Soviet government's relinquishing to Turkey all of Western Armenia, as well as Kars, Ardahan,

and Batum. The Turkish invasion of 1918 threatened to extend the genocidal operations into the heart of Eastern Armenia.

Of course, the Armenians were surprised and bewildered. They were compelled to declare the independence of the little of what was left of their historic lands in the Caucasus after both Georgia and the Muslims (now Azeris) had abandoned them and taken measures to protect their own people. Under these frightful circumstances, the Republic of Armenia was unplanned and unwanted. The Armenian liberation movement had always been directed toward Western, or Turkish, Armenia, not toward the area around Erevan. But the leaders of the Armenian National Council, located in Tiflis, had no other option but to declare the independence of this rump state, which began with barely 8,000 square kilometers (around 3,000 square miles) but thanks to the defeat of Germany and Turkey was able to quadruple in size by the spring of 1919.

A.W. Was Armenia's foreign policy pro-Western or pro-Russian (White Russians)?

R.H. During the Armenian torment of World War I, the Allied Powers had made many solemn pledges regarding a safe and secure "national future" for the Armenians without the "blasting tyranny of the Turks," so it was natural that the Armenians would adopt a pro-Western orientation in the fervent hope that a truly independent republic might be formed through the unification of Eastern and Western Armenia, with outlets on the sea.

Ideologically, the leadership of the Armenian Republic was hostile to communism and the Soviet system and, while not comfortable with the White Russians, tried to reach an accommodation with them to relieve pressure on Armenia from Azerbaijan and Georgia and also to safeguard the countless thousands of Armenians living in South Russia and the Crimea under the control of the White Armies. Most observers believed that the Soviet system would not endure.

In hindsight, perhaps the Armenian government should have attempted more serious diplomatic feelers for a modus vivendi. On the other hand, the Georgian example may be instructive in that such an agreement

was reached with Soviet Russia, including the exchange of diplomatic missions, but this did not at all deter the Bolsheviks from continuing their subversive activities and the Red Army from ultimately subjecting Georgia to the same fate as Azerbaijan and Armenia.

A.W. Is the Transcaucasian federalism project adopted by Georgians, Armenians, and Azerbaijanis a good solution for the South Caucasus now?

R.H. Ideally, federation or confederation could benefit all the constituent states of the Caucasus, but the experiment of the short-lived Transcaucasian Federation in 1918 and the imposed Federation under Soviet rule from 1922 to 1936 demonstrated that the interests of the component parts were not sufficiently cohesive to make such a solution viable.

Hypothetically, it still remains a desirable and advantageous arrangement, but the likeliness is remote, and the opposite processes seem to be at work in the world—as in the cases of Yugoslavia, Czechoslovakia, Sudan, and the current heated situations in Belgium and Spain. Still, close cooperation among the Caucasian republics would be highly advantageous to all.

A.W. Armenian political life revolved around the Armenian Revolutionary Federation (ARF) in this period. How did the party behave with its rivals?

R.H. The Armenian Revolutionary Federation (ARF—*Dashnaktsutiun*) was the predominant Armenian party in the Caucasus since the early 20th century. It had the possibility and sometimes the necessity of ruling alone, but faced with the overwhelming challenges of 1918–1920 the *Dashnaktsutiun* was desirous of gaining the cooperation of the other parties, as seen in the composition of the Armenian National Council, which ultimately declared the independence of Armenia, and especially in its subsequent formation of a coalition governments with the liberal *Joghovrdakan* (Constitutional Democrat or Ramgavar equivalent) party, which was made up of highly educated professionals—lawyers, bankers and financiers, middle class merchants, and intellectuals—with important contacts in the non-socialist

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world and with the more conservative Western Armenian circles headed by Boghos Nubar Pasha in Paris.

In the spring of 1920, however, the supreme Bureau of the party took full control of the government to suppress an abortive Boshevnik May-Day uprising immediately after the Red Army had marched into Azerbaijan, and, under Ruben Ter-Minassian, then crushed the defiant non-Armenian enclaves south of Erevan. After the brief Armenian-Turkish war of Sept.–Dec. 1920, the *Dashnaktsutiun* again sought support from a minor party, this time the left-wing Socialist Revolutionaries, who joined the final cabinet that was to deliver what was left of the Armenian Republic to the Soviet order.

A.W. How might one assess the foreign policy and domestic politics of the Armenian government during these 20 months of independence?

R.H. In foreign relations, the primary activities revolved around attaining a favorable solution to the Armenian question through convincing the Allied Powers and the United States of America that Armenia's wellbeing was in their own vital interest. This was not an easy assignment, because Armenia had few resources that would be immediately available to the Western powers, and so the Armenians had to advance primarily moral and humanitarian arguments. Meanwhile, Armenian unofficial and official missions on five continents tried to further Armenia's cause.

In the end, the Allies discharged their obligation to Armenia in the Treaty of Sèvres by sanctioning the creation of a united Armenian state with the award of parts of the Ottoman provinces of Trebizond, Erzerum, Bitlis, and Van to the already existing “Erevan republic.” But, at the same time, they had already made it clear that they would not provide the requisite military assistance to expel the Turkish armies from these areas. That, the Armenians would have to do themselves. The outcome is well known.

The domestic picture was brighter. Famine conditions had abated, and thousands of orphans had been clothed and housed under the auspices of Near East

Relief and Armenian agencies. In 1920, all arable land was seeded for the first time since the beginning of the world war six years earlier. Although there was still much about which to complain, including the heartless extortionist bureaucrats—*chinovniks*—left over from tsarist times, the edifice of a parliamentary cabinet system of governance had been put in place; popular elections had been organized; agrarian, *zemstvo* (communal self-governance), and educational reforms had been initiated, including the opening of Armenia's first university. Armenia's legal system began the transition to conducting proceedings in the national language, and the country witnessed its first trial by jury.

A.W. Can the creation of the ephemeral First Republic of Armenia three years after the beginning of the Armenian Genocide be considered a success or a failure, in terms of nation-building?

R.H. I would term the Republic a “blessing in disguise” or “an unfinished symphony.” It was unable to reach its coveted goal of “*Azat, Ankakh, Miatsial Hayastan*,” and many of its initiatives remained in their early stages—interrupted by the interlude of the Soviet years. Yet, with all its shortcomings, the Republic had put Armenia on the map and became a symbol for generations in the

Diaspora, which preserved the ideal of an independent Armenian homeland. It was not the desired homeland of the Armenian revolutionary movement, and ironically Soviet Armenia was left with only half the territory of the Republic, but it remained a magnet for the Armenian people and the hope of one day realizing their dreams.

A.W. What are some parallels we can draw between the First Republic and the present Republic of Armenia?

R.H. There are many parallels, such as being a landlocked, blockaded country, economic dislocation and collapse, continuous tension and sometimes bloodshed along the borders, inability to guarantee all citizens a minimum standard of living, and the complex issue of relations with a vital Diaspora.

But there are also differences. The post-Soviet Republic has endured more than a quarter of a century, it has been admitted into the international community of nations and many agencies, and from the outset it inherited an advanced infrastructure, which was lacking in the First Republic. Yet, while the latter small state began with absolutely no resources, within two years it had started to gradual upward spiral, whereas the current Republic started from a rather elevated position, structurally, economically, and socially, but quickly descended into a dark abyss before starting a slow recovery—unfortunately having already lost a significant part of its population to emigration.

As for the leadership of the First Republic, the ministers may not have been very experienced in governance and perhaps made some questionable decisions, but their absolute dedication leaves no room for doubt. They lived and died with the people, and to my knowledge not a single one attempted to enrich himself through a position of privilege or power. It was a highly idealistic, visionary generation, the likes of which may not be seen again.

Hopefully, the current and future leadership of the Republic of Armenia will both embrace the admirable visionary attributes of that past generation and find the road to rational, practical measures to address the many complex challenges that, a hundred years later, have carried over from the original Republic of Armenia. □

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Becoming Aram

The Formative Years of a Revolutionary Statesman (1879–1908)

By Khatchig Mouradian
*Lecturer, Columbia
University*

If you had told Aram Manoukian on March 6, 1908, that within a decade he would successfully lead the defense of Van against the Ottoman military, save tens of thousands of Armenians from imminent murder, become the temporary governor of Van after the withdrawal of the Turkish forces, and then emerge as the founder of the First Armenian Republic as Tsarist Russia faltered, he probably would have had a good laugh. After all, that day seemed to usher in the end of Aram's life as a free man—if not his life altogether—as Turkish policemen and soldiers dragged him out of a 30-foot-deep well where he was hiding with fellow revolutionaries, and escorted the lot of them to the military commander's residence, where they were interrogated, photographed, and sent to solitary confinement.

A rare photograph of Aram from the ARF Archives.
(Photo: ARF Archives)



The story of what got Aram (née Sargis Hovhannisian) into that predicament, what got him out of it, and what turned him into the founder of Armenian statehood after an interregnum of more than five centuries is a combination of luck, resilience, mistakes, experience, and unwavering will that shaped him into a leader who ruled the borderlands between two empires and established a home for his nation.

Chroniclers have projected the Aram they knew backwards, fashioning an image of a born leader, yet what makes Aram's journey from "inexperienced revolutionary" to statesman remarkable is the process through which he became a leader.

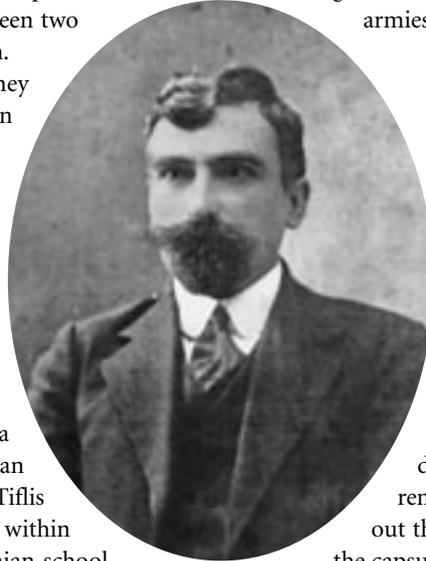
EARLY LIFE

The youngest of five children, Sargis Hovhannisian, often referred to as Sergei, was born March 19, 1879 in Shushi. Sergei was a student in his hometown when the Armenian Revolutionary Federation was established in Tiflis (Tbilisi), and he joined the ranks of the party within a few years. He was expelled from his Armenian school for revolutionary activity in 1901, completed his secondary education in Yerevan at the age of 24, and then moved to Baku, where he served the party apparatus. He helped fight Tsarist Russia's anti-Armenian policies and organized labor protests and gatherings for the workers in the city's burgeoning oil industry.

Sergei's brief tenure in Baku helped hone his organizational and oratorical skills, preparing him for the "revolutionary crucible" of Kars, but it was also formative ideologically. Writing about the discussions during the Fourth ARF World Congress in Vienna (1907), ARF leader Simon Vratsian summed up Aram's ideological allegiances: "He was a staunch Socialist with us, the 'lefties'... But he would be willing to abandon socialism, and us, if necessary. He was an Armenian in the mold of [members of the ARF's founding generation] Rostom [Stepan Zorian] and Dr. [Hakob] Zavrian [Zavriev]. Socialist? Yes. But first and foremost an Armenian."

The Armenian Revolutionary Federation (ARF, or Dashnaktsutiun) in Kars was not your average operation, and Aram dove in head first (in the fall of 1903) after a short stop in Gandzak. "The revolutionary crucible of the Kars Province was a place where the Dashnak novices came out either forged and molded or, unable to withstand its extreme ideological and Spartan lifestyle, they renounced the revolutionary path," wrote chronicler Ruben Ter Minasian. Here, Sergei distinguished himself as an effective communicator and propagandist and served in the network that organized the passage of armed revolutionary groups to the Ottoman Empire. Eager to support the Armenians waging an asymmetric battle against the Ottoman military in Sassoun, the ARF in the Russian Empire sent group after group of Armenian revolutionaries, but most were killed crossing the border, long before reaching Sassoun. Sergei itched to cross the border and join the Armenians there. "Sassoun's untimely eruption, the failed attempts of countless arms-smuggling groups and their

annihilation on the border, and the martyrdom of my close friends had rendered me hopeless. I was tormented by the thought that everyone went and got massacred, and I, as if through my cunning, stayed behind," he wrote later. By the time Sergei managed to cross the border, Sassoun had fallen to Ottoman armies. He had to settle for Van.



FROM THE FURNACE INTO THE INFERNO

An incident in Sergei's journey to Van, prior to crossing the Iranian border, stands out as a testament to what he himself referred to as "revolutionary inexperience." Staying in the house of an Armenian family in a village while he awaited a Turkish guide to help him and his comrades cross the Araxes River to Iran, Sergei decided to disassemble the dynamite capsules he was carrying with him to render them safer for travel on horseback. He laid out the explosives on the table and started emptying the capsules, engaging the host family, a couple and their child, in the process. Suddenly, a capsule in Sergei's hands caught fire, and the flame engulfed everything on the table. "I automatically threw myself under the table. The schoolteacher and his wife, less experienced, remained standing and were exposed to the blow of the horrible explosion. The schoolteacher lost a few fingers and his face was burned. The poor wife, and especially the child, received greater injuries," he confessed.



The Central Committee of the Van region. Aram is the fourth from the left. (Photo: ARF Archives)



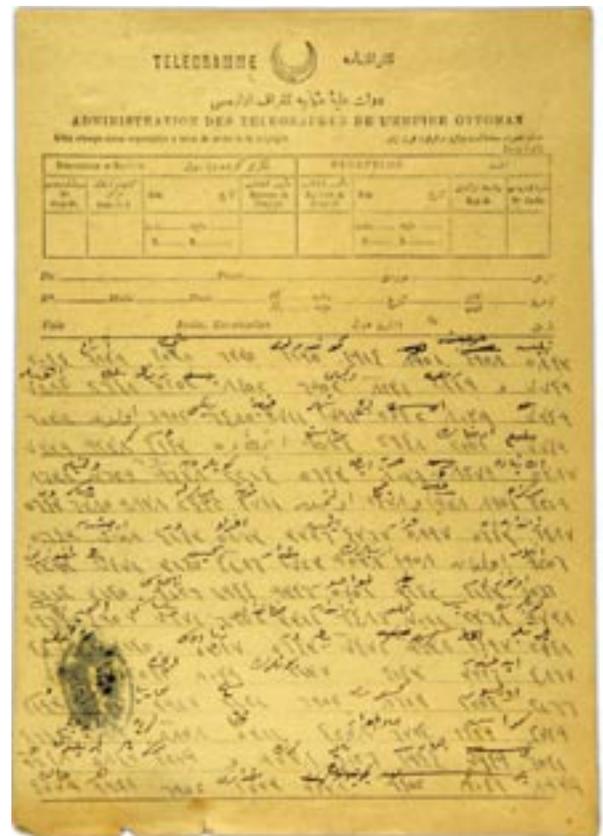
Aram (bottom row, third from left) with comrades (Photo: ARF Archives)

“I sort of knew just a little bit about explosives, more in the theoretical sense than in the practical, as I had only once or twice been present at tests, conducted by others at that,” he acknowledged. The incident, recounted by Sergei himself in a forthright manner, points to the reality that he was still a work in progress as he left the revolutionary crucible of Kars and journeyed to Van. He was yet to become a “born leader.”

The harsh winter conditions impeded Sergei’s journey, imposing on him a four-month stint (Oct. 1904–Jan. 1905) at the St. Thaddeus Monastery in Northern Iran near the Ottoman border. He wrote to Koms (Vahram Papazian), the leader of the ARF in Van, from the monastery, explaining his circumstances: “I am forced to stay here until spring; the roads are buried in snow.” This, the oldest surviving letter we have from Sergei, is signed “Aram.” This is also the earliest instance the nom



Aram’s arrest document (Document: ARF Archives)



Coded telegram from Van governor to the Ottoman Interior Ministry, referencing Aram as the leader of the Van defense (Document: ARF Archives)

de guerre appears (henceforth, I shall refer to him as Aram). He went on to report, “In the spring, I am hoping that at the earliest opportunity we can send large amounts of dough and apples.” It is not that Aram was into the production of apple pie. In Dashnak-speak, dough was understood to be gunpowder, and apples were bombs.

Curiously, Aram touted his expertise in “dough and apples operations” in this letter, written only a few weeks after the explosion that maimed three people. It is possible that he was simply playing up his knowledge of explosives. Yet a more plausible explanation is that his “revolutionary inexperience” right before crossing the border to the inferno of *Yerkir* alarmed him, and he decided to use his stay at St. Thaddeus Monastery to educate himself on explosives (one of his three companions was an expert) and peruse the encyclopedias and books at the monastery to deepen his knowledge on everything he deemed relevant to his mission. The letters Aram sent to Van from the monastery support this hypothesis. In one, he writes to Koms at length about the advantages of breeding carrier pigeons, and how he himself has started doing so after reading about them in an encyclopedia. “There is dedicated literature on the subject. If you want, I can send you at least what’s in the encyclopedic dictionary, which can serve as a reliable guide,” he wrote. It is unclear what happened to Aram’s proposal, but two months later, in early February, Aram finally arrived in Van after a tumultuous journey, and Koms welcomed him warmly: “The first time I met him, I already felt that the newcomer was a serious, mature, and capable asset of a person,” Koms wrote in his memoir, extolling Aram’s experience in Baku, Kars, and the borderlands between Russia and Iran.

That region in the aughts of the 20th century was bustling with revolutionary activity, and Aram quickly asserted himself, despite initial resistance from the local party members, who typically viewed the revolutionaries arriving from the Caucasus with suspicion. Within months, Aram became a pillar of the ARF’s Van operation, extending the organization’s reach and forging alliances. Contemporaries praise Aram’s efforts to find common ground and cooperate with other Armenian groups, like the Hnchakians and, in particular, the Armenakans, as well as “neutral” Armenian circles. “Aram was adept at making a good impression, generating affinity, and gradually bringing others into the fold,” observed Koms.

Circumstances on the ground contributed to Aram’s ascent: Koms left Van soon after Aram’s arrival, leaving a void that Aram readily filled. However, Aram was first and foremost engaged in the process of procuring weapons from Russia and arranging their transport to Van, in fulfillment of the ARF’s plan to arm the Armenian peasantry in the region and prepare them for self-defense against local aggression and extirpation. This was his main role in the region until he left for the Fourth ARF World Congress, held in Vienna in early 1907.

BETRAYAL

Aram’s letters were full of instructions about effective and safe modes of transportation of bomb-making materials. In a letter dated March 11, 1905 addressed to Malkhas (Artashes Hovsepian), he explained his tactics to discourage betrayal and ensure the safer



A disheveled yet defiant Aram, far left, in a photograph taken after he and his comrades were arrested in 1908. Dajad Terlemezian can be seen standing next to Aram. (Document: ARF Archives)

transport of goods. For example, sellers and transporters were not paid for the service rendered until the next time they rendered service. Always owed pay, sometimes significant amounts, these local Kurds and Turks had a vested interest in keeping their mouths shut, lest they lose their money if the authorities arrested their contacts.

But the greatest betrayal, one of the costliest in Armenian revolutionary history, was not committed by Kurds or Turks, but by an Armenian revolutionary. Davo was in a relationship with Satenig, the sister of Ales, a fellow revolutionary. When Satenig



became pregnant, Ales threatened to kill Davo unless the ARF resolved the issue. Davo refused to marry Satenig and accused Aram of impregnating her. The party made it clear that Davo must either marry Satenig or suffer the consequences of his act. The confrontation led Davo to engage in the unthinkable: He went to the Ottoman authorities and exposed the locations of numerous ARF weapons caches, in return for protection.

The betrayal brought the powder keg of Van to the brink of explosion. A flurry of actions followed: The ARF moved weapons caches to new locations; the Ottoman authorities cracked down on the revolutionaries in the region and placed Van under siege; Dajad Terlemezian, an ARF member in his late teens, assassinated Davo following party orders; 19 revolutionaries, including Aram and Dajad, went into hiding in a well. This brings us to March 6, 1908.

FROM FREEDOM TO INDEPENDENCE

Had it not been for the Young Turk coup (known as the Young Turk Revolution) of July 1908, Aram would have likely been hanged and remembered today primarily as a revolutionary who smuggled hundreds of kilograms of explosives and thousands of weapons from the Russian Empire into the Ottoman Empire to defend the Armenian peasantry against Turkish and Kurdish oppression. But the coup ushered in a brief period of freedom, and the ARF leaders, allies of the Young Turks in the revolution, were released from prison.

Thirty-year-old Aram was a free man—and, finally, a “born leader.” During the next decade, he would successfully lead the defense of Van against the Ottoman military, save tens of thousands of Armenians from imminent murder, become the temporary governor of Van after the withdrawal of the Turkish forces, and then emerge as the founder of the First Armenian Republic as Tsarist Russia faltered. He died of typhus in Yerevan on Jan. 29, 1919. His funeral in Yerevan was one of the most widely attended the Armenian nation had ever witnessed. In his eulogy, ARF leader and statesman Nikol Aghbalian told the nation: “When the night falls, withdraw into the back chambers of your souls, speak to your conscience, and ask: Have you worked for the Armenian people as Aram has? Have you been as self-sacrificing? Have you dedicated your entire life to the Armenian people as Aram has?” □

Note: This article is an excerpt from a much longer manuscript titled “Becoming Aram: The Life and Legacy of a Revolutionary Statesman,” currently under review for publication. This project was partially funded by a travel and research grant from the Knights of Vartan Fund for Armenian Studies (FAS), administered by the National Association for Armenian Studies and Research (NAASR). Aram’s letters referenced in this article are housed in the ARF Archives in Boston.

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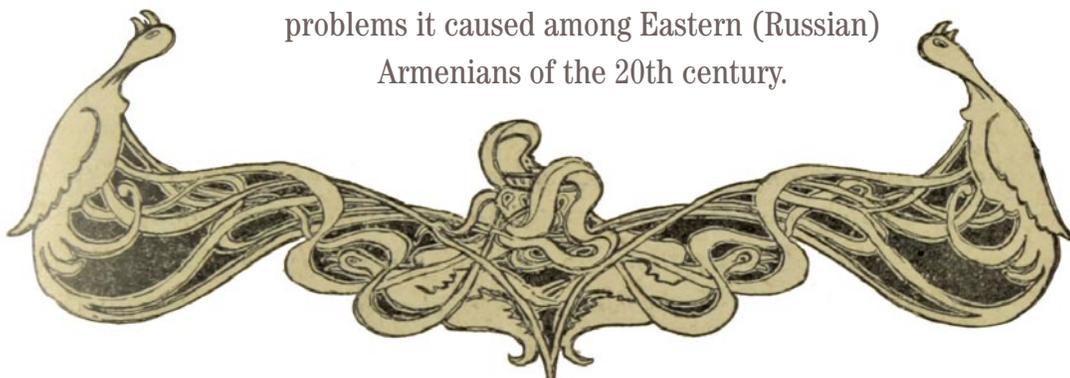
Marriage Contract: Armenians against Venereal Diseases at the Beginning of the 20th Century

By Anna Aleksanyan

PhD Candidate, Clark University

Strassler Center for Holocaust and Genocide Studies

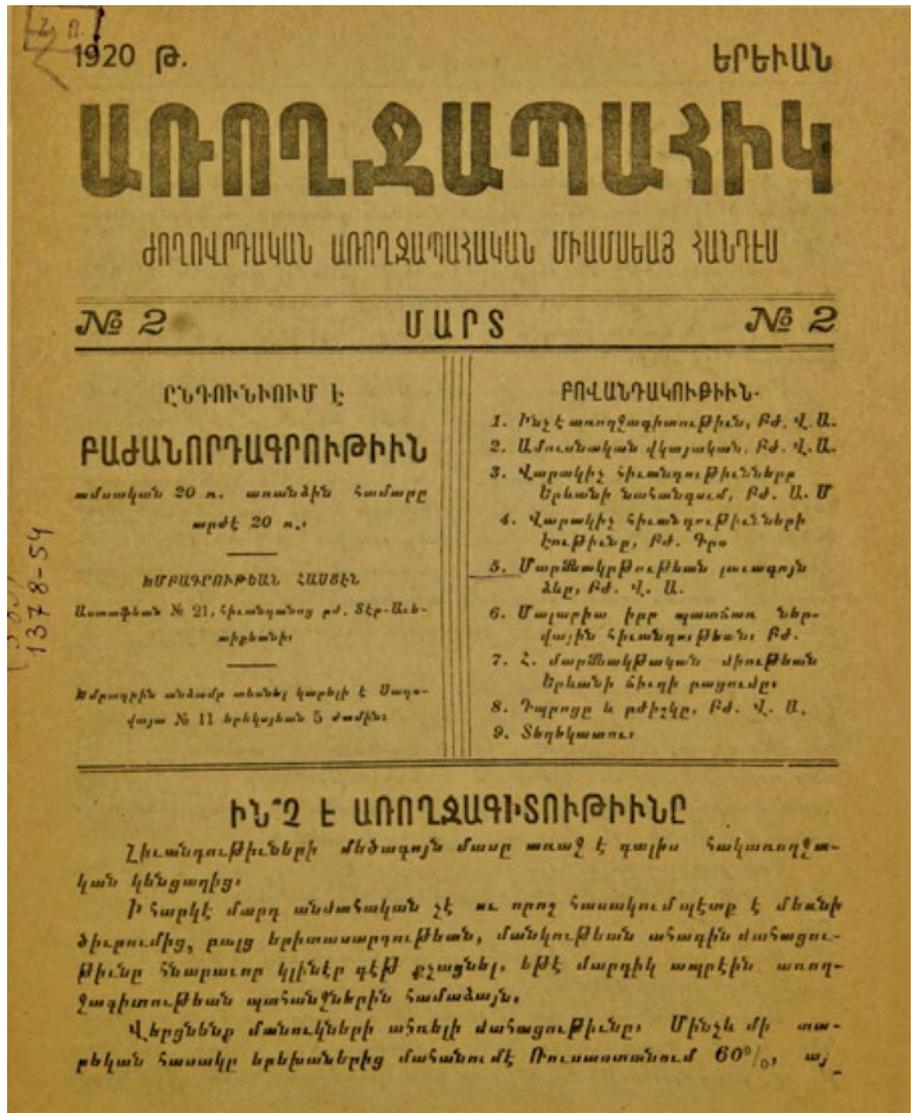
“Hidden venereal diseases¹ have begun to spread also among us, as they were spread in Russia and Europe. Syphilis² has already spoiled the pure Armenian family and threatened to destroy the Armenian home. Immigrant life, conscription, labor in big cities are to be blamed. Continually, Baku is ruining Armenian youth and dispersing them into small towns and villages inhabited by Armenians. Armenian young laborers infected with dangerous diseases are returning from Baku, Tbilisi, and Russia to the homeland and bringing with them this illness and contaminating the Armenian family,” doctor Vahan Artsruni³ writes in the introduction of his book *Vat Tsav (Bad Pain)*, published in 1900.⁴ That book is one of the first published in Armenian that raises the question of venereal disease and the problems it caused among Eastern (Russian) Armenians of the 20th century.



Having received his medical education in France, Artsruni was well aware of the harmful consequences of venereal diseases, which had already caused significant damage to Europe. He was also aware of the poor sanitary and health conditions of Armenians in the Caucasus. The first clinic in Eastern Armenia had opened in Artashat only in 1887, and another had been established in Yerevan in 1890. The first hospital in Yerevan had opened its doors in 1882 and had just 12 beds.⁵

In the early 20th century, the term “venereal disease” was known among Armenians as *frankakht* (French disease) or *vat tsav* (bad pain) and referred mainly to syphilis, gonorrhea, and chancroid, which were the most prevalent diseases of this kind. The three forms of venereal diseases identified in the early 20th century were known to produce superficial or visual symptoms on the exterior of the body, such as rash, warts, lesions, mucous, bumps, and various other forms of presentation. In fact, the symptoms of syphilis, its mode of transmission, and its effects on the body have been understood for hundreds of years.⁶ At the end of the 19th century, Armenians, as other peoples in the region, were suffering from several well-known infectious diseases. In those conditions, when malaria, typhus, and cholera were also rampant, the question of venereal diseases was assigned secondary importance. Another reason was the shame and social stigma associated with these types of diseases among Armenians. Because of shame, ignorance, and a lack of education among the population at large, syphilis was neither prevented nor treated, and within a short period it became widespread and manifest.

As Artsruni points out in his book, the main population infected by venereal diseases consisted of Armenian migrant workers who were leaving their villages and going to large cities in search of work and money. In due course, those men’s tastes changed, they became accustomed to city life, and they adopted the habits of urban lifestyles, including abusing alcohol and visiting prostitutes. As a consequence, they were returning home infected with diseases. In conditions of poverty, many villagers had only one outfit and ate from a communal pot, and often slept in the same bed, all of



The second issue of “Aroghjapahik,” published in Yerevan in 1920. The front page article’s headline reads “What is health science?”

which contributed to the rapid spread of disease. Another reason for venereal infections was ignorance about disease itself. There was no limiting of contact with the infected. On the contrary, workers coming back from the big cities married village girls; as a consequence, not only their wives but also the children born of those marriages suffered from disease. There were not enough doctors, and the absence of female doctors made the situation even worse. Venereal diseases cast substantial shame on a family, and especially female members. These women, with the help of their mothers-in-law, would try to find treatment for themselves and their children. Their best option was a village healer who would try to heal them using traditional methods. Those methods were not useful, however, and in most cases they cost patients their life.

But the situation was little better in cities. Women were afraid to seek out a doctor, afraid that their illness would be revealed, thus ruining “the good names of their husbands and families.”

“What is more preferable,” asked doctor Artsruni of his readers, “to cold-heartedly witness how people lose their health and keep silent, or to break the wall of false bashfulness and loudly pronounce the word ‘syphilis,’ which people have made synonymous with the word ‘disgrace’ against themselves?”⁷

How could the damage brought by venereal diseases be prevented, controlled, and cured? Ideas about public hygiene and attitudes about morality found their way into Armenian society through the publications of Armenian physicians. With his publications, Artsruni tried to support

Armenian women and girls who were victims of a patriarchal society and of social stigmatization. In 1901, he published another book, this time about marriage. In it, he terms any man who would ignore his venereal disease and marry an innocent girl a “monster.”⁸ He notes that these men are guilty in front of not only their wives but also an entire generation that they have poisoned. He titled the eighth chapter of the book “Syphilis,” in which he tried to explain the disease and treatments for it.

Artsruni’s professional life was significantly influenced by French dermatologist Jean Alfred Fourier⁹, who specialized in the study of venereal diseases. “How to stop syphilis? How to treat it? Of course, with the help of doctors, and never old quack cures of the village,” Artsruni wrote.¹⁰ Concerning treatment, physicians at the time were divided into two camps. One argued for treatment using mercury, the other for non-mercury therapies. Artsruni was more inclined toward mercury treatment, but he warned patients that a full and absolute cure would not come immediately: It may take a year or sometimes three years, and they had to have patience. Writing about the inheritability of syphilis and its destructive effects, Artsruni notes that everyone who has syphilis should visit a doctor and get married only with the doctor’s permission. “Undoubtedly, the time will come when it will be necessary to produce health certificates from doctors to get married”: That is required for honesty; for the health of the family and offspring; the survival of the nation; and, it should be added, because people are selfish even in marriage, and so it is a necessity for their own happiness, he argues.¹¹

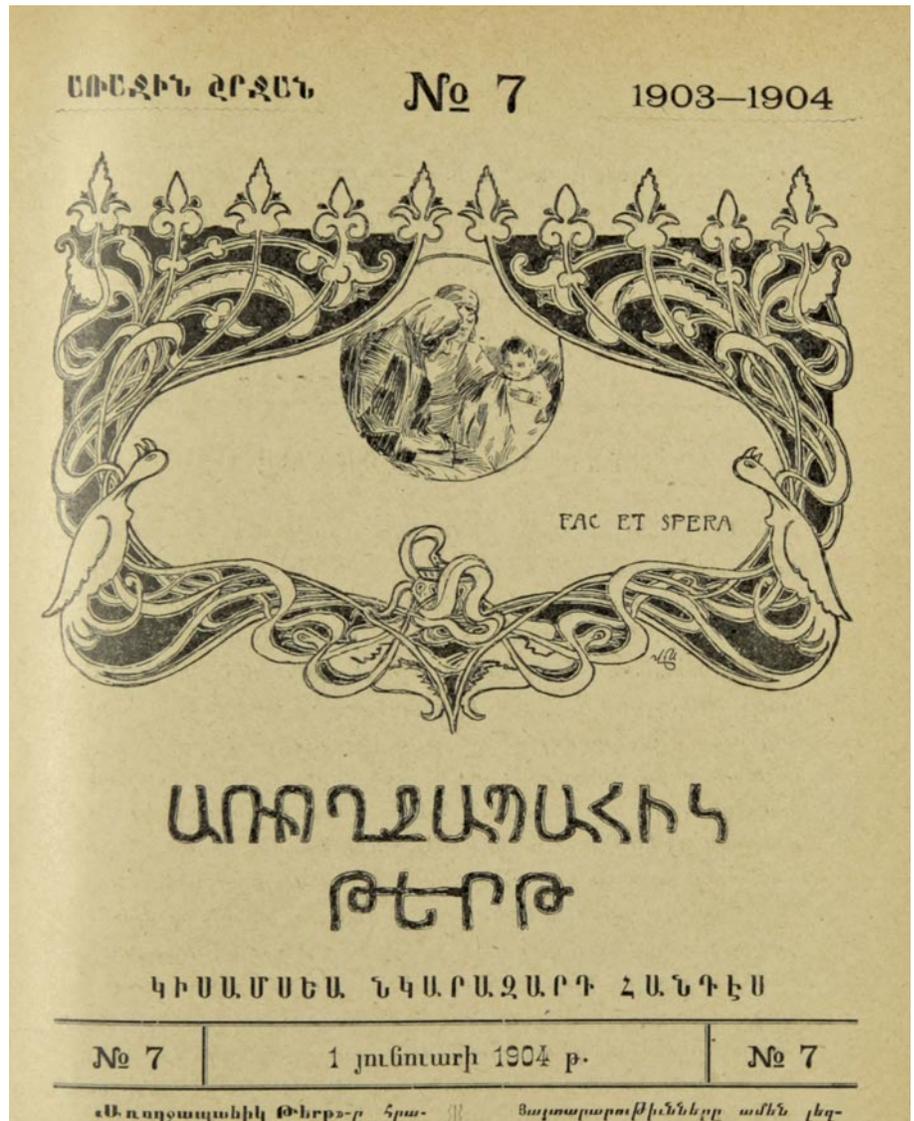
Not finding allies among men, who were continuing marriages without proper treatment for syphilis, Artsruni tried to find allies among women and girls to save them from danger. In 1903 he published another book, dedicated to his niece, Haykanush Tigranian.¹² In it, Artsruni notes that “the Armenian girl should constitute a pillar of the family, but her education is wrong and full of false influences.”¹³ He criticized the traditional way of girls’ education and their treatment as unimportant, secondary members of the family, which undermines the strength of the

Armenian nation. “She should publish good books, establish children’s journals, spread positive education among the nation. She is also a part of our nation, isn’t she? Society has expectations from her. She should act—act in all spheres,”¹⁴ Artsruni writes. Referring to marriage, he points out, “An Armenian girl is given to a husband; she does not choose him.”¹⁵ He calls on girls to resist such brutality and marry only with love. He also warns girls to pay attention to their future husbands’ health condition before agreeing to the marriage.

Elsewhere, his contemporary, Dr. Budughian, writes that “to be safe from syphilis, merely awareness is needed. If the child were to receive education within the

family similar to that at school, it would give hope that syphilis will gradually diminish. Otherwise, degeneration is inevitable.”¹⁶

Despite the efforts of Armenian doctors, the disease continued to spread. It was necessary to take more practical steps. The situation in Europe was no better. According to Fournier, who was the first professor to obtain a chair in both dermatology and the study of syphilis in France, there should be three paths of action: (1) to put into effect administrative measures and policies affecting the public and having as their goal to stop the spread of syphilis; (2) to attack syphilis by treating the disease; and (3) to fight syphilis by educating the younger generation of physicians on all aspects of the

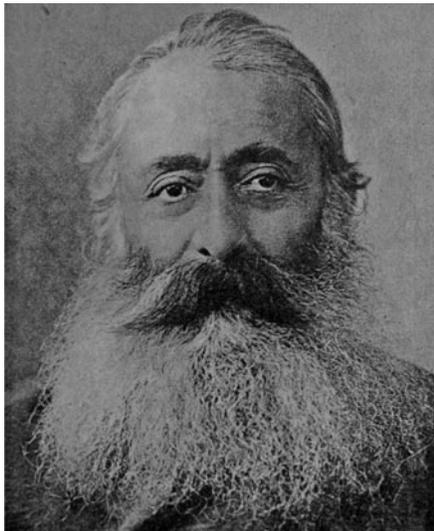


The seventh issue of “Aroghjapah tert,” published in in Tbilisi in 1904

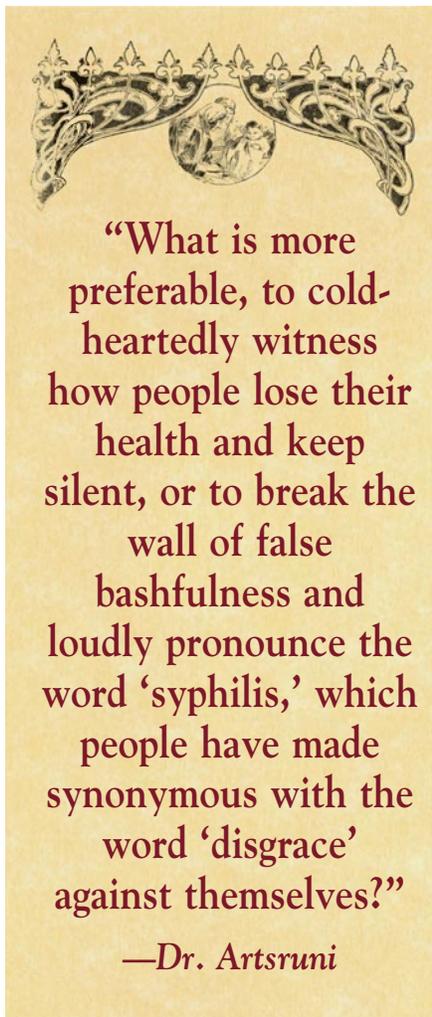
disease. In addition to that three-pronged policy of treatment and education, Fournier added another measure: marriage. “Nothing more noble, nor more exalted than to pursue the extinction of syphilis by the early unions, the marriages at the age of 25 between a husband and a wife, equally chaste, equally dignified, one to the other as the flower of the orange blossom.”¹⁷

At the time, France was trying to control the situation by monitoring the health of prostitutes, which was neither fair nor effective. Police checked prostitutes and regularly demanded health certificates, although they never asked the same of men who frequented brothels. But even that unequal and unfair method could not work in the case of the Armenians. They did not have any authority to establish control over brothels in the large cities of the regions. Their only hope was the Catholicos of All Armenians, in Etchmiadzin, who was at that time Mkrtych Khrimian (Khrimyan *Hayrik*). A group of Armenian doctors, among them Artsruni, introduced the problem to Archbishop Sedrakian, who was a confidante of Khrimian. The Catholicos understood the seriousness and urgency of the question and immediately took action. In 1904 he issued the Edict on Marriage, according to which every man should provide a certificate from a doctor about his health to a priest before the wedding ceremony in church.¹⁸ According to other Armenian sources on the issue, for some time the “Marriage Certificate” worked efficiently, and the population supported the decision of the Catholicos. The problem came back again, however, and the number of those infected increased during World War I and the Armenian Genocide.

In 1917, a Dr. Makarian raised the question of prevention of venereal diseases: “Not only the individual but also society, the government, must fight against such infection. But to succeed in this fight, it is necessary to eliminate the attitude society has in general about venereal diseases. We need to cast aside prejudice, start talking and writing about syphilis freely, tell the people the nature of it, and teach them how to combat it successfully. It is essential that venereal diseases and especially syphilis come out from their covered, hidden state, and we



Khrimian Hayrik



begin to fight against it as freely as we fight other infectious diseases. This is the only guarantee for a successful outcome.”¹⁹ But, unfortunately, the call of doctors regarding the urgency of the problem would not be heard. Armenians and the entire region were suffering from war and other well-

known dramatic events. There was no time for fighting venereal disease.

Armenian doctors revisited this issue only during the First Armenian Republic. At the beginning of its establishment, the young republic established the Ministry of Relief, which was supposed to deal with the health issues of the republic. Through the efforts of the ministry, the Armenian Physicians’ Congress was organized in 1920. Its primary purpose was to combat malaria, but during its various sessions other health issues of the Republic were discussed, including venereal diseases. This ministry was abolished in Jan. 1921 by a parliamentary decision.²⁰

Artsruni was more enthusiastic and motivated in his mission and work because of the long-awaited independence of Armenians. Now he had an opportunity to act freely for the benefit of his nation. In Feb. 1920, with the help of his friends, he began publishing the first health journal in Armenia. The first article of the inaugural issue of *Aroghjapahik* (Healthcare) was dedicated to the prevention and treatment of venereal diseases. “The government takes measures,” writes Artsruni in it, “but they are not enough if there is no public support. The government urges us not to keep infectious patients at home, but to take them to hospital and ‘isolate’ them so that they cannot infect others. But what use is that if the people continue to hide their infection?”²¹ The journal aimed not only to educate the people but also to dispel thousands of superstitions, to warn them not to trust village remedies. Especially in light of the genocide of Ottoman Armenians, the future and the existence of the Armenian nation and its young independent republic were dependent on a healthy society. At least, that was Artsruni’s conviction: “We need a healthy generation in body and in soul, which can only be born to healthy parents,”²² he wrote.

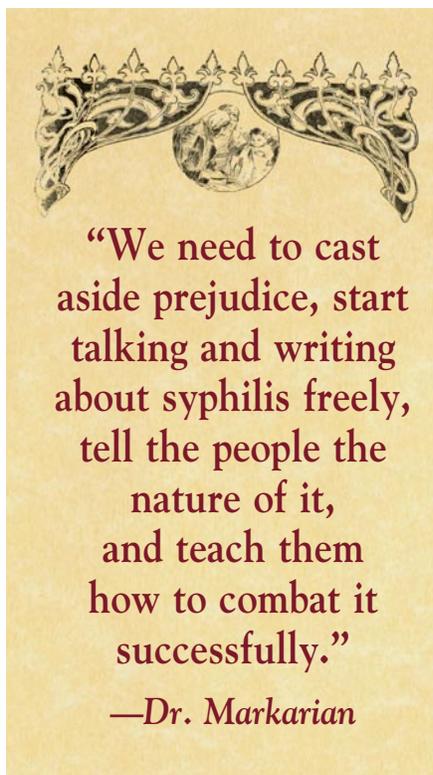
Artsruni used the journal platform to raise the question of a “Marriage Contract” once more. He reminded his readers about the famous Catholicos Edict of 1904 and pointed out that it was not working anymore. He also considered it “incomplete,” because a health certificate was not required of women, it was required of men only, which made it entirely insufficient.

“Khrimian’s great work should be implemented through legislative means. Let the parliament of Armenia develop this law as soon as possible, and the homeland will be grateful for it,”²³ he wrote.

It is not known whether the Armenian parliament managed to discuss the question, and a relevant law was not adopted during the short-lived First Armenian Republic. One thing is certain, however: Soviet Armenia was fighting venereal diseases for several decades after its establishment. □

NOTES

- 1 The term “venereal disease” refers to a group of illnesses that enter the body through either sexual transmission or blood transfusion. The word “venereal” itself refers to activities involving sexual desire or sexual intercourse in general. For more see: Wills, Mildred F., “Our Attitudes toward Venereal Disease Nursing,” *The American Journal of Nursing* 52(4), 1952, p. 477.
- 2 Syphilis is one of the oldest known venereal diseases and can manifest itself in various ways throughout the body, and is capable of changing into different, more complex forms over time.
- 3 Vahan Artsruni (1857–1947) was a well-known Armenian doctor who graduated from the school of medicine at the University of Paris and was a member of Caucasus Doctors Union. He edited and published medical journal “*Aroghjapah tert*” [Healthcare newspaper] in Tbilisi (1903–1905) and “*Aroghjapahik*” [Health-care] in Yerevan (1920).
- 4 Artsruni V. *Vat Tsav* [Bad Pain]. I. Syphilis (translation), II. Chancre Mouth, III. Chlamydia, Tbilisi, Publication Mn. Martiroseants, 1900.
- 5 Armenia in 1870–1917, in *The History of Armenia*, Vol. VI, published by the Academy of Science of ASSR, Yerevan, 1981, p. 959.
- 6 Cooper, Alfred, *Syphilis*, Second edition (Philadelphia: P. Blankiston, Son & Co., 1895), pp. 1–2.
- 7 Artsruni V. *Vat Tsav*, p. 10.
- 8 Artsruni V., *Amusnutiun: Aroghjapahakan Etude* [Marriage. Healthcare Étude], Tbilisi, 1901, p. 96.



- 9 Jean Alfred Fournier (1832–1914) was a professor of dermatology at the University of Paris and director of the internationally renowned venereal hospital at the Hospital of St. Louis. He wrote extensively on the clinical and social aspects of this subject. Fournier emphasized the importance of congenital syphilitic disease and wrote on its social aspects (*Syphilis et Marriage*, 1890).
- 10 Artsruni V., *Amusnutiun*, p. 130.
- 11 Artsruni V., *Amusnutiun*, p. 132–133.

- 12 Artsruni V., *Aghjik (Aroghjapahakan ev Baroyagitakan Etude)* [Girl (Health and Ethics Étude)], Vol. I, (Georgian Literature Company; Tbilisi, 1903).
- 13 *Ibid.*, p. 4.
- 14 *Ibid.*, pp. 11–12.
- 15 *Ibid.*, p. 66.
- 16 Budughian A., *Aroghjapahakan Nver Norati Kanants* [A Health Offering to Young Women], (Printing house Stepantsians, Alexandropol, 1901), p. 72.
- 17 Tilles G., Grossman R., Wallach D., “Marriage: A 19th Century French Method for the Prevention of Syphilis: Reflections on the Control of AIDS,” *International Journal of Dermatology*, Oct. 1993, 32 (10) p. 767.
- 18 *Aroghjapahik journal* [Healthcare], (publisher: Aghbyur-Taraz, Tbilisi, 1910) No. 76, pp. 5–6.
- 19 “Aroghj kyank,” *Joghovrdakan Aroghjapahik Amsatert* [“Healthy life.” Popular Health Monthly], (publisher: N. Yerevantsian, No.1, Baku, Jan. 1917), pp. 26–30.
- 20 Khatisian Al., *The Founding and Development of The Republic of Armenia*, (Hamazgayin: Beirut, 1968), p. 146. Vratsian S., Republic of Armenia, II edition, (Printing house Mush: Beirut, 1958), p. 364.
- 21 *Aroghjapahik* [Healthcare], No. 1, (Yerevan: Feb. 1920), p. 3.
- 22 *Aroghjapahik*, No. 1, p. 4.
- 23 *Ibid.*, No.2, p. 23.

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The **LASTING LEGACY** *of* *the* **SECOND CONGRESS** *of* **WESTERN** **ARMENIANS**

By Jano Boghossian

Resident Podiatric Surgeon, Los Angeles.



Vahagn Kermoyan: Vratzian, S. *Hayastani Hanrapetutian* [Republic of Armenia] 2nd ed., 1958

When I first read about the Second Congress of Western Armenians, held in Yerevan in 1919, I felt pride that two of my ancestors had been key participants. That feeling soon gave way to a need to further explore that historic event.

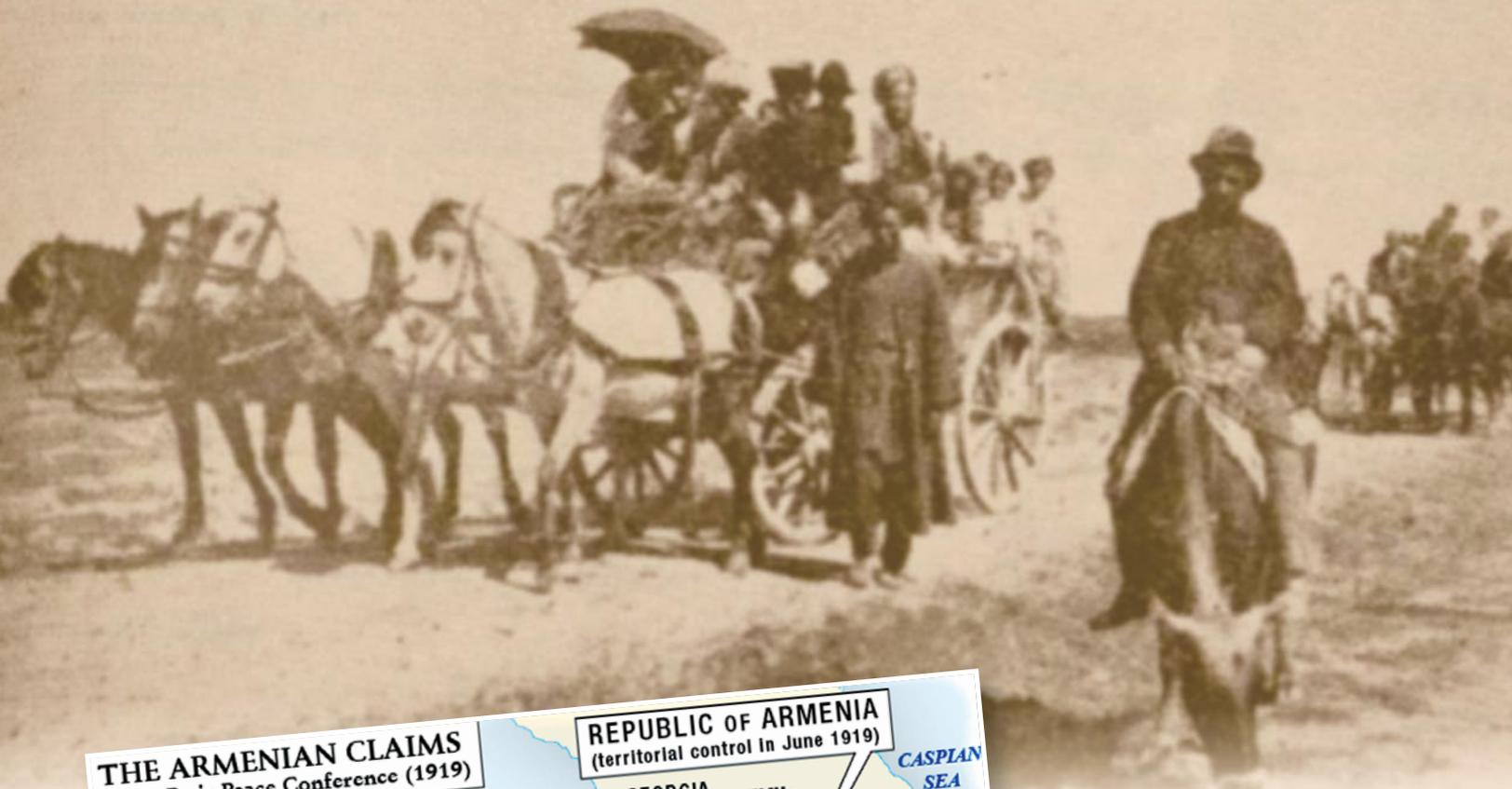
An analysis of the Congress reveals striking parallels between the attitudes of Western Armenians regarding



Arsen Gidour: Kitur (Gidour), A. Palmutian S. D. Hnchakian *Kusaksutian, 1887–1963* [History of the S. D. Hnchakian Party, 1887–962] Vol 1; 1962

the “repugnant Russianism” of the First Republic and its inhabitants—and the attitudes of many Western Armenians in the Armenian Diaspora regarding today’s Armenia, a century later.

For the survivors of genocide, who subsequently fell victim to hunger and disease, the newly independent republic of 1918 seemed neither haven nor home. To make the lessons from that nuanced chapter in Armenian history relevant to our world today—to best move forward—we must first look back.



Top: Refugees Returning Home: Vratzian, Hanrapetutun.

Left: Armenian Claims at the Paris Peace Conference (1919)
<https://www.edmaps.com>
 (Map: edmaps.com)

lands in the Alashkert Plain and Bayazid valley, expressing his desire to instead populate the border area with Russians and Cossaks.²

The First Congress of Western Armenians was convened in Yerevan in May 1917, and initiated the creation of an executive body to secure

Despite the perception of relative liberty in the south Caucasus after the February Revolution in Russia overthrew the Tsar in 1917, the 300,000 Western Armenian refugees who were fleeing genocide could not escape persecution.

From Bayazid, in Russian-held Western Armenia, came complaints that former Romanov officials continued to oppress and disarm the populace while Kurdish violence against Armenians ran rampant.¹ Two years earlier, prior to the Russian occupation of portions of Western Armenia, General Yudenich had informed Count Vorontsov-Dashkov of his intent to prevent the Armenian refugees now in the Caucasus from reclaiming their

the physical existence of the Western Armenians, revive their disrupted economy, rebuild their homeland, and provide a progressive education for their youth. By the end of 1917, 25 primary schools were in operation in the Van area alone to serve the native population that had streamed homeward. Nearly 150,000 natives of Van, Bitlis, Erzerum, and Trebizond vilayets had repatriated.³

After the October Revolution of 1917, Russian forces withdrew from the Caucasus. Taking advantage of the subsequent vacuum, the Turkish armies of General Vehib Pasha succeeded in occupying Erznga (Erzincan), Papert (Bayburt), Garin (Erzerum), Sarikamish, Kars, and Alexandropol (Gyumri) starting in Jan. 1918. The Turkish advance was finally halted at the battle of Sardarabad, deep into Armenian territory, on May 26, 1918. Consequently, the treaties of Brest-Litovsk and Batumi awarded

the Turks nearly 20 percent of the territory of Armenian Republic. Thus unable to harvest crops from the fertile Ararat valley, more than 200,000 among the population of the Armenian Republic perished from hunger and disease in the following months.⁴



Yerevan was merely a provincial town a century ago, yet it formed the nucleus of the infant Armenian republic that emerged after nearly six centuries of foreign rule. Western Armenians would have preferred for that state to re-emerge in the heart of the Armenian Highlands, in Asia Minor. Instead they found themselves refugees in a peripheral province that bore the marks of all things Russian.⁵ Some half a million Western Armenians impatiently awaited the opportunity to return to their homes; to them, the government and capital of liberated Armenia should have been in Garin, Van, or even a major city in Cilicia, but certainly not, as General Antranig put it, “in the capital of an Armenia carved out by the hand of the Turk.”⁶

The political and intellectual leaders of Western Armenians shared such popular misgivings, but they also recognized the potential consequences of lasting internal division.

The Armenian Republic’s government initiated the Second Congress of Western Armenians, which met in Yerevan Feb. 6–13, 1919, to discuss the political goals of the Western Armenians and issues associated with their repatriation. A nine-person elected Executive Body was instructed to implement the decisions of the Congress and to function until the creation of a combined government of United Armenia.⁷

Two of my ancestors, both from Bayazid, were members of that Executive Body: Vahakn Kermoyan, a Lausanne-educated lawyer and writer, was an influential member of the Armenian Revolutionary Federation (ARF);⁸ Arsen Gidour, a graduate of the Kevorkian *Jemaran* (Seminary) in Etchmiadzin, was a member of the Hnchakian party and a veteran of the Battle of Sardarabad.⁹

The Western Armenian leaders placed their aspirations in the hands of the Armenian National Delegation to the Paris Peace Conference, led by Boghos Nubar Pasha, an influential politician and the former chairperson of the Armenian National Assembly of the Ottoman Empire. Although ARF members and sympathizers formed the majority of the Second Congress, they regarded Boghos Nubar as the person best qualified to advance Armenian interests at the Peace Conference.¹⁰

The Congress’s Executive Body communicated its demands to Paris: Armenia’s right to statehood, the liberation of Western Armenia in order to constitute a United Armenia, and punishment for the architects of the systematic massacre of the Armenians.

A new National Delegation was named in April and included the famed ARF revolutionary Karekin Pastermadjian (Armen Garo), respected in both Western and Eastern Armenian circles, with the hope that his history of collaboration with Boghos Nubar would create a more unified front during negotiations.¹¹

On May 28, 1919, in Yerevan, on the anniversary of independence, Prime Minister Alexander Khatisian read the adopted text of

The Act of United Armenia and invited the 12 newly designated Western Armenian deputies to sit alongside members of the Republic’s Parliament. Speaking on behalf of those 12 parliamentarians, Vahakn Kermoyan pledged active Western Armenian participation in the Republic to work toward the goal of a united, independent Armenia.¹² Despite having no jurisdiction beyond the Republic’s borders, Yerevan festively celebrated the declaration of Armenian unification.



Nearly a century later, we again have an independent Republic—despite the Turkish crescent and the Russian sickle. Yet, the unfortunate reality remains that Armenians are dispersed across the globe, and more of us reside outside of our homeland than within it.

Recently, however, many Western Armenians have sought refuge in Armenia to escape war in the Middle East, and some others from the Diaspora have also “repatriated” and are playing a role in the country’s revitalization. The issues prevalent a century ago continue to be discussed among this new generation of Diasporans returning to Armenia.

No Armenian is immune to foreign influence, whether in Armenia or in the Diaspora. To overcome the obstacles of dialect, custom, tribalism, and mistrust, both the government and its citizens must collaborate to foster an environment of inclusivity, encourage and provide incentive for repatriation, and denounce all types of discrimination.

And perhaps such measures might include following the example of the First Republic by having active Western Armenian participation in all strata of government to bridge our artificial divisions. □

NOTES

1. Hovannisian, R.G., *Armenia on the Road to Independence, 1918*; University of California Press, 1967, pp 77–78
2. *Ibid.*, 57–58
3. *Ibid.*, 78–79
4. *Ibid.*, 210–211
5. Hovannisian, R.G., *The Republic of Armenia, Vol. I*; University of California press, 1971, pp 450
6. Vratzian, S., *Hayastani Hanrapetutium* [Republic of Armenia] 2nd ed.; 1958, pp 256
7. Hovannisian, *The Republic of Armenia*, pp 454
8. Tarbassian, H.A., *Erzurum (Garin): Its Armenian History and Traditions*; Garin Compatriotic Union of the United States, 1975, pp 222
9. Kitur (Gidour), A. *Patmutium S. D. Hnchakian Kusaksutian, 1887/1963* [History of the S. D. Hnchakian Party, 1887–1962] Vol 1; Beirut, 1962, pp 480
10. Hovannisian, *The Republic of Armenia*, pp 453
11. *Ibid.*, 458–459
12. Vratzian, *Hanrapetutium*, pp 264



A scene from the massive demonstration at Yerevan's Lenin Square on April 24, 1965
(Photo: Armenian Genocide Memorial-Institute)

The Legacy of the First Republic of Armenia during the Soviet Era: The Tumultuous 1960s

By Vahram Ter-Matevosyan

Assistant Professor, American University of Armenia

The First Republic lasted only 32 months. Its legacy, however, went far beyond its short-lived existence. After it collapsed in Dec. 1920, generations were born and raised, both in Soviet Armenia and in the Diaspora, with the hope that one day Armenian statehood would be resurrected. The Soviet Union (Union of Soviet Socialist Republics, or USSR), however, did not provide fertile ground for preserving the legacy of the First Republic. Heavy-handed Soviet censorship and propaganda portrayed the First Republic and its founders as reactionary,

nationalist, and adventurist. As early as in the 1930s, in the official discourse of the USSR, the First Republic was presented as distant and insignificant history. The Soviet version of the history of the First republic and its turning points were distorted beyond recognition. Until the late 1980s, even the date of collapse of the First republic was noted as Nov. 29, 1920, instead of Dec. 2, when the leaders of the First Republic ceded power to the Bolsheviks.

Yet, despite the official narratives and efforts to ridicule the founders of “the Dashnak republic,” the history of the First Republic faded little on the popular level. In the 1960s

and 1970s, the generation that had endured the calamities of the Genocide and had lived in the First Republic, was still alive. Many of them recalled the 1914–1923 period with great pain and sorrow, but also with great pride, recalling the great victories at Sardarabad, Gharakilisa, and Bash-Abaran.

Until the late 1950s, the Soviet leadership in Moscow was ultra-sensitive toward any manifestation of local nationalism. However, the Khrushchev-era thaw resulted in changes to the flow of social

had to take note of the growing concerns and rising voices of the people and the intellectual class, and convey that information to Moscow. That's not to say, however, that the leadership of Soviet Armenia during that decade—Yakov Zarobyan and Anton Kochinyan, and later Karen Demirchyan—nurtured anti-nationalist tendencies. Despite being part of the Communist system, they had all been raised in families that kept the stories of the 1910s alive. The books and memories published by their family members and friends demon-

strate that they held a deep belief in the rebuilding of the Armenian homeland. In various settings, they shared their visions of a prosperous Armenia that would develop against all odds. With carefully calibrated language and arguments, they appealed to the leadership in Moscow to consider the sentiments and concerns of the Armenian people. Despite their undisguised unease, the Communist leaders in Moscow

“The seeds of Soviet disintegration and ideological polarization were planted in the 1960s, and Armenian dissidents’ roles in that process were anything but secondary.”

and ideological transformation in the USSR, including in Soviet Armenia. Leaders of Soviet Armenia undertook various initiatives that aimed to present the history of 1914–1923 under a new light.

In the late 1950s and 1960s, dissident groups and underground movements were formed in Soviet Armenia. The Armenian Youth Union and the National Unity Party, the only underground opposition party in the territory of the USSR, were the ones most widely known. Their strident criticism of Moscow and of past injustices, their territorial claims from Turkey, along with their demand that Karabagh and Nakhichevan be reunited with Soviet Armenia, reopened wounds that the Communist party leadership had hoped was a distant memory.

Many party functionaries and ideologues in Moscow scoffed at those groups and their demands, arguing that only a very few embraced those “manifestations of petty nationalism” in Armenia. Little did they know that their utter confidence would prove problematic. The seeds of Soviet disintegration and ideological polarization were planted in the 1960s, and Armenian dissidents’ roles in that process were anything but secondary. Those “manifestations” were also behind the April 1965 events in Armenia, when mass rallies occurred in Yerevan on the 50th anniversary of the Armenian Genocide. Some 100,000 Armenians participated in the massive demonstration on April 24, 1965, demanding that April 24 be designated a day of commemoration of the victims of the Armenian Genocide.

Moscow and the Soviet propaganda machine were quick to criticize the unprecedented demonstration by labeling it “secessionist and anti-state nationalism.” Despite Moscow’s reaction, it was an undeniable reality that such ideas were embraced by the masses, in part because fertile ground existed for nurturing such views. People took to the streets because they sensed the change in the air of the Soviet Union.

The unparalleled rally in Yerevan led to changes in the political, cultural, and social landscape of Soviet Armenia. The government

were quick to realize that resorting to violence against the population and silencing dissent en-masse could prove problematic. As a result, a new model of coexistence between Moscow and Soviet Republics was shaped in the 1960s, and all the Soviet republics began to benefit from it.

However, the political protests, rallies, and subsequent revisions came at a price. Smaller-scale persecutions and arrests were part of the reality of the era. Between 1963 and 1988, 34 political trials were held in Armenia, resulting in the sentencing of 105 political prisoners. The events of 1965 and subsequent developments had provided inspiration to many in Armenia, and new popular heroes arose who went on to inspire young people.

Yet another important factor the rise of the Armenian dissident movement and the popular discussion of historical events was the repatriation of tens of thousands of Armenians to Soviet Armenia in the late 1940s. Those newcomers had brought with them new ideas and visions that enriched popular discussion and ideological debates.

The Soviet Armenian leadership was itself inspired by the emergence of patriotic literary works that delved into both the heroic past and the sufferings of the Armenian nation, including the revolutionary period preceding the Genocide. It was during this decade that Khachik Dashtents, Hovhannes Shiraz, Paruyr Sevak, Sero Khanzadyan, Silva Kaputikyan, and many others became household names. Their books and poetry were widely read, distributed, and discussed. Their literary works helped produced a new identity, inculcating hope, determination, and perseverance. They became anchors during a period of nationwide, including leadership-level, soul-searching. Moreover, in 1969, the 100th anniversary of the birth of Hovhannes Tumanyan and Komitas were celebrated in Armenia and contributed to the that reawakening.

Two famous sports victories also contributed to the rise of patriotic sentiment in Soviet Armenia. In 1963, Tigran Petrosyan became world chess champion by defeating Mikhail Botvinnik. In 1966,

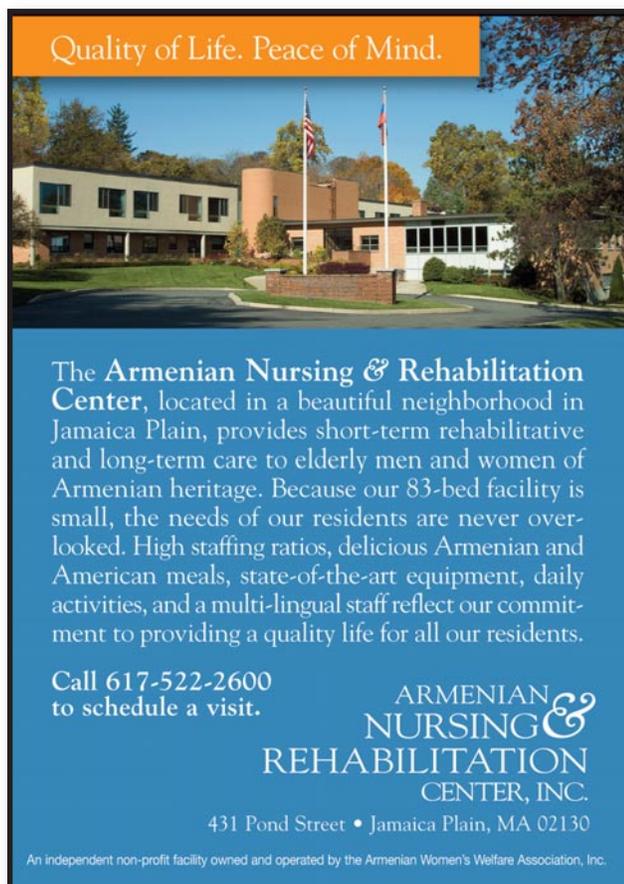
Petrosyan successfully defended the title for another three-year term. His victory became a cause of joy and celebration in Armenia, new-borns were named after him, and he popularized chess in Armenia. The other important event occurred in 1973, when the “Ararat” football (soccer) team of Yerevan became the USSR Champion in the Soviet Union’s Premier League, winning the trophy in Armenia’s newly built Hrazdan stadium.

In the 1960s, there was great interest in questions related to Armenian identity and history. The Civil Registration Agency in charge of registering children’s names began to demonstrate reluctance toward accepting non-Armenian names, encouraging the use of Armenian names instead. Couples started to get married in the church—a quite uncommon occurrence in the preceding decades. The first studies about the Armenian Genocide emerged, containing archival documentation; these were the pioneers of Genocide studies in Armenia. Another manifestation of rising interest in Armenian history, culture, and identity was the number of visitors to museums: In 1960, there had been only 96,000 visits, whereas by 1970 the number of visits had increased to 525,000.

Reluctantly, Soviet authorities also yielded to the power of symbolism, particularly in public spaces. As early as 1959, the construction of the Matenadaran, the repository of Armenian manuscripts, had been completed. The same year, the monument of Sasuntsi Davit, the legendary hero of the Armenian national epic,

was erected in Yerevan, in front of the railway station. In 1962, the massive statue of Stalin was removed from Victory Park in Yerevan, and five years later it was replaced with the equally massive “Mother Armenia,” visible from all corners of Yerevan. After two years of construction, the Genocide memorial was inaugurated in Tsitsernakaberd in 1967. In 1968, after a series of discussions with Moscow, Kochinyan convinced Soviet leaders of the necessity of celebrating the 2750th anniversary of Urartian Erebuni—modern-day Yerevan. The same year, the construction of the Sardarabad memorial began, marking yet another turning point in the decade. After 1.5 years of construction, the Hrazdan football stadium was also completed. Soon, the erection of a monument commemorating the Battle of Avarayr was authorized; the statue of Vardan Mamikonyan, the Armenian general from that fifth-century battle, depicted on his horse and with sword in hand, gives the impression that he is rallying his people and charging at the enemy. Unveiled in 1975, it has become a powerful manifestation of struggle and hope.

The main conclusion that can be drawn from this discussion is that the link between the independent First Republic and the republic of Soviet Armenia remains underexplored. Yet, clearly, despite the dominance of Soviet historiography, the history of the First Republic has left a lasting impact on the people of Soviet Armenia. For many, it has been—and remains—a source of historical pride and inspiration. □



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A VIEW FROM THE BOSPHORUS

Zaruhi Bahri's

Take on the First Republic of Armenia and Its Sovietization

By Lerna Ekmekcioglu, MIT

McMillan-Stewart Associate Professor of History, MIT

Zaruhi Bahri, photographed in 1957

Zaruhi Bahri is one of the many women who need to be written back into Armenian history. Despite her decades-long activism and prolific writing, she is all but invisible in current scholarship. If one of the reasons for her absence in historiography is her sex (Armenian historiography largely remains blind to women's experiences), the other is the long silence on the history of Armenians who stayed in Turkey in the immediate aftermath of the Genocide, the years that Bahri was most active in the Constantinopolitan Armenian community.

After moving to France in the late 1920s, Bahri wrote six historical novels, all of them featuring female protagonists. One novel is specifically about the life of an Armenian woman during and after the Genocide, but the remaining works revolve around Armenian life either in pre-Genocide Constantinople or post-Genocide France.¹

All but one of the works devoted to the history of literature in the Diaspora ignore her existence.²

Accordingly, in this special issue dedicated to the centennial of the First Republic of Armenia, I give the floor to Zaruhi Bahri to tell us how she, from her corner

in Istanbul, observed and interpreted the fate of her kin in Transcaucasia from 1918 to 1921. The selections come from her memoir, *Gyankis Vebe* (The Novel of My Life), which was posthumously published by her family in Beirut in 1995. A more extensive translation will appear in *Feminism in Armenian: An Interpretive Anthology* (edited by Melissa Bilal and Lerna Ekmekcioglu, forthcoming in 2020). Published and unpublished works of hers, as well as interviews with her descendants, will appear in *Feminism in Armenian's* website in digitized form.

Zaruhi Bahri: A Short Biography

Zaruhi Shahbaz Bahri was born Constantinople on May 31, 1880. She began her work in the public space after the 1909 Adana massacres. She taught orphaned girls sewing and needlework. During the 1912–1913 Balkan Wars, she worked in charitable organizations that provided the families of Ottoman Armenian soldiers with food and clothing. She was one of the women who established the Armenian Red Cross of Constantinople in 1913.

Zaruhi lost a brother and sister to the Armenian Genocide. Her sister was deported from Amasya (a city in north-central Turkey, in the Black Sea Region) with her family, after which they all disappeared. Her brother, Parsegh Shahbaz, a member of the Armenian Revolutionary Federation (*Hay Heghapokhagan Tashnagsutiun*), was among the intellectuals arrested by the Ottoman government on the night of April 24, 1915, and later killed.

The Bahri family spent the war years in the Ottoman capital. After the Mudros Armistice of Oct. 1918, the Armenian residents of the city were most active in relief work for survivors who came to the capital from Mesopotamia and other parts of the Middle East. Very soon after the signing of the armistice, Bahri became director of the Shishli branch of the Armenian Red Cross of Constantinople and a member of the Armenian Women's Association (AWA). She also began contributing essays to the

women's journal *Hay Gin* (Armenian Woman). At the Armenian Patriarch's request, she worked as the Armenian representative and director of the Neutral House (*Chezok Doun, Bitarafhane*) where orphans and young women of contested identities were brought in order to determine whether they were Turkish or Armenian. When the Turkish Kemalist forces entered Istanbul and forced the Allied evacuation, Zaruhi Bahri had to flee the city with her family, for she was viewed as an anti-Turkish figure because of her work at the Neutral House (accused of "Armenianizing Turkish children"). The family first escaped to Bucharest and, later, in 1928-1929, moved to Paris.

Together with her husband Hagop Bahri, a prominent lawyer, she had four children and four grandchildren. She died in Paris on May 13, 1958, and was buried in Père Lachaise Cemetery. In 1987, in accordance with her wishes, her children took her ashes to Armenia to bury them on the grounds of Etchmiadzin Cathedral, the Mother Church of the Armenian Apostolic Church.

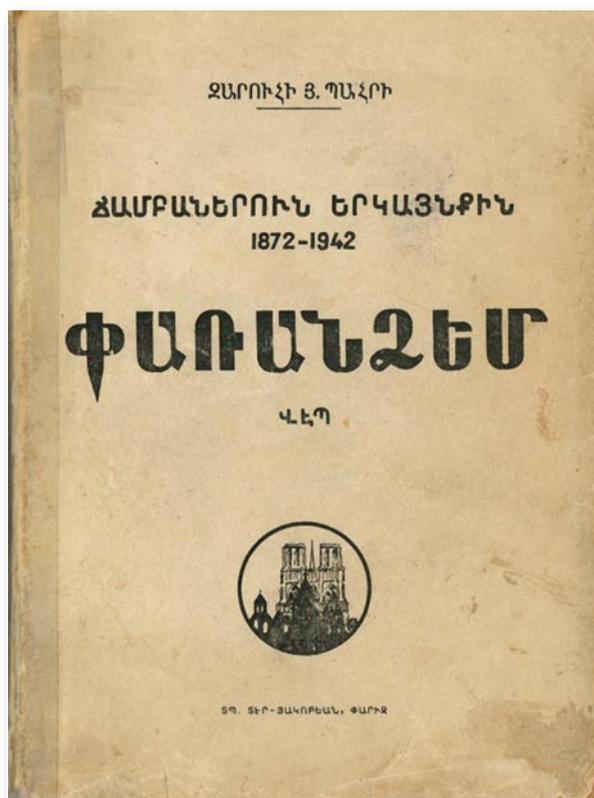
Translations from *Gyankis Vebe* Part I

Zaruhi Bahri and her family, along with many other Armenian intellectuals who were not deported from Istanbul, spent some parts of the war years on Kınalı Ada, one of the Prince Islands near Istanbul, which used to be known as "Hay Gghzi" (Armenian Island), for it was heavily populated by Armenians. In this section of her memoir, Bahri narrates hearing the news of the establishment of the Republic of Armenia in 1918.

21. THE INDEPENDENT REPUBLIC OF ARMENIA (P. 156–158, TRANSLATED BY DEANNA CACHOIAN-SCHANZ)

And so, this historical moment and our generation were destined to witness the establishment of our long dreamt-for country (*hayrenik*). From its very first day, we were aware of the problems that our small, newly formed state would face. But the sheer fact that even our greatest and perhaps only enemy, the Turks, recognized it—albeit under pressure—assured us that we could overcome all obstacles as long as we continued our stubborn work. And, indeed, the Turkish newspapers delivered us the good news. True, that small country wouldn't satisfy our greatest wishes, but we trusted in the benevolence of our *great Allied friends* to satisfy the rest. We were not interested in the specific political and military conditions under which that republic was given to us.

I confess that we were enveloped by a childish, intuitive, and reckless happiness, and we openheartedly surrendered ourselves to the enchantment of that joyous gift. Poor Hrant Asadour was the only one who couldn't ardently savor that long-awaited, long-desired joyous news. The mental illness that had already taken hold, and which in the end would overcome him, filled him with



The cover of Zaruhi Bahri's novel *Parantzem*

a fear that rendered all of our encouraging words and factual arguments utterly futile. He would retire to his bedroom and withdraw behind closed windows and doors not to hear or take part in the ardent enthusiasm of the young people outside, which inundated the rocky paths of the Armenian island.

The enthusiasm in our house knew no limits. The blood of our lost loved ones and of the hundreds of thousands of martyrs was finally emerging victorious from this unequal battle.

A celebration was to be organized in the village hotel.

The Arakelian sisters were going to play, my Noyemi was going to recite Chobanian's "To Armenia," and Mannig Berberian was going to sing "Armenia, Heavenly Land" wrapped in a tricolor flag. I don't know how we knew that the Armenian flag was the red, blue, and orange tricolor. We were still at war and it was very difficult to find colored fabric. We succeeded in finding dye and we sacrificed a bed sheet to prepare a large, beautiful flag for our bright new fatherland (*hayrenik*).

The celebration took place with indescribable enthusiasm. At everyone's request, Shahan Berberian took the floor and fervently praised our fatherland (*hayrenik*).

As I write these lines in one of the distant suburbs of Paris in the autumn of 1952, I recall with great pleasure that one evening not too long ago I had the pleasure of hearing "Armenia, Heavenly Land" sung again, this time by a young Armenian from Marseilles, which brought a flood of different emotions back to my mind's eye. That song was quite dear to my precious mother, who would softly hum it to me when I was a child, when the tyranny of Sultan Hamid had yet to end. My adolescent children sang it until the dawn of the Ottoman Constitution [1908]—until 1914 arrived seeking to destroy my ancient nation in a reign of terror. So it was sung for the emancipation of Armenia, in those perhaps deceptive days, on a rocky island in the Sea of Marmara, expressing the fervor of a patriotic group.

And now it is sung in my émigré's apartment in Boulogne, it is sung by a youth born and raised on foreign soil. I've heard that precious hymn from the lips of four generations, praising glory to our fatherland. "Will a fifth generation that grows up abroad continue to sing it?" I asked sadly.

"Yes, madam, you can rest assured," said the precious youngster, and added, "our generation won't be lost because now we have a homeland, an actual country toward which we fix our eyes and hearts each time we recite the words *Armenia, heavenly land*." And as if to complete the meaning of his words, he began to enthusiastically sing, "Blossom Free, My Homeland." My eyes welling with tears, I kissed that dear ambassador of the new, foreign-born generation.

Returning to the summer of 1918, a few days later we learned about the arrival in Istanbul of Avedis Aharonian, the president of the Delegation of the Republic of Armenia [to the Paris Peace Conference]. Despite still-uncertain times, my husband wanted me to pay him a visit, on behalf of both of us, at the Tokatlian Hotel, where we had a one-to-two-hour meeting, along with Vartouhi Kalantarian, who accompanied me. My husband gave me 50 gold coins that I delivered to Aharonian, who was to take them to Armenia and use them for any immediate needs.

Part II

In this section, Zaruhi Bahri narrates developments that led to the Sovietization of Armenia.

26. "THE FATHERLAND IS IN DANGER" (P. 179–182, TRANSLATED BY MARAL AKTOKMAKYAN)

During that summer of 1920, the news of the realities in Armenia gradually began to grow unclear. The statements of the national assembly slowly ceased to be reassuring. Stormy winds were blowing, casting down our enthusiasm. In a speech to an overflowing audience in the *Petit Champ* theater, A. Khadisian brought the reality before us: In Armenia, there was no food, no clothing, no medicine, no guns . . . and no money. We were looking in vain for a powerful state that would protect this small, suffering republic whose people, desiring emancipation, were unmercifully slaughtered and crucified, while those who survived had given their best to the benefit of those powerful countries.

At the start of autumn, Turkey began to become a threatening force under Mustafa Kemal's resurgent forces and, as always throughout their history, the Armenians became the first victims in those horrific days. The surprising irony is that in the occupied capital of the very same Turkey, our newspapers still enjoyed the freedom to write about Kazim Karabekir's assault [against Armenia] and the dangers threatening our fatherland.

It was then that I thought that it is every Armenian's duty to send at least some financial support to the threatened fatherland. The easiest and most practical way was to donate a military tax to the state in place of our children who did not serve as soldiers in the army. I sent an article entitled "The Fatherland Is in Danger" to [ARF publication] *Azadamard* (Battle for Freedom) or its successor, the newspaper *Jagadamard* (Battle). Along with it, I sent 50 golden coins each for my two children, Krikor and Jirayr, in lieu of their military service. My Krikor was studying in Paris, and my Jirayr, my poor, precious Jirayr, barely 15 years old, desperately wanted to volunteer in the Armenian army . . . But how? Armenia, surrounded by enemies, wasn't even able to breathe . . .

A black curtain was being drawn on our two years of enthusiasm, emotion, and hope . . . The fatherland wasn't in danger: It was on its deathbed . . .



That black curtain would be pulled back on a supposedly gloomy morning in November with Armenia's lustrous Sovietization. The brotherly army coming down from the North told Kazim Karabekir's hordes, "Hold off there!" It was Stalin's immortal voice that ordered from Tiflis that "Armenia must be helped."

The tears of sorrow were replaced with tears of joy. Those who had hesitated to believe in the past now had difficulty in accepting the reality.

For instance, during those days I received a visit from Dr. Torkomian, a great friend of my husband and our family. I had

noticed that he held me in high esteem since the time that a very short article of mine titled “But I Have Still Been Waiting for You,” which I wrote to the memory of my brother, appeared in *Jagadamard*.

Dr. Torkomian visited to talk to me about a particular matter. Perhaps he wished to clear his conscience by getting my assent. He noted that on the same morning he had received a check of ten thousand francs from Mrs. Aharonian in Paris, to be delivered to the army of Armenia, and he added sadly that he was obliged to send back the money right away as we did not have an army any longer and the “Reds” occupied Armenia a day or two ago. I protested severely. For us, for our family, Armenia, whether red, blue, or yellow, was ours and so was its army. And he made a mistake in having sent back the money because that money could have been used to satisfy a need. It is true that a short while after this we would be thrilled to hear that the Soviet government from Moscow provided a large amount of material aid to our small Sovietized republic, while the Allied governments had denied *Free Armenia* any pounds sterling or dollars. This, despite Fridtjof Nansen’s request with tearful eyes before the League of Nations Assembly in Geneva, where he said, among other things, “You will save a people, an entire nation for the yearly cost allocated toward just a single battleship of the great nation that is England.”⁴ And the Assembly remained deaf to the supplicant call of that great philanthropist.

Moscow became an unconditional provider for Armenians. And the Armenian people, supported financially and protected against the external enemy, raised up their country with energetic hard work and creative mind to amazing heights in 30 years, to most people’s surprise. It is painful, and even more than painful, that some of us still insist on going against the course of history.



Hereafter we had gradually been receiving news of Kemalist troops’ victories over various lands in Asia Minor. How pleasant it was to think that the direction of Kazim Karabekir’s soldiers had been directed westward, where this time they unfortunately faced the Greeks who had landed there after the Armistice of Mudros. The Allies were still in Istanbul, where one would see twice a week the parade of Scottish soldiers with picturesque uniforms, feathered caps, and rustic band. The bandmaster on the front would swing his astonishing decorative instrument and give beats for his musicians to play. To safeguard against any maritime or ground attack, Mustafa Kemal had made Ankara the capital city, that Turkish city in the center of Asia Minor, where even its Armenian population was Turkophone.

I don’t wish to talk about politics, thinking that, without evidence, my views might be subjective and might not correspond to the truth.

We were trying to continue to do our work. The Armenian Patriarchate, National Caretaker Service (*Azkayin Khnamadartutun*), Armenian Red Cross, Neutral House (*Chezok Doun*), each one of them did their part conscientiously and faithfully.

Part III

In this section Zaruhi Bahri narrates the ARF’s rebellion against the Bolsheviks in Armenia that began on Feb. 18, 1921 and was suppressed on April 2, 1921. Coming from an ARF family, Bahri is critical of the uprising and supports the Bolsheviks because she sees the Soviets as the only force that will protect Armenia from Turkish attacks.

27. ARMENIAN WOMEN’S ASSOCIATION (P. 192–193, P.194-197, TRANSLATED BY MARAL AKTOKMAKYAN)

[...]

In the summer of 1921, the reality of Soviet Armenia was becoming increasingly more reassuring. Government representatives were coming to Istanbul to report on that reality and forge connections with most of the Armenian communities abroad and inspire faltering minds with strength and faith.

I am happy and proud that as much as our home, the Shabbaz-Bahri family, had been among those that sacrificed much to the cause of Armenianness—had lost its members and had been ground down—it also knew equally well how to appreciate and deeply experience the joy of the liberated fatherland, no matter that it constituted only a fragment of the (territorial) rights that we had been claiming. Our home was one of the first to receive the leaders of Soviet Armenia.

[...]

In the fall of 1921, I left with Jirair for Paris via Italy, by boat up to Naples, at which time I met and talked with B. Boissière, the French scientist I wrote about in the section on the Neutral Home (*Chezok Doun*), then to Rome, Venice/San Lazzaro, Turin, and through the Alps on to Paris.

Having read Ruskin’s works and D’Annunzio’s *Le Feu*, I set off, ready to meet the aesthetical wonders awaiting me in Italy. Communing with the Old World and the works of Renaissance masters, my soul was enlivened with boundless satisfaction. On the other hand, I pitied our people, the Armenian nation, which had its own multifaceted riches, but whose similar aesthetic works had been the target of barbaric Asiatic invasions and destroyed. But I remained hopeful, only because I truly believed in the eternal soul of my race, like a rising phoenix. I believed that under the watchful supervision of Moscow, and without internal dissent, the fatherland and its people would find their path upward, toward luminous horizons.

Before having any rest after that unforgettable journey, a great national-political disappointment was in store for us. That was the February Uprising. I know that there were people, many people, who wanted and still want to give a share of responsibility to the Armenian Revolutionary Federation (ARF) for the Turkish policy of the extermination of Armenians in the 1915–18 period. They claim that ARF should have been more cautious, and could have taken a prudent step to, if not forestall, at least to mitigate the ferocity of the horrible crime. I do not think they should have the right to criticize men who *consciously* absolved themselves of their misdeeds by sacrificing their lives. Making mistakes is a human trait. Insisting on mistakes is a crime.

Mr. Saghatelian, a member of the Duma of Tsarist Russia, would tell my husband years ago in Istanbul: “Our mistake was to believe

that we could deceive imperial Turkey and defeat her by relying on Europe. We did not realize that politics never entails humanitarianism, we never thought that every leader is *obligated* to look after the interest of his own country and people. We failed to see that Turkey was founded on a 500-600-year tradition of military discipline, that its leaders had a mentality of ruling, whereas our revolutionaries are the children of a nation that has degenerated (*aylaserads*) under centuries-long enslavement. Thereby, though committed, they are unable to compete with their adversary.”

Based on this, and judging from the ARF leaders I had known in the past and as well as the conduct of my brother Parsegh, I did not want to believe that Armenians, those committed ones who are dubbed as patriots in Armenia, after enduring all the disappointment that our two Delegations (to the Paris Peace Conference), Patriarch Zaven (Der Yeghiayan), Fridtjof Nansen and our friends suffered as they defended our case in the conferences and the League of Nations Assembly,⁵ would betray recently established Soviet Armenia, which was going to survive thanks to the new regime that shook the world.

In Paris I had, at times, the opportunity to see Avedis Aharonian, whom I had met in Istanbul. During those meetings, I shared with him my views [about the political situation]. He would not oppose what I was saying. But I have the deep belief that his illness, which caused occasional brain congestion, was the main reason why, during a banquet, in response to a question, he felt obliged to make a statement in favor of the anti-Armenia policy of his political party. I was so convinced by his patriotism, I thought he must return to Soviet Armenia at the first occasion and continue his activism and literary career there (just as Avedik Isahagian would do in the following years). I tried to make his life a little easier. I introduced him

to my cousin, Vahan Khorasanjian, inviting them and Mrs. Aharonian to a tea party in Neuilly, Dr. Karakoch’s residence. That first encounter was followed by a dinner that Khorasanjian hosted in Hotel d’Iena. After that, Khorasanjian became friends with him in the broadest sense of the word, and remained friends during Aharonian’s long period of illness.

Based in particular on what I had told him, Khorasanjian respected Aharonian as a poet, a man of letters, a great patriot, the president of the first government, and future ally of the newly established Soviet administration. As proof of his great sympathy for Soviet Armenia, he [Khorasanjian] donated a large and most valuable Aivazovsky seascape to the museum in Yerevan.

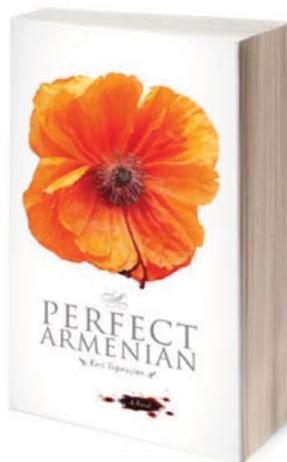
The February Uprising ended, with the result being 18,000 casualties from among this unfortunate people who had already been bled to death. Fortunately, though, the uprising ended with the victory of the Soviet regime. Who among us could imagine, without fearful uneasiness, about a possible scenario where the ARF laid claim to the conditions on the ground? Turkish hordes were on the border, ready to smash, destroy, ruin everything, to the very last . . .

As I write these lines, my entire being shivers from the horrors of new perils. I am terrified by the Americans’ assistance to improve the Turkish army and economy.⁶ Trained under the supervision of American officers and armed with the latest weapons, Turkish soldiers are a great threat to the other side of the Arax river.

But why not take heart by the sole remaining hope, with our poetess Silva Kaputikyan’s hope that “henceforth the road to Yerevan goes through Russia”? □

NOTES

- 1 Her genocide novel is *Parantsem: Jampanerun Yergaynkın* (Paris: Der Hagopian, 1946). Others: *Dakre: Vospori Aperun Vra 1875–1877* (Paris: Der Hagopian, 1941); *Dayyan Kevork Bey gam Badriarkarani Poghotsin Pnagichnere: Vospori Aperun Vra 1895–1898* (Paris: Le Solei, 1952); *Muygerun Dag* (Beirut: Madensashar “Ayk,” 1956); *Louissette ou Osmose* (serialized in *Aysor*: 1952); *Ambrob* (serialized in *Azad Khosk*, Paris: 1940). Bahri also edited and wrote the introduction of the book that her son Gerard Bahri wrote, *Vahan Maleziani Gyankn u Kordse: Hushamadyan Ir Utsunamyagin Artiv (1871–1951)* (Paris: Le Solei, 1951).
- 2 Bahri does not appear in the Soviet Armenian Encyclopedia or in the Armenian Abridged Encyclopedia. Notwithstanding a couple of factual mistakes, Krikor Beledian discusses Bahri’s works in his *Fifty Years of Armenian Literature in France* (California State University, Fresno, DATE, edited by Barlow Der Mugrdchian, translated by Christopher Atamian), p. 393–395. Beledian does not see talent in Bahri’s works, finishing her section with “The author, simply stated, doesn’t seem to possess the talent to achieve her ambitions.” (p. 395). Beledian does not shy away from noting, however, that other critics during the time of Bahri’s novels’ publication found her work “the cornerstone of the new Armenian novel, the best example of the genre,” as stated by Yenovk Armen in *Loossaghpiur*, March 1953, no 7, p. 180, as quoted in Beledian fn 23 on page 395.
- 3 Zaruhi Bahri’s note: I don’t have a copy, as it was destroyed like all my other papers, in Istanbul. It must of course be in the [newspaper’s] archives (author’s note).
- 4 Lerna Ekmekcioglu (L.E.) Note: Zaruhi Bahri uses the word “*zrahavor*” (in Turkish, *zırhlı*) which means “armored.” While in time it came to mean “soldier,” during the time of Bahri’s writing it usually referred to ships with extensive armor. I thank my friend Ulys for alerting me to this nuance as well as his careful reading of and comments on this whole text.
- 5 Here Bahri says “*azkayin zhoghov*,” meaning “national assembly,” but she must have meant “*azkerou zhoghov*,” meaning “assembly of nations”—i.e., League of Nations Assembly.
- 6 Bahri refers to the Marshall Plan here.



When Armenian drug smuggler, Tavid Kaloustian, fakes his own death and escapes, it is the first in a series of dangerous events that transform him into the champion of his people, even as he deals in the dark, deadly world of the opium trade.

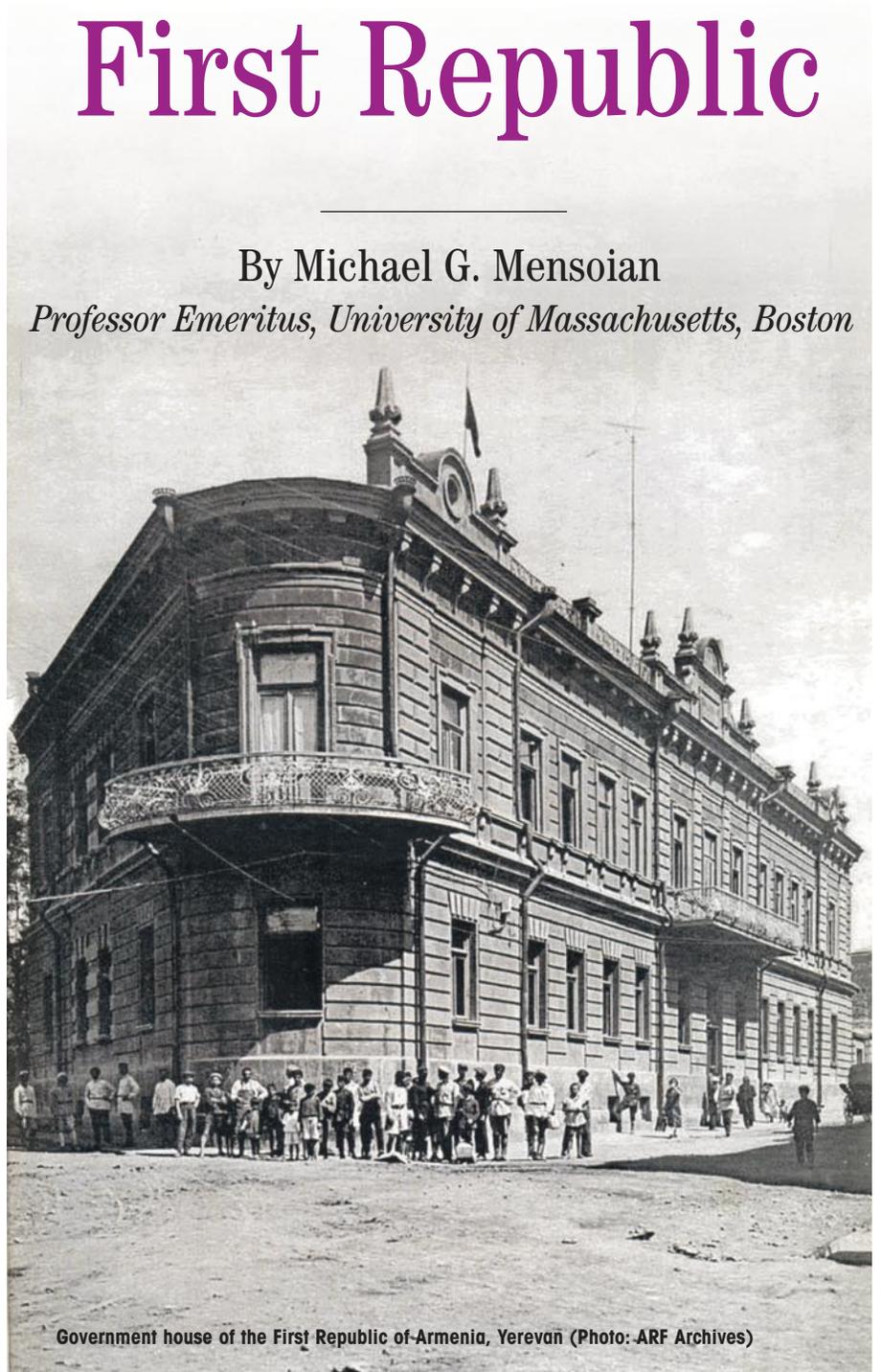
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The ARF Response to the Demise of the First Republic

By Michael G. Mensoian

Professor Emeritus, University of Massachusetts, Boston

In May 1918, the Armenian Republic was established in the harshest socioeconomic and political environment imaginable. Accordingly, the founding of the First Republic was an improbable achievement. From its inception, the new republic—the first independent Armenian state in nearly 600 years—was beset with internal and external problems that would have confounded even the most mature governments. The lack of basic resources, food, medicine, and clothing, coupled with an inadequate infrastructure, exacerbated the problems facing the government as it sought to meet the needs of its people, many of whom were refugees who had fled their ancestral homes in the Western Armenian provinces.



Government house of the First Republic of Armenia, Yerevan (Photo: ARF Archives)

The international scene proved no better. The young republic was essentially ignored by the victorious Western governments. In a world of *realpolitik*, the fledgling Armenian state was not important. The situation in Asia Minor and the south Caucasus was chaotic. Turkish ultranationalists not only challenged the legitimate government seated in Constantinople but also the allied proposal (Treaty of Sèvres) for the parti-

of our people to overcome adversity. That spirit—wrapped, as it were, in tenacity and faith—has been responsible for the survival of our nation against adversaries and international interests that have continually encroached on our historic homeland.

When the abrupt, but not unexpected, end of the First Republic came amid its occupation by the Russian army, not all Armenians viewed that event with trepidation.

may have taken them. The ARF leadership was confronted with a dramatically new reality, banned as it was from the USSR and its presence no longer viable in the Anatolian provinces of the former Ottoman Empire, the historic home of Armenians for millennia.

That rather rapid change in fortune would have dismayed lesser men and women. However, the ARF leadership,

the spirit and the optimism of the ARF proved to be



from environments they knew well, and had been tossed

tioning of the Ottoman Empire. In the Caucasus, the young Armenian government had to contend with the Bolsheviks, who had recently seized control in Russia.

Considering such formidable obstacles—the lack of available resources, the absence of meaningful international support, and Armenia’s isolation resulting from its landlocked state—it wasn’t merely the founding of the First Republic that was improbable. Its continued independence proved to be equally so. Notwithstanding its brief existence, however, the First Republic is testament to the efforts of the Armenian Revolutionary Federation (ARF) to establish a free and independent Armenia. To have succeeded under the conditions of those times speaks to the indomitable spirit

Admirers of the Bolsheviks were pleased. Others firmly believed that being part of the Soviet system would provide Armenians with the security and respite they needed—especially, as it seemed, with an unrepentant and resurgent Turkey as a neighbor. Yet, there were also those who held that the end of the First Republic was an irreconcilable loss, and that there could be no justification that would allow the ARF to accommodate the existence of a Sovietized Armenia.

With the demise of the First Republic, most Armenians were living either in the recently created Soviet-Armenian republic or in others that together formed the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics. The remaining Armenians, mostly survivors of the genocide, were scattered wherever chance

imbued with the zeal and determination common to revolutionaries, did not waiver. How it chose to respond not only defined the ARF agenda during the subsequent 70 years that Armenia remained a Soviet republic but also solidified its viability as a political party. That response would transform the ARF from an essentially regional political party to one whose organization and operation became international in scope. At the same time, the creation of a free and independent Armenia remained the ARF’s principal objective.

Although ARF leaders had been active on the world stage representing the interests of the Armenian nation in the period up to the demise of the First Republic, the ARF was not an international political

party. Its field of operation was Asia Minor and the south Caucasus, with outliers in Western Europe and Iran. With the establishment of a new Turkey under Ataturk and the Bolsheviks in control of Russia, the ARF was compelled to shift its organizational and operational activities to a much wider geographic area. Iran already had a sizeable Armenian community, as did Aleppo in Syria, and later Lebanon, where

independence during the dying days of the Soviet Union, in 1991, it was the tricolor and “Mer Hairenik,” with some changes in the lyrics, that were adopted by the newly independent republic.) While this “chain of command” was being implemented, the Diaspora was expanding outward, like a ripple in a quiet pond, from the Middle East to Western Europe, the United States and Canada, South America, and finally to

The delegates of the 26th Convention of the ARF of America in front of the Hairenik Headquarters in Boston (Photo: ARF Archives)

inspirational to these Armenians who had been torn



like survivors of a shipwreck on some foreign shore.

many of the survivors of the genocide settled. It was in Beirut that the ARF eventually established its center of operations.

Historically, the ARF was essentially a national liberation movement committed to establishing a free and independent Armenia. The new reality did not change that goal. There was never any acknowledgment that a Soviet Armenian republic was or should be permanent. To reinforce that belief, the symbols of the free and independent First Republic—the tricolor flag and the “Mer Hairenik” national anthem—were never abandoned. They continued to evoke pride and hope among those survivors who shared the belief that Armenia would be free and independent once more. (It should be noted here that when Soviet Armenia declared its

Australia. At the same time, the Diasporan population was also increasing as families were formed and new generations were added. In 1923, there were some 300,000 Armenians in the Diaspora. Today, that number has grown to at least six million. (However, it should be noted that a relatively small Armenian Diaspora had existed for centuries prior to 1915, and some of the increase in the Diasporan population after 1991 is attributable to the out-migration from Armenia and other former republics of the Soviet Union.)

With the ARF’s now highly nationalistic agenda, the spirit and the optimism of the ARF proved to be inspirational to these Armenians who had been torn from environments they knew well, and had been

tossed like survivors of a shipwreck on some foreign shore. Many of the survivors held on to the belief that they would, in time, return to their homeland. Traumatized by the savagery that had been unleashed upon them, many found it difficult, if not impossible, to understand why such a catastrophe had befallen them.

The ARF leadership recognized, early on, the potential problems of acculturation and assimilation associated with the forced dispersion of genocide survivors to new and often remarkably alien cultural environments. The response to that anticipated problem was especially relevant for those generations born in the Diaspora whose principal ties to their heritage consisted merely of one or both parents. Many, if not

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most, of those born in the Diaspora would be educated in non-Armenian schools, hastening the process of acculturation and assimilation; and when those Diasporan generations married, the cultural attrition would tend to accelerate in the case of their children.

Aware of that likely attrition among the Diasporan generations, the ARF sponsored various organizations that would provide relevant opportunities not only to learn about heritage but also to enrich the lives of individuals as they engaged in diverse activities, such as athletics, scouting, and social activities. The overriding objective was instilling knowledge

by Raphael Lemkin and its adoption by the United Nations General Assembly in 1948 as a crime punishable under international law gave hope to the Armenian people. The emotional scars that the survivors of the Armenian Genocide carried for so many years were still raw, unable to heal.

Given its network of regional and local committees operating throughout the Diaspora, the ARF was the only political organization capable of confronting Turkish leaders in the world arena. For Armenians and the ARF in particular, Genocide recognition became a political but also moral

was not the case. By the time Soviet Armenia declared its independence in 1991, the ARF had evolved from a localized liberation movement into the largest and most influential political party in the Diaspora.

In the interim 70 years during which Armenia had no independent voice, the ARF was an effective proponent for Armenian issues, for a free and independent Armenia, and for the development of Armenian-centric communities. Its work with the youth was exemplary. In addition to the process of aiding the youth to become practitioners of their culture and to

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of heritage and the creation of active members of the Armenian community.

Three organizations organized to meet those objectives were the Homenetmen athletic and scouting organization, the Hamazkayin Cultural and Educational Society, and the Armenian Youth Federation (AYF-YOARF). Homenetmen was formed in Constantinople, in 1918, and re-established in 1924 with a chapter in Beirut, Lebanon. In 1933, the AYF, the youth organization of the ARF, was formed in the United States. The Hamazkayin Cultural Organization was organized in 1928 in Cairo, Egypt, to cater to the educational and cultural interests of the developing communities.

Moreover, founded in 1910 in New York, the Armenian Relief Society (ARS) operated under the umbrella of the ARF. The ARS is not only the oldest but also the largest active Armenian Woman's organization. Its antecedents had begun years earlier, when women volunteers raised funds to aid Armenian victims of the lawlessness common in the interior provinces of the Ottoman Empire. Since its founding, the ARS has served Armenians in need and provided financial assistance in response to international disasters.

The end of World War II exposed the mass killing carried out by Nazi Germany of the Jewish people and other ethnic groups. The coining of the term "genocide"

imperative; the efforts of the ARF assuaged somewhat the burden of hopelessness and victimization that the nation carried.

As part of that effort demanding Turkey's recognition of its guilt, the ARF worked assiduously to influence foreign governments to recognize the genocide carried out by the Ottoman Turkish government against its Armenian citizens from 1915 to 1923. As a result of those sustained, coordinated efforts by the ARF and its affiliated organizations, Uruguay in 1965 became the first government to recognize the Armenian Genocide.

Concomitantly, the ARF's international presence allowed it to successfully counter propaganda by the Turkish government and Turkish-paid lobbyists and sponsored organizations to deny the Genocide.

In the 100 years since the founding of the First Republic, the ARF has undergone a metamorphosis that no one could have envisioned when the First Republic came to an end. The joy and the exhilaration spawned by its founding was too soon taken away. However, in this instance, as often happens, with the passing of time the unintended consequence of the event became more significant than the event itself.

The "consequence" flowing from the demise of the First Republic was the new and dramatically different reality it created. With lesser leaders, the ARF could easily have taken a different path or tack, but such

be appreciative of their heritage, ARF-led programs would develop the youth's innate abilities by providing older as well as peer mentors and role models, internships, opportunities to serve the community, and a host of other opportunities and experiences associated with being a member of an organization. It would be those members who carried on the work of the ARF decades into the future. And, today, the ARF is a bona fide political party in Armenia, with its headquarters relocated to Yerevan. It has one foot in the Homeland and the other foot in the Diaspora.

One may wonder how the ARF would have developed had the First Republic survived. There can be no definitive answer, but this writer firmly believes that there would have been little or no interest for the ARF to expand beyond the borders of the First Republic. Confined there, the ARF would not have become the largest and most influential political organization in the Diaspora.

Today, its value to Armenia cannot be ignored. While the Armenian government is constrained in its relations with other governments by protocol, the ARF is not and can more freely express a position with respect to issues affecting Armenia (and Artsakh).

Today the ARF is well positioned to continue to play an important role in the life of *Mayr Hayastan*. □



Congratulations to the Armenian Nation on the 100th Anniversary of the Founding of the First Republic of Armenia

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