

The First Republic of Armenia
(1918-1920)
on its Centenary:
Politics, Gender, and Diplomacy

Edited by

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The Subversive Activities of Armenian Bolsheviks: A Critical Factor in Yerevan-Moscow Negotiations (1918-1920)¹

Rubina Peroomian

Conscious of the fact that within the geopolitical situation after the all-Russian Revolution of March 8 (February 22), 1917, the fate of the Armenian people and the Armenian Cause was contingent upon the new reality in Russia, the Armenian Revolutionary Federation (ARF, Dashnakts'ut'iwn) initiated direct talks with the Provisional Government in Petersburg especially when it was quite evident that Ozakom, the governing body of the Caucasus, was unable and unwilling to work around Armenian interests.² Talks were carried out directly and through personal contacts by the Russian Armenian ARF leaders, Liparit Nazarians and Dr. Hakob Zavriev (Zavarian).³ In these negotiations with the head of the government, Prince Georgy Lvov and Alexander Kerensky, replacing him shortly, important inroads were made.⁴ The Bolshevik Revolution,

¹ This short essay is primarily based on a previously published study by this author, *Hayastaně H.H.D.-Bolshevik haraberut'iwnneri volortum, 1917-1921* [Armenia in the sphere of ARF-Bolshevik relations, 1917-1921] (Yerevan: Yerevani Hamalsarani Hratarakch'ut'iwn, 1997). But here, of course, recent findings, archival studies, and publications are used to reinforce the line of reasoning.

² Mikayel Papajanian, the only Armenian member of the Ozakom, appointed by the Provisional Government (March 22/9, 1917), had little knowledge of Armenian issues, while the Georgian and Tatar members worked to secure the best arrangement for their people.

³ For details of negotiations in Petersburg and Moscow, see Liparit Nazarians, *Hay heghap'okhakan dashnakts'ut'ean ew khorhrdayin ishkhanut'ean mijew hamadzaynut'ean p'ordzer* [Attempts at agreement between the Armenian Revolutionary Federation and the Soviet government], in *Drōshak*, no. 8-9 (1928). Henceforth cited as Nazarians, *Hay heghap'okhakan Dashnakts'ut'ean*.

⁴ The Provisional Government agreed to appoint a special commissariat for Western Armenia (April 26/May 9, 1917), detached from the Ozakom, with Zavriev as the vice-commissar taking charge of the Western Armenian affairs

November 7 (October 25), and the fall of the Provisional Government put a stop to these negotiations. In the next phase of relationship, that with the Bolshevik government (*Sovnarkom*), except for informal meetings between Nazarians and Leon Trotsky,⁵ contact between the ARF and the Bolshevik government was indirect and depended a great deal upon the goodwill of such Armenian Bolsheviks who were engaged in joint projects⁶ with the ARF and willing to play the role of mediators. Needless to say, most of their efforts were challenged and counteracted by the anti-ARF campaign of the Armenian Bolsheviks of the Caucasus and the

right away. Garo Sassuni attests to the great hope and enthusiasm of ARF activists engaged in rebuilding Armenian life in the Russian-occupied territories of Western Armenia and organizing the return of the Armenian refugees. See Garo Sassuni, *Tachkahayastaně Rusakan tirapetut'ean tak 1914-1918* [Turkish Armenia under Russian rule, 1914-1918] (Boston: "Hairenik" Press, 1927). As to the Caucasian affairs, there were prospects of creating ethnic boundaries with Georgian, Armenian, and Tatar concentrations, the realization of which was foiled because of an unsolvable dispute among the three. Simon Vratsian maintains that in this dispute there was a sense of agreement and cooperation between the Georgians and the Tatars, a phenomenon that lasted through the entire history of the three independent republics. See, Simon Vratsian, *Hayastani hanrapetut'iwn* [The Republic of Armenia], (Tehran: 3rd printing, "Alik", 1992), 23. Henceforth cited as Vratsian, *Hayastani hanrapetut'iwn*.

⁵ Liparit Nazarians attests that Leon Trotsky, who had been a proponent of continuing the war, at least on the Caucasian front, considered the treaty of Brest-Litovsk (March 3, 1918) to be a misfortune for the Armenian people and was glad he did not have to sign it himself, for Georgy Chicherin had replaced him as People's Commissar for Foreign Affairs. See Nazarians, *Hay heghap'okhakan dashnaksut'ut'ean*, 232. See also, Arshak [Jamalian] [Moscow] to Avetik [Sahakian], March 28, 1918, Armenian National Archive, Yerevan, fund 222, list 1, doc. 130. Henceforth cited as ANA.

⁶ One such project stipulated the creation of an independent Western Armenia with boundaries defined by Avetik Shahkhatuni, approved by the 1916 ARF Congress, and submitted to the Provisional Government (see Vratsian, *Hayastani hanrapetut'iwn*, 22). It also addressed the idea of an Armenian canton in the Caucasus. Another joint project involved the preparation of a document substantiating the Armenian demands to be submitted by Vahan Terian in the Brest-Litovsk peace talks which began in December 1917. Of course, Vahan Terian, who participated in the peace talks as an adviser for Armenian Affairs, was not given a chance to speak. Lenin had his agenda and Armenian interests were the last thing on his mind and the first to be sacrificed.

Commissariat for Armenian Affairs.⁷ The result was, thus, negligible, especially due to the fact that the Bolshevik government, or Lenin for that matter, engaged in quelling the internal tumult, withdrawing from the war at any price (by signing the ruinous treaty of Brest-Litovsk), and bringing Russian soldiers home, had temporarily pulled out of the Caucasus where the main players were the three political parties, the Social Democrat-Mensheviks, the Musavat, and the ARF.

A New Phase in the Relationship

After the Armenian declaration of independence on May 28, 1918, the breach between the ARF and the Armenian Bolsheviks grew wider. The Dashnaks'ut'iwn, being the key player in the formation of a free and independent Armenia and the Republic's administrative body, came under heavy criticism from the Armenian Bolsheviks for whom the idea of an independent state was preposterous. Stepan Shahumian, vehemently criticized the separation of Transcaucasia from Russia and the formation of an independent Republic and labeled its leadership as "a reactionist body of petit-bourgeois."⁸ In a letter to Lenin, dated June 23, 1918, he wrote, "Our international situation in the Caucasus is terrible indeed: independent Georgia, independent Azerbaijan, as though independent Armenia."⁹ As to the Commissariat of Armenian Affairs, an article in the June 30th issue of *Komunist*, the Commissariat's organ in Moscow, titled "Independent Armenia," called the newly established independent Armenia "the realization of traitor dashnaks' centuries-old dream" and the free Armenia as "a grave that the Armenian large and petit bourgeoisie is preparing for the Armenian workers."¹⁰

⁷ The Commissariat for Armenian Affairs, a branch of the Commissariat of Nationalities headed by Stalin, made it a point to thwart every move by the ARF toward rapprochement with Moscow leaders. They even managed to convince Lenin that the ARF had adopted a British orientation in the Caucasus and that cooperation with them was futile. See, Nazarians, *Hay heghap'okhakan dashnaks'ut'e an*, 232-233.

⁸ Stepan Shahumyan, *Erker* [Works] (Yerevan: Haypethrat, 1958), 3:66-70.

⁹ *Ibid.*, 324.

¹⁰ See A. N. Mnatsakanyan, ed., *Hoktemberyan sots'ialistakan mets revolyuts'ian yew sovetakan ishkhanut'yan haght'anaké Hayastanum: P'astat'ght'eri yew nyut'eri zhoghovatsu* [The great socialist revolution of October and the victory of Soviet rule over Armenia: A collection of documents and material] (Haykakan SSR GA Hratarakch'ut'yun, 1960), doc. no. 152, 234-235. Henceforth cited as

The ARF-Bolshevik, now in a larger context of Yerevan-Moscow, relationship entered a new phase. From day one after independence, Hamo Ohanjanian in Berlin and Hakob Zavriev and Artashes Chilingarian (Ruben Darbinian) in Moscow had tried in vain to persuade the Bolshevik government to recognize Armenian independence. The last attempt at formal negotiation, as Liparit Nazarians recorded, was foiled because Poghos Makintsiyan convinced the People's Commissariat of Nationalities to sabotage the meeting and hold the Dashnaks 'ut' iwn responsible for the adverse events in Baku.¹¹ In fact, as a reaction to these events leading to the fall of the Bolshevik regime, some Bolshevik activists demanded the arrest of Mensheviks, Social-Revolutionaries, and Dashnaks in Moscow. However, as Nazarians attests, ironically, "only the Commissariat of Armenian Affairs heeded this demand and had the Dashnaks 'akan leaders arrested."¹² The arrests were launched on August 27, 1918, the day of the arranged meeting between Nazarians, Zavriev, and Chilingarian with the Bolshevik representatives, Lev Kamenev (chairman of the Central Executive Committee of the All Russian Congress of Soviets), Varlam Avanesov (head of the Commissariat of Armenian Affairs), and Sahak Ter-Gabrielian. The latter had mediated with Lenin to authorize the talk between the two parties. The Bolshevik representatives failed to show up to the meeting that day. Nazarians and Zavriev along with some other ARF leaders were arrested and imprisoned and subsequently held hostage under the pretense of retaliation for the murder of Stepan Shahumian and the rest of the 26 Commissars. The prisoners were released in March 1919 but denied permission to leave Moscow. It was only in the spring of 1920 that Nazarians managed to get away. Zavriev, having contracted typhoid in prison, died shortly after his release.

It is significant that because of the extreme anti-ARF activities in the Commissariat of Armenian Affairs, Vahan Terian, the famous Armenian poet and Deputy Chair of the Commissariat, had resigned from his position. To him, opportunist elements like Gurgen Haykuni had infiltrated the Commissariat.

Mnatsakanyan, *Hoktemberyan*. Dashnak is a derogatory word used in Bolshevik speech and writings for the Dashnaks 'ut' iwn Party and its members.

¹¹ The anti-ARF or generally speaking the anti-Armenian independence campaign by the Commissariat of Armenian Affairs grew more intense after the fall of Baku Commune and Stepan Shahumian's murder. See Richard G. Hovannisian, *The Republic of Armenia*, vol. I, 1918-1919, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1971), 395-396. Henceforth cited as Hovannisian, *The Republic of Armenia*, vol. I.

¹² Nazarians, *Hay heghap 'okhakan dashnaks 'ut' ean*, 233.

trated the Commissariat and were using every occasion to vent their hatred and animosity against the free Republic of Armenia and the Dashnak Party running its government.¹³ During the Third International convened in Moscow in March 1919, Haykuni, who had replaced Terian on the Commissariat, spoke against the bourgeois nationalists in Transcaucasia, particularly Dashnakts'ut'iwn. For Haykuni, "national independences" were a perfidy of the counter-revolutionaries to destroy Bolshevism, the Republic of Armenia was "a mocking insult to the workers and peasants," and the Armenian government was "a pack of bandits." He reassured the Bolshevik leaders that the Armenian Communist Party would struggle until the ultimate victory of Bolshevism in Armenia.¹⁴

All the while, the Bolshevik government, still inattentive to the burgeoning republics on the southern borders of the former Russian Empire, was busy consolidating its power over Russia and continuing its secret negotiations with Turkey and Germany, while the Armenian government had ceased its attempts at rapprochement and its official call for negotiations. The latter was simply inundated with internal problems and the impossible task of building a Republic out of a "formless chaos" (*andzev kaos*) as Hovhannes Kachaznuni had described it. Another reason why relations with Bolshevik Russia were put on the back-burner was that many in Europe did not believe the Bolshevik regime would survive to become the true successor of the tsarist regime in Russia. That attitude influenced Armenian—or rather the ARF—leaders and drew them to seek the ultimate resolution of the Armenian Cause in Europe, hence their Western orientation. They also engaged in negotiations with non-Bolshevik forces in Russia clearly alienating the Bolshevik government in Moscow. That was a move that proved wrong in hindsight.

The Bolshevik government of Moscow and the anti-Bolshevik forces in southern Russia, however, did agree on one question, if nothing else, i.e. the intact preservation of the territories of the former tsarist Empire. Both Vasilii Maklakov, the anti-Bolshevik tsarist Russian Ambassador to France, and Boris Bakhmeteff, the Provisional Government's Ambassador to the United States, clearly conveyed this idea to Avetis Aharonian and the Armenian delegation to the Paris Peace Conference in a meeting on the sidelines of the conference on May 9, 1919.¹⁵ The Soviets were

¹³ Hovannisian, *The Republic of Armenia*, vol. I, 409–414.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 412.

¹⁵ Avetis Aharonian, *Sardarapatits 'minch 'ew Sewr yew Lōzan* [From Sardarabad to Sèvres and Lausanne] (Boston: "Hairenik" Press, 1943), 22–23. Henceforth cited as Aharonian, *Sardarapatits*.

following the same policy when they signed an agreement in March 1919 with William Bullitt, President Woodrow Wilson's special envoy to the Paris conference. Under pressure from the Allied Powers, the Soviets agreed to accept the newly formed independent states within the borders of the former Russian Empire. Nonetheless, they managed by a clever twist to get the Allies to agree to withdraw from Russia and promise not to assist any state in rising against it. Assured of Allied non-interference, the Soviets could afford to temporarily tolerate the independent republics of Transcaucasia.

The Ninth ARF General Congress and its Directives

An important forum, where the internal and external policies of the party and for that matter the government of Armenia were being discussed and resolved, was convened in Yerevan on September 27, 1919. One of these resolutions clearly delineates the stance of the ARF or the Armenian government vis-à-vis the Soviets and the low priority assigned to Armeno-Russian relations. It reads: "Despite our complete goodwill toward the Russian people and the political revival of Russia, our diplomacy should resist the Russian government's attempts to spread Russian domination over the former Russian Armenia and hinder the realization of United Armenia."¹⁶

The resolution to struggle for the creation of a Free, Independent, and United Armenia¹⁷ that was adopted in the same forum – and which was in fact a consecration of the proclamation of "the act of the declaration of the freedom of United Armenia" by the Armenian government's Council of Ministers on May 28, 1919¹⁸ – resulted in another wave of Bolshevik discontent and condemnation. Anastas Mikoyan's statement on this occasion is an example. He wrote, "the Armenian Chauvinists are pushing forward the culpable and chimerical idea of creating a 'Great' Armenia

¹⁶ *K'aghwatsk'ner H.H.D. 9rd ēndhanur zhoghovi voroshumnerits'* [Excerpts from the decisions of the ARF 9th General Congress] (Yerevan: Urardia Press, 1920), 6.

¹⁷ The text in V. Ghazakhetsyan et al. (compilers), *Hayastani hanrapetut'iwn, 1918-1920 t'i. (k'aghak'akan patmut'iwn), P'astat'ght'eri yev niwt'eri zhoghovatsu* [The Republic of Armenia, 1918–1920 (Political History): A collection of documents and material] (Yerevan: HH GAA "Gitut'yun" hratarakch'ut'iwn, 2000), 127.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 108.

within the boundaries of historical Armenia. Our Party cannot support the idea of neither a great nor a small Turkish-Armenia.”¹⁹

It is ironic that while Armenian Bolsheviks were busy disparaging the idea of Armenian independence and slandering the Republic’s ARF-dominated government, the ousted Ittihadist leaders in Moscow and Europe were negotiating to effect an accord between Bolshevik Russia and Kemalist Turkey and to secure Russian assistance to Turkey.

The Bolshevik-Young Turk-Kemalist Triangle and the Armenian Bolsheviks

The Bolshevik-Young Turk accord, signed in Baku on November 27, 1919, laid the foundation for the future scheme against the Republic of Armenia. New research in this domain and unearthed evidence provides details of an extended series of talks that began in Baku in the fall of 1919, whose goal was to liberate all Muslim countries from the yoke of Western European imperialism. This was followed by another treaty between the Bolsheviks and Kemalist Turkey signed on January 11, 1920. Vladimir Harutyunyan, a contemporary historian in Armenia, discusses Point 11 of this treaty, which reads, “Provide assistance to the movement being launched in the Caucasus against British and Russian Imperialism and the present governments of Georgia, Azerbaijan, and Armenia operating under their command and influence.” The Armenian Bolsheviks Alexander Bekzadian, Isahak Dovlatov, Hakob Hakobian, Sargis Kasian, Anastas Mikoyan, and Askanaz Mravian were enthusiastic participants in those talks, and the all-out war against Armenia was being shaped under their nose. Harutyunyan concludes, “As we can see, Armenian Bolsheviks were indeed devoid of any nationalistic or even national attributes, and by their presence, they did not embitter but sweetened and strengthened the Bolshevik-Kemalist brotherly pact.”²⁰

¹⁹ *Khawarum* [Eclipse], a pamphlet published by the Hovhannes Tumanyan Museum in Yerevan after the exhibition/illustration of the same title, 19; the quotation is dated December 1919.

²⁰ Vladimir Harutyunyan (compiler), *P'astat'ght'er Hayastani k'aghak'akan patmut'ean, Karsi marz̄e Hayastani arajin hanrapetut'ean kazmum (april 1919t' – hoktember 1920t')* Niwt'er yew p'astat'ghter [Documents on the political history of Armenia, Kars province within the First Republic of Armenia (April 1919–October 1920): Materials and documents] (Yerevan: Modus Vivendi, 2016), 126. Henceforth cited as Harutyunyan, *Karsi marz̄e*.

Armenian leaders were concerned when rumors of such a pact reached Yerevan, but the Armenian Bolsheviks denied any such agreement. In order to verify its existence, the ARF Bureau sent three of its members, Arshak Jamalian, Simon Vratsian, and Ruben Ter-Minassian, to meet Hmayak Nazaretian, First Secretary of the Communist Party Bureau of Transcaucasia (KavBureau). Ter-Minassian later wrote that, by his silence, Nazaretian implicitly confirmed the existence of a secret accord, and that he explicitly stated that Moscow's new policy would entail increased propaganda and agitation in Armenia.²¹ According to Vratsian, when the delegation put forth the idea of some kind of an agreement between the Bolshevik Russia and ARF the ruling party in Armenia, Nazaretian retorted contemptuously, "What agreement? The spread of the Soviet rule in Transcaucasia should be expedited."²² Nazaretian's forecast was consistent with the resolution reached in a secret meeting of Armenian Bolsheviks in Yerevan in January 1920 to overthrow the Dashnak government and begin the process of the Sovietization of Armenia.²³ The Armenian committee, the ArmenKom of the Russian Communist Party, elected in that meeting in Yerevan, included Sargis Kasian, Askanaz Mravian, Ghukas Ghukasian, Avis Nourijanian, and Danush Shahverdian.²⁴ Nonetheless, the resolution was not put into effect at the time because the leaders of ArmenKom were aware of the fact that, with the limited numbers of their followers and thus lack of power in Armenia, they could not begin the process without outside help. Even according to Bolshevik sources, the number of those in Armenia who considered themselves Bolsheviks then did not exceed 400–600 souls.²⁵ Besides, they were uncertain as to whether a Soviet regime or proletarian rule would be premature in a backward country like Armenia where there were almost

²¹ Ter-Minassian, *Hay heghap 'okhakani mě hishataknerě*, hator 7 [The memoirs of an Armenian revolutionary, vol. 7] (Los Angeles: Horizon Press, 1952), 268. Henceforth cited as Ter-Minassian, *Hay heghap 'okhakani mě hishataknerě*.

²² Vratsian, *Hayastani hanrapetut 'iwn*, 383.

²³ See Mnatsakanyan, *Hoktemberyan*, doc. no. 191, 303.

²⁴ See Vladimir Harutyunyan (compiler), *Hay bolshevikneri hakapetakan gortsuneut 'yune: 1919-1920t 't.*, *P'astat'ght'eri zhoghovatsu* [Anti-statehood activities of the Armenian Bolsheviks, 1919–1920: Collection of documents] (Yerevan: Modus Vivendi, 2014), doc. 1-31, 86. Henceforth cited as Harutyunyan, *Hay bolshevikneri*.

²⁵ Ibid., 17. Reference is made to Shavarsh Amirkhanyan's *Mayisean apstam-but 'iwně Hayastanum* [The May uprising in Armenia] (Moscow, 1926).

no proletarian workers. According to Simon Vratsian, the idea of immediate Sovietization came from Avis Nourijanian.²⁶

Bolshevik Anti-Governmental Propaganda and Agitations in Armenia

The number of Bolshevik propagandists and agitators did indeed increase in Armenia. Paradoxically, at the end of 1919, when the persecution and incarceration of Bolsheviks escalated in Georgia, ARF leaders gave Sargis Kasian, Askanaz Mravian, Sargis Khanoyan, Yegor Yerznkian, Avis Nourijanian, and others safe refuge in Armenia and entrusted them with responsible jobs in government and notably in the sphere of education, on one condition: that they should not engage in Bolshevik propaganda and activism. That condition was never met. The devoted Bolsheviks spread Communist ideas, established Communist cells, and instigated a population that was near starvation to revolt against the government and seek Russia's protection. They promised that Russia could fill the country with bread and sugar.

One such incident instigated by Bolshevik agitation occurred in Alexandropol in January 1920. Taking advantage of the people's complaints about the high price of bread, the Bolshevik activists Sargis Khanoyan, Yegor Sevian, and Bagrat Gharibjanian tried to turn popular discontent into mass protest. The government arrested and imprisoned the three agitators, which aroused a wave of protests in the Soviet media, criticizing the Dashnakts'ut'iwn and holding it responsible for the abject misery in Armenia. An article in April 1920 in the *Komunist* paper in Baku, reported, "Perhaps not in any corner of the world the army of the poor, the destitute, and the exploited is growing as rapidly as in Armenia." And, of course, "the government of dashnaks" is to blame.²⁷

Despite all this, the government showed tolerance and leniency. After all, many ARF leaders were friends with Armenian Bolsheviks, shared the same ideology of Socialism, and had fought the Tsarist regime together.²⁸ Besides, they still naively believed that the goodwill they showed toward them could translate into good relations with the Moscow government.

²⁶ Vratsian quotes an article by Sargis Kasian in *Nor Ashkharh* monthly (1922). See Vratsian, *Hayastani hanrapetut'iwn*, 385.

²⁷ Quoted in Hovhannes Karapetyan, *Mayisean apstambut'iwnnerē Hayastanum* [The May uprisings in Armenia] (Yerevan: HSSR GA Hratarakch'ut'yun, 1961), 67, 69. Henceforth cited as Karapetyan, *Mayisian*.

²⁸ See Vratsian, *Hayastani hanrapetut'iwn*, 378.

The Armenian government failed to react when, according to information from Georgia, Ghukas Ghukasian had taken refuge in Armenia and was organizing Bolshevik cells in Alexandropol and spreading propaganda against the Armenian independent state.²⁹ Significantly, Ruben Ter-Minassian attributed this policy of tolerance not to political farsightedness, but extremism, which confuses the external political aspirations with internal political concessions.³⁰

This policy lasted until the unrest of May 1, 1920, when the Bolsheviks, headed by Ghukas Ghukasian and the Armenian members of the Tbilisi-centered “Spartak” Communist youth organization, managed to turn the May 1 celebrations in Yerevan into an anti-government rally. They called upon “the workers, soldiers, and peasants of Armenia” not to be fooled by “freedoms” and “parliaments,” but to “strive toward Russia,” which would lead them toward their “bright future, Socialism.”³¹ Similar demonstrations were organized with more success in Alexandropol, Sarikamish, Kars, and Nor-Bayazed.

In order to quell the unrest, the ARF Bureau took direct control of the government and mobilized ARF members to ward off “the danger threatening the Armenian homeland and statehood.”³² The Bureau-cum-government was headed by Hamo Ohanjanian who was named Prime Minister. Of course, this action aroused discontent even within the leadership. Some, like Simon Vratsian (who would succeed Ohanjanian in November), called it *Dashnakts ‘ut’ean diktatura* (the ARF dictatorship).³³ In fact, with this action, the narrowly maintained separation of party and state was abolished. The action was also the cause of a deeper schism among the ARF leadership in which personal opinions and sometimes opportunistic preferences played a role. Hovhannes Kachaznuni’s *Dashnaktsut ‘iwně anelik’ chuni aylevs* [Dashnakts‘ut‘iwn has Nothing to do Anymore], Bucharest, 1923 and Vienna 1924, reveals some of these complexities. It touches upon realities such as that an elected parliament (August 1919) with ARF party members in an overwhelming majority, that is, a parliament without an opposition, was not a healthy way of ruling the country. The ARF took upon itself responsibilities that it had neither

²⁹ See *ibid.*, 378-379. Vratsian quotes an article in *Khorhrdayin Hayastan*, May 14, 1927, where Askanaz Mravian describes Armenian Bolshevik activities.

³⁰ Ter-Minassian, *Hay heghap ‘okhakani mě hishataknerě*, 266-267.

³¹ Mnatsakanyan, *Hoktemberyan*, doc. no. 164, 260-262.

³² For the text of the declaration of mobilization, see the ARF Archives in Boston, section E, file 120, doc. 3.

³³ Vratsian, *Hayastani hanrapetut ‘iwn*, 390.

the means nor resources to handle. The ARF Bureau overpowered, controlled and pressured the parliament in its actions and decisions. Even the ARF's parliamentary faction followed the Bureau's directions.

Peaceful means to quell the insurgency had proven ineffective, and the Bureau-government resorted to force. There were arrests, incarcerations, even the execution of insurgent leaders. For this task, the government primarily commissioned Sebouh, the famous fedayee *khmbapet* [brigade master], and his troop of mostly Western Armenian former fedayees, and they were unforgiving. It was in this operation that Sebouh earned the moniker of "the executioner of Bolsheviks."³⁴ The unrest was suppressed and the country returned to normal, but the coup de force gave the Bolsheviks an opening to convince the Moscow government to act.³⁵ The Bolsheviks fled to Moscow or to the already Sovietized Azerbaijan with exaggerated reports of thousands imprisoned and thousands executed, and they inundated the Politburo and the Soviet press with letters of protest, demanding the accelerated Sovietization of Armenia and calling for the Red Army units in Azerbaijan to march into the country, overthrow the Dashnak government, and install the ArmenKom in power.³⁶

As a result of this campaign, public opinion about the government's competence dropped, both in the interior and abroad. Contrary to this assessment, however, Simon Vratsian attests that public opinion in Armenia approved the measures taken to crush the unrest, and to support his view he cites the proclamations put out by the Social-Democrats Labor Party, the Populists, and the Ramkavars in Armenia.³⁷ All this was at a time when Bolshevik Russia, having consolidated its position nationally and internationally, had begun to move toward the Caucasus. In a March 17, 1920 telegram sent to Sergo (Gregory) Ordzhonikidze, the head of the Transcaucasian Military Revolutionary Committee, Lenin ordered him to accelerate the capture of Baku which he deemed extremely necessary.³⁸

³⁴ Karapetyan, *Mayisean*, 275. For Sebouh's participation in the government's actions against the agitators, see Vratsian, *Hayastani hanrapetut'iwn*, 392.

³⁵ A detailed list of the names of those executed or otherwise killed in each city during the May uprising shows the total number of victims to be less than fifty. See Harutyunyan, *Hay Bolshevikneri*, doc. ii-72, 217–220.

³⁶ For more details on the May uprisings and the government's actions, see Vratsian, *Hayastani hanrapetut'iwn*, 314-414.

³⁷ Ibid., 392-394. Typically, the May 14 proclamation by the Social-Democrats Labor Party's Yerevan Committee, called the Armenian Bolsheviks' actions pleasing the Bolshevikism-Pan Islamism alliance.

³⁸ See Lenin, V. I., *Erker* [Works], (Yerevan: 1969), 51:193.

KavBuro (Caucasian Bureau) was formed in April to facilitate the spread of the Bolshevik regime in the Caucasus, and the Red Army marched into Baku on April 27. Azerbaijan was Sovietized. It was time for the Armenian government to act, to set aside its Western orientation, which was supported and encouraged by the promises Allies made and developments in the Paris peace talks, and engage in direct negotiations with Bolshevik Russia whose presence in the Caucasus was already an absolute reality. The move had been overlooked long enough, for there was no consensus about its importance. There were those in the leadership who believed that rapprochement with the Bolsheviks would alienate the Allies. And there were others who thought this rapprochement could trigger a quicker response by the Allies in fulfillment of their promises. Unfortunately, they did not notice the change of political atmosphere and the inclination to favor Mustafa Kemal's Nationalist Turkey.

And Finally, Formal Negotiations in Moscow

An Armenian delegation headed by Levon Shant with Hambartsum Terterian and Levon Zarafian, two leftist ARF members, was formed and the delegation left Yerevan on April 30. Two Karabagh Armenians, Aramayis Yerznkian and Simonik Pirumian, accompanied the delegation as experts in issues pertaining to Karabagh in support of uniting Karabagh with Armenia.³⁹ Because of the lack of transportation the delegation reached Moscow after a long journey full of hindrances and only on May 28 did negotiations begin with Georgy Chicherin, the People's Commissar for Foreign Affairs, and his Armenian deputy Lev Karakhan.

During these negotiations, the Bolsheviks were primarily interested in receiving assurance from the Armenian government that the Armenians would not strike at Turkey when the Turks and the Bolsheviks began their joint operation to oust the European imperialists from Turkish soil. They also demanded that Armenia break with the Allies and authorize the Soviets to engineer the dismissal of agenda items concerning the Armenian Cause from the peace negotiations going on at Versailles. The Armenian delegation's initial impression was that the Moscow government had no intention to force a Soviet regime on Armenia in the

³⁹ It is ironic, that once in Moscow, these two Karabaghtsies changed course, severed their ties with the Armenian delegation and presented a distorted view of Karabagh Armenians who are waiting for the Bolsheviks and the Bolshevik regime to spread over Karabagh. See, Vratsian, *Hayastani hanrapetut 'iwn*, 555, and Levon Shant's letter to Vratsian, dated June 18, from Marseille in *ibid.*, 612.

near future. The impression was also that Chicherin was speaking from a position of power and with some arrogance and indifference. Hambartsum Terterian attests that the meetings usually occurred at night, that there were always two Nagant revolvers on Chicherin's desk with the barrels facing the Armenian delegation, and that the meetings were not recorded.

Important items tabled by the Armenian side, such as the Soviet government's recognition of the Republic of Armenia, a final agreement on Karabagh, Zangezur, and Nakhijevan – where fighting was raging between Armenia and Azerbaijan – as well as the issue of annexing Western Armenia to the Republic of Armenia were briefly discussed, but with no substantive outcome.⁴⁰ Chicherin fervently objected to this last issue, reasoning that according to Bolshevik tenets, the logic of historical belonging is irrelevant and that land belongs to the peasant cultivating it.⁴¹

Then, on July 1 the meetings were abruptly cancelled. Chicherin refused to continue negotiating with the "brutal murderers" of his Communist comrades. In a telegram to Yerevan, he protested the execution of hundreds of Communists, including "Comrade Mikoyan." Of course, as Vratsian states, Chicherin's reaction was based on false information. Mikoyan had never set foot in Armenia.⁴² In fact, only two weeks before, on June 20, *Komunist*, Red Azerbaijan's organ in Baku, had published a memorandum addressed to the Armenian government to stop the "bloodshed" against Bolsheviks in Armenia carried out by Sebouh, the principal mauserist executioner. The memorandum cited an alarming number of peasants and workers tortured and killed, executed en masse. Three Armenians, Mikoyan on behalf of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Azerbaijan, Kostanian representing the Russian Communist Party, and Nourijanian, representative of the military RevKom of Armenia were among the signatories.⁴³ Levon Shant's report to the Armenian government speaks of the efforts of the Azerbaijani and Armenian Bolshevik delegation from Azerbaijan especially sent to Moscow to abort the ongoing negotiations. Chicherin announced that the talks would continue in Yerevan with the Moscow government's

⁴⁰ Ibid., 453 for details of Armenian demands.

⁴¹ For a detailed description of the negotiations, see Hambartsum Terterian, *Hayastani Hanrapetut'ean yew khorhrdayin rusastani banakts 'ut 'iwnneré* – *Levon Shant'i patwirakut'iwné* [The negotiations between the Republic of Armenia and Soviet Russia – Levon Shant's delegation] in *Hairenik'* monthly, No. 1-5, 1954.

⁴² Vratsian, *Hayastani hanrapetut'iwn*, 452.

⁴³ Ibid., 451-452.

plenipotentiary representative, Boris Legran, member of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Russia.

The talks stopped in Moscow. Chicherin had not been able to overpower the strong hatred and animosity of Bolsheviks in the Caucasus against the Bourgeois states of Georgia and Armenia. Moscow had to change its strategy of tolerating the existence of these two republics, even temporarily. Anastas Mikoyan, Avis Nourijanian, and other Bolsheviks in Baku and Moscow – and of course the Commissariat of Armenian Affairs – celebrated another success having convinced Chicherin to halt the negotiations. Chicherin had other reasons to cut the talks short: the Russo-Turkish pact was in the making and Soviet Azerbaijan was reluctant to relinquish the lands it was fighting to appropriate. The Armenian Bolsheviks endorsed the Azerbaijani position in a statement by Amirkhanian, Poghosian, and Ghaltaghchian, recommending that the central government “demand that the regions of Ghazakh/Shamshadin in rebellion be either united with Azerbaijan or captured by the Red Army.”⁴⁴ Furthermore, a letter to the Central Committee of the Communist Party, dated July 10, expressed dissatisfaction against Chicherin’s concession in the division of Karabagh, Zangezur and Nakhijevan between Armenia and Azerbaijan. The letter insisted that the Armenian peasants of Zangezur and Karabagh were impatiently waiting to rid themselves of the yoke of the Dashnak government. Mikoyan was among the signatories.⁴⁵

A telegram from Stalin to Sergo Ordzhonikidze, dated July 8, 1920, reveals the underlying Soviet position on this issue: “We should not endlessly oscillate between the two sides. We should support one, and in this case, it should be Azerbaijan with Turkey. I have spoken with Lenin. He does not object.”⁴⁶ Stalin’s message coincided with the date of the cessation of the talks in Moscow.

It is questionable how the Armenian delegation handled the negotiations. Levon Shant, Hambartsum Terterian, and Levon Zarafian were not seasoned politicians who could make decisions and close a deal without Yerevan’s consent, and the lack of direct lines of communication between Moscow and Yerevan made things difficult. The only line

⁴⁴ *Khawarum*, 22. Reference is made to the ANA, fund 1022, list 4, doc. 68, no. 21.

⁴⁵ For the content of the letter and the names of the signatories, see Richard G. Hovannisian, *The Republic of Armenia*, vol. IV: *Between Crescent and Sickle, Partition and Sovietization*, (Berkeley, Los Angeles, London: University of California Press, 1996), 74.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 20.

available went through Tbilisi and were often sabotaged. Communications were withheld or delivered so late that they were outdated or no longer effective. As for Simonik Pirumian and Aramayis Yerznkian—two newly converted Bolsheviks—half-way through the talks, they secretly left Moscow with a 5,000-ruble grant from the Commissariat to expedite the Sovietization of Karabagh and Zangezur.

Secret Deals to Bring about the Demise of the Armenian Republic

Notwithstanding the formal negotiations, however, the future of Armenia was being forged not through talks in Moscow or Paris, but in the Russo-Turkish dealings in Moscow as well as the Congress of Eastern Peoples in Baku. Legran too with his aid, Sahak Ter-Gabrielian, had chosen to go to Baku instead of Yerevan to consult with Ordzhonikidze, with whose recommendation he advised Chicherin to annex Karabagh and Zangezur to Azerbaijan and move the Red Army to occupy Nakhijevan. The constant threatening to advance into Armenia coming from Turkey forced Legran to meet the Armenian government representatives and hold talks in Tbilisi before the Armenian delegation stranded in Moscow could return to Armenia. Indeed, Armenia was squeezed between “the Bolshevik hammer and the Turkish anvil” as Simon Vratsian quipped. Arshak Jamalian and Artashes Babalian, with Ruben Yuzbashian as adviser, were sent to Tbilisi to negotiate a treaty to stop military operations. A temporary agreement was signed between the two parties with heavy concessions on the part of Armenia. The date was August 10, ironically, the date when the Treaty of Sèvres was signed. With this agreement, Bolshevik Russia fulfilled its promise to Turkey. Karakhan had informed the Turkish representative in Moscow that the Red Army was ordered to occupy Karabagh, Zangezur, and Nakhijevan for Azerbaijan.⁴⁷ With the twist of fate, the signature under this agreement was the first official document which also meant Moscow’s recognition of the Republic of Armenia.

The Russo-Turkish Treaty of Moscow was initialed on August 24, 1920, after which Mustafa Kemal authorized Kazim Karabekir to begin the military campaign against Armenia. The Congress of Eastern Peoples, convened on September 1, was attended by representatives of Mustafa Kemal’s Nationalist Turkey as well as some Young Turk leaders. This was an important forum where the Armenian Bolshevik delegates Anastas

⁴⁷ Gabriel Lazian, *Hayastan yew hay datē* [Armenia and the Armenian Question], reprint (Tehran: “Alik” publishing, 1985), 251. The author quotes the memoirs of Ali Fouat Pasha, Mustafa Kemal’s representative in Moscow, on this issue.

Mikoyan, Avis Nourijanian, Sargis Kasian, and Askanaz Mravian witnessed the Turkish-Azerbaijani-Russian conspiracy to bring about the demise of the Armenian Republic. In their fiery declarations, they claimed that the Dashnaks “ut‘iwn, “with the help of bandit-mauserists.... buried the peasantry of Turkish-Armenia.... and is building a new Golgotha for the workers and peasants of Eastern Armenia.”⁴⁸

Mustafa Kemal’s top-secret order to launch the attack on Armenia was issued on September 24, 1920. Operations began on September 28. It is significant that only a week before the attack, on September 20, the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Armenia had issued its own “top secret” message for limited distribution to the Communist bodies of Armenia with the order to destroy after reading:

Kemalist Turkey is Soviet Russia’s ally and is fighting for its national freedom against Imperialism. The victory of the Republic of Armenia over Turkey would be tantamount to strengthening Imperialism in the Near East and would jeopardize the victory of the Revolution in Transcaucasia and thus the Sovietization of the East. The Armenian Communist Bolsheviks should aim to expedite the defeat of republican Armenia, which will also expedite the Sovietization of Armenia. To that end, [we need to]

1. Dissolve the Armenian army....
2. Instigate and organize desertions in the army....
3. Persuade soldiers on the front not to fire at the advancing Turkish soldiers.
4. Persuade soldiers to disobey the orders of their commanding officers and destroy them if necessary.

This message was signed by Sargis Kasian, Askanaz Mravian, Avis Nourijanian, Shavarsh Amirkhanian, Isahak Dovlatian, and Ashot Hovhannesian.⁴⁹

Indeed, these recommendations were put into effect point by point. And while the government was calling upon the nation to unite and defend the Republic, and while all the other political parties active in Armenia, as well as Gevorg V, Catholicos of All Armenians, supported the

⁴⁸ Mnatsakanyan, *Hoktemberyan*, doc. no. 243, 375–378.

⁴⁹ *Khawarum*, 11–12. Reference is made to the ANA, fund 1022, list 3, doc. 275, no. 1.

government's call for action,⁵⁰ the Bolshevik propaganda machine was working full blast to demoralize the army and destroy the Armenian resistance. Pamphlets and flyers were distributed, and fiery speeches were delivered to peasants and soldiers, encouraging them to ignore the call for mobilization, refrain from fighting, and return home. Bolshevik propaganda focused on two themes: the first revolved around the idea that Kemalist soldiers were not looters or slaughterers but simple peasants and workers, "brothers" coming "to liberate us from the yoke of Dashnak repression," while the second theme advocated putting down arms and embracing the Bolshevik regime which promised bread and sugar for the starving peasants. Armenian Bolshevik activists even cooperated with the Kemalist army, especially in Kars, providing them with intelligence in the hope that the Turks would capture the city and turn it over to the Bolsheviks.⁵¹ In a message dated November 13, 1920, A. Ter-Martirossian and Mkrtich Khachikian wrote, "Liberated from the centuries-old Armenian yoke, the Alexandropol proletariat and the impoverished peasantry send brotherly and heartfelt greetings to the Turkish Communist Party. Long live Turkey's Communist Party. Long live the revolutionary Eastern Red Army. Long live Communism. Long live Soviet Armenia."⁵² Vladimir Harutyunyan quotes N.E. Shutova, who explains the Armenian Bolsheviks' attitude toward territorial concessions to Turkey, "In order to be able to establish relations between Soviet Russia and Turkey, it is

⁵⁰ See Ghazakhetsyan, *Hayastani hanrapetut'iwn*, 300–301, for the texts of the joint declarations of Armenian political parties.

⁵¹ For details of the fall of Kars, see Artashes Babalian, *Mi tari gerut'ean mēj* [One year in captivity], in *Hairenik'* monthly, vol. 2 (1924), 54–65. More recent publications include Ghazakhetsyan, *Hayastani hanrapetut'iwn*, 335, to see the article titled "Bolshevik akentner" (Bolshevik agents) which was originally published in *Haraj* (November 9, 1920). The article exposes the treacherous activities of the Armenian Bolsheviks who facilitated the Kemalist occupation of Kars. Vladimir Harutiunyan too sheds light on the details of the fall of Kars in *Karsi marzē Hayastani hanrapetut'ean kazmum, april 1919 – hoktember 1920*, *Karsi nahangapet Stepan Ghorghanyani husherē* [The marz (province) of Kars within the Republic of Armenia, (April, 1919–October 1920, The memoirs of Kars governor Stepan Ghorghanyan (Korganof)] (Yerevan: AniARC publication, 2018); in *Arajin hanrapetut'iwn, Karsi verchnakhaghē* [The First Republic of Armenia: the Endgame of Kars] (Yerevan: A Modus Vivendi publication, 2018); and in *Kars-Aleksandrapoli korustē 1920-in haykakan banaki spayi husherum* [The loss of Kars-Alexandropol in the memoirs of an Armenian army officer] (Yerevan: AniARC publishing, 2019).

⁵² *Khawarum*, 38. Reference is made to the ANA, fund 1002, list 2, doc. 189.

indispensable first to solve the Armenian issue. For that matter, it is imperative to accept the importance of maximal territorial concessions to Kemalist Turkey on account of Armenia.”⁵³

Before briefly discussing the process of the Sovietization of Armenia, I need to backtrack and entertain three questions in order to fully illustrate the situation that led to Sovietization: How were the Bolsheviks able to spread so swiftly in Armenia? Why were they so successful in their propaganda among the masses? And finally, why did the ARF monopolize the government, if it did, only to have the Armenian Bolsheviks, and for that matter, seventy years of Soviet historiography label the free republic as “Dashnak Hayastan”?

It is a fact that the Bolshevik presence in the Caucasus was negligible. The Social Democratic Labor-Mensheviks controlled Georgia; Muslim Musavatists ruled over the Tatars; and the Dashnaks‘ut‘iwn was the power behind the Armenian Cause. The Dashnaks‘ut‘iwn was a majority in every national governance body, and in consecutive governments during the period of independence. In fact, after the declaration of Armenian independence, the first prime minister, Hovhannes Kachaznuni tried very hard to form a coalition government in Tbilisi. But the difficulties were many. The pool of intellectuals and political activists was limited. The Populist party leaders refused to participate and demanded that the ARF step aside and let them form the cabinet. They even suggested having two ruling bodies, one in Tbilisi and the other in Yerevan. “The Populists did not want to leave Tbilisi.”⁵⁴ This idea stemmed from the fact that, as Vratsian states, neither the Populists, nor the Social-Revolutionaries and Social-Democrats were willing to take up residence in backward and destitute Yerevan and assume responsibility in that volatile situation. They would rather have the Armenian government operate from Tbilisi. Besides, the spirit of cooperation was lacking among the various Armenian political parties: to accept a portfolio in the government was seen as working under the command of the Dashnaks‘ut‘iwn. Therefore, the first cabinet was comprised solely of ARF members except for the minister of defense General Hovhannes Hakhverdian, a non-partisan. Grigor Ter-Petrosian, a non-partisan activist in Yerevan was invited as minister of Justice. It was only in November 1918 that the Populists agreed to participate in the coalition

⁵³ Harutyunyan, *Karsi marzē*, 147, fn. 345.

⁵⁴ Vratsian, *Hayastani hanrapetut‘iwn*, 178; 178-182 contain details of the struggle to form a coalition cabinet in Tbilisi and the difficulties of transferring it to Yerevan.

government. The first Minister of Education, Mikayel Atabekian, was a Populist. However, after holding office for a few weeks, he returned to Tbilisi with the excuse of having important affairs to attend to, and he never came back to Yerevan. He was replaced by Gevorg Melik-Gharageozian, another Populist, who worked diligently until the resignation of all the Populist members of the cabinet in June 24, 1919 in opposition to the declaration of a Free, Independent, and United Armenia.⁵⁵

Calling the Republic “Dashnak” was an invention of Armenian Bolsheviks who invested the word with all their hatred and animosity toward the Dashnaks‘ut‘iwn. It implied that the Republic was the monopoly of the Dashnaks‘ut‘iwn, alien to the Armenian people’s welfare, interests, and goals. That term and its implications was adopted and disseminated by Soviet historiography as a strategy to cover up Soviet transgressions, obscure the secret Russo-Turkish agreement and collaboration against independent Armenia, and blame the Dashnaks‘ut‘iwn for all the losses, including the loss of Turkish Armenia.

As to the rapid spread of Bolshevik or rather Communist ideology, the reason can be seen in the inability of the government to deal with unresolved internal and external problems jeopardizing public security. It can also be attributed to the dire economic situation and the absence of drastic measures to eradicate poverty, starvation, and joblessness to build a republic with a democratic structure and socialist ideology coveted by the ARF. In this situation, the Bolshevik propaganda – equality for all, Russian bread and sugar for the destitute, struggle against the wealthy class, rule of the working class, and brotherhood among nations – attracted not only the gullible, uneducated near-starving masses, but also idealistic youth. It was agreeable to the simple peasant youths to heed the sermon, put down their weapon, go home, and pick up their hoe and shovel.

Push for Sovietization of Armenia

On November 4, 1920, in a meeting of the Caucasian Bureau (KavBuro) of the Central Committee of the Russian Communist Party, with Stalin and Ordzhonikidze (then chair of the KavBuro) present, Shavarsh Amirkhanian, a member of the Central Committee of the

⁵⁵ Ibid., 266-267. Vratsian believes that the resignation was instigated by Boghos Nubar Pasha, the head of the Armenian National Delegation at Paris Peace Conference, who considered the declaration not in harmony with Armenian foreign policy.

Armenian Communist Party, reported that the situation in Armenia was grave and that in some areas virtually no government existed. He firmly stated that the situation was ripe for immediate Sovietization.⁵⁶ The final draft of Legran's agreement with the Armenian government was thus rejected and Amirkhanian's recommendation was sent to Chicherin for final approval. In fact, it was Amirkhanian who, together with Avis Nourijanian, would organize and supervise the execution by axe of imprisoned former leaders of Armenia on February 16–18, 1921, at the onset of the February uprising against Bolshevik rule in Armenia.

Legran was attempting to institute Soviet rule with the consent of the Armenian government without using force, so as to avoid the intervention of the Allies. But the coup de force came from the ArmRevKom in Baku supported by the Armenian detachment from the Red Army. With Ordzhonikidze's approval, these forces crossed the border on November 29, entered Ijevan, and declared Armenia Sovietized. ArmRevKom issued a proclamation citing the anarchy in the Armenian Republic and the people's anger at the adventurous and heedless actions of the Dashnak government, and reassuring the people that the Communist Party, with the help of the Red Army, liberator of all deprived nations, was leading the Armenian uprising to crush this bastion of the Allied Powers.⁵⁷

How to explain the unseemly rush and excessive eagerness to destroy the country and rule over the ruins? Vladimir Harutyunyan writes, "It is one thing to struggle against one's own government and overthrow it, albeit by armed force.... However, it is another thing to destroy one's own independent statehood for the sake of foreign interests, and to receive instead the right of a local satrap to rule over the ruins of the once independent state. This is utter treason against statehood."⁵⁸

Conclusion

Evidence shows that the Sovietization of Armenia was realized not at the behest of Moscow but because of the zeal and greed of the Armenian Bolsheviks for their personal gain, for the opportunity to rule the country, and for the sake of the victory of the Communist ideology and internationalism which they had so ardently espoused. Leonid Krasin, a high-ranking Soviet diplomat in Paris, had told Avetis Aharonian that

⁵⁶ Mnatsakanyan, *Hoktemberyan*, doc. no. 249, 397. See also Simon Vratsian, *Hayastani hanrapetut 'iwn*, 496.

⁵⁷ ARF Archives (Boston), section A, file 11, doc. 59.

⁵⁸ Harutyunyan, *Hay Bolshevikneri*, 18.

Moscow had no interest in Armenia, but "the Armenian Bolsheviks have convinced us that the Armenian nation aspires to Communism." He had even stated, "We need an independent Armenia to separate Azerbaijan from Turkey."⁵⁹

Of course, this general Soviet policy vis-à-vis Armenia was influenced by another gathering threat that changed the course of action, and that was Turkey's dangerous advance toward and aspiration to reach Azerbaijan. Mustafa Kemal was pursuing the realization of the Young Turk ideology of Pan-Turkism. An Armenia totally paralyzed by internal turmoil was incapable of defending its independence; indeed, it was on the verge of becoming a dismembered state totally dependent on Turkey. Stalin's telegram to Lenin, dated November 15, 1920, explained: "It is possible that in regard to Armenia we are already late, that is, Kemal will eat it and finish it sooner than we [can] get there."⁶⁰

Armenia was Sovietized, and through subsequent treaties and rulings, Armenian territories were conceded to Turkey and Azerbaijan. The Sovietization was inevitable, and the ARF or the Bureau-government for that matter had its share of mistakes and miscalculations, but as Simon Vratsian, the last Prime Minister of Independent Armenia put it, "If the leaders of Armenia were free in their relationship with the Russians and did not meet at every instant the slandering and treachery of Armenian Bolsheviks, a major portion of the catastrophe that befell the Armenian nation would not have occurred."⁶¹ The historically inevitable Soviet Socialist Republic of Armenia would have been established with more respect to the rights of the people of Armenia and her territorial integrity.

⁵⁹ See Aharonian, *Sardarapatis* ', 122.

⁶⁰ Harutyunyan, *Karsi marzé*, 146, n. 344.

⁶¹ Simon Vratsian, *Hayastané bolshevikian murchi yew t'rk'akan sali mijew* [Armenia Between the Bolshevik Hammer and the Turkish Anvil] (Boston: A publication of A.R.F Central Committee of America, 1941), 146.