

armenian review

Dashnaktsutiun-Bolshevik Relations, 1918-20: Dashnaktsutiun's Quest for Peaceful Coexistence

Rubina Peroomian

The Russian revolution of March 1917 and the lifting of czarist repression gave the Armenian Revolutionary Federation (ARF)—or Dashnaktsutiun, as it is known among Armenians—the opportunity to pursue its goals in the Russian empire with more freedom, optimism, and enthusiasm. Founded in 1890, the Dashnaktsutiun had come to lead the Armenian national struggle for emancipation. With modest aspirations at first, Dashnaktsutiun adopted in its Fourth General Congress, in 1907, the resolution to fight for the realization of two autonomous states, Eastern Armenia and Western Armenia, with federative links to the Russian and Ottoman governments. By 1917, this resolution had remained unchanged.

The idea of an independent Armenian nation-state in Transcaucasia was far-fetched even after the collapse of the czarist regime in Russia. Dashnaktsutiun viewed Transcaucasia as an inseparable part of Russia and, from the vantage point of Armenian national interests, supported the policy of collaboration with Russia—with the Petrograd Provisional Government and, after the revolution of November 1917, with the Bolshevik government. Dashnaktsutiun's political stance reflected the sentiments of the majority of Armenians. For that matter, the party dominated the Russian-Armenian National Congress, convened on 11 October 1917, in Tiflis. With more than two hundred representatives of various political parties, the congress was to assess the situation and choose a course of action.¹ Dashnaktsutiun's influence was likewise extended over the Armenian National Council, the executive body elected in this congress.

The Armenian Bolsheviks, who were still negligible in numbers and had limited activity in the Caucasus, took a divisive stance from the

outset. They boycotted the Russian-Armenian National Congress, declaring that "a nationalistic unity and a collaboration between the bourgeoisie, the proletariat, the peasantry, and the imperialist, petty-bourgeois dashnaktsutiun [use of lower case by the authors] in the lead is a betrayal of the tactics and the revolution of the international proletariat."² This stand of the Armenian Bolsheviks never changed with regard to Dashnaktsutiun and the Republic of Armenia, thus stifling the possibilities of long term ARF-Bolshevik cooperation.

The declaration by the Armenian Bolsheviks was in keeping with Bolshevik teachings on the nationalities question. These teachings came across more clearly in the declarations of the Armenian Bolsheviks than they did in the equivocal decrees issued by the central government and the resolutions adopted by local party conventions. The Bolshevik government wished, of course, to reinforce communism and implement its principles; for a time, however, Bolsheviks in the center were cautious not to alienate ethnic elements in the former Russian empire. The contradictory messages coming from the central government may baffle the observer trying to discover the guiding ideology of that period. In October 1917, for example, the Transcaucasian Regional Congress of the Social-Democrat (Bolsheviks) organization adopted a resolution calling for self-determination of all nations, up to and including separation from Russia, but at the same time in its concluding paragraph rejecting the idea of separation and formation of separate states based on nationality.³ This conclusion was in agreement with Stalin's statement labeling the demands of separation by the people on the Russian borders, in this stage of the revolution, as treachery. The resolution also reflected the spirit of the Declaration of Peoples' Rights and Lenin's promise to liberate all the peoples of Russia, issued on 16 November 1917.

Another example of a double-edged message is revealed in the declaration "About Turkish Armenia," signed by both Lenin and Stalin and issued on 31 December 1917. The declaration granted autonomy to Turkish Armenia, but it also called for the evacuation of the Russian army from the Caucasian front. With Russian military operations halted and the borders left open to Turkish aggression, it was not possible for Armenians to hold on to the Western Armenian lands.

The conflicting notions in the decree apparently troubled Soviet Armenian historians, and they labored to explain it. Lendrush Khurshudian writes: "Lenin had decided to bestow independence upon Turkish Armenia; therefore, he pulled his troops out to give Armenians the chance for self-determination."⁴ A more plausible explanation comes from Bagrat Borian, who later fell victim to Soviet purges: "By withdrawing the Soviet troops from the Turkish front," he reasoned, "Lenin intended to prove to Turkey that he did not follow the czarist imperialistic poli-

cies. In that context the Armenian Question was only a means not a goal.⁵ The withdrawal of the Russian troops from the occupied lands in Western Armenia seemed to reaffirm the Sovnarkom's appeal, in December 1917, to "The Muslims of Russia and the East," in which "the treaty on the partition of Turkey and the wresting of Armenia from her" was declared "null and void."⁶

All these conflicting decrees and resolutions notwithstanding, Lenin was pushing an entirely different agenda. His delegates, headed by Ioffe and later by Trotsky, were busy in Brest-Litovsk, negotiating peace with the Central Powers to end the war. The resulting agreement, the Treaty of Brest-Litovsk, struck a deadly blow to the Russian-occupied lands of Western Armenia. Lenin agreed to hand over to Turkey the districts of Kars, Ardahan, and Batum, and the six Armenian provinces (*vilayets*), and in the additional Russo-Turkish bilateral agreement he promised to dissolve and disperse the Armenian bands in Russia as well as in the Russian-occupied Turkish provinces.⁷ The Bolshevik Regional Committee of Transcaucasia immediately endorsed the treaty and criticized those who still held on to Kars, Ardahan, and Batum.

In this state of confusion and uncertainty in the aftermath of the Bolshevik revolution, the ARF was struggling for a favorable settlement of the Armenian Question. As Rouben Ter Minassian put it, Dashnaktsutiun and the Armenian National Council had three options or three courses of action from which to choose: (1) to remain with the Georgians and Azerbaijanis and, therefore, lean toward the Turks and the Germans; (2) to go against their Transcaucasian neighbors and the Turks and, therefore, rely on the Allied Powers; (3) to sever ties with their neighbors and the Allies and trust the Bolshevik government in Moscow and the Bolshevik activists in Transcaucasia for support and arbitration in the region.⁸ But the ARF did not adopt a specific course of action; instead, it explored the possibilities of all three options, not only because none of the choices offered a guarantee for a better future for Armenians but also because the ARF leadership was divided on this issue.

Insofar as the third option is concerned, it should be noted at the outset that direct relationships and personal contacts never reached the level attained during the period when the Provisional Government was in power. Liparit Nazarians describes his meetings with Trotsky in Petrograd and Moscow in the early period of the Bolshevik revolution as very friendly and productive. He also mentions his and Rostom's cooperation with Vahan Terian to prepare a document substantiating Armenian demands to be submitted during the Brest-Litovsk peace talks. Terian, the renowned Armenian poet and dedicated communist, was serving as the deputy chair of the Armenian Affairs Commissariat (Commissariat po Armianskim Delam) in Moscow. At that time,

Nazarians was soliciting Bolshevik support to strengthen the Turkish front, and Trotsky was showing interest in working out a viable plan. He attests to Trotsky's expression of sincere sympathy for Armenians after the Treaty of Brest-Litovsk was signed. According to Nazarians, Trotsky was in favor of continuing the war at least on the Turkish front. He had even promised to arrange for a Czechoslovakian regiment of forty-five thousand men on their way home from the Far East to be transferred to the Caucasus front.⁹ Negotiations with Trotsky and the goodwill he showed toward Armenians are also reported by Arshak Jamalian, another ARF leader. Jamalian remembers that Trotsky had even insinuated that Armenians should protest against the Treaty of Brest-Litovsk to the European Powers including Germany. Since travel abroad was restricted, he even ordered Karakhan, an Armenian Bolshevik high-ranking Moscow official, to facilitate the journey of Jamalian and Nazarians to pursue the solution of the Armenian Question in Europe.¹⁰ Nazarians believes that friendly relations with Moscow leaders could have continued if the Armenian Bolsheviks and especially the Armenian Affairs Commissariat, gradually gaining clout with the inner circles of Soviet leadership, had not tried so hard to abort these relations. According to Nazarians, who was campaigning in Moscow, Trotsky had agreed to mediate with Lenin and arrange for cooperation with Dashnaktsutiun. Nazarians quotes Lenin as saying in response to Trotsky's proposition that although the two parties had fundamental ideological differences, however, cooperation between the two was not impossible. The preliminary arrangements were made, but the meeting did not take place. The Armenian Bolsheviks protested against Trotsky's overlooking the advice of the Armenian Affairs Commissariat and mediating for the "anti-revolutionary" Dashnaktsutiun. They had managed to convince Trotsky that the ARF had adopted a British orientation in the Caucasus, and cooperation with them was meaningless.¹¹

During the period before Armenian independence—from the Bolshevik revolution to 28 May 1918—in the absence of direct relations, ARF leaders relied on the goodwill of Armenian Bolsheviks to mediate with the Moscow government. Despite mutual criticism and animosity, the ARF leaders attempted cooperation and initiated plans of joint action with Armenian Bolsheviks, some of whom were their classmates and personal friends. The intention was to seek through them the Moscow government's help for the Armenian people. For example, Aram Manukian, who actually ruled over Yerevan as the representative of the ARF Bureau and the Armenian National Council, asked Poghos Makintsiyan, a Bolshevik activist, to travel to Moscow and try to prepare the ground for a dialog between Armenian leaders, that is Dashnaktsutiun, and the Moscow government. Arriving in Moscow,

Makintsiān discarded his promise to Aram and sought employment with the Cheka (the Soviet secret police). He later assumed an important role in the People's Commissariat for Nationalities (Narkomnats) and in the Armenian Affairs Commissariat and, among other things, also took charge of restructuring the century-old Armenian Lazarian Institution of higher learning to bring it in line with communist ideology.

Rouben Ter Minassian relates the details of a plan worked out in Tiflis between Bolshevik leaders, Danush Shahverdian and Stepan Shahumian, and two ARF representatives, Hakob Zavriev and himself, with Aram's approval from Yerevan. The plan entailed joint action to create an independent Western Armenia (ARF's resolution to fight for an autonomous Western Armenia with federative links to the Ottoman government had obviously become obsolete as a result of the events during World War I, the Armenian Genocide, the depopulation of Western Armenia, and the Turkish defeat in the war). It called for the participation of the Russian army to push back the Turks, and Shahumian promised to convince the central government to let the Russian army stay on the Turkish front. The plan also stipulated the creation of an Armenian canton in the Caucasus with defined boundaries (according to Shahkhatuni's plans approved in the 1916 ARF Regional Congress and submitted to the Petrograd Provisional Government). Curiously, however, the last phase of the plan called for a revolution to spread Soviet rule over all of Transcaucasia.¹² The Treaty of Brest-Litovsk foiled the execution of the plan.

After the Russian retreat following Brest-Litovsk and the declaration of independence of Armenia on 28 May 1918, the breach between the ARF and the Armenian Bolsheviks grew wider. Dashnaktsutiun, being the key player in the formation of free Armenia and the republic's administrative apparatus, came under heavy criticism by Armenian Bolsheviks to whom the concept of Armenian independence was preposterous. With Armenia declared free and for all practical purposes separated from Moscow, ARF-Bolshevik relations entered a new phase. Hamo Ohandjanian negotiating with Moscow representatives in Berlin, Hakob Zavriev and Artashes Chilingarian in Moscow tried in vain to persuade the Bolshevik government to extend recognition to the Armenian republic. The Bolsheviks were not ready to make such a commitment while still preoccupied with consolidating their power and spreading it over all of the Russian empire. Besides, they were busy negotiating an agreement with Germany to divide Transcaucasia into two zones of influence, which entailed relinquishing the Armenian lands to Turkey. Therefore, with the Moscow government refusing to recognize the new republic, this new phase of relations came to a halt, only to pick up slowly later on. At the time, the Armenian government's

immediate concerns, like solving the overwhelming internal difficulties and insuring the safety of the Armenian borders, put off extensive attempts to initiate diplomatic relations with Moscow. Moreover, the promises of the Allied Powers nurtured the Western orientation of many Armenian leaders and caused them to delay relations with the Soviets.

The Ninth General Congress of Dashnaksutiun, which convened in September 1919 in Yerevan, was an important forum of policy making for Armenia's foreign relations. In this context significant is a resolution passed in the congress which read: "Despite an absolute 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 former Russian Armenia and to hinder the realization of United Armenia."¹³ This resolution clearly reflects the ARF's or the Armenian government's stand vis-à-vis the Soviets and the low degree of priority Armeno-Russian relations presented for them.

It should be clear that the Armenian government did not limit its efforts to establishing relations with Russia to the Bolshevik government alone. The attempts at rapprochement were extended also to the White Army commander General Anton Denekin, as well as Admiral Kolchak in Siberia, hoping that in case of victory of the White Armies over the Bolsheviks the already established relationship would benefit the Armenian people. To reach out to all the Russian factions in power was a tactic ratified in the Ninth ARF General Congress. This undertaking, however, had its adverse effects on the ARF-Bolshevik relations. As a reflection of the Soviets' suspicion regarding Armenian relations with anti-Bolshevik forces, when Chicherin, the foreign affairs commissar of Soviet Russia, appealed in August 1919 to the Transcaucasian governments to unite with Russia against Denekin's army, the Armenian government was excluded in this appeal.

If nothing else, the Bolshevik government of Moscow and the anti-Bolshevik forces in southern Russia agreed on one issue: the intact preservation of the territories of the former Czarist Empire. Denekin firmly stated that although he recognized the existence of governments fighting against Bolsheviks in the outlying regions of the Russian empire, the interests of all Russia would supersede in future relationships with them.¹⁴ Avetis Aharonian reports a similar point of view of the Bolshevik government officials. During a meeting with the two Armenian delegations in Paris, on 19 May 1919, both Maklakov, the Soviet ambassador to France, and Bakhmetov, the Soviet ambassador to the United States, expressed their government's consent to the idea of a United Armenia but firmly stated that Moscow would object if that idea became finalized without Russian acquiescence and before the finalization of the borders of the new Russian state.¹⁵ This Soviet policy dictated also the agreement signed in Moscow, in March 1919, with

William Bullitt, representative of the Allied Powers. Under the pressure of the Allies, Soviets agreed to accept the newly formed independent states within the former Russian empire; nonetheless, with a clever twist, they managed to make the Allies agree to pull out of Russia and promise not to assist any state rising against Russia. Assured of the non-interference of the Allies, the Moscow government could afford to temporarily tolerate the independent republics of Transcaucasia. This attitude was also a factor slowing the process of the Armeno-Russian negotiations in the spring of 1920. The Bolshevik government needed time to finalize the international boundaries of the former Russian empire before dealing with border states claiming independence.

An exceptional case of ARF-Bolshevik cooperation developed in Baku in the latter part of 1918. Baku was the only region under Soviet rule in the Caucasus and Stepan Shahumian had been declared extraordinary commissar of the Caucasus. Ironically, while the Georgian Mensheviks, the Muslim Musavatists, and the Armenian Dashnakists were united in a struggle against the Bolsheviks in all of the Caucasus, in Baku alone an ARF-Bolshevik joint military campaign was initiated against another common enemy, the invading Turkish army. The ARF's incentive for this cooperation was the protection of the city's Armenian population, whereas Bolsheviks took into account the ARF's tremendous influence among Armenians in Baku, as well as its military power. Indeed, Rostom had been able to assemble and organize all the Armenian soldiers dispersed in the Caucasus waiting to be transported to the Turkish front. Transcaucasian officials and especially the Azerbaijanis had hindered the transportation of these soldiers to the battlefield. Now, gathered in Baku under Dashnaktsutiun's command, they represented a considerable military force ready to fight against the approaching Turkish army. Shahumian was able to use this force at its best. He marched the army of the Baku commune, consisting mostly of Armenian troops, toward Gandzha and Tiflis to fulfill his goal of spreading Bolshevik rule. Hamazasp commanded the Armenian regiment, and General Bagratuni acted as the commander-in-chief. Rostom also took part in this campaign.¹⁶ Despite the unsuccessful outcome, amazing was the extent of the cooperation. The Armenian National Council of Baku put its trust into this cooperation and hoped the goodwill shown toward Bolshevik rule in Baku would induce Shahumian to intervene with Sovnarkom in favor of the Armenian people and the newly independent Armenian state. In his report on the defense of Baku, however, Shahumian did not forget to warn the Sovnarkom not to promise any help to Dashnaktsutiun, although, he admitted, Dashnaktsutiun was the real force behind the fire lines of Baku.¹⁷

Shahumian's advice paralleled the diligent efforts of the Armenian Affairs Commissariat to sabotage any rapprochement between the ARF

and the Sovnarkom. The Commissariat's anti-Dashnaktsutiun propaganda had gained momentum after the declaration of Armenian independence. An article entitled "Independent Armenia?" in the Commissariat's official paper, *Kommunist*, on 30 June 1918, proclaims "war against the Germano-Turkish Dashnak independent Armenia" and calls the new republic "a grave that the Armenian bourgeoisie is digging for the Armenian working class."¹⁸ The Armenian Bolshevik activists in the Caucasus and the entire cadre of the Armenian Affairs Commissariat in Moscow were pushing the Sovnarkom to put an end to the existence of Dashnakist Armenia. They were trying to convince Moscow leaders that the Soviet regime was the only solution for the Armenian people. These endeavors were brought to fruition in a resolution adopted in the Fifth Congress of the Soviets, July 1918. According to that resolution, all the activities of Dashnaktsutiun were to be considered treason.¹⁹

The turn of events in Baku further deteriorated Bolshevik-ARF relations. The joint military campaign in Baku had not been able to stop the Turkish army, which continued to tighten the siege and threatened to capture the city. Despite Shahumian's opposition, a British regiment was invited to assist in the defense of Baku. Shahumian and twenty-six commissars, taking advantage of the confusion, secretly left town, and a provisional government was formed on ARF initiative to take control of the affairs and defend the city's Christian population. Meanwhile, Shahumian and the commissars were arrested and executed seemingly by the British, but the Commissariat for Armenian Affairs put the blame on Dashnaktsutiun. Avanesov, the director of the Commissariat, sent an acrimonious radio message to the ARF Central Committee and the ARF Eastern Bureau, holding them responsible for Shahumian's death.²⁰ The immediate reverberation in Moscow of the Baku incidents was the cancellation of an ARF-Bolshevik or Soviet-Armenian high-ranking meeting. Liparit Nazarians attests that this time, as a result of Sahak Ter Gabrielian's efforts, Lenin had agreed to a meeting between ARF representatives Zavriev, Nazarians, and Chilingarian and Bolshevik officials Kamenev, Avanesov, and Ter Gabrielian himself. On the designated date, 27 August 1918, the ARF delegates waited in vain for the Bolshevik leaders to show up. That same night Zavriev and Nazarians were arrested and imprisoned. Poghos Makintsiyan, the devoted employee of the Commissariat, had managed to persuade the People's Commissariat for Nationalities to sabotage the meeting and have the representatives of the Armenian government held hostage in retaliation for Shahumian's execution. The prisoners were released in March 1919, but were denied permission to leave Moscow. It was only in the spring of 1920 that Nazarians managed to get out. Zavriev had already died of typhoid.²¹

Because of extreme anti-Dashnaktsutiun activities in the Commissariat for Armenian Affairs, Vahan Terian resigned from his post as the Commissariat's deputy chair. He strongly criticized his new colleagues and called them opportunists who use every occasion to vent their hatred and animosity against the independent Armenian state and the Dashnakist party running its government. Gurgen Haikuni, who later replaced Vahan Terian, during the Third International, convened in March 1919 in Moscow, spoke vehemently and disparagingly, making virulent remarks against the bourgeois nationalist parties of Transcaucasia, Dashnaktsutiun in particular. For him "national independences" were a perfidy of the counterrevolutionaries to destroy Bolshevism; the Republic of Armenia was "a mocking insult to the workers and peasants," and the Armenian government "a pack of bandits." He reassured the Bolshevik leaders that the Armenian Communist Party would struggle until the ultimate victory of Bolshevism in Armenia.²²

Now, compare these subversive activities with the efforts of the ousted Ittihadist leaders in Moscow and in Europe to effect an accord between Bolshevik Russia and Kemalist Turkey and to secure Russian assistance for Turkey.

The Bolshevik-Young Turk accord, signed on 27 November 1919 in Baku, lay the foundation for the future conspiracy against independent Armenia; it also gave the Turks a free hand to go on with their plans for a final solution to the Armenian Question. Rumors about the possibility of such an agreement had stirred concern and apprehension in the Armenian leadership, but the Bolshevik leaders in Armenia kept denying it. To investigate the veracity of these rumors, the ARF Bureau decided to send three of its members, Arshak Jamalian, Simon Vratsian, and Rouben Ter Minassian, to meet Hmayak Nazaretian, the first secretary of the Communist Party Transcaucasian Bureau. As Rouben notes, Nazaretian confirmed the truth of the accord by his silence and added that the new Moscow policy would require an increased propaganda and agitation in Armenia.²³ Shortly before that meeting, in a secret conference of the Armenian branch of the Russian Communist Party in Yerevan in January 1920, the sovietization of Armenia was discussed. According to some Soviet sources, it was decided to take immediate action to overthrow the Dashnakist government and expedite the process of the sovietization.²⁴ Other sources indicate that the idea of immediate action was rejected by some Bolshevik leaders, who, according to Simon Vratsian, had serious concerns about the limited number of the Communist leadership and the party's rank and file. They thought that a Soviet regime or a dictatorship of the proletariat was premature for a backward country like Armenia where there were almost no workers. They also pointed out that

without outside help it was impossible to overthrow the Armenian government. A unanimous decision was made, in any event, to intensify Bolshevik activities in Armenia.

Despite the increasing Bolshevik anti-government agitation, some kind of relationship was maintained between Armenian government officials and the Bolshevik leaders in Armenia. At the end of 1919, when persecution and incarceration of Bolsheviks intensified in Georgia, ARF Bureau members as well as the Tiflis Central Committee continued their friendly relations with the Armenian Bolsheviks. They even helped them to escape from prison and provided them safe refuge. The Armenian government welcomed Bolsheviks expelled from other parts of Transcaucasia and trusted them with responsible jobs in the government, in the area of education in particular. The main motive was twofold: many of these Armenian Bolsheviks were personal friends of the ARF leaders and fellow socialists, sharing persecution and prison during the czarist regime. There was also the hope of using the Bolsheviks as mediators to procure the Moscow government's goodwill toward independent Armenia. Despite the fact that many ARF leaders pushed for strong punitive measures against the agitators, the government showed tolerance and leniency toward them throughout the first tumultuous months of 1920.²⁵ This attitude prevailed until May 1920, when the ARF Bureau took over the government. Today, in hindsight, this permissiveness can be interpreted as either a desperate reaction to the situation, that is, the absence of a better choice, or naïveté and political immaturity.

At the ARF special conference in Bucharest, after the collapse of Armenian independence, the ARF Bureau was criticized both ways: for having developed close ties with the Bolsheviks, thus, inviting the suspicion of the Allies; and for not recognizing the importance of the Bolsheviks in the Caucasian situation.

The sovietization of Azerbaijan, on 28 April 1920, became a decisive factor for the future of the Armenian republic. The Bolshevik presence in the Caucasus was institutionalized. Baku became a major center for Bolshevik decision-making and control of implementation of central policies for Transcaucasia. A close link was established between the Azerbaijani Communist government and the Communist Party branch in Armenia. Armenian Bolshevik leaders expressed strong optimism that with the sovietization of Azerbaijan the final victory of the Armenian proletariat over the Dashnak government was imminent.²⁶ Henceforth communication between Armenian and Azerbaijani Bolsheviks consisted mainly of Armenian appeals for help, food, and supplies to overthrow the Dashnakist government.

The Armenian Bolsheviks perhaps were more realistic and clairvoyant than the Yerevan government. The latter welcomed the sovietization of Azerbaijan with joy and satisfaction, hoping that the fall of the Musavatist government would put an end to the bloody conflicts over Karabagh and Zangezur, and would bring about their final unification with Armenia. To the surprise of the Armenian government, in the first hours of the sovietization of Azerbaijan, a memorandum was received in Yerevan demanding the evacuation in three days of "the indisputable Azerbaijani territories." The issue was so clear for the Azerbaijanis that they did not even bother to name the territories in question.²⁷ The memorandum was significant in setting the pace for a continuing Armeno-Azerbaijani antagonistic relationship. In line with the memorandum, Khosrov Bek Sultanov, the Azerbaijani governor of Karabagh, sent an ultimatum to Armenian leaders in Shushi (the administrative center of Karabagh), demanding they stop the resistance and turn the government over to the Revkom, since, the ultimatum read, the Red Army had already entered Karabagh and there was no sense to go on fighting. The Bolsheviks promised to begin negotiations with Dro only after the Armenians fulfilled these terms. In spite of this ultimatum, the Karabagh provisional council decided not to engage in negotiations with the Bolsheviks and to continue the armed resistance. A similar directive was received from the Yerevan government. In defiance of all this, Dro met with Bolshevik representatives Levandovskii and Sahak Ter Gabrielian, and on 27 May moved on to Zangezur and turned the Karabagh government together with the money and the military supplies at his disposal over to S. Hambardzumian, the Bolshevik leader of Zangezur.²⁸

With the escalation of Bolshevik agitations in Armenia and the 1 May Bolshevik uprising in Yerevan and some major cities in Armenia, the Yerevan-Moscow relationship drifted from direct and indirect appeals for recognition and assistance to one that was solely reactive. The ARF Bureau, headed by Hamo Ohandjanian, took over the government to quell the unrest, punish the Armenian Bolshevik activists, and restore peace and stability to the republic. It should be noted that with the ARF taking charge of government affairs, the separation of party and state, which had at least been narrowly maintained thus far, was abolished.

The first step the ARF Bureau took to restabilize the republic was the mobilization of the members of the Dashnaktsutiun party. This measure aimed to ward off "the danger threatening the Armenian homeland and statehood."²⁹ The Bureau-government then dispatched a number of envoys to convince the Bolshevik leaders to cooperate since the moment was portentous, internal upheaval was detrimental, and the nation needed unity to be able to defend the country against the immi-

inent danger of Azerbaijani and Turkish assaults. On 10 May 1920, for example, Generals Ghamazian and Hakhverdian of the Armenian army appealed to Musayelian, chair of the Bolshevik military Revkom in Alexandrapol, to cooperate with the government. Musayelian's response was naturally one of indifference and contempt. He retorted, "It is only the Russian proletariat who can help us. The Soviet government of Russia will not allow anyone to harm the Armenian people if they sever their ties with the Dashnak government."³⁰ The failure of peaceful measures led the Bureau-government to use force. In a period of two weeks law and order was restored, but life in the republic never again returned to normal.

The means employed by the Bureau-government to stifle the wave of discontent can be a subject of debate. Why were the old Western Armenian fedayee troops used? ARF sources indicate that they were the revolutionary arm of the party, implementing force in the needed moment, as foreseen and ratified in the party's Ninth General Congress. These sources also point out the frustration and disappointment of Western Armenians in view of the indifference many Eastern Armenians showed toward the concept of independent Armenia. Soviet sources, on the other hand, stress that the only way the Dashnak government could destroy the wave of discontent and unrest was by using the Western Armenian fedayees; the locals, peasants, and workers, they maintain, would not cooperate, for they were fed up with the situation.

The persecution of Bolshevik leaders, amplified in exaggerated reports in the Soviet press, created strong public opinion against the Armenian government. The Communist Party of Azerbaijan sent a memorandum on 20 June 1920, condemning the persecution of their Communist comrades. They threatened to appeal for the intervention of the Moscow government. Armenians, they claimed, were ruthlessly killing Communists in Armenia, and at the same time were "shamelessly" sending their delegation to Moscow to seek help.³¹ In a letter from his prison cell to the Transcaucasian Regional Committee of the Russian Communist Party, Musayelian alleged that Levon Shant had advised the Dashnak government not to heed Chicherin's protests and to go on with persecution of the Communists in Armenia since he had convinced Chicherin that no Communist had been executed in Armenia.³²

Until the spring of 1920, Moscow-Yerevan negotiations took place on an unofficial ground. The international political situation, the continued and at times successful struggle of the White Russians against the Bolsheviks, the promises of the Allies, and the humanitarian aid coming from American relief organizations had assured the Dashnaksutuun and for that matter the Armenian government that the solu-

tion to the Armenian Question was to come from the West. They still hoped, as the Allied Powers' propaganda suggested, that the Bolsheviks had illegally usurped the Russian government and would soon be ousted. Besides, they believed that any attempt at rapprochement with the Moscow government would alienate the Allies who had already extended their *de facto* recognition to Armenia and had promised to reach final solution at the Paris Peace Conference coming up in August. Western orientation and faith in the Allies was so overwhelming that some ARF leaders even suggested initiating ARF-Bolshevik relations simply to incite the Allies so that they would expedite the fulfillment of their promises and would take practical measures to win the Armenians back. Reports from the Armenian delegation in Paris, imbued with optimism, strengthened the government's Western orientation. Yet the delegation, at least in the second half of 1920, even before the finalization of the Treaty of Sèvres, should have already detected the change in climate. Was their failure to do so the result of a lack of diplomatic sensitivity or of the overwhelming signals of goodwill and diplomatic double-dealings?

The eventual victory of the Bolsheviks in all of Russia and the Red Army approaching Transcaucasia compelled the Armenian government to seriously pursue a *modus vivendi* with the Soviets. According to Hambardzum Terterian, a member of the future Armenian delegation to Moscow, Ordzhonikidze's message was another impetus for the Armenian government to initiate relations with Moscow. The commander of the Red Army in Caucasia, had sent word from Vladikavkaz that if Armenia wished to be recognized by the Russian government, it should emerge from isolation and enter into negotiations with Moscow.³³ Soon a delegation was formed of Levon Shant (chair), Hambardzum Terterian, and Levon Zarafian. Aramayis Erznkian and Simonik Pirumian, two Mensheviks recently converted to internationalist socialism, joined the delegation to supply input when the issue of the reunification of Karabagh and Armenia was brought up. The delegation departed for Moscow, while the army kept fighting in Karabagh and Zangezur. The military encounter at this time, however, was not with the Musavatists but with the Red Azerbaijanis who had the full fledged assistance of the Red Army. With the involvement of the Red Army in the fight, ARF-Bolshevik relations entered a new phase consisting of diplomatic negotiation, coupled with armed confrontations. The situation was a reflection of the Bolshevik policy of military aggression and territorial occupation.

Because of the scarcity of means of transportation, the Armenian delegates did not reach Moscow till the end of May. Soon after their arrival, a meeting was arranged with Chicherin. Karakhan, Chicherin's Armenian aid, was also present. Chicherin brought up the subject of

the Bolshevik uprising in Armenia and the violent countermeasures taken by the Armenian government. The Armenian delegates had no way to respond but to profess ignorance, for the news of the uprisings had not yet reached them. During the negotiations, the Bolsheviks were mainly interested in receiving the Yerevan government's assurance that Armenians would not strike Turkey when Turks and Bolsheviks began their joint operations to oust the European imperialists from Turkish soil. The Bolsheviks also suggested that the Armenian government break ties with the Allies and authorize the Moscow government to withdraw agenda items pertaining to Armenian issues during the peace conference. On the question of eventual annexation of Western Armenian provinces to the Armenian republic, Chicherin's negative stance was obvious at the outset. He reasoned that according to Bolshevik tenets, territories are distributed based not on historic facts but on the principle that "the land belongs to the laborer." With statistical reports and documentation, the Armenian delegates succeeded in changing Chicherin's mind (these reports and documents are said to be in Yerevan).³⁴ Some agreement was reached concerning the Western Armenian provinces; the details were discussed, and the signing of the treaty seemed to be only a matter of days away. But there were other factors pushing their way into the scene behind the negotiating table. The Bolshevik leaders of Armenia, especially those who had fled the Bureau-government's persecution and had taken refuge in Baku, were trying hard to abort the Yerevan-Moscow accord. There was also the resistance of the Azerbaijani government to relinquishing its rights in Karabagh and Zangezur. Above all, there was the impending Russo-Turkish accord taking shape in Moscow.

The atmosphere was changing gradually. At the end of June, Chicherin returned to the negotiating table with another draft in which Karabagh went to Azerbaijan, and Zangezur was declared in dispute. In return, Armenians would receive Nakhichevan. Uncertainty as to whether to accept or reject the terms led the delegation to wire the draft to Yerevan and wait for an answer. It is not known whether the Armenian government took long to answer or communication was deliberately held up. The Moscow government probably needed to drag out the finalization of the treaty until it could settle some important questions with other interested parties in Transcaucasia. But if the Armenian delegation had consented to the conditions and signed the accord then and there, a treaty would have materialized, opening, perhaps, better opportunities for the preservation of the republic. In any event, in that period of one month's idleness for the Armenian delegation, Moscow became the scene of secret negotiations and decisions on the fate of Transcaucasia. In the meantime the delegation learned in surprise and dismay that the two Karabagh representatives had secretly left Moscow. Terterian

attests that they had received five million rubles to expedite the establishment of Soviet rule in Zangezur and Karabagh. The money was allocated for propaganda purposes, and the military assistance was to come from the Russian Eleventh Army upon Azerbaijani request. The Eleventh Army would be invited to cross the Zangezur region and extend protection to the Nakhichevani Turks against Armenian assaults. The formula was found to justify the occupation of both Zangezur, declared in dispute in the last draft, and Nakhichevan, the only region among the territories in dispute assigned to Armenia according to the same draft.

How was the delegation spending its time in Moscow? The only source available to this author, Hambardzum Terterian's memoirs, published some thirty years later in *Hairenik*, does not say much, and there were no official records kept of the negotiations; Terterian attests to that fact. Today's student of Armenian history would exclaim with amazement: "How unprofessional." Terterian also attests that surprisingly the meetings were usually held late at night, and there were always two Nagan revolvers lying on the negotiation table. This entire image is a representation of just how important—or unimportant, to be precise—these talks were to the Moscow government. Concerning other activities in Moscow, Terterian notes that Levon Shant staunchly rejected the idea of meeting Turkish diplomats directly and trying to find a way to settle the question of Western Armenian lands. Levon Shant believed that the delegation was not authorized to do that, and, besides, he would never sit at a table with the butchers of the Armenian nation. Lack of political astuteness or the overwhelming emotions of an artist? The more important question, however is that in this early stage of Turkish-Armenian conflict, what could these meetings bring? The Armenians could perhaps play their own game as an equal, and the underlying distrust and caution the Turks felt toward the Bolsheviks could have benefited the Armenian position.

Moscow was the scene of secret dealings. Azerbaijanis were there to grab their share of the pie; the Turkish lobby was operating incessantly; and the Armenian Bolsheviks were adding fuel by disseminating blown up tales of executions of Bolshevik comrades in Armenia. Neither the relatively large Armenian community in Moscow nor the Dashnakist network was efficient enough to counter these activities.

At the beginning of July, Chicherin informed the Armenian delegation that the negotiations were terminated in Moscow and would be resumed in Yerevan. The Moscow government was sending Boris Legran, its plenipotentiary representative, and representative of the Communist Party Central Committee to conduct the negotiations. A pro forma meeting was set up with Legran in the presence of his Armenian aide, Sahak Ter Gabrielian, after which the Armenian delegation

spent another futile month waiting for directives from the Yerevan government. Legran had already left Moscow when the Armenian delegation received a wire with the Yerevan government's belated reaction to the last draft of the agreement. The Armenian government was reinforcing its demands regarding not only Mountainous Karabagh but also the Karabagh lowlands. A second telegram informed the delegation of the capture of Goris, the capital of Zangezur, by the Red Army and the murder of Vahan Khoren and Arshak Shirinian, two high-ranking Dashnakist leaders and members of the Armenian Parliament. The delegation was asked to protest these acts.

In the meantime, while the Armenian delegation remained stranded in Moscow, Legran was heading toward Tiflis and Baku. He was accompanied by Ter Gabrielian and Khalil Pasha, a convicted Ittihadist and brother of Enver Pasha. Khalil Pasha's participation in this journey was not a coincidence. He had been working in Moscow on behalf of the Ittihadists and as a representative of Mustafa Kemal for quite some time to pave the way for a consort and cooperation between Moscow and Mustafa Kemal's new Nationalist Turkey. The Caucasian repercussions of such an agreement, if it materialized, would be a pro-Azerbaijani course of action by the Russians and territorial losses for Armenia.

The Armenian delegation had not reached Yerevan yet, when on 10 August 1920, Arshak Jamalian and Artashes Babalian, representatives of the Yerevan government, signed a cease-fire agreement with Legran in Tiflis. The cease-fire was bringing to an end the battle raging for a month in Nakhichevan and Zangezur between the Red Army and the Armenian troops under Dro and Garegin Nzhdeh. Paradoxically, this cease-fire agreement was the first official document signed between the two governments; it resulted in territorial loss for Armenians, but, at the same time, the recognition of the Armenian republic. The Allies, who had not shown any interest and offered no substantial assistance to prevent this outcome, were needless to say very upset to hear about the agreement. Until final terms were defined, Armenia was to relinquish Karabagh, Zangezur, and Nakhichevan; however, Nzhdeh continued fighting in Zangezur and keeping the Turks and the Red Army out of the region.

Ironically, the same day that the cease-fire agreement was signed, the Armenian delegation in Paris was proudly and victoriously signing the Treaty of Sèvres. The provisions made for the solution of the Armenian Question in that treaty, the arrival of British military aid worth forty million pounds sterling, and moreover, promises made for more military supplies once again alleviated the Armenian government's deep concerns caused by the threats of the Red Army. The new hopes reaffirmed Western orientation and translated into a firm resolution to

fight against Bolshevik and Kemalist encroachment and look up to the Allies for final salvation. Consequently, the Moscow factor, dependence on Bolshevik mediation was almost abandoned.

The future of Armenia, however, was being forged not on the negotiating tables in Europe but paradoxically, through the Russo-Turkish talks in Moscow and in the Congress of the Peoples of the East in Baku. The Russo-Turkish treaty, which materialized on 24 August, stipulated mutual assistance to facilitate the transportation of men and equipment through each other's territories. According to the treaty, the Moscow government denied recognition to any treaty signed by a Turkish representative without the consent of Nationalist Turkey (the Treaty of Sèvres was thus discredited by the main players of the Armenian game). Upon receiving news of the finalized treaty, Mustafa Kemal authorized Kiazim Karabekir to begin his long-coveted military campaign against Armenia. The blow was too heavy for the Armenian government to bear. Appeals were made to the Allies for help and to Legran in Tiflis for the Bolsheviks to intervene and stop Mustafa Kemal. The Armenians were obviously not aware of the Russo-Turkish secret agreement, and Legran was covering up, accusing the Armenians of initiating assaults on Turkey.

The Armenian delegation had returned from Moscow and was stressing the importance of coming to terms with the Bolsheviks, even at the price of compromise. Armenia was caught between two fires, Turks from the west and the Red Army from Idjevan (Karvansara) and Nakhichevan. The intervention of Moscow seemed to be indispensable. After continuous postponement by both sides (an indication of the Armenian reluctance to seek a final accord with the Bolsheviks and Moscow leaders' indifference toward Armenian demands), arrangements were finally made for Legran to visit Armenia, and so, on 11 October 1920, Legran finally arrived in Yerevan accompanied by a large group of Armenian and Azerbaijani Bolsheviks. He had come, however, not to resume talks but to deliver an ultimatum demanding the Armenian government denounce the Treaty of Sèvres and accept the arbitration of the Moscow government in defining and finalizing the borders of the republic. The Soviets also demanded that the Red Army be allowed to cross Armenia in order to reach the Kemalist armies.

The Armenian government was split. Some suggested outright rejection; others were in favor of working out a compromise. After some negotiations the imposed terms were softened with the concern of protecting at least the rights of the free republic. Later, Ter Gabrielian secretly informed Terterian that should the Armenian government reject the ultimatum, a decision had been made to begin military operations against them. Legran left Yerevan carrying the revised draft, which in those circumstances could be considered not so bad an alternative

to the Treaty of Sèvres. The draft agreement called for the inclusion of Kars and Alexandrapol in Armenia and the settlement by referendum later of all Armeno-Azerbaijani disputed lands. On 4 November, in Baku, Legran presented the draft to the Caucasian Bureau (Kavbureau) of the Central Committee of the Russian Communist Party. Stalin and Ordzhonikidze were present. The draft agreement was rejected outright. Shavarsh Amirkhanian, a member of the Armenian Communist Party Central Committee, 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 of the republic.³⁵ Amirkhanian's recommendation was adopted and relayed to Chicherin in Moscow for final approval. Meanwhile the Kemalist army was pushing forward. In fact, Kars and Alexandrapol were occupied when Chicherin sent telegrams to Yerevan and Ankara proposing to mediate, through his representative, Budu Mdivani, to put an end to the bloodshed between the two countries.³⁶

It shall be noted that even before the Armenian military setbacks, before the Moscow government consented to expedite the sovietization of Armenia, the Bolshevik propaganda machine was working full blast to demoralize the army and destroy Armenian resistance. Pamphlets and flyers were being distributed. Fiery speeches were being delivered to the peasants and soldiers encouraging them to boycott the government's appeal for mobilization, to abstain from fighting, and to return home. The propaganda focused mainly on two themes: the first revolved around the idea that the Kemalist soldiers were not looters and slaughterers but simple peasants and workers, "brothers," who came "to liberate us from the yoke of Dashnakist repression"; the second advocated putting down arms and embracing the Bolshevik regime, which promised sugar and bread to the starving peasant. Armenian Bolshevik activists even cooperated with the Kemalist army, especially in Kars, providing them intelligence information, in the hope that the Turks would capture Kars and turn it over to Bolsheviks.

Under the pressure of constant Bolshevik provocations and condemnation of the persecution of Bolsheviks in Armenia, the Armenian government had released imprisoned Bolshevik leaders in Alexandrapol. Despite promises not to engage in anti-government activities, once released, they announced a Bolshevik coup, declaring that Dashnakist rule in Alexandrapol was overthrown. They sent a memorandum to Lieutenant Colonel Arsen Shahmazian, the army commander of the region, to surrender. The Bolshevik "coup" was, of course, put down and the leaders were ousted by Sebouh and his fedayee troops as part of a campaign by the Yerevan government against Soviet encroachment. The question was posed earlier in this paper: was this a proper course of action taken by the Bureau-government? And why was discontent

among the people so deep that Bolshevik propaganda could take root and spread so swiftly? The ARF Bureau was strongly criticized in the Bucharest conference for failing the party ranks, for taking over the government, for dedicating all its efforts to the republic's administration, and, finally, for not resigning after the May uprisings were quelled.³⁷ Could a strong party structure with a vast number of believers in the party's goals and tactics and with a dedicated rank and file resist the spread of Bolshevik propaganda? Could a new government, with not so strong a Dashnakist inclination, find a way with the opposition?

After substantial losses on the Turkish front, the Armenian government signed a cease-fire agreement in 18 November to prevent further Turkish advances until the final arrangements could be made. In addition, appeals for help inundated the desks of the Western diplomats, whose indifference and reluctance to give any assistance was recognized too late by the Armenian government. It was impossible to prevent the tragic outcome of the Turkish-Armenian war; however, there was much criticism during the Tenth ARF General Congress (1924–25) of the Bureau's war strategy. The Bureau-government did not weigh all the options, especially on the diplomatic front. Armenian military power was overestimated and the strength of the enemy underestimated.³⁸

Approaching the Turks in the diplomatic arena was a complex issue for the Armenian government. Every step toward finding a solution with the Turks had to be accepted and digested by both the Armenian leadership and the public. The editorials in *Harach*, the ARF official paper in Yerevan, attempted to explain the necessity of coming to terms with the Turks in order to assure future peaceful coexistence. Later, the Bolsheviks, interpreting the Dashnakist government's attempt at conciliation and the explanatory articles that appeared in *Harach*, accused the ARF of Turkish orientation. Comments and editorializations added to the documents and newspaper articles, preserved in the archives in Soviet Armenia, best reflect this intent.³⁹ Such interpretation was obviously in distinct contradiction with the Bolshevik propaganda of the time, which portrayed the Turkish army as the saviors of the Armenian people from the yoke of Dashnak rule. It was a propaganda tool aimed to slander the Armenian government; it was a cover-up for the Russo-Turkish secret agreement and collaboration against independent Armenia.

The Russo-Turkish agreement was put into effect while both sides were watching each other in distrust, lest one side violate the limits and break the rules of the game. A measure of precaution was taken by the Bolsheviks by organizing a joint attack on Armenia with a group of Turkish Bolshevik activists, led by Mustafa Sufi, who was recently

released from Turkish prison by Russian intervention and had taken refuge in Azerbaijan. The objective of this attack was to gain the upper hand in Armenia and stop the Kemalist army before it could reach the sovietized Muslims of Transcaucasia, a union that would certainly create embarrassment for Moscow.⁴⁰ An example of this game of checks and balances on the Turkish side was the refusal to accept Mdivani's participation in the Turkish-Armenian peace talks in Alexandrapol (the Armenian government had accepted Mdivani's arbitration and had sent him along with the delegation to Alexandrapol). Turkish mistrust toward the Russians had its roots in the long history of hostility and rivalry among the two. Vahan Minakhorian, a member of the Armenian delegation and a Social Revolutionary, quotes Kiazim Karabekir, commander of the Kemalist army, as saying that their accord with the Russians is temporary because there are old, conflicting interests at stake, and the danger from Russia is always present.⁴¹

On 23 November 1920, the day before the Turkish-Armenian talks began in Alexandrapol, the Bureau government submitted its resignation. In an urge to stop the Turks and prevent new massacres, the new government headed by Simon Vratsian consented to denounce the Treaty of Sèvres, a precondition imposed by the Turks before the talks could begin.⁴² The possibilities were limited. Legran, who had been negotiating in Yerevan since 9 November, was proposing sovietization as an alternative to coming to terms with the Turks. And to show his "goodwill," he was even suggesting the admission of a division of the Red Army to protect Armenia against the Turks. The Armenian government refused the involvement of the Red Army, reasoning that it would be an actual occupation of Armenia; nevertheless, as was said before, the Armenian government agreed to let Mdivani participate in the peace talks with the Turks. After the Turks objected to Mdivani's presence in the peace talks, he remained in Alexandrapol and with the support of the relatively strong Bolshevik contingent in the area engaged in the preparatory activities for the sovietization of Armenia.

ARF sources insist that Legran was in Yerevan only to push the process of the sovietization of Armenia. In order to neutralize the only obstacle, the organized resistance of Dashnaktsutium still in power, he aimed to rupture the party from within. He found supporters in the party. A group, who called themselves left wing Dashnaktsakans, headed by Haik Avalian, Arshak Grigorian, and Tadeus Ter Ghazarian, approached Legran and expressed their approval of the Red Army's entering Armenia and promised to arrest and hand over Dashnakist government officials and even execute some of them after sovietization. Along with the left wing Dashnaks, there were also some members of the Dashnakist faction of the Parliament who sided with Legran's proposition with the purpose of making the sovietization process as smooth

and painless as possible. They strove to disseminate the idea of the continuation of independent Armenia and tried to prepare the ground for some cooperation between the ARF and the future Bolshevik government. Disappointed with Avalian's extremism and his secret dealings with Legran, soon they pulled out and remained inactive to become once again a decisive force toward effecting the February uprising.⁴³

Subversive actions were taken also to crush Armenian military resistance: Smirnov, a Red Army commander, on 26 November sent a dispatch to Garegin Nzhdeh, still fighting the Red Army in Zangezur, with a demand for surrender. He reasoned that a Soviet coup had been carried out in Armenia and there was no sense in holding on to Zangezur. On 28 November, an Armenian regiment was segregated from the Eleventh Army and put at Armenian Revkom member Avis Nourijanian's disposal for the "special task." Orders were sent by Gekker, the commander in chief of the Eleventh Army, to all troops to assist the Armenian regiment in that "special task."⁴⁴ Richard Hovannianian's research, however, indicates that instructions coming from Moscow were different, and only the Armenian Revkom's hasty action changed the course. Legran was in Yerevan to introduce the sovietization of Armenia with the consent of the Armenian government. His instructions were not to use force in order to avoid the intervention of the Allied Powers. But Armrevkom (the Armenian Revolutionary Committee), already formed in mid-November under Sargis Kasian, superseded him, with the approval of Ordzhonikidze, and the support of the Armenian regiment crossed the border, entered Idjevan and declared Armenia sovietized. The Armrevkom's proclamation of sovietization talked about the anger of the Armenian people against the Dashnakist government's adventurous and heedless actions and anarchy in the republic. The proclamation reassured that the Communist Party with the help of the Red Army, the liberator of all deprived nations, is leading the Armenian uprising to crush this bastion of the Allied Powers.⁴⁵ When Vratsian protested against the Revkom's action, Legran apologized and called it a misunderstanding. A decision was made to send an Armenian unit to push the intruders back and to ask Russian representative Bobrishjev to go to Idjevan to oversee their retreat. But the few hundred Armenian soldiers, confronted with an aggressive army of six thousand, surrendered and joined the revolutionaries. It was a point of no return. Legran was instructed to take immediate action, and on 30 November, he presented Vratsian an ultimatum demanding the immediate acceptance of the Soviet regime.

The Armenian government was under tremendous pressure from both the Soviets and the Turks. They were watching each other's advances, and in order to supersede the other, each was pressuring the Armenians to accept their terms immediately or face grave consequences.

To discuss the situation and find the best solution, a meeting was convened in Yerevan with the ARF faction of the parliament, the current and former cabinet members, the ARF Bureau, and some ARF leaders participating. The discussion was focused on two possible solutions: The majority was in favor of unequivocal surrender to the Soviets to avoid Turkish encroachment and imminent massacres. The leftist Dashnaks in favor of immediate sovietization joined this group. The second solution was to continue fighting. This group was convinced that the Bolsheviks would not defend the republic against the Turks anyway, and that they would exacerbate internal turmoil and weaken the country. They believed that an entente with the Turks was feasible and that Armenians could even use Turkish assistance to defend the country against the Bolsheviks. A telephone call from Khatisian in Alexandrapol, announcing that the Turks had rejected any compromise, and that the harsh terms remained unchanged, made the picture clearer. Accepting the Turkish terms was tantamount to creating an amputated state totally dependent on Turkey. Surrender to the Soviets, therefore, remained the only option. The ARF Bureau decided to take that option and leave the country in order to pave the way for a smooth transition. The government resigned and a transitional government was formed with two ARF leaders, Dro and Hambardzum Terterian, participating.

Negotiations began on 1 December. A draft accord called the Sovietization Act was prepared and submitted to the last meeting of Dashnaktsutium that night. The treaty was signed at 2 P.M. on 2 December. At 6 P.M. the same day, the government was turned over to Dro, the commissar-in-chief and the minister of war, and Silin, the Soviet representative, appointed as the commissar of Armenia. As the new representative of the republic, Dro informed Khatisian about the collapse of the government and left to the discretion of the delegation the decision to sign or reject the treaty with the Turks. Under Turkish pressure, after midnight, in the wee hours of 3 December, Khatisian signed the treaty on behalf of the government, which had already resigned. A clause in the treaty called for the ratification of the treaty by the Armenian parliament and by the Supreme Assembly of Nationalist Turkey. That condition was never met. The treaty lacked authority in more ways than one, and it could have been denounced by the new leaders of the republic on many grounds. On the contrary, it was observed and used by the future leaders and historians of Soviet Armenia to hammer into the minds of Armenian generations that the Dashnaks sold the country to the Turks. As an additional propaganda tool, the treaty between the "Dashnakist government of Armenia and Turkey" is included in the volume entitled *Hoktemberian sotsialistakan metz revoliutsian yev sovetakan ishkhanutian haghtanake Hayastanum*:

Pastatghteri yev niuteri zhoghovatzu (The Great October Socialist Revolution and the victory of Soviet rule over Armenia: A collection of documents and materials). But the Act of Sovietization of Armenia, which had been published earlier in the Russian version of this same volume, was censored out. There was no need to admit that the ARF leaders, down to the last moment of agony, labored to secure conditions to benefit the future of Armenia. These conditions included the continuation of an independent Armenian state under the name of Independent Socialist Soviet Republic; the maintaining by the Armenian republic the entire former Erevan Gubernia and a part of Kars, the region of Zangezur and parts of Karabagh, Kazakh, and the former Tiflis Gubernia which belonged to the Armenian republic until 28 September 1920; the providing of military aid by the Red Army to defend the Armenian republic against Turkey and to push the Turks behind the boundaries before the Turkish invasion. These conditions were obviously violated by the Soviets.

The signing of the Act of Sovietization of Armenia put an end to ARF-Bolshevik relations for the year 1920. They were to be resumed later, once again at the ARF's initiative, to negotiate albeit futilely a workable relationship with the Soviet Armenian government for the sake of the best interests of the Armenian people.

Why was Armenia sovietized when the messages coming from Moscow and the course of action taken by some Moscow leaders indicated the Bolshevik government's indifference toward immediate action against independent Armenia? According to Hambardzum Terterian, after the sovietization of Azerbaijan the Red Army intended to march toward India through Iran and bring to an end British influence in the East. Terterian attested that illiterate and ignorant Red soldiers in the streets of Yerevan boasted that they were getting ready to march on India to raise the red flag of revolution; then, they said, they would return home to elect their emperor.⁴⁶ It was clear that there was no plan yet to impose the Soviet regime on Armenia.

The most obvious answer to the enigma is the successful campaign of the Armenian Bolsheviks to abort any attempt of ARF-Bolshevik rapprochement. For reasons of personal gain—an opportunity to rule a country—and following faithfully the Communist ideology of internationalism, they could not bear to see the burgeoning of a nationalistic state within the boundaries of an empire inherited by the Bolsheviks. There is ample evidence of anti-Dashnaksutium and anti-Armenia (Dashnakist Armenia) propaganda, speeches, newspaper articles, flyers, disseminating discontent and seeds of hatred and unrest in Armenia. There is ample evidence also of Armenian Bolshevik provocations in Baku and Moscow accusing the Dashnakist government of pressing the ideology of nationalism, working against the interests of workers

and peasants, and persecuting, torturing, and killing Bolsheviks. Together with their allies in the inner circles of the Moscow leadership, Armenian Bolsheviks were doing everything to abort Dashnaktsutiun's quest for a peaceful coexistence with Soviet Russia. They shaped opinions in the leadership and influenced decisions and policies. Their goals, of course, coincided with Bolshevik interests in Transcaucasia and beyond. Krassin's statements further clarify the role played by the Armenian Bolsheviks in the sovietization of Armenia. After the February uprising and the ousting of the Bolshevik Revkom from Armenia, the Red Army marched on Armenia and captured Yerevan once again on 2 April 1921. Avetis Aharonian, who was still working as the representative of the Armenian republic in Paris, describes his protest against the Red Army's invasion. Krassin, a high ranking Soviet official, had given him this explanation: "We do not have a special interest, neither economic, nor political in Armenia. Armenia is not valued as a mediator in international relations either. You do not have a network of railways. You do not have Baku or Batum. We will never let go of Baku, and for that matter of Azerbaijan, but Armenia is different. We do not wish to spread our territorial dominion; we are not only interested in lands; we have enough. . . . As to the regime, Armenian Bolsheviks have convinced us that the Armenian nation aspires to Communism. If that were not true, we would have gone against imposing our regime over you. . . . We need an independent Armenia to separate Azerbaijan from Turkey, the vaster the better. Don't let our friendly relations with Turkey fool you. That relation is temporary. And if Turkey manages to expand to reach common borders with Azerbaijan, it will constantly incite the Azerbaijanis against us."⁴⁷

The Russian relationship with the Allied Powers was another factor that promoted the sovietization of Armenia. It was not feasible for Russia to reach India and confront the British there. A more easily attainable goal would be the retrieval of all the territories of the former Russian empire. But Russians kept postponing the sovietization of Armenia to avoid inviting possible Allied involvement in the Caucasus. Meanwhile, Kemalist Turkey, which had received substantial aid from Bolshevik Russia for use against the Allies, was doing nothing of the kind. On the contrary, the Turkish army was using the military aid to expand eastward. Thus, the threat to Bolshevik Russia in Transcaucasia and especially in Armenia did not come from the Allies, whose promises to guard Armenia against Turkey and Russia remained unfulfilled. Bolsheviks knew very well that the Allies had lost interest in the Caucasus, especially Armenia, and were trying to normalize relations with Nationalist Turkey. The real danger came from Turkey and Pan-Turanist aspirations. An Armenia completely dependent on Turkey would have been a constant menace to them, and that menace had to be eliminated before the Turks had the chance to create one. □

NOTES

1. According to Simon Vratsian, of the 203 delegates participating in the congress 113 were members of the Dashnaktsutiun party. See Simon Vratsian, *Hayastani Hanrapetutium* (Republic of Armenia), 2d rev. ed. (1958; reprint, Tehran: Alik Press, 1982), p. 34.
2. A. N. Mnatsakanian, ed., *Hoktemberian sotsialistakan metz revoliutsian yev sovetakan ishkhanutian haghtanake Hayastanum: Pastatqhteri yev niuteri zhoghovatsu* (The Great October Socialist Revolution and the victory of Soviet rule over Armenia: A collection of documents and materials) (Yerevan: Academy of Sciences of Armenian SSR, 1960), no. 45, pp. 73-74.
3. *Ibid.*, no 52, p. 83.
4. Lendrush Khurshudian, *Sovetakan Rusastane yev haikakan hartse* (Soviet Russia and the Armenian Question) (Yerevan: Hayastan Press, 1977), p. 30.
5. Richard G. Hovannisian, *Armenia on the Road to Independence, 1918* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: Univ. of California Press, 1967), p. 100.
6. *Idem*, *The Republic of Armenia*, vol. 1 (Berkeley and Los Angeles: Univ. of California Press, 1971), p. 438.
7. For details on the negotiations and signing of the Treaty of Brest-Litovsk, see Hovannisian, *Armenia on the Road to Independence*, pp. 101-5.
8. Rouben [Ter Minassian], *Hai heghapokhakan me hishataknere* (The memoirs of an Armenian revolutionary), vol. 7 (Los Angeles: Horizon Press, 1952), pp. 138-39.
9. Liparit Nazarians, "Hai Heghapokhakan Dashnaktsutian yev Khorhrdayin Ishkhanutian mijev hamadzainutian pordzer" (Attempts at agreement between the Armenian Revolutionary Federation and the Soviet government), *Droshak*, 1928, no 8-9, p. 231.
10. Arshak [Jamalian] (Moscow) to Avetik [Sahakian], 28 March 1918. State Historical Archives, Yerevan, fund 222, list 1, doc. 130.
11. Nazarians, "Hai Heghapokhakan Dashnaktsutian yev Khorhrdayin Ishkhanutian mijev hamadzainutian pordzer," p. 232.
12. Rouben, *Hai heghapokhakan me hishataknere*, pp. 141-44.
13. *Kaghvatzner H. H. D. 9rd endhanur zhoghovi voroshumnerits* (Excerpts from the decisions of the ARF Ninth General Congress) (Yerevan: Urardia Press, 1920), p. 6.
14. Simon Vratsian, *Hayastani Hanrapetutium*, p. 360.
15. Avetis Aharonian, *Sardarabadits minchev Sevr yev Lozan* (From Sardarabad to Sèvres and Lausanne) (Boston: Hairenik Press, 1943), pp. 22-23.
16. ARF Archives, Watertown, Massachusetts, section D, file 1406a, doc. 1.
17. Stepan Shahumian, *Yerker* (Works), vol. 3 (Yerevan: Haipethrat, 1958), p. 147.
18. Mnatsakanian, *Hoktemberian sotsialistakan metz revoliutsian*, no. 152, pp. 234-35.
19. Gabriel Lazian, *Hayastan yev Hai Dat* (Armenia and the Armenian Question) (reprint, Tehran: Armen Publishing 1985), p. 196.
20. Mnatsakanian, *Hoktemberian sotsialistakan metz revoliutsian*, no. 161, pp. 256-258.

21. Nazarians, "Hai Heghapokhakan Dashnaktsutian yev Khorhrdayin Ishkhanutian mijev hamadzainutian pordzer," p. 233.
22. Hovannesian, *Republic of Armenia*, vol. 1, p. 412.
23. Rouben, *Hai heghapokhakani me hishataknere*, vol. 7, p. 268.
24. Mnatsakanian, *Hoktemberian sotsialistakan metz revoliutsian*, no. 191, p. 303.
25. Alexandre Khatisian, *Hayastani hanrapetutian tzagumn u zargatsume* (The emergence and development of the Republic of Armenia) (Beirut: Hamazgain Press, 1968), p. 208.
26. Mnatsakanian, *Hoktemberian sotsialistakan metz revoliutsian*, no. 197, p. 315. The document is a congratulatory note sent by the Armenian branch of the All-Russian Communist Party to Narimanov, the chair of the military Revkom of Azerbaijan. However, other sources do not confirm the actual dispatch of the message.
27. Vratsian, *Hayastani Hanrapetutiun*, p. 377. See also Hambardzum Terterian, "Hayastani hanrapetutian yev Khorhrdayin Rusastani banaktsutiunnere" (The negotiations between the Republic of Armenia and Soviet Russia), first installment, *Hairenik Amsagir* 335 (1954).
28. ARF Archives, section D, file 1649, doc. 1.
29. For the text of the declaration of mobilization, see ARF Archives, section E, file 120, doc. 3.
30. Mnatsakanian, *Hoktemberian sotsialistakan metz revoliutsian*, no. 200, p. 318.
31. Ibid., no. 222, p. 347.
32. Ibid., no. 227, p. 350.
33. Terterian, "Hayastani hanrapetutian yev Khorhrdayin Rusastani banaktsutiunnere," first installment, p. 2.
34. Terterian, "Hayastani hanrapetutian yev Khorhrdayin Rusastani banaktsutiunnere" second installment, *Hairenik Amsagir* 336 (1954), p. 14.
35. Mnatsakanian, *Hoktemberian sotsialistakan metz revoliutsian*, no. 249, p. 397. See also Vratsian, *Hayastani Hanrapetutiun*, p. 496.
36. Mnatsakanian, *Hoktemberian sotsialistakan metz revoliutsian*, no. 250, p. 398.
37. Hrach Tasnapetian, *H. H. Dashnaktsutiune ir kazmutenen minchev Zh. Endh. Zhoghov* (The Armenian Revolutionary Federation from its inception through the Tenth General Congress) (Athens: Droshak Press, 1988), p. 159.
38. ARF Archives, section E, file 1549, doc. 13.
39. State Historical Archives, Yerevan, fund 198, list 1, doc. 74/1.
40. Anahide Ter Minassian, *La Question Arménienne* (Roquevaire, France: Éditions Parenthèses, 1983), p. 183.
41. State Historical Archives, Yerevan, fund 200, list 1, doc. 639/1-5.
42. ARF Archives, section A, file 11, doc. 58.
43. ARF Archives, section E, file 184, doc. 1.
44. Mnatsakanian, *Hoktemberian sotsialistakan metz revoliutsian*, no. 252, p. 399.
45. ARF Archives, section A, file 11, doc. 59.
46. Terterian, "Hayastani hanrapetutian yev Khorhrdayin Rusastani banaktsutiunnere" fifth installment, *Hairenik Amsagir* 339 (1954), p. 13.
47. Aharonian, *Sardarabadits minchev Sevr yev Lozan*, p. 122. ■