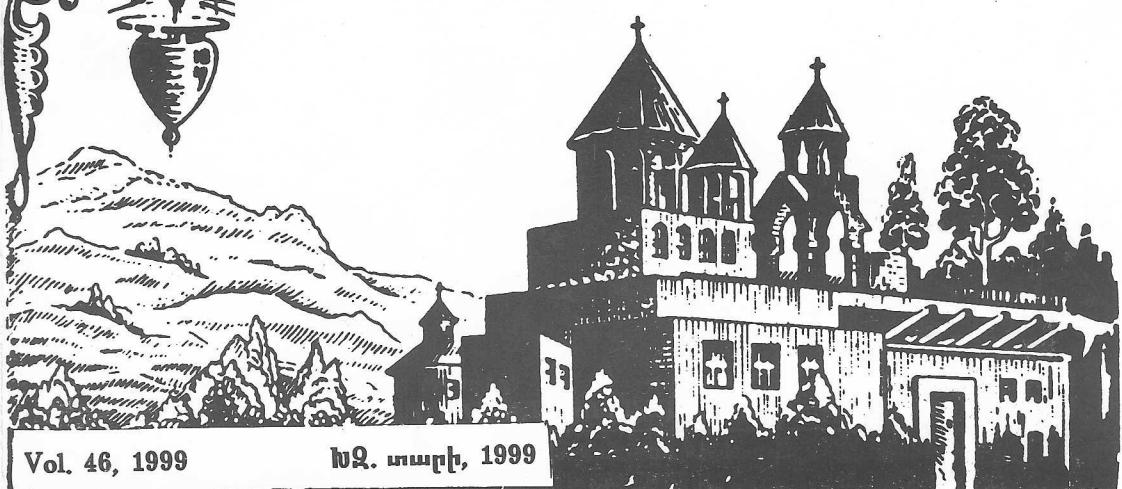




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Haiastan H.H.T - Bolshevik Haraberutiunneri Volortum (1917-1921)

By Aris G. Sevag

From the Armenian Reporter Int'l

While there are many works in both the Armenian and English languages dealing with the first Republic of Armenia, most notably the four-volume **Republic of Armenia** by Prof. Richard Hovannisian of UCLA, this new work by Dr. Rubina Peroomian, a lecturer in history of at UCLA and the author of the three-volume text **Hai Tahd**, is of special value for several reasons.

First of all, it focuses particularly on the interrelations between the Bolshevik and Dashnak parties and their impact on the fledgling Republic of Armenia, in the context of World War I, the Russian Revolution and the complex international relations of that period.

Secondly, the author brings an objectivity to her study which rarely existed in previously published works, almost all of which were heavily politicized; they were greatly biased in favor of either the Bolshevik

view or the Dashnak view of the events of that period. As Academician Lendrush Khurshudian justifiably points out in his Preface, "this study is one of the first successful attempts to create a national (scholarly) historiography."

Thirdly, Dr. Peroomian has utilized several new sources in the writing of her important study, including documents in the Armenian state archives which became available to historians only in this decade after Armenia regained its independence.

A look at the Table of Contents gives the reader an overall idea of the logical development given by the author to the topic under consideration: (1) Period of the Pan-Russian February Revolution (February-October 1917); (2) Period of the Bolshevik Revolution; (3) Toward Free and Independent Armenia; (4) The Role of Soviet Russia in the Caucasus and the Baku Commune; (5) Newly Independent Republic of Armenia; (6) When Armenia Was Proceeding Toward External and Internal Stability; (7) Negotiations Under the Shadow of Russo-Turkish Betrayal; (8) Armenia's Independent Imperiled; (9) Russo-Turkish Complicity Step by Step Swallows Armenia; (10) The Natural Revolt of the Armenian People Against Soviet Rule; (11) The Armenian Question: Victim of Russo-Turkish Friendship, and (12) Reflections as Epilogue.

The author's own summary, as contained in the final chapter, quite adequately presents the gist of the book.

"The Bolshevik Revolution was the first step in reestablishing sovereign control by the new Russia and the future Soviet Union over the ruins of the Tsarist Russian Empire. The road wasn't long. Through revolutionary or, more accurately, forceful means, it became possible to accelerate the stages and establish Bolshevik rule. The period of 1917-1922 passed, in Vahan Navasartian's characterization, through the stages "necessary for revolution" -- from civil war bloodshed to united diplomatic front, conditioned by special agreement signed by "independent" republics.

Caught in the whirlpool of these stages, Armenia and the Armenian people were pulled toward the sacrificial altar. The Dashnak party, which had believed in the pan-Russian February revolution, endeavored in vain to establish Armenia's legal status in the Transcaucasus. Bolshevism exploited the rights of nationalities, particularly small nationalities, and made a grave for justice. No political or diplomatic measure would have been able to rescue Armenia's independence in the face of totalitarian Bolshevik plans. Pan-Turanist aspirations and,

particularly, the temporary alliance between those two powerful ideologies.

The Armenian Revolutionary Federation, which was struggling for the freedom of the Armenian people, was an obstacle hampering the advance of Bolshevism in Armenia, so it got beheaded.

The Armenian Bolsheviks, with the help of Red Army, destroyed the country, beginning with the violation of human rights and extending to the eradication of intelligentsia, political leadership and generals' staff, even going so far as to ruin the territorial space and, at the same time, destroy the economic situation.

The lifting of the nominal independence of the Transcaucasian republics and their unification in 1922 was a second step ensuring the realization of a totalitarian Russia. The following stage, again expertly planned, was the economic unification of the republics with a structure that made them dependent on the center. In this stage as well, Armenia's interest and the cause of the Armenian people remained mere items of barter for Moscow's rulers on the diplomatic bargaining tables.

From the collapse of the Russian Empire to the birth and establishment of Soviet Russia throughout the imperial territory, Russian-Armenian relations went through several quite diverse stages. Reflecting on those relations, Alexandre Khatisian divided the period from 1914-1920 into three stages: (1) 1914-1917, when the Armenians and the Russians carried out joint military operations on the Turkish front; (2) 1917 to the end of 1918, after which relations were broken off when the Russian troops abandoned the Caucasian front; (3) 1919-1920, when relations were reestablished by means of diplomatic negotiations and concluded with the sovietization of Armenia.

A detailed look at the second period -- the period of the first pan-Russian revolution -- reveals it to be one of cooperation between the Dashnaksutium and the Temporary Government of (St.) Petersburg. Bolshevik-Dashnak relations were circumstantial, based on personal ties which individual Dashnaks had with Bolshevik leaders. During the period of the Bolshevik Revolution, from November 1917 to the declaration of Armenian independence at the end of May 1918, the Dashnaks made repeated efforts to secure the patronage and assistance of Bolshevik leaders and, in particular, the role of the Armenian Bolsheviks as intermediary in these relations. It was during this period that the Commissariat of Armenian Affairs took birth and expanded its activity, however deviating from its *raison d'être*, it became the

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title of greater Russia (or, subsequently, one small member of the Soviet Union.)"

A final note: The diaspora Armenian reader of this book will be pleased by the use of classical Armenian orthography. While the printing relatively free of errors, those that crept in are largely carryovers from the still prevalent Soviet orthography.

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