

**Hovhannes Katchaznouni**

(The First Prime Minister of  
the Independent Armenian Republic)

**DASHNAGTZOUTIUN  
HAS NOTHING TO DO  
ANYMORE**

(Report Submitted to the 1923 Party Convention)



THE ISTANBUL CHAMBER OF COMMERCE

**Hovhannes Katchaznouni**  
**(The First Prime Minister of**  
**the Independent Armenian Republic)**

**DASHNAGTZOUTIUN**  
**HAS NOTHING TO DO ANYMORE**

Translated by Lale Akalin

© All rights reserved by  
Analiz Basım Yayın Tasarım Gıda Ticaret ve Sanayi Ltd. Şti.  
web address: [www.kaynakyayinlari.com](http://www.kaynakyayinlari.com)  
e-mail: [iletisim@kaynakyayinlari.com](mailto:iletisim@kaynakyayinlari.com)  
Tel: (0212) 252 21 56-99 Fax: (0212) 249 28 92

Translated by Lale Akalın  
Technical Setting: Analiz Basım Yayın  
Printed and bound in Turkey by Analiz Basım Yayın  
September 2008

ISBN: 975-343-453-7

KAYNAK YAYINLARI: 450



With the kind permission of Kaynak Publishers, this book has been printed on behalf of the Istanbul Chamber of Commerce in 3000 copies.

Distinguished readers,

The book you have in your hands is neither a story, nor a novel nor some fiction. It is a fully fledged documentary. It is a historical document laying before your eyes the entire facts about the 1915 Armenian Issue from the pen of an important witness of the era.

It is a silent cry against the unfounded Armenian genocide claims made by Armenia and in particular the Armenian Diaspora with the purpose of embarrassing the Republic of Turkey in the international arena. What renders this silent cry significant is the fact that the owner of that voice is not a Turk, but an Armenian who deals with the incidents impartially. This book was written by Armenia's first Prime Minister Ovanes Kachaznuni who told the real facts about what went on during that era against the unfair accusations against Turks, when the 1915 Armenian Issue was still fresh in memories.

As a competent person, Kachaznuni says in this book to his own citizens that the Ottomans, the predecessors of the Turkish Republic, had never committed an Armenian genocide. This report, prepared and voiced by Armenia's first prime minister who personally lived through Armenia's Tashnak movement during those controversial years was unfortunately banned in his own country. It was confiscated and an effort was made to hide it from the public.

Therefore the best words to describe what is written in this book is 'a silent cry'.

As the Istanbul Chamber of Commerce, we are unveiling this document presented by Kachaznuni at an overseas conference held in Bucharest by Armenia's most important political party Tashnaksutyun in 1923 as an exemplary lesson.

When Istanbul Chamber of Commerce was founded in 1882 its first chairman was an Ottoman subject of Armenian origin, so it wishes that the historical incidents that took place during World War I should be evaluated with no political concerns. We therefore regard it as our duty to present this book, evaluating the incidents impartially, to the attention of those concerned.

Thus, we wanted to underscore once more the necessity to evaluate the 1915 Armenian Issue based on archival documents. It is our greatest wish that instead of unfounded hostilities take root between countries and peoples, feelings of friendship and brotherhood prevail.

This has been our attitude as we publish the English, French and German editions of this publication. We hope that this light shed by historical documents will also illuminate a future filled not with enmity but with friendship.

Dr. Murat YALÇINTAŞ  
Istanbul Chamber of Commerce  
Chairman

## TRANSLATOR'S NOTE

Before I started to translate this report submitted by Hovannes Katchaznouni to the Dashnagzoutiun Convention held in Bucharest in 1923 into English, I came across another translation in English, on a website. According to the information the website provided, it had been translated from the Armenian original into English and published in New York by an organization called "the Armenian Information Service" in 1955.

However, this translation only contained certain parts of the original text which the publisher must have thought important.

The name of the translator of these pages in English appears to be Matthew A. Callender and the editor's name is given as John Roy Carlson who apparently has another name, Arthur A. Derounian.

Working on the present English translation of Katchaznouni's Manifesto, I occasionally referred to the above translation, whenever I could. However, the text I used was the Turkish translation. This Turkish translation is a very recent edition: *Taşnak Partisi'nin Yapacağı Bir Şey Yok*, by Kaynak Yayınları, Nov. 2005, İstanbul, translated from Russian into Turkish by Arif Acaloğlu.

Lale Akalın  
İstanbul, April 2006



## INTRODUCTION TO THE TURKISH EDITION

Much has been said as to how the archives should be consulted, in connection with the discussion of the Armenian issue. Here is a document from the Armenian archives. With this report we lift the cover of the Armenian archives.

We invite the whole world to study the Russian and the Armenian archives, in order to bring out the truth. They are very rich in documents: reports by the Armenian authorities and government members of the time, and reports by Armenian commanders written to their seniors, documents published by reliable Armenian historians like Borian and Lalaian are all in those archives as official documents.

As the Kaynak Publishing House, we are commencing the publication of the series, *The Falsification of 'Armenian Genocide' in Armenian Documents*, with an official document, a report by the first prime-minister of the first Armenian government and the leader of the Dashnagzutsiun Party. We would like to repeat that this document you will be reading is not a magazine article or a speech but a report submitted to the Dashnagzutsiun Convention in Bucharest in 1923. The person who submitted this report, Hovannes Katchaznouni may be regarded as the most important figure in the Dashnag movement. He was holding a responsible position during the period 1915-1923 in which the events referred to as "the Armenian Genocide" took place. The present report is actually a summary of the events in that period.



## Who was Katchaznoui?

Hovannes Katchaznoui (Igithanian) was the first prime-minister of the Armenian state founded in July 1918. He was in authority as the head of government until August 1919, for thirteen months. He was among the founders of the Dashnagzutsiun Party and one of its top leaders. He was the prime authority of Armenia and the Dashnagzutsiun Party.

He was born in 1868 in the Akhaltsikhe region of Georgia. Having studied architecture, he worked as an architect in Baku, Tbilisi and Batoum. He joined the Dashnag organization in Baku. He worked on the commission established to put an end to the mutual massacres taking place in the clashes between the Armenians and the Tatars in 1905-1906. The police being after him due to the case against the Dashnagzoutiun Party, he fled to Turkey in 1911. He stayed in İstanbul and then in Eastern Anatolia. He carried out propaganda activities. He went back to Transcaucasia in 1914. He became a member of the Armenian National Council in 1917 and served as the Dashnag representative in the Sejm (the Caucasian Parliament) until 1918. He was on the Armenian committee conducting the peace talks with the Turks in Trabzon and Batoum. He and Hatisov signed the Batoum Agreement on behalf of the Armenian Republic on the 4th of June. In July 1918 he became the first prime-minister of the independent Armenian State. He held this position until August 1919. In February 1919, on the decision of the Armenian Parliament, he traveled to Europe and the USA to secure aid. He returned to Armenia in 1920 and was appointed as the deputy Chairman of the Armenian Parliament.

He was arrested after Bolsheviks came to power in Armenia in 1920. He left the country after the counter-revolutionary revolt against the Bolshevik rule was suppressed in 1921. He lived in Bucharest in 1921-24. After the publication of the book you are now reading, in 1923, he resigned from the Dashnagzoutiun Party

and petitioned to the Armenian Government to be allowed to come back. He settled in Yerevan in 1925. He worked there as an architect and taught at universities and was granted the title of professor. He died in 1938.<sup>1</sup>

## Publication of the Report

Katchaznoui makes a self-criticism of the past in this conference report. This self-criticism is in fact a confession. Katchaznoui honestly and sincerely resolves that the Dashnagzutsiun Party is responsible for the past agonies. He concludes, at the end of the report, that the Dashnagzutsiun Party should dissolve itself and leave the political arena. His last words are remarkable: "Yes, I propose suicide, the party should commit suicide," he says.

Immediately after the Party convention, that same year, Katchaznoui publishes his report. The title he uses once more emphasizes his proposal of suicide: "Dashnagzutsiun Has Nothing to do Anymore"

Katchaznoui omitted some three or four pages concerning his proposals about the inner organizational issues of the party when he first published this report as a book. On the other hand, he included his response to a fellow party member who had criticized his report in a letter.

The book published in Armenian was translated into Russian four years later and an edition of only 2000 copies was published in Tbilisi in 1927 as an attempt at calling attention to what might be learned from past experience. The Russian edition included an introduction in Russian.<sup>2</sup>

1 Antsiklopedya "Armyanski Vapros", Yerevan, 1991, p.197.

2 S. Hanoian, in the Introduction, states that Katchaznoui was "open-hearted" in his report, despite some criticism concerning his ideas on the Soviet rule. However, in the Soviet Armenia, there were very grave criticisms on Katchaznoui's book. See Marents, "Litso Arsyaskogo Smenohovstva", *Bolševik Zakavkazya*, No.3-4, 1928, p.83 vd.

Certain passages from the book were published in 1955 as a pamphlet with the title *The Armenian Revolutionary Federation (Dashnagsoution) Has Nothing To Do Any More* by the "Armenian Information Service" in New York.

What is interesting although it seems natural when the content of the book is taken into consideration, is the fact that this historical report by the first Armenian Prime Minister was banned in Armenia. All the copies in all the languages it had been translated into so far, were collected from European libraries by Dashnagsoution members. The book can be found in the library catalogues but no copies can be found on the shelves.

I discovered a copy of the Russian edition in the Lenin Library in Moscow, during my research on the Armenian issue. It was translated into Turkish by Arif Acaloğlu with the utmost care and precision and I would like to extend my thanks to him here for his worthy contribution.

## Studies in Turkey

In the Introduction to the previous editions of this book we indicated that before the publication of this report by Kaynak, Prof. Türkkeya Ataöv had mentioned the existence of such a report in a book he wrote on the Armenian issue in 1985. However, there are earlier references to the report which I should mention as well. 34 years before Ataöv's book Esat Uras; again a few years before Ataöv Ambassador Kamuran Gürün; and in the same year as Ataöv, in 1985 Mim Kemal Öke referred to the Katchaznouni report. This means the existence of the Katchaznouni report has been known in Turkey for over half a century.

Esat Uras, in his celebrated work *Tarihte Ermeniler ve Ermeni Meselesi (Armenians and the Armenian Question in History)*, pub-

lished in 1950, made references to Katchaznouni's book.<sup>3</sup> So it is clear that Katchaznouni's book published in Armenian in 1923 in Vienna had been translated into Turkish before 1950, when Uras published his book.

Quotations from the same manuscript translation appear in Ambassador Kamuran Gürün's book *Ermeni Dosyası (The Armenian File)*, published in 1983 by the Turkish History Institute.<sup>4</sup>

The bibliography of the booklet, *Dokuz Soru ve Cevapta Ermeni Sorunu (The Armenian Question in Nine Questions and Answers)* the publisher of which is the Foreign Policy Institute, contains a reference to the 1923 edition published by Katchaznouni himself in Vienna.<sup>5</sup> However, in the bibliography, the title of the book appears not in Armenian but in English.

Mim Kemal Öke, in his article in a collection published by Boğaziçi Üniversitesi in 1984, quoted in length from the English edition published in New York in 1955.<sup>6</sup>

Prof. Türkkaya Ataöv published a ten-page work on Katchaznouni's book, in 1984, in English. This work was translated into French, German and Spanish and all these translations were published in a single book in 1985.<sup>7</sup> Ataöv, in his work, which has never been published in Turkish, states that he has got a 61-page

3 Esat Uras, *Tarihte Ermeniler ve Ermeni Meselesi*, Istanbul, 1950, p.716, 740 vd, 758.

4 Kamuran Gürün, *Ermeni Dosyası*, Türk Tarih Kurumu Yayınları, Ankara, 1983, p.196, 234, 274, 304 vd, 308.

5 Dış Politika Enstitüsü, *Dokuz Soru ve Cevapta Ermeni Sorunu*, Ankara, Nisan 1983, p.41.

6 Mim Kemal Öke, "The Responses of Turkish Armenians to the Armenian Question", Boğaziçi Üniversitesi, *Armenians in the Ottoman Empire and Modern Turkey (1912-1926)*, Istanbul, 1984, p.79.

7 Prof. Dr. Türkkaya Ataöv, *An Armenian Source: Hovhannes Katchaznouni; Une Source Armenienne Hovhannes Katchaznouni, Eine Armenische Quelle: Hovhannes Katchaznouni, Fuente Armenia. Hovhannes Katchaznouni*, Second Printing, Ankara, March 1985.

type-written copy of the Turkish translation of Katchaznouni's book in Armenian. Clearly, the "manuscript translation" referred to by Esat Uras and Kamuran Gürün had been reduplicated as a type-written copy in the meanwhile. Other researchers might also have referred to the Turkish or English translations before 1984.

The Turkish edition, translated from the Armenian original is kept in in the Turkish History Institute, though we are not sure whether the Foreign Ministry keeps a copy.

The Katchaznouni report was first introduced to the Turkish readers by the publications of the weekly *Aydınlık*, starting with the issue of October 2, 2005. These publications based on the Russian edition mainly consisted of a broad summary and an evaluation of the report.

### **Assertions by Katchaznouni**

Katchaznouni particularly states that he has come to his conclusions after a grave thinking process. The conclusions he has reached are not the result of a superficial evaluation or lack of a strong character. He knows he will infuriate many. He calls on the delegates of the Dashnagzoution Conference to listen to him patiently, without prejudice. As he determines the boundaries of his report, he explains that he will examine the period extending from World War I to the Lausanne Conference, dividing it into certain phases from the point of view of the Armenian question and focus on the role the Dashnagzoution has played in this process.

The first Prime Minister of the Dashnagzoution Government makes the following points:

- It was a mistake to establish the volunteer armed units before the World War.
- They were unconditionally allied with Russia.

- They had not taken into consideration the balance of power which was in Turkey's favour.

- The decision of the deportation of Armenians was a rightful measure taken by Turks to serve their purpose.

- Turkey had acted with an instinct of self-defense.

- The British occupation once more aroused the hopes of the Dashnags.

- What they established in Armenia was a Dashnag dictatorship.

- They had acted in pursuit of an imperialist demand, "Armenia From Sea to Sea" and had been provoked with this.

- They massacred the Muslim population.

- The Armenian terrorist activities were directed at winning over the Western public opinion.

- The fault was on the Dashnagzoution authorities themselves, not anyone else.

- The Dashnagzoution Party had nothing else to do but to commit suicide.

Yes, all these statements were made by Katchaznoui, the first Prime Minister of Armenia and the founder of the Dashnagzoution Party.

Katchaznoui considers the essence of the Turkish-Armenian relations during the period of 1914-23 as the state of war. According to Katchaznoui's evaluations, this war was actually between Turkey and the great imperialist powers. Katchaznoui does not make any evaluations that hold Turkey responsible, he considers the Dashnags and the Armenians that follow them as one side of the war and Turkey as the other side. He concludes that in the face of Turkish victory the Dashnagzoution Party had nothing else to do but dissolve itself.

These statements may surprise some people. However, many other Armenian statesmen and historians have made the same eval-

uations. The years following 1921 were years of deep self-criticism for Armenian intellectuals. They were finally face to face with realities. Doubtlessly, the Bolshevik rule played an important part in this new turn to reality. The new stand taken against imperialism necessarily reminded them of the realities and pulled them towards the Lenin-Atatürk alliance. For this reason, the Armenian and Dashnag documents especially belonging to the period following 1921 confirm Katchaznouni's views. The Dashnag documents, some of which are found in the Armenian State Archives expose the falsification of "Armenian Genocide" as dramatically as Katchaznouni's report. The Dashnag sources themselves disclose how they were used against Turkey by the Tzarist Russia and the Western imperialism; what massacres they were responsible for during the occupation and how rightful was the fight the Turkish army waged against all this.

### **Report Teaches a lesson**

Katchaznouni's report is extremely valuable not only because it displays an indisputable truth but also because it teaches invaluable lessons even in the present day world. Those who allowed themselves to be pushed against the peoples they had been living together with for hundreds even thousands of years, had not only their neighbours pay but their own people as well. Katchaznouni, like all the other Armenian writers do, states that the Tzarist Russian regime, the British and French imperialism abused them and when, finally, they were left on their own, they could do nothing but bemoan that they had been betrayed. Those who can interpret the developments in history can doubtlessly see that similar processes may be experienced today and the regrets and complaints which will follow will not be in a different tone.

## **Other Documents in the Dashnag Archives Confirm Katchaznouni**

The points made by Katchaznouni in his report are confirmed by other documents in the Dashnag archives as well. These Dashnag documents, some of which can be found in the Armenian archives, expose the "Genocide" fabrication in the same dramatic way as Katchaznouni's report does. The Dashnag documents also show how they were used by the Tzarist Russia and the Western imperialism against Turkey and what massacres they were responsible for, during the occupation and how rightful was the fight the Turkish army waged against all this.

### **The Tzarist Armies Fight against Turkey**

The imperialist centres accuse the Ottoman state and the Mustafa Kemal government with subjecting the Armenians to massacre and genocide during 1915-23. However, the eight years which comprise the period of the Turkish War of Independence, are at the same time years of fight of the Dashnag forces under the leadership of the Tzarist regime of Russia, the British and the French armies. This historical fact has been reflected in thousands of Armenian documents.

I would like to give a few examples. The declaration sent by the Armenian national Bureau to Tzar Nicholas II at the very beginning of World War I, shows how deeply attached the Dashnag leaders were feeling towards imperialism:

"As the glorious Russian Armies are fighting against Turkey who, with German support has dared to raise its hand against mighty Russia, on the lands in her hegemony, in the snowy



Armenian mountains and the vast Alashkert valley, the Armenians, taking the advice of their forefathers (...) have stood up to sacrifice their lives and their assets to Great Russia and the magnificence of its throne.

"The good news of war with Turkey has aroused enthusiasm among all the Armenian people. The Armenians from all the countries are in haste to take their place in the glorious Russian armies and to serve the victory of the Russian arms with their blood. We pray to God to be victorious over the enemy. We owe it to our nation to become the new Russian arms and to fulfill Russia's historical duty in the East. Our hearts are burning with this desire.

"The Russian flag will freely flutter in the Bosphorous and the Dardanelles.

Your will, my magnificent lord, will bestow freedom to the peoples under Turkish yoke."<sup>8</sup>

In fact Zaven, the Armenian Bishop in Istanbul had already declared, before the War started, to a reporter of *Mşak*, the organ of the Armenian nationalist-liberals, that the radical solution of the Armenian question would be the unification of all Armenia (including the Eastern Anatolia of Turkey-M.P.) under Russian sovereignty with which Armenians' fate was historically linked. The Bishop stated that "the sooner the Russians arrive here, the better for us."<sup>9</sup>

Zavriev, the Head of the International Relations Department of the Dashnagzoutsian Party, in the letter he sent to the ambassadors

8 *Mşak*, No. 271, 1914: cited by Marents, *op. cit.*, p.89.

9 Armenian SSR State Central History Archives (TsGIA Arm. SSR) fond vıpisok, folder 37, sheet 45-46, cited in K.N. Karamyan, *Polojenie Zapadnıh Armyan, "Armyanski Vopros" i Mejdunarodnaya Diplomatıya V Posledney Çetverti XIX Veka I Naçale XX Veka*, Yerevanski Gosudarstvenniy Universitet, Yerevan, 1972, p.87 vd.

of the Tzarist Russia in London and Paris in 1915, displays the role played by Armenians in World War I:

"Since the first days of the present war, the Russian Armenians have been expecting to join the war. This situation gives rise to the hope that the Armenian question will be taken up at the end of the war, and that it will definitely be solved. For this reason, Armenians cannot hold back from participating in the prospective events and thus must take their places in the war, most passionately."<sup>10</sup>

Another Dashnag document which supports the content of this letter in the Tzarist Russian archives is found in the personal archives of Borian, a politician and historian. The document which comprises the speech made by the military representative of the Dashnagzoution Party in the All Armenia National Congress convened in Tbilisi in February 1915 is significant:

"As is known, the Russian government gave 242 900 rubles at the beginning of the war to make preparations, to arm the Turkish Armenians and to incite revolts in the country during the war. Our volunteer units need to break the defense line of the Turkish forces; to unite with the rebels and to create anarchy on the front and behind the lines and by these means help the Russian armies pass and capture the Turkish Armenia."<sup>11</sup>

Dashnag publications are full of documents admitting that they created anarchy on the front and behind the lines and fought as the striking force of the Russian armies. *Orizon*, the organ of Dashnagzoution reads as follows in its 196th issue of 1912:

10 *Mejdunarodnie Otnoşenia V Epohu Imperializma (Dokumenti İz Arhiva Tsarskogo I Vremennogo Pravitelstva)*, seriya III, t. VII, ç.II, Gosudarstvennoe Sotsialno-Ekonomičeskoe İzdatel'svo, Moskva-Leningrad, 1935, p.45.

11 See B.A. Borian, *Armeniya, Mejdunarodnaya Diplomatija i SSSR*, v.I Gosudarstvennoe İzdatel'stvo, Moskva-Leningrad, 1929, p.360.

"The Turkish state authorities and those in power should know that from now on, neither a Turk nor the Turkish state has any value whatsoever for an Armenian. Let them think of other means to protect their existence."<sup>12</sup>

Again in the 243rd issue of October 31, 1914 of *Orizon*, it was claimed that the victory of the Tzarist Russia was also going to be the victory of Armenians, as Armenians were called to actively participate in the war.<sup>13</sup>

Another organ of the Dashnags, *Ayrenik* of September 24, 1914 refers to Nikolai Nikolaievich, the Caucasian Governor of Tsarist Russia, who had just arrived in Tbilisi as follows:

"Yesterday His Excellency the Royal Prince Nikolai Nikolaievich, the deputy of the Tsar in Caucasia arrived in Tbilisi. We trust that the Royal Prince will put an end to the existence of the Turkish State forever. With this conviction, we salute the dear 6th Commander-inChief of the Russian army in Caucasia and welcome him".<sup>14</sup>

At the dinner party in Echmiadzin following the march of the volunteer unit commanded by Vardan on April 15, 1915, the first toast was proposed to glorious Russia and its heroic army. All Armenian Catholicos, after having sung ceremonial prayers, declared the gratitude of the Armenian people to the Russian armies and their readiness for emancipating the Armenian lands from the hegemony of foreigners, together with Russia.<sup>15</sup>

12 *Orizon*, No. 196, 1912 cited in K.N. Karamyan, *op.cit.*, p.81.

13 *Orizon*, No. 243, October 31, 1914, cited in A.M. Elchibekian, *Armenya Nakanune Velikogo Oktyabrya*, İzdatelstvo AN Armyanskoy SSR, Yerevan, 1963, p.18.

14 *Ayrenik*, No. 2, Sept.24 1915 cited in Lalaian, "Kontrrevolyutsionny 'Dahnag-sutyun' Ġ İmperialistiçeskaya Voyna 1914-1918 gg", *Revolyutsionny Vostok*, No.2-3, 1936, p.91.

15 *Ararat*, No. 5, 1915, p.288 vd cited in: A.O.Arutiunian, *Kavkazski Front 1914-1917 gg.*, İzdatelstvo "Ayastan", Yerevan, 1971, p.305.

Similarly, Georg V, the all Armenia Catholicos, after the occupation of Van, states in the congratulatory telegrams he sent to Vorontsov, the Caucasian Governor of Russia and to P.I. Oganovsky, the Commander of the 4th Caucasian Army that he is praying for new victories of the Russian armies.<sup>16</sup>

Hatisian, one of the important leaders of the Dashnagsutun, in his memoirs published in the 5th issue of *Ayrenik* in 1933, states that "with the defeat of the Russian army, all our hopes pinned on this army were exhausted"<sup>17</sup> and declares his position in World War I.

### **Fighting Against Turkey in the service of the British and French Armies**

Following the collapse of the Tsarist Russia, Dashnags went under the control of the Western powers and fought against Turkey for the regional interests of Britain, France and USA.

Katchaznoui, as the Prime-Minister of the Dashnag government, on February 1919, at a meeting with General F. Wocker, the commander of the occupational British forces, stated that he was sure the conditions of the Armenians was going to improve with the victories of the Allies and with their move into Caucasia. The report on this meeting is in the Archives of the Interior Ministry of Armenia.<sup>18</sup>

Similarly, another document in the Armenian State Archives relates that the Armenians in Adana were armed by the French

16 *Ararat*, No. 5, 1915, p.415 vd cited in: *ibid*, p.307.

17 *Ayrenik*, No. 5, 1933, cited in: A.A. Lalaian, "Kontrevolyutsionnaya Rol Partii Dashnagsoutun", *İstoriçeskie Zapiski*, No.2, 1928, p.83.

18 See Armenian SSR Interior Ministry Central October Revolution Archives (TsAOR MVD SSRA) Fond 114, folder 23, leaf 48 cited in: D. Yenukidze, *Krah İmperialistiçeskey İnterventsii V Zakavkazye*, Gospolizdat Gruzinskoy SSR, Tbilisi, 1954, p.188.

invasion forces under the command of General Diffe, and organized in "revenge units" and fought in French uniforms.<sup>19</sup>

Obedying British and French Imperialism resulted in commitment in Greek invasion. The Foreign Minister of the Dashnag Government states, in the telegram he sent to his representative in Tbilisi:

"The situation on the front is very grave. It is essential that you see Luck and Corbeille<sup>20</sup> and have them send telegrams to their governments informing them of how the Turkish troops are advancing and demand that they take all the necessary precautions(...) See also the Greek representative and ask him to send a telegram to his government to inform them of the situation as well and to ask them if it is possible for the Greek forces to start an assault and break the strength of the Turkish forces".<sup>21</sup>

### Armenian Cruelty in Dashnag Reports

The Armenian documents are also full of the stories of massacre by the Dashnags under the influence or even command of the Tsarist Russia and Western Imperialism.

In the letter of directive sent by Nikolaev, the commander of the Van military units, to Aram, who became the Governor of Van following the occupation of the city, on June 22, 1915, the troops are ordered not to attack the Kurdish population in the area and not to

19 Armenian SSR State History Archives (GIA Arm. SSR) F. 200, f. 132, lf. 338 cited in: N.Z.Efendiyeva, *Borba Turetskogo Naroda Protiv Frantsuzkih Okkupantov Na Yeye Anatolii* (1919-1921 gg.), Izdatel'svo AN Azerbaycanskoy SSR, Baku, 1966, p.116.

20 The representatives of the Allies in Tbilisi.

21 D.S. Zavriev, K. Noveyşey, *Istoriya Severo-Vostochnoy Vilayetov Turtsii*, Tbilisi, 1947, p.85.

ransack the villages. However, Aram, in his reply protests that the directives will not be carried out but as a warning to the Muslims in the areas not yet occupied, the guilty will be punished most gravely.<sup>22</sup>

On the other hand, in the urgent report dated November 7, 1918, sent by Lieutenant Colonel Melik-Shahnazarov, the commander of the Dashnag Bash-Gyarninsk unit, he informs another Armenian division that they have bombed all the villages in the area, captured 30 Turkish villages and asks permission for an operation to bomb the remaining 29 villages. This Dashnag unit, which gets the permission from the Headquarters lays waste tens of Azerbaijani villages in the Bash-Gyarninsk region, kills hundreds of people, no matter they are young, old, women, children and ransacks their belongings. The report by the Dashnag Lieutenant Colonel on this attack is kept in the Armenian State Archives.<sup>23</sup>

The Dashnag report published by the Armenian Soviet historian Lalaian first in the issue 2-3 of *Revolutsionnyi Vostok* and then in the issue 2 of *Īstoricheskie Zapisky*, the organ of the Institute of History of USSR Academy of Sciences, is horrifying. In the report he wrote from the Beyazit-Vaaram region in 1920, the Dashnag officer proudly narrates their practices in the area:

"I exterminated the Turkish population in Bashar-Gechar without making any exceptions. One sometimes feels the bullets shouldn't be wasted. So, the most effective way against these dogs is to collect the people who have survived the fight, dump them in deep holes and crush them under heavy rocks pressed from above, not to let them inhabit this world any longer. So did I, accordingly. I collected all the women,

22 USSR October Revolution Central State Archive (TsGAOR SSSR) F. 579, list 1, f. 1880, lf. 3-7 cited in A.O. Arutunian, *op.cit.*, p.369.

23 Armenian State Archives (Gosarhiv Armenii) F. 67, f. 664, lf. 1-2 cited in A.A. Lalaian, *op.cit.*, p.99 vd.

men and children and extinguished their lives in the deep holes I dumped them into, crushing them with rocks."<sup>24</sup>

## **Dashnag Policy of Plunder**

The Dashnag units practiced Mediaeval methods of torture and plundered the villages. In this way, they tried to overcome the financial crises that the Armenian State was in. In a letter of a Dashnag official to the head of the Dashnag government, A. Oganjanian, dated June 21, 1920, he complains that the wealth that should in fact be handed over to the Armenian state is already being plundered by Armenians:

"Zanki-Bazar was occupied by our troops. This region is so rich that it can pay our debts many times over. There has been an unconceivable plunder here. They have collected all the wheat, barley, rice, all the samovars, carpets, all the money and gold. The Ministry of Finance could only yesterday send here two officials, without company of an organized force for the first time. A wealth of gigantic proportions is sliding away from our hands."<sup>25</sup>

The report by the Dashnag official who wanted the property of Turks to be collected in the hands of the government is kept in the Armenian State Archives. Another important document in this direction is the report sent by the Armenian Governor of Kars, to the central authority. The Governor, as he is reporting how the Turkish-Kurdish population is exterminated and their assets plun-

24 *Op.cit.*, p.101; A. Lalaian, "Kontrevolyuysionniy 'Dashnagsutiun' i Ĭmperialisticheskaia Voyna 1914-1918 gg.", p.92 vd.

25 Gosarhiv Armenii F. 65, f. 116, lf. 96 cited in: A.A. Lalaian, "Kontrevolyutsionnaya Rol Partii Dashnagzoutiun", p.100.

dered, complains that they are not always successful in collecting all the wealth in their hands in the occupied villages. The Governor adds that "the region comprising Turks and Kurds is really like a treasure. But unfortunately we cannot fully control this place."<sup>26</sup>

We come across the evidence of another instance of plunder in the 105th issue of 1920 of daily *Jogovurd*, an organ of dominant circles in Armenia. The writer named G. Muradian recounts from the Azerbaijani villages of the North bank of Lake Gorchy his impressions of the Dashnag policy of plunder with admiration:

"As a result of the efforts of our government, the population of these villages have been expelled outside the borders of Armenia. I have seen abandoned villages with only a few cats and dogs who were meowing or barking strangely with surprise at the deadly silence. The population of these villages have left behind a considerable amount of potatoes, wheat and barley and seeds. The government can collect from these villages, over two million puds of wheat and half a million pud of potatoes."<sup>27</sup>

### **Dashnag Torture Inflicted on Armenian Peasants**

Dashnag documents also depict how Armenian peasants suffered under the unbelievable torture and cruelty of the Armenian government itself. For example, it was reflected in the documents how the Dashnag Government commissar V. Agamian punished people and had them shot without putting them on trial or carrying out an investigation, in order to prevent desertions from the army. Agamian gathered the wives, mothers and sisters of the people charged with deserting the army; forced them to duck-walk in the

<sup>26</sup> Gosarhiv Armenii F. 67, f. 1769, lf. 25, cited in: *ibid*.

<sup>27</sup> *Jogovur*, No. 105, 1920 cited in *op.cit.*, p.100 vd.



village square naked, beat and kept them in water for hours. Agamian, who later ordered the women to be arrested, raped the young girls and women during the night. He stayed in office for a long time without ever been punished. The Dashnag government called him to the headquarters, only after they had learned from a peasant named M. Azaparetov that the peasants were going to attempt at assassinating Agamian.<sup>28</sup>

A member of the Dashnag government, Jagetian, in his article published in Iran, makes the following statements concerning the Dashnag rule which he was a part of then:

"Under the veil of tracking down the Bolsheviks, the government armies and the so-called-volunteer units (humbas) plundered the villages around the town of Ichevan and raped the women. The volunteer execution team put the peasants in such a state that the 'humbapeta' (the head of the team), 'Arch-Mard' (the bear-man) used to surround the village with 50 volunteers and pulled it down. Almost one thousand Armenian peasants were pushed into Azerbaijan territory."

Jagetian says that no official was punished due to nepotal relationships and adds:

"The Armenian Interior Ministry had become the shelter for all the criminals. The Minister Krmonian himself embezzled 50 million rubles from the state treasury one day before he left office."<sup>29</sup>

Years later, another representative of the Dashnags and a publisher Chalhushian calls the government police as "plundering

28 Gosarhiv Armenii F. 67, f. 1588, lf. 62-63, cited in: *op.cit.*, p.101.

29 See A. Karinian, "K Harakteristike Armianskih Nationalisticheskikh Tcheniy", *Bolshevik Zakavkazia*, No. 9-10, 1928, p.70.

troops" and talks about how it became impossible to walk unarmed in the centre of the Armenian capital after sunset.<sup>30</sup>

In fact, the Armenian volunteer units called "humbapeta" systematized anarchy and plunder in Armenia and the neighbouring countries. The following song sung all together is actually a musical confession so far as it reflects the psychology of the volunteer units: "Come, pull down, pillage, kill and lay your jacket on your shoulder, walk about freely!"<sup>31</sup>

These circumstances gave rise to a situation where everyone who wished so founded a volunteer unit and turned them into criminal organizations. The announcement made by the "humbapeta" (head of the unit) named Deli-Qazar expresses this situation very well:

"Announcement to the Armenians of the Yerevan region and the town of Yerevan: I am going to the front today with the boys. If some people, after my departure, introduce themselves as Deli-Qazar's boys and misuse my name as a black-mailer, they will be punished severely by the nation and the military authority."<sup>32</sup>

By 1918, The Dashnag Government had recruited all its citizens below 35 to the army and had re-established "volunteer" units to fight against Turkey. In their publications, they made announcements threatening those who would go against this decision with death and proclaimed that "those who were wise" would not act against them. The issue dated March 1, 1918 of the Dashnag organ, *Arev*, contains such information.<sup>33</sup> In another document kept in the

30 See *ibid*, p.70 vd.

31 T. Hachikoglian, *10 Let Armyanskoy Strelkovoy Divizii*, İzdatelstvo Polit. Uprav. KKA, Tiflis, 1930, p.5.

32 *Ibid*, p.5 vd.

33 *Arev*, No. 46, March 1, 1918 cited in: A. Lalaian, "Kontrevolyutsionnyy 'Dashnagsutyutun' i Imperialistheskaia Voina 1914-1918 gg.", p.96.

Armenian State Archives it is stated that special troops have been dispatched to punish the villages of Berd, Verhniy, Karmir, Ahbyur and the Shamshadinsk region that rejected to do so.<sup>34</sup>

Another Dashnag organ, *Martik*, published in Alexandropol states that two cannons, one machine gun and a team of soldiers will be dispatched to the villages of those who have not participated in the military mobilization and that those who resist will be bombarded.<sup>35</sup> The Dashnag authority even formed troops named "Terror Organ" in order to fight the deserters and posted such announcements on the village walls:

"To all the deserters and the Armenian people: On the night of March 1, the three Armenian soldiers one of which stole a horse and two others deserted the regiment were executed by shooting for betraying our country and people. All the deserters are urged to surrender to their troops and fulfill their military service before it is too late. Otherwise they will be punished in the same way. Death to the traitors who will give Turks the opportunity of raiding Shiraq. Terror Organ. Gumru, March 2, 1918."<sup>36</sup>

*Jogavurd*, one of the organs of the Armenian ruling powers states in its issue of June 29, 1920 that the Dashnag Government blocked the flow of the river Zangi and cut their water supplies to punish the resisting peasants in the region. As a result of this punishment many people died and the crops were ruined.<sup>37</sup>

34 Armenian SSR Central State Archive (TsGA Arm. SSR) F. 67/199, f. 139, lf. 230 cited in: A.M.Elchibekian, *Ustanovlenie Sovyetskoy Vlasti V Armenii*, Izdatelstvo AN Armyanskoy SSR, Yerevan, 1954, p.76.

35 *Martik*, No. 2, 1918 cited in: T.P. Agaian, *Veliki Oktyahr i Borba Trudyashihsia Armenii Za Pobedu Sovyetskoy Vlasti*, Izdatelstvo AN Aramianskoy SSR, Yerevan, 1962, p.134.0

36 T. Hachikoglian, *op.cit.*, p.7.

37 *Jogovurd*, No.102, June 1920 cited in: A.A. Lalaian, "Kontrevolyutsionnaya Rol Partii Dashnagsutian", p.102.

Mauses Petros, one of the Dashnag former-Foreign Ministers, who, like Katchaznouni, makes an appraisal of the past in an open letter he wrote to Simeon Vratsian, one of the Dashnag former-Prime Ministers and says that the past adventurous attitude of the government has only brought poverty and national conflicts to the country. Petros' open letter was published in *Zang*, the organ of the Hinchag Party in Tabriz, on September 21, 1921.<sup>38</sup>

### **Armenian Peasants Enthusiastically Greeting Turkish Army**

Besides their Massacres towards Turks and Kurds, the violent acts of Dashnags in Armenian villages encountered reaction from the Armenian people, as well. Moreover, some Armenian documents reflect the warm feelings shown by Armenian villages towards the Turkish Army. The report written by an Armenian officer sent from the town of Echimiadzin to the villages of Gumru, in search of the Armenian soldiers who had deserted the army is striking. The commander, on the information he received from the report, reports to the Headquarters, on October 14, 1920, that:

"The Armenians in the Gumru region showed a hostile attitude towards the Dashnag officer and even attempted to turn him in to the Turks a few times. The people in many villages seem averse and hostile towards the military. In the villages of Ilhiab and Kapanak red flags have been put up. (...) My officer has come across a Turkish cavalry guard accompanied by horsemen from the Selchan Armenians. The Turks were welcomed with bread and salt. Peasant women cooked dishes in

38 See Russian State Archive of Socio-Political History (RGASPI) F. 64, lt. 1, f. 208, lf. 167-171.

cauldrons. When my officer asked them who they were cooking for, they answered: "Certainly not for you, they are for the Turks."<sup>39</sup>

The reception by the Armenian people themselves, of the Turkish Army, accused of genocide today, in this warm manner, gives an idea about the merits of this accusation.

It is interesting that Dashnags themselves advocated a pro-Turkish stand when the Soviet rule was established in Armenia, to be able to maintain their existence. Dashnags, who had showed overt hostility towards communism and the progressive Armenians fighting against imperialism now started to defend alliance with Turkey as a way out. This fact too disproves the claims that Turks practiced genocide on Armenians. In the article published in the Dashnag newspaper, *Arach* on October 20, 1920, titled "The Question of Armistice and Our Direction", it is stated that "if the Armenian people wish to maintain their existence, they are to approach Turkey, not Russia".<sup>40</sup>

This preference is reflected also in *Ayrenik*,<sup>41</sup> the organ of the Armenians in the USA. Here, they even speak about how they caused wars by making too many demands on the Ottoman authorities in both the Abdulhamid and the Ittihad Terakki periods and how they themselves are responsible for the killings.<sup>42</sup>

39 TsGA Arm. SSR F. 68/200, f. 867, lf. 278 cited in: A.M. Elchibekian, *Velikaya Okyabrskaya Sotsialisticheskaya Revolyutsiya I Pobeda Sovyetskoy Vlasti V Armenii*, Izdatestvo A N Armyanskoy SSR, Yerevan, 1957, p.209.

40 *Arach*, No. 255, October 20, 1920 cited in: A.A. Lalaian, *op.cit.*, p.105 and T.P. Agaian, *op.cit.*, p.31.

41 A. Myasnikov, *Armianskie Politicheskie Partii Za Rubezhom*, Izdatelstvo "Sov-yetski Kavkaz", Tiflis, 1925, p.19.

42 T.P. Agaian, *op.cit.*, p.31.

## **The Invaluable Katchaznoui Report and other Armenian Documents**

With regard to the Turkish-Armenian relations, there have been endless allusions to "documents" in the discussions concerning the facts of World War I. It is as if everybody were in search of a "magic document" to prove or disprove the "Armenian Genocide". It is quite absurd to attempt at proving or disproving a historical fact such as genocide with a few documents. However, if it is so essential to find such a powerful document, the Katchaznoui Report is matchless in this respect, for the author is the first prime-minister of Armenia; not of Turkey. And he witnessed the incidents termed as genocide when he was the prime authority in the Dashnagsutiun Party and the Armenian Government.

He evaluated the events calmly and conscientiously not during but after the war, after it was over.

The person who wrote the report was the leader of one of the parties at war, in fact, of the party which is claimed to have suffered genocide.

The Prime-Minister of Armenians, who are claimed to have suffered genocide, evaluates the incidents as state of war and what is more, sincerely admits that they have been manipulated by the imperialists.

The document in your hands is not in the Turkish archives, but in the Russian and Armenian archives. Who is to trust, if not the Armenian Prime Minister, when the claims on "Armenian Genocide" are being appraised? If the Armenian archives do not persuade them, which other archive will?

The Katchaznoui Report puts an end to the great imperialist falsification of "Armenian Genocide".

What remains is to launch a world-wide campaign by publishing the Katchaznouni Report and other Armenian documents which expose the facts in Turkish, English, French, German, Armenian, Russian, Arabic, Chinese, Spanish and other languages.

Here are the facts from the pen of Katchaznouni, the first Armenian Prime-Minister and leader of the Dashnagsutium Party.

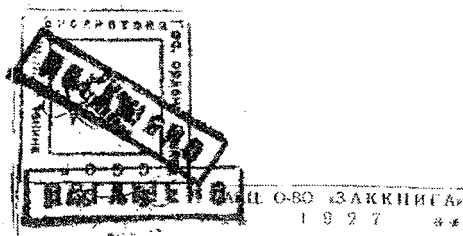
Mehmet Perinçek

October 11, 2005 Generala Tyuleneva/ Moskova.

ОВ: КАЧАЗНУНИ

# ДАШНАКЦУТИОН БОЛЬШЕ НЕЧЕГО ДЕЛАТЬ!

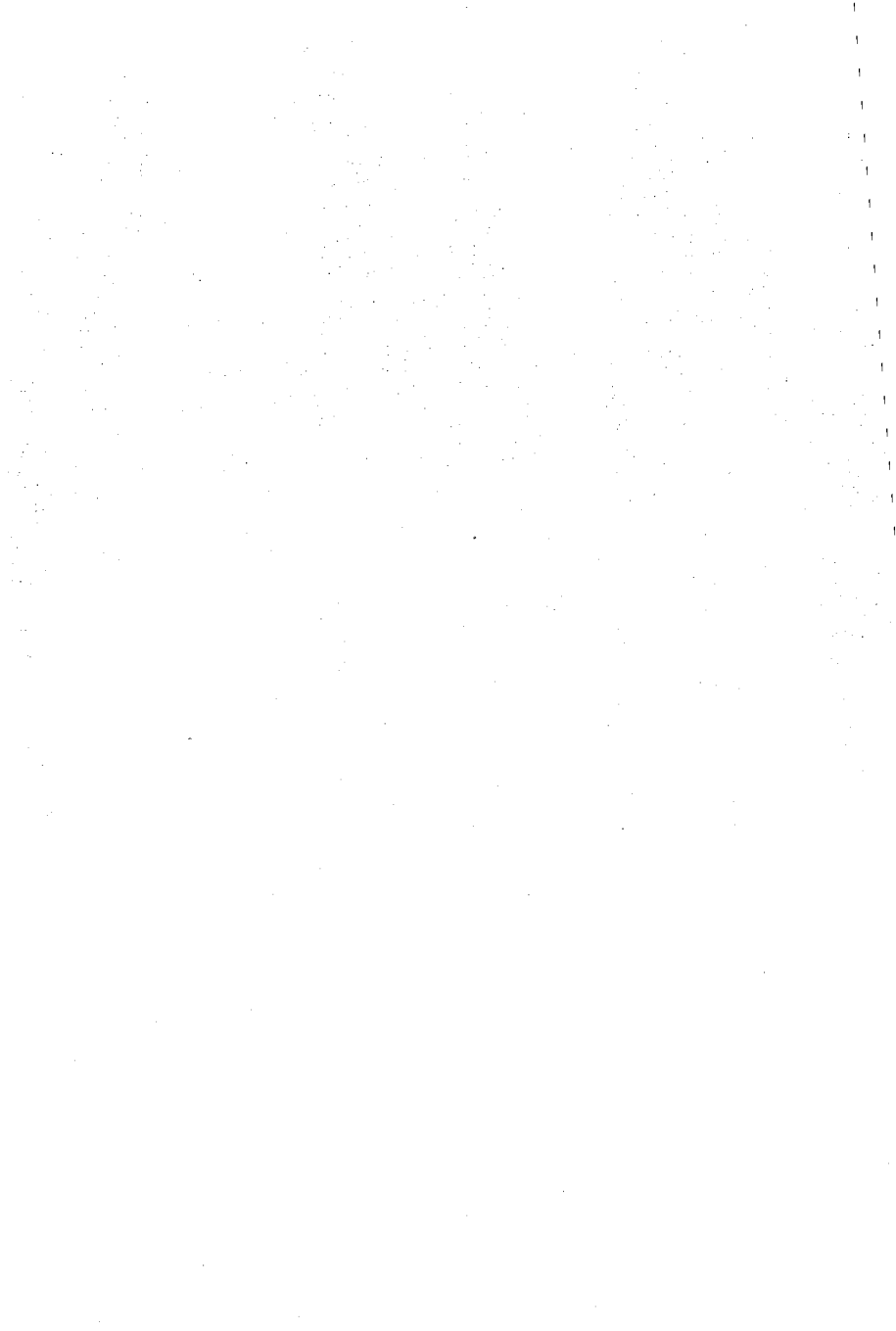
С ПРЕДИСЛОВИЕМ С. ХАНОЯНА



The cover of the book written by Hovhannes Katchaznoui,  
which was published in Russian in 1927 in the USSR (Tbilisi),  
which carried the title:

*The Dashnagzoutiun Has Nothing To Do Anymore.*





## TO THE READER

This is a manifesto which I prepared to the Convention of the foreign branches of the Armenian Revolutionary Federation, convened during the month of April, 1923.

Deeply convinced that all the questions raised here will be subject to the most serious consideration of not only the members of the Party but also of every single Armenian, I thought it was my duty to have this manifesto published and thereby make it public property.

I am having it printed complete and without any alterations except the final three or four pages which contain concrete proposals that are reserved to the governing bodies of the Party.

Hovhannes Katchaznoui  
Bucharest, July, 1923



Comrades:

These matters have had my deliberate and serious consideration. I do not know whether you, too, have arrived at the same conclusions. Allow me to say more: I am afraid that my final conclusion - those very difficult words which I shall here state with all singleness of heart - will cause general embarrassment, perhaps resentment, in the Convention.

I am prepared for that.

I only ask that you believe: a) that it is more difficult for me to write and sign those words than for you to listen to them from my own lips; b) that those words are not the result of thoughtless or petty, transient dispositions or hasty resolve. They are the result of deep-rooted convictions and a clear awareness, for I am capable of thinking and understanding, considering and determining a stand point.

I beg of you, therefore, that you be patient and approach the matters with an open mind, unhampered - something which is not easy for men who have lived a Party life and have thought from a Party angle.

Let me now proceed with my subject.

In order to present my conclusions in proper sequence I feel it is necessary for me to refresh your memory with the various phases of the Armenian Cause - " from the Great War to the Lausanne Conference and the role played by the Dashnagtzoutiun during that period. So that I may not abuse your attention, I shall curtail my speech and present to you a concise yet accurate commentary.

Following 1914, what stages did the Armenian question pass through, what development did the events show, how did they come about, what sequence did they follow and where did they lead to and in the meantime, what did our party do and what will it have to do in the future?

When I recall the recent past, with these considerations in mind, and when I distinguish the important points from the secondary and the arbitrary ones, and arrange them in chronological order, this is the picture that arises:

1. At the beginning of the Autumn of 1914 when Turkey had not yet entered the war but had already been making preparations, Armenian revolutionary units began to be formed in Transcaucasia with great enthusiasm and, especially, with much uproar. Contrary to the decision taken during the general meeting at Erzurum only a few weeks before, the A.R.F. had active participation in the formation of the units and their future military action against Turkey.

In an undertaking of such gravity, fraught with most serious consequences, individual agents of the Transcaucasian A.R.F. acted against the will of our superior authority, against the will of the General Meeting of the Party.

Why?

Because they were also suffering from the syndrome of following the masses, and were flowing in the direction that the current was taking them.

This example urges us to recall that the A.R.F. in Transcaucasia in the past had been a follower rather than an originator of movements that had their inception beyond their control. Thus it was in 1903 (rebellions and demonstrations on the occasion of the seizure of Church properties); thus it was in the year 1905-1906 (bloody encounters between Tatars and Armenians); and thus it was also

during the first big movements of the laboring classes (1903-1906) when the A.R.F. was being led at Baku, Tbilisi and Batoum by the policies of foreign socialistic parties.

The same characteristic line of action appears, as we will see a little later, in the conduct we pursued afterwards generally.

It would be useless to argue today whether our bands of volunteers should have entered the field or not. Historical events have their irrefutable logic. In the Fall of 1914 Armenian volunteer units organized themselves and fought against the Turks because they could not refrain themselves from organizing and refrain themselves from fighting. This was an inevitable result of a psychology on which the Armenian people had nourished themselves during an entire generation: that mentality should have found its expression, and it did so.

And it was not the A.R.F. that would stop the movement even if it wished to do so. It was able to utilize the existing conditions, give effect and issue to the accumulated desires, hopes and frenzy, organize the ready forces - it had that much ability and authority. But to go against the current and push forward its own plan - it was unfit, especially unfit for one particular reason: the A.R.F. is a mass of people strong in instinct but weak in comprehension.

It is also useless, today, to question who is responsible for the wrongs (if the issue of responsibility does ever come up). If it had not been Bishop Mesrop, A. Hatisov, Dr. Zhavriev, S. Arutniov, Dro and Andranic, there would have been others to do the same things in their place. If the formation of units was wrong, the root of that error must be sought much further and more deeply. At the present time it is important to register only the evidence that we did participate in that volunteer movement to the largest extent and we did that contrary to the decision and the will of the General Meeting of the Party.

2. The Winter of 1914 and the Spring of 1915 were the periods of greatest enthusiasm and hope for all the Armenians in the Cauca-

sus, including, of course, the Dashnagtzoutiun. We had no doubt that the war would end with the complete victory of the Allies; Turkey would be defeated and dismembered, and its Armenian population would at last be liberated.

We had embraced Russia whole-heartedly without any compunction. Without any positive basis of fact, we believed that the Tsarist government would grant us a more-or-less broad self-government in the Caucasus and in the Armenian "vilayets" liberated from Turkey as a reward for our loyalty, our efforts and assistance.

We had created a dense atmosphere of illusion in our minds. We had implanted our own desires into the minds of others; we had lost our sense of reality and were carried away with our dreams. From mouth to mouth, from ear to ear passed mysterious words purported to have been spoken in the palace of the Viceroy; attention was called to some kind of a letter sent by Vorontzov-Dashkov to the Catholicos, as an important document in our hands to be used in the presentation of our rights and claims -a cleverly composed letter with very indefinite sentences and generalities which might be interpreted in any manner, according to one's desire.

We overestimated the ability of the Armenian people, their political and military power and overestimated the extent and importance of the services our people rendered to the Russians. And by overestimating our very modest worth and merit, we were naturally exaggerating our hopes and expectations.

3. The deportations and mass exiles and massacres which took place during the Summer and Autumn of 1915 were mortal blows to the Armenian Cause. Half of historical Armenia -" the same half where the foundations of our independence would be laid according to the traditions inherited by European diplomacy -" that half was denuded of Armenians: the Armenian provinces of Turkey were without Armenians. The Turks knew what they were doing and

have no reason to regret today. It was the most decisive method of extirpating the Armenian Question from Turkey.

Again, it would be useless to ask today to what extent the participation of volunteers in the war was a contributory to the Armenian calamity. No one can claim that the savage persecutions would not have taken place if our behavior on this side of the frontier had been different, as no one can claim to the contrary that the persecutions would have been the same even if we had not shown hostility to the Turks.

This is a matter about which it is possible to have many different opinions.

The proof is, however - and this is essential -" that the struggle began decades ago against which the Turkish government brought about the deportation or extermination of the Armenian people in Turkey and the desolation of the Turkish Armenia.

This was the terrible fact!

Civilized humanity might very well be shaken with rage in the face of this unspeakable crime. Statesmen might utter menacing words against criminal Turkey. "Blue", "yellow", "orange" books and papers might be published condemning them. Divine punishment against the criminals might be invoked in churches by clergymen of all denominations. The press of all countries might be filled with horrible descriptions and details and the testimony of eye-witnesses... Let them say this or that, but the work was already done and words would not revive the corpses fallen in the Arabian deserts, rebuild the ruined hearths, repopulate the country now become desolate. The Turks knew what they ought to do and did it.

4. The second half of 1915 and the entire year of 1916 were periods of hopelessness, desperation and mourning for us. The refugees, all those who had survived the holocaust were filling Russian provinces by tens and hundreds of thousands. They were famished,



naked, sick, horrified and desperate floods of humanity, flooding our villages and cities. They had come to a country which was itself ruined and famished. They piled upon each other, before our own eyes, on our threshold dying of famine and sickness...

And we were unable to save those precious lives. Angered and terrified, we sought the culprits and quickly found them: the deceitful politics of the Russian government. With the politically immature mind peculiar to inconsequential men, we fell from one extreme to another. Just as unfounded had been our faith in the Russian government yesterday, our condemnation of them today was equally blind and groundless.

It was claimed that the Russians were intentionally slow to act, showed uncertainty and provided the grounds and the means for the Turks to slaughter the local Armenians. It was professed that the reason behind this attitude on the part of the Russians was to vacate Armenia and later settle the Kossacs there and that Count Lobanov-Rostovsky's widely known project "Armenia without Armenians" was in progress.

It was not only our party, but many of our citizens with common sense who also shared this idea.

We were reluctant to understand that there did not have to be such a project as "Armenia without Armenians" to explain the Russian stand and that the Russian plans did not necessarily have to involve such an item as unconditionally taking on the defence of the Turkish Armenians. Such a plan definitely did not exist. We were only projecting our own wishes on the Russian government and accusing them of disloyalty.

Our volunteer units were naturally trying to capture Van and Muş without any waste of time. They headed for these places to save the Armenians. However, Russians did not only consist of Armenians and they had other intentions. Their sluggishness and uncertainty to act which we evaluated as disloyalty is explainable by

the customary ineffectiveness of the Russian command ( which was witnessed many times on other fronts as well) or other general military conditions unknown to us now.

This incident being very much original and interesting, demands to be taken up individually. By extraordinary mental aberration, we, a political party, were forgetting that our Cause was an incidental and trivial phase for the Russians, so trivial that if necessary, they would trample on our corpses without a moment's hesitation.

I am not saying that we did not know the circumstances. Of course we knew and understood and so we started when it was necessary to explain the situation. Deep down in our hearts, however, we did not grasp the full meaning of that word-formula; we forgot what we already knew and we drew such conclusions as though our Cause was the center of gravity of the Great War, its cause and its purpose. When the Russians were advancing, we used to say from the depths of our subconscious minds that they were coming to save us; and when they were withdrawing, we said they are retreating so that they would allow us to be massacred...

In both cases we misinterpreted the consequence with the purpose and intention. We sought proofs of Russian treachery and of course we found them - exactly as we sought and found proofs of the same Russians- undeniably benevolent six months before. To complain bitterly about our bad luck and to seek external causes for our misfortune- that is one of the main aspects of our national psychology from which, of course, the Dashnagtzoutiun is not free.

One might think we found a spiritual consolation in the conviction that the Russians behaved villainously towards us (later it would be the turn of the French, the Americans, the British, the Georgians, Bolsheviks - the whole world -to be so blamed). One might think that, because we were so naive and so lacking in foresight, we placed ourselves in such a position and considered it a great virtue to let anyone who so desired betray us, massacre us and let others massacre us.

5. In February 1917 the Russian Revolution broke out. New possibilities opened up before us unexpectedly.

A democratic order was under way. Extremely important social issues (such as appropriating the lands into public ownership) were waiting to be solved. We, the socialists and democrats welcomed this new order with enthusiasm. Also, as a national political party, we concentrated on the issues of taking over the administrative power from the central authority and the autonomy of individual regions and peoples.

We set out on a hard work.

The old state mechanism needed to be changed and the local units of the new authority needed to be set up. The central government which was going through the first phases of the Revolution did not have the means to look into this question. The local cadres were wholly entrusted with this issue. Social institutions such as political parties, workers' unions and national governments were authorized with dealing with the issue (or, rather they took it upon themselves to deal with it).

The issue of national participation in the government was a particularly complex and difficult question in Transcaucasia. National councils among which were Armenian councils were established in important centers.

The Transcaucasian Commissariat and Worker, Soldier and Peasant Soviets Transcaucasian Center were established. These were two independent establishments of the central government and were assigned with governing the region until governmental institutions were set up.

"The Soviets Center" had lost its authority by the end of the year and it left the political scene. On the other hand, the Transcaucasian Commissariat gained strength and turned into the governing power of the whole Transcaucasia.

6. As it later proved to be in the Seym<sup>1</sup> and in the Transcaucasian government, the "Commissariat" was also a coalition.

This coalition represented the parties in name and form and the nations, in essence. The main parties were: The Menshevik Fraction, the Social Democrats, the Musavat and the Armenian Revolutionary Federation Dashnagtzoutiun. These parties in fact represented the three main nations of the region: the Georgians, the Azerbaijani Tatars<sup>2</sup> and the Armenians.

The Georgian Mensheviks assumed the authoritative position, the leading role in the Commissariat and later both in the Seym and in the government.

What was the reason?

Here are some reasons:

Firstly, the Commissariat had taken its authority from the Provisional Government, or rather the State Duma circles in Petrograd. The Georgian representatives, over a long period of time, had acquired important positions and influence and had established contacts, relying on a strong organization which was the Russian Social Democratic Party. When a "Commissariat" was established in Transcaucasia, the priority was naturally given to the Georgians and not to the Armenians and the Tatars who were not conspicuous in the Duma.

Secondly, there were people more or less experienced in state affairs, among the Georgians. These people had acquired some habits and experience due to active participation in the work done in the Duma. Neither we, nor those from the Musavat, however, had been through such a school and were not prepared. Musavat was

1 Seym: Transcaucasian Parliament (Arif Acaloğlu).

2 Tatars: The author here refers to the Azerbaijani Turks. Katchznouni sometimes prefers the word, "Tatar" as it was sometimes used by the Tsar regime but occasionally uses the word "Azerbaijanis" to refer to the same people. (Arif Acaloğlu.)

new and Dashnagtzoutiun was in fact prepared for underground activity. Doubtlessly, the qualities of the party leaders were also important to a certain extent. The Georgians had bred a few capable people or social leaders; we had nobody to sit next to them and we used to sit behind them in the second or third rows.

Another point was that in the times of the old regime, the state affairs were in the hands of the Georgians. This fact continued after the Revolution, for more people were to be found among the Georgians, who were capable enough to conduct technical work. Experience in official service naturally formed a strong basis for the Georgians to gain further strength in administrative duties. So was the situation from the "Commissariat" to the affairs relating to the railways and the post and telegraph.

The most important was the following: The Georgians were the best organized people with the highest social consciousness in Transcaucasia. On the other hand, there was no threat against the physical existence of the Georgian people. For these reasons, the Georgians were stronger than the other peoples.

The geographical location of the Georgian people and the fact that they inhabited the same area together, that they suffered fewer losses in the War and also that they bred no mutual antagonism (serious enough to be a threat to their national existence) against their neighbours made them luckier in being able to be heard, in comparison to the Armenians and the Azerbaijanis.

No matter what, the Georgians could be on better terms with Turkey and Azerbaijan, compared to the Armenians. What was more, a Georgian population outside the borders of Georgia, whose lives were under threat did not exist. However, Armenians had kins living in Azerbaijan and so did Azerbaijanis, living in Armenia.

The Georgians were living in peace and quiet on their own land; although they did have certain border problems with their neighbours,

these arose from imperialist claims and could easily be completely solved without putting the present or the future of Georgia under threat.

On the other hand, the relations between Armenians and Turks and Armenians and Tatars were different. Between them there had been problems going on for centuries and it was impossible to solve them without major conflicts. Turkey, unconditionally defeated on the west, was trying to open up a future for itself and consolidate it on the northeast. And here the Armenians interjected between Erzurum and Baku and blocked their way.

Insolvable land problems stood between Armenians and Azerbaijanis. The problem was not occupying one or two towns but having the national population inhabit an unbroken, continuous geography. This wish was fostered both by the Armenians and the Azerbaijanis. Armenia could not survive without Sharur-Nakhichevan and the importance of Nakhichevan for Armenia was different from the significance of Zaqatala, Akhalkalaki and Lori for Georgia. This was why both Armenia and Azerbaijan were unlucky.

It was perhaps possible for politically mature peoples to find peaceful solutions. However neither we nor the Azerbaijanis were mature enough; for this reason, the conflict between the two peoples had mutually become a source of antagonism and distrust.

The Georgians used the Armenian-Turkish and Armenian-Tatar conflicts cleverly (in other, stronger words, opportunistically), in order to consolidate their privileged position. Relying on Turks and Tatars and threatening us with moving the borders in this or that way, they complicated matters for us and forced us to accept their conditions. Whenever they needed to ally with us, they started threatening the Azerbaijanis. This kind of behaviour was politically an absolute blackmail and it provided a superiority for the Georgians over their neighbours and established their hegemony over others.

I have digressed a little but in order to make the political situation clear during that period in Transcaucasia, it was necessary.

Our party must understand and keep in mind that the party was under the hegemony of the Georgian Social Democratic Party in the most difficult days, and it acted abominably.

7. In September 1917, the Armenian Convention met in Tbilisi. A national board was established as its executive organ and was named the Central National Council. This National Council later acted on behalf of the Armenian people of Transcaucasia and became the fully authorized representative of the nation.

Dashnagtzoutiun played the leading role both at the Convention and on the board and the council.

8. Towards the end of the same year, elections were held in Transcaucasia for the members of All Russia Provisional Assembly.

Out of the parties which participated in the election campaigns, the Menshevik Social Democrats won 12, the Musavat won 10 and the Dashnagtzoutiun won 9 seats. The number of seats won by the other parties was negligible.

These three parties represented three great peoples who could be listed, according to their political weight, as the Georgians, the Tatars and the Armenians. These elections showed that the strongest, or rather the only organized party was Dashnagtzoutiun.

9. The All Russia Provisional Assembly could not meet. The Bolshevik Revolution broke out in October and was triumphant in Moscow and Petrograd. The Soviet order was proclaimed and the meeting of the All Russia Provisional Assembly was not permitted, as this assembly was considered to have bourgeois tendencies.

Transcaucasia, loyal to the February Revolution did not recognize the Soviet sovereignty and system

Why?

Because in this corner region the dominant parties preferred a democratic platform based on a broad mass membership and for this reason would not accept especially a party dictatorship. On the other hand, they thought that the country was not mature enough for a fully socialist, let alone a communist regime (besides, the Musavat Party possessed nothing in the name of socialism). The socialism of the Armenian Revolutionary Federation Dashnagtzoutiun was only on the surface and had no deep roots among the masses of people within the party. Among the Georgian Mensheviks, on the other hand, the nationalistic anti-Russian trend was strong.

Secondly, the Georgian Mensheviks which determined the atmosphere in the political life of Transcaucasia, had broken away from the Bolsheviks and were openly opposing them.

The Mensheviks who were loyal to their party regulations and the general political line of their party, were pursuing here, exactly the same policy their Russian comrades were pursuing in Russia. The Musavat which had enthusiastic desires about capturing Baku and had Panturkist ideals, wanted an immediate separation from Russia.

The Armenian Revolutionary Federation Dashnagtzoutiun had formed close relations with the local Bolsheviks and was assisting them, in case the Tatars would capture Baku. In Tbilisi, on the other hand, they could not close their eyes to the reality of the Georgians and Tatars and so could not put in practice Bolshevik policies. They would not have been able to do so even if they had wanted. Anyway, they had no desire to do so, because the Bolshevik ideology and tactics did not appeal to them.

Our Party stood in the anti-Bolshevik camp partly due to certain convictions within the Party and partly because of being under the pressure of outside factors.

10. I have to remind you here of the neutral and reluctant stand our comrades took in Baku. Baku, the industrial city which bore a



proletariat of tens of thousands and strong workers' organizations offered very favorable conditions for the development of Bolshevism. That city had been the only region where the Bolsheviks could find a reliable sanctuary and a sound support in the whole Transcaucasia since the first days of the Revolution. Baku did not refuse, in form, the sovereignty of the Transcaucasian Commissariat even after the October Revolution. In reality, however, the power was in the hands of two local organs: the Social Organizations Soviet and the Workers' Representatives Soviet.

In the first one, anti-Bolshevik groups, and in the second one the Bolsheviks dominated.

Our Party was represented on both of the organs. Inside these organs which were independent of each other and were of different nature, an open struggle for domination was going on.

In the first period, the Social Organizations Soviet was stronger (here, the mild socialists and the liberal bourgeoisie had formed a silent alliance against the Bolsheviks). The Workers' Representatives Soviet was gradually gaining strength and by January 1918 it had gained control over the entire situation.

This Soviet was led by the Bolsheviks. Bolsheviks were not an important force then; their accomplishments were essentially due to the insecurity prevailing in the other camp.

Only two parties, Dashnagtzoutiun and Musavat could demonstrate any strength against the Bolsheviks. However, though these two parties needed to act in alliance if they wanted to accomplish anything in the struggle against Bolshevism, this was unimaginable, for there was no mutual trust. Dashnagtzoutiun was aware that its support for Musavat was required only because of the Bolshevik threat. Musavat had to erase Dashnagtzoutiun from the political scene, after having eliminated the Bolsheviks. No doubt, the Bolsheviks would do the same to Dashnagtzoutiun after having destroyed the Musavat with the help of armed Dashnag troops. For

the Armenian community, the Bolshevik dictatorship was more acceptable in comparison to the Musavat dictatorship.

The fact that our people got more and more involved in the Bolshevik movement in Baku and that they provided a kind of sustenance to them is explainable only with this.

Just as we unintentionally came under the domination of the Georgian Mensheviks in Tbilisi, we were under the influence of the Bolsheviks in Baku. In both cases the motivating force was the Turkish-Tatar threat. Bolsheviks wiped out Musavat in Baku with our support (March 1918); we, on the other hand were able to protect Baku against the Turkish-Tatar assault with the help of the Russian elements among the Bolsheviks.

Later, again with our initiative, British forces were invited over from Iran. This happened in the last moments when the Bolsheviks were getting ready to escape to Russia and had got on the ships.

If the British had been able to settle down firmly in Baku, the outcome of the events would probably have been different. However, the few numbers of the British troops did not promote trust among the people and they got on their ships and went back to Iran.

We were left alone; we did nothing else besides following the British to Iran.

The Azerbaijani government based in Gəncə so far, entered Baku with the Turkish armed forces and the armed people. The Armenian people started to be cruelly massacred; just as the Muslim people massacred (on a smaller scale) in March during the Bolshevik-Musavat conflict.

These incidents were happening outside Armenia, in one of the Tatar regions; nevertheless they were reflected on our political scene and confused the situation and made it more difficult.

The Tatars continually provoked the Turks against us and speeded up their assault, in order to be able to enter Baku. With this intention, they were very cunningly speculating about the March

incidents and were putting the blame of the incidents entirely on the Armenians. The Georgians were displeased with our association with the Bolsheviks; they had doubts about us, thinking we were seeking for an opportunity to open the doors of Transcaucasia to the Russian Bolsheviks. Apart from this, they interpreted having the British forces over in Baku when the Germans which they were flirting with, were in Tbilisi as a betrayal of the Georgian-German-Turkish-Tatar policies.

As a result of the policies we practiced in Baku, our neighbours started to regard us as independent allies. Our comrades in Baku, on the other hand, thought that they would be able to protect the rest of Armenia against Turkish assaults by consolidating their existence in Baku and attracting the Turkish-Tatar forces to the city. They developed their policies in this direction.

I am going back to the chronological sequence of events.

11. At the end of 1917 the Russian Army started to get demoralized and the soldiers started to abandon their troops on the Caucasian front. The front was being destroyed in astonishing speed.

At the end of January, there was no longer an army. Negligible Armenian troops, with some soldiers left over from the army, were charged with defending the Erzurum line.

12. The situation in Transcaucasia was getting more and more dangerous.

The Bolshevik Revolution and the civil war spreading wider and wider every day, had definitely torn away the outer regions from Russia.

The Commissariat which acted in the name of the Provisional Government led by Kerensky lost the ground under their feet after the Government was turned out of office. There was a need to establish a new power, authorized in the eyes of the public and capable

of conducting governmental affairs independently and with greater authority. Such a power was established with the Transcaucasian Seym and its Government.

The Seym was formed out of the Transcaucasian members of the All Russia Provisional Assembly (by multiplying this number with three). Thus the Mensheviks (Georgia) had 36, the Musavat (Azerbaijan) 30 and the Dashnagtzoutiun (Armenia) had 27 seats in the Seym.

The Seym met in Tbilisi, the natural and indisputable capital of Transcaucasia.

At the first general congress on 10<sup>th</sup> February 1918, the executive committee report was read and the resignation of the Commissariat was accepted. Later, the Seym taking into consideration the fact that the relations between our region and Russia had been actually broken and that it was uncertain as to when they would be re-established, announced the independence of the Transcaucasian Democratic Republic and that it was the only institution which held the executive power in its hands. Within this context, Y. Gegechkory (Georgian Menshevik) was assigned the task of forming a provisional government (a cabinet) responsible to the Seym.

This did not mean a separation from Russia; it only reflected the actual situation and was temporary. Internationally, Transcaucasia was considered to be an inseparable part of Russia.

13. Encouraged by the increasing corruption of the Russian army, Turkish military troops hastily got organized, got themselves in order and started to capture one after the other, the regions they had lost. In the meantime, the Turkish Command (Vehip Paşa) started to initiate a cease-fire and the continuation of the peace talks.

The Seym took a decision to stop the war and sat down for a settlement with the Turks.

The first talks were conducted in Trabzon in March 1918. The Dashnagtzoutiun fraction was able to add among other Seym de-

mands the demand for self determination of the Armenians in Turkey within Ottoman borders, as a separate individual point (there were four separate demands).

However, this demand (which was very badly formulated and was open to negotiation) was immediately answered officially and was stated that the self determination of the Turkish Armenians was an internal matter of Turkey and nobody had the right to interfere with the internal affairs of Turkey. Thus, they gave us the message that if we ever brought up the issue of the Turkish Armenians, they would cut off any talks. The Transcaucasians did not bring up the issue any more. The reason why they had brought it up was clear; the Seym's decision was only a gesture of good will towards the Armenians, and the Seym never had the intention of insisting on this demand. The Georgians were not inclined to get into needless trouble (they did not feel the need to); for the Azerbaijanis, on the other hand, the Turkish interests were more important than the future of the Armenians and even the Transcaucasian Republic. The Armenian members of the delegation were certainly not able to make the Tatars and the Georgians accept their demands. To be just, it must be pointed out that even if our allies at that time (the Georgians and the Tatars) had been able to defend the Armenian demands most sincerely, they would not have been successful. The balance of power was in Turkey's favour and therefore there was no reason why Turkey should give any concessions. This point was clear to us –the Armenian members of the delegation.

The issue of borders became a hot subject of discussion.

The Turks were convinced that the border between Transcaucasia and Turkey had been determined with the Brest Agreement signed by the Bolsheviks. In the same manner, they stated they had come to Trabzon not to open this agreement to question but to establish friendly relations with their neighbour, the Transcaucasian Republic. Transcaucasia on the other hand, did not recognize the Brest

Agreement and thought it was the Transcaucasian peoples who were authorized to decide about land concessions to Turkey. In other words, the Transcaucasian delegation did not want to accept that the Soviet government was legally authorized (on the grounds that this government was not recognized within Russia itself and on the other hand that according to the slogan of self determination voiced during the period of the Great War, the real owners of Transcaucasia was not the Russian Government, no matter how legitimate it might be, but the peoples of the region themselves).

It was very difficult to defend this stand not only because it was new and controversial in international law, but also because the Turkish Army was growing stronger every day and the Transcaucasian Army was on the verge of breaking down. In international affairs it is no secret that the powerful party proves to be right.

Another reason why it was difficult to defend this attitude was because the delegation was not in unity within itself.

Because the Georgians were primarily concerned with the issues of Batoum and Ajaria , in order to be able to secure all this region, they were inclined to leave Kars and Ardahan to Turks.

However, Kars was needed by the Armenians. We were ready to give Ajaria big concessions in order to get Kars in return. The Azerbaijanis, on the other hand, as the fourth (or if Dagestan is taken into consideration, the fifth) republic of the Transcaucasian Federation, wanted a Southwestern Muslim Republic to be established in Ajaria. If not, they thought, Ajaria ought to be attached to Turkey. They did not want it to be attached to Georgia.

The Azerbaijanis defended completely the same view with the Turks concerning Kars and Ardahan. They considered Kars and Ardahan Turkish territory and therefore regarded it quite natural that they should be attached to Turkey.

Turks were very closely informed about our inner conflicts and therefore insisted on their views.

There was another issue which invoked a big discussion: Turks wanted Transcaucasia to be declared independent of Russia and thought that an agreement with us would only then be possible.

The Transcaucasian delegates insistently stated that Transcaucasia was physically separated from Russia and was in fact independent. Turks, on the other hand, quite rightly declared that in order for an international agreement to be signed, a de facto situation was not sufficient and that a legal foundation was needed and that to bring this about, certain formalities had to be carried out.

These unproductive talks went on for about a month. It was to Turks' advantage that the talks went on for so long (otherwise, they would have ended them any moment). Time was passing, our military force and defense potential was continuously getting weaker whereas those of the Turks were getting stronger. While we were busy with holding meetings and with correspondence in Trabzon, the Turkish Army was advancing without meeting any obstruction. They captured Erzurum at the end of March and Batoum at the beginning of April.

Nevertheless, the Seym would not admit defeat.

When it was clear that Turks would not make any compromises on anything that was included in the Brest Agreement, the Seym withdrew its delegation and the Trabzon talks broke up (this was called "a break").

14. Internal discord within the Seym and inside the government of the Federation which had been going on since the first days was more clearly prominent now.

Turkish success encouraged the Azerbaijanis; their delegation had a better chance to sit down with the Turks and talk in Trabzon (and they certainly did use it). In the Seym the Azerbaijanis did not hide that they sided with the Turks. Defending and developing the Turkish view, they demanded that Transcaucasia be speedily

separated from Russia, Turkey be given considerable concessions and also the war be ended, having come to an agreement with Turkey; for they stated that as Muslim democrats, their religious sentiments prevented them from getting actively involved in a fight with the Turks.

These words, expressed by a Musavat speaker in the Seym should have been understood as a possibility that the Transcaucasian Tatars would fight against us, let alone fighting on our side, (they had never actually been on our ranks and had never fought on the Turkish front) if the war with Turkey was continued.

The Georgians hesitated, as if they were the Menshevik fraction of the Seym.

They harboured two trends, two different tendencies (the Russian tendency and the German-Turkish tendency). Those that were inclined towards Russia did not definitely want a separation from Russia, but because they evaluated the Brest Agreement as unacceptable, thought that instead of a peace with such conditions, a war was more preferable. The representatives of the second trend were against Russia; They thought the Russian threat against Georgia was more important than the Turkish threat. Therefore, they were ready to give very big concessions to Turkey, to be able to compromise (to speak openly, they were trying to give concessions in the name of Armenia, to be able to save at least Batoum and the harbour there, if not the whole Ajaria).

The Armenians (Dashnagtzoutiun fraction in the Seym) did not want to separate from Russia nor did they have positive expectations from Turkey. The Armenians would rather stop Turkish attacks with armed force, because they believed that it was going to be them, rather than anybody else (or perhaps only them) who would suffer losses and they still hoped they were capable of future military victories.



The Armenian National Assembly met in Alexandropol (Gumru) in April and took up this issue. Despite the presentation made there, by the author of these lines, it was agreed that the Brest Agreement should be refused and the war should be continued. However, this decision could never be put into practice, because we were not in a position to assert our ideas, we could not even determine our own fate.

The indecision of the Georgians did not last long. The German-Turkish trend was victorious in the Sejm and as a result of this victory, the Sejm announced boisterously on April 22 that Transcaucasia parted from Russia. On this occasion, the Georgian and the Tatar leaders made very emotional speeches at the Sejm meeting. The Dashnag fraction supported the proposal of separation but did not make any speeches.

It was not easy for us to accept this separation, but there was no other way. If we had opposed, the Transcaucasian Federation would have broken down; the Georgians and the Tatars would have agreed to reconcile with the Turks and we would have been left alone; and we would have been standing against the Turkish Army. Russia (neither the Bolshevik one nor the anti-Bolshevik one) could not have helped us even if they had wanted to. We were not only alone, but behind our lines it was also not secure; for it was clear that the Azerbaijanis and (perhaps the Georgians too in order to capture Akhalkalaki, Lorri and Pembek) would come against us. We needed the Transcaucasian Confederation more than anybody else and did not want it to break down. This was why we acted in the same direction as our neighbours did.

15. On April 25, Kars fell; and with almost no fighting, for directives were received from Tbilisi to surrender the fortress to the Turks. This treacherous directive had been sent without our knowledge and it aroused great reaction among our people. That day the fate of the Federation looked very critical.

However, what was done was done. The Kars fortress which was our most strategic area was now in the hands of the Turks; there was no room for hesitation and neglect. The Seym accepted the Brest Agreement as the reference and decided to continue the talks which had broken up in Trabzon.

The new phase of the talks started in Batoum on the first days of May (where the Turks had quite comfortably settled for some time). This time the Turks had a different approach. The Brest Agreement was no longer satisfactory for them. They were saying that following the Trabzon talks there was more bloodshed and that this had to be compensated. They mainly demanded more land compensations from Armenia. Long and useless talks started again. The Brest Agreement which we had not wanted to hear about a few months ago in Trabzon, became our sole wish now. However, it was impossible to persuade the Turks. They had gripped our throat tightly and did not want to let go.

On May 15, the Turkish troops crossed Arpaçay (Arpatchai) which was the border according to the Brest agreement, and invaded Alexandropol in a few hours and moved towards Karakilise.

The situation was unacceptable.

Tbilisi which was the capital of Georgia and Transcaucasia was also under threat. No further advance was made in the talks going on in Batoum.

16. The discord in the Seym could not be settled with any compromise. An explosion was inevitable.

The Georgians were able to see that we were a useless burden on their shoulders and they could very easily solve their own problems without us. The Azerbaijanis, on the other hand, had one wish: Joining the Turks to invade Baku right away. Following the Turkish victory, the Azerbaijanis had no longer any need for the

Transcaucasian Federation. They did not need the Georgians and they saw the Armenians as their enemy.

The moment of breaking down had come.

On May 26, the Sejm abolished itself and abandoned its rights, taking into consideration that there were fundamental disagreements concerning war and peace issues.

On the same day and in the same building, Georgian National Council bombastically declared the independence of Georgia.

One day later Armenia took the same step.

Now it was Armenia's turn.

Was it right to declare our independence; did we have the means to establish our own state and maintain it?

These questions were absurdly unnecessary. We had neither the place nor the time to organize elections. History had brought us to a certain point. We had to gather courage and solve this problem, for we did not want to disappear. We had to own our country, otherwise, we were going to lose it forever. A small hesitation and neglect would create a situation of *res nullius* (nobody's property) and in such a situation we would become a war booty for our neighbours, the Turks, the Georgians and the Tatars.

On May 28, late at night, the Central National Council declared Armenia an independent state and itself the highest sovereign organ of this state.

The Council had not received any such authority from the National Board, but nevertheless they did not hesitate in the face of such a formal obstacle and in the following years nobody thought of accusing the Council of transgressing their authority. Everybody was aware that there was no other way.

17. On May 22-26 the battle of Serdarabat and on May 25-28 the battle of Karakilise were fought.

The Armenian people had gathered all their strength to defend their existence. No doubt these fierce battles, the brave resistance

that the people (there was no longer an army) showed (especially around Karakilise) significantly raised our standing in the eyes of the Turks and provided the opportunity for a settlement.

The Armenian delegates who were now acting on behalf of the Armenian Republic and who had been authorized by the National Council returned to Batoum and a treaty was signed on June 4.

It was a new phase in the life of the Armenian people; a phase of the revival of a state organization which had been lost long ago.

18. On August 1, The Armenian Parliament began to work in Yerevan (Erivan) and the first government was formed.

The parliament had been formed by tripling the present number of the National Council members. 6 Muslims, 1 Russian and 1 Yezid<sup>3</sup> member was added to the other members. The majority belonged to the Armenian Revolutionary Federation Dashnagtzoutiun. Because our fraction held 18 votes out of the 47 and because we could not form a bloc with any other fraction, the Parliament had no stable center and a definite political identity.

The government was not stable either. The cabinet changed four times during the first 10 months, but the head of the government was always the same person.

The first governments that were formed were all coalitions (the Dashnags, the Cadets and an independent war Minister). The coalition government was not founded on a sound basis, because it did not have a safe majority in the parliament (the Cadets often took a different course from the Dashnags). What was more important was that there was no common agreement among the parties forming the government, on the basis of the program. The attitude our party had towards the government was also an obstacle in this context.

3 Yezid: Yezid Kurds (Arif Acaloğlu).

19. Now I would like to take up a mistake which I find very important and explain it below.

Armenia was a Democratic Republic. It had the proper organs of a democratic-parliamentarian government: a legislative body composed of the people's representatives and a responsible administration. The Parliament was composed of representatives from the four existing Parties and minorities with the widest true democratic principles. The government received its authority from the legislative body and was responsible to it.

This was the form.

But the reality was otherwise.

In practice our Party tended to take under its control both the legislative body and the government. We did not have the courage, nor the ability to declare an open dictatorship, but did not wish to remain within parliamentary limits either and tried to establish in Armenia the "İttihad"<sup>4</sup> system - a party dictatorship disguised as a democracy.

An intolerable dualism resulted from it - on the surface the Parliament and the government; behind the scenes, invisible, the Party and its organs.

Naturally, these two types of authority which were practiced officially and unofficially were only obstructing one another. The official rules prevented the party from acting freely and fast and exposing its own will; the manipulations of the party also prevented the government from acting with its own initiative. This factor made it extremely difficult to form coalitions. Actually, the foreign elements of the coalition government had to practice the policies which had been decided outside the government, in party offices which did not belong to them and they had no control over.

<sup>4</sup> İttihad: The Union and Progress Party (İttihat Terakki Partisi) (Lale Akalın).

Last summer, I prepared a report on this sensitive issue and presented it to the Party Congress, as I was instructed by the related party organ. My report was read at the regional meeting which met in Constantinopolis.

Here I will suffice with a few lines on this issue.

20. In November a general peace was declared. Germany and its allies lost the war.

The German troops left Georgia in haste. Turks also receded back into their old territory.

Towards the end of the month, British troops –the troops of our ally– entered Batoum. We started to entertain new hopes. It appeared as if our situation in Transcaucasia would radically change, for the victorious and those which replaced the German troops in Tbilisi were our allies. We had fought against a common enemy. We certainly would attain the privilege of special friendship of the British, compared to the Georgians who had flirted with the Germans and to the Azerbaijanis who had openly went over to the Turkish side.

We were once more wrong. The British saw no difference among us. They acted as if either they did not know that we had been their ally or had forgotten this. The generosity they showed towards the Georgians and the Azerbaijanis was unexpected and incomprehensible. We certainly did not like this attitude of the British and thought they were disloyal. This was the easiest way of explaining to ourselves an incomprehensible situation. We contented that they were unfaithful and we were relieved. We did not examine the reasons for this unfaithfulness.

21. At the beginning of December, a war between Georgia and Turkey broke out but did not last long. When the Turks moved from Alexandropol to Pembek and captured Karakilise, the Georgians took the opportunity and sent troops to the Lorri region of Ar-

menia. Nevertheless, even when Turks receded, the Georgians did not want to vacate Lorri. On the contrary, they took every opportunity to secure their presence there.

They ruthlessly suppressed the resistance of the people of the region. Lorri became a matter of dispute and the gravest border question between Armenians and Georgians.

Georgia broke us off the rest of the world in order to be able to apply pressure on us, they imprisoned us inside our borders. Even the wheat which was imported into our country in order to feed our immigrants, was obstructed in Georgia and could not properly reach its destination.

Georgia invaded Lorri and closed the railway. We were surrounded. This was actually a reason to declare war on Georgia. The revolt of some Armenian villages in Lorri and the severe measures taken by the Georgian government was a direct reason for declaring war. It was as if the Georgian government was looking for reasons to massacre Armenians.

Probably the provocations of the Russian officers serving in our army also played a part. The government in Georgia was trying to diminish the Russian factor (which was quite strong in Tbilisi), curb its influence and nationalize the state apparatus. For this reason they were dismissing the Russian officials and officers and were expelling them from Georgia in big groups.

A significant number of Russian officers were serving in our army and these officers had connections in Tbilisi (and perhaps also in the volunteer units of the Dennikin Army). It was probably the same people who provoked our military circles in order to create the hostile atmosphere needed to start a military operation.

The war lasted only three weeks. On December 31, the British interfered and a settlement was made. Lorri was temporarily declared a neutral zone and a common Armenian-Georgian authority was established there, under the supervision of the British commissar.

In this way, the war had concluded favorably for us. We had partially achieved our aim (the railway connection was reestablished with the help of the British). Nevertheless, the war made us think over many issues. We were a very young state with a history of only 4-5 months and this country which was in need of many things had fought a war. We had been fighting with a neighbour with whom we had to have the closest relations, for we could only establish connections with the rest of the world over Georgia.

We were aware of that and sincerely wished to have friendly relations with the Georgians, but we were not able to accomplish that. The reasons were both the attitude the Georgians took towards us and our own weakness, political inadequacy and our inaptitude to use the state apparatus.

22. Here, I also have to call attention to the continuous fights going on within and outside our national borders.

We were officially at war with Azerbaijan, because we were actually fighting with them in Qarabag. There were often clashes in Gazakh too. Inside the country, at certain places like Agapapa, Zod, Zanki-Bazar, Vedi-Bazar, Sharur-Nakhichevan, Zangezour etc. many bloody battles were fought with the native Muslim inhabitants.

And also there is no doubt that the attitude of Azerbaijan in this matter was hostile. Also it is indisputable that the native Muslim inhabitants had been acting against the Armenian state because they were encouraged by Turkey and Azerbaijan. What is important is that we had not been able to take the precautions either within our country or outside it, to secure our stand. We could not establish an acceptable *modus vivendi*<sup>5</sup> with Azerbaijan. We were not able to establish order by means of administrative methods, in the Muslim

5 *Modus vivendi*: Temporary agreement, compromise, interim settlement. (Arif Acaloğlu.)



regions; we were obliged to use arms, send troops, demolish and massacre. We were not successful even in these; so much so that this failure shook the prestige of the central authority. In important points such as Vedi-Bazar and Sharur-Nakhichevan we were not able to establish our authority even with arms; we lost and receded.

23. On May 28, 1919 on the anniversary of our independence, the Parliament declared Armenia "united": in other words, declared that we included the land which would possibly be saved from Turkish sovereignty into the present Armenian territory. This step was considered by some Turkish Armenians as usurping their rights, because they found it extremely dangerous from the point of view of the Armenian question. They made a great fuss, they protested and the Armenian problem in Turkey was once more brought very heavily against the Armenian question in Russia. The liberal bourgeoisie inside and outside the country called this an irresponsible behaviour on the part of Dashnagtzoutiun and started acting furiously towards the party.

These objections and worries were all ungrounded. The Dashnagtzoutiun had no intention of usurping their rights or doing any plotting, besides, it was later understood that this step would not harm the Armenian question in Turkey. The May Declaration had no effect whatsoever on the Armenian question in Turkey and nobody ever even became aware of it.

It was later seen that the hopes the people who prepared this declaration cherished to increase the political significance of Armenia and to facilitate the diplomatic work done in Europe were in vain. No change had been brought about in the situation, in the eyes of European diplomacy. A single declaration of our parliament, this meager record which had not been supported with the necessary activities could not have changed the effect of realities. It could have been expected that our national delegation in Paris would be

abolished, but it was not. Even following May 28, two diplomatic missions in Europe (The Delegation of the Republic and the National Delegation) continued to function side by side ; they were assigned to advocate the same issues in the same places to the same people. However, it proved difficult to compromise the activities of these two organs who were competing for authority. In this way, our undivided front in Europe was divided. In Armenia, on the other hand, it became difficult to find an opportunity to have a coalition with liberal elements and for this reason our party was more isolated.

The psychological demands which led us to announce the Federal Armenia Declaration are explicable. However, it is a fact that this declaration did not lead to any favorable results; its unfavorable results (domestic strife and conflicts) are, on the other hand, very clear.

24. The Armenian Parliament which replaced the Council opened on August 1, 1919. The elections took place in accordance with the democratic procedure - general, equal, direct and secret balloting - but it was strange and disheartening that 72 out of 80 members were Dashnags. Only four members were elected from the SR's<sup>6</sup> and no other party could send a representative. There was no opposition party to act as a check. We Dashnags seemed to be victorious but did not understand that it was not a Parliament but the caricature of a Parliament.

We could not understand that elections proved that our people were not yet ready for an independent political life. We were not aware that our parliamentary victory was not actually a victory but a defeat and that by sending 72 members into the parliament we had lost the ground we trod on, the democratic foundation.

We did not understand that as we assumed authority, at the same time, we were also assuming all the responsibility. We lacked the ne-

6 SR: The group called the Socialist Revolutionaries (Arif Acaloğlu).

cessary provisions and elements. We could not understand that a strong opposition was needed simply to discipline us and to prevent us from transgressing the present law and order. We also did not understand that by carrying our party meetings into the parliament we were actually bringing the existence of our party to an end.

There was no Parliament; it was an empty form without content. The problems of state were being discussed and solved behind closed doors, in the rooms of the Dashnag faction, and then declared from the rostrum of the Parliament.

In reality, there was not even a parliamentary faction, because this latter was under the very strict supervision of the Dashnag Bureau, and was obliged to carry out its orders. There was not a government either. This, also, was subject to the Bureau; it was a kind of executive body for the Bureau in the state. This was the Bolshevik system. But what the Bolsheviks were doing openly and consistently, we were attempting to hide behind democratic forms.

25. On the first days of May 1920 there were Bolshevik demonstrations and attempts at uprising. These were suppressed without much effort, because they had no basis; Bolshevism was strange to us. There was also no outside support.

Nevertheless, there was also an interesting situation. A group of young Bolsheviks (even in Yerevan in front of the eyes of the government) were making noisy demonstrations and propaganda among the military toops, occupying the train station in Alexandropol and capturing an armoured train.

This proves that the government was irresponsible, weak and ignorant.

26. Following the Bolshevik rebellious efforts of May 1920, there was a "coup d'etat" and the A.R.F. Bureau (the so-called "Bureau Government") replaced the Parliament with its own dictatorial rule. By order of the Bureau the resignation of prime minister A.

Khadissian was accepted on May 5, and by order of the Bureau Dr. H. Ohanchanian was ordered to form a new cabinet; the latter presented the already-prepared list of ministers in the same meeting in which he was ordered to form a new cabinet. That was the Bureau itself. Parliament was ordered indefinitely recessed.

The Armenian Parliament had given a dictatorial government to the Dashnagzoutuin - to the Bureau.

This was against the decision of the 9th General Meeting of the A.R.F. and had many disadvantages, but it also had the advantage of coming out in the open in its true form and color.

27. The Armenian-Turkish war which broke our back began in the Fall of 1920.

Would it have been possible to evade it? Probably not.

The crushed Turkey of 1918 had recovered during the two years. There came forward patriotic, young officers who formed a new army in Asia Minor. They saw the necessity of attacking in the Northeast, and also in the Southwest against the Greeks which they could not do without first crushing their flank on the Armenian front. One cannot say that the Turks really had such a plan, but it is possible that they did and it was also probable that the war with us was inevitable.

Despite these hypotheses there remains an irrefutable fact. That we had not done all that was necessary for us to have done to evade war. We ought to have used peaceful language with the Turks whether we succeeded or not, and we did not do it. We did not do it for the simple reason -no less culpable - that we had no information about the real strength of the Turks and relied on ours. This was the fundamental error. We were not afraid of war because we thought we would win. With the carelessness of inexperienced and ignorant men we did not know what forces Turkey had mustered on our frontiers. When the skirmishes had started the Turks proposed that we meet and confer. We did not do so and defied them.

I should point out that in the autumn of 1920 we were not a *quantitie negligible* in the eyes of Turks. The terrible incidents of the past years were forgotten. Our people were well rested and our army was well armed with British arms. We had sufficient ammunition. We were holding a very important fortress called Kars in our hands. Finally there was the Sévres Treaty and it was not simply a piece of paper in those days, it was an important gain against Turks. We were not in a similar position to what we were in May 1918 in Batoum. We could easily believe we could be heard, because Turks were considered the defeated party.

We did not make an attempt.

If we had accepted their offer what would they have proposed to us? They would probably have started from where we had left in Batoum and Brest and then they would have given further concessions and receded behind the 1814 border lines. They could possibly have withdrawn further and could have handed over Beyazit and Eleşkirt too.

Turks would never have given any further concessions than these in September 1920 and in return, they were going to demand from the Armenian government that they give up the rights advanced by the Sévres Treaty.

How would the Armenian government have reacted to this?

They would certainly have refused the offer. The government would never have agreed to these conditions; they would have preferred fighting.

Not only the Dashnag Bureau-Government but any Armenian government would have acted in the same way. I am calling attention to this fact. And this quite significantly alleviates the crime committed by our party. The government could never have accepted these conditions; because all the political parties and groups, all our diplomats, all the appointed and voluntary patriots... all would

have revolted, rejected the government and accused it of treason. The Sévres Treaty had blinded everyone's eyes.

We now see that if we had agreed on a settlement with the Turks directly (in spite of the Sévres Treaty) we might have gained a lot. But we could not see this at that point.

All these are possibilities, but they are also the reflections of our thoughts then.

War, on the other hand, was a reality.

It is also a reality, an unforgivable reality that we did not do anything to avoid war but did just the opposite; we created excuses for it. What is unforgivable is that we had no idea about the military power of Turkey and neither did we know our own army.

28. The war resulted in our indisputable defeat. Our army was well fed and well armed and dressed but it did not fight. The troops were constantly retreating and deserting their positions; they threw away their arms and dispersed in the villages.

Our army was demoralized during the period of internal strife, the inane destructions and the pillages that went without punishment. It was demoralized and tired. The system of roving bands, which was especially encouraged by the Bureau government, was destroying the unity of the military organization. The instruction of the army, its military spirit, its organization and discipline, and therefore its power for defense had deteriorated to the last degree, and that was a surprise to the government: the government and the ministers of war did not know their own army.

And then the government made a fatal mistake. Intending to increase the number of troops, it called under arms additional men who were past middle age and tired, overburdened with family and financial problems. They were made to put on the military uniforms in a great hurry; rifles were put into their hands and they were instantly

sent to the front. These were ready-made deserters which caused additional defections and demoralization in the ranks of the army.

29. When on November 2 [1920] the victorious armies of Karabekir had reached Alexandropol, the Bureau-government presented its resignation. It could not stay in power any longer; it was beaten, and on account of its defeat it had been discredited.

Then it became necessary to begin negotiations with the Turks it became necessary that those who negotiated should be new faces. After a short indecision, the government of Simon Vratzian was formed, composed of Dashnags and SR's. Dashnag ministers belonged to the "Left" wing of the Party, while he, the Prime Minister [Vratzian] was known to be a man of Russian orientation, and the SR's had personal ties in the Armenian Bolshevik circles.

There was a remote hope that in the event of the Bolsheviks coming to power (a fact we were beginning to understand was inescapable), a government with such a composition would be able to find a common language with the new comers.

30. The Turks had already occupied Alexandropol.

In the meantime the Armenian Bolsheviks at the head of the Red troops entered Itchevan and Dilijan. Was there an understanding between the Bolsheviks and the Turks? In our ranks that conviction was widespread. I think, however, that it was wrong; in all events there was no positive proof. It is probable that the Bolshevik agents (or individuals with Bolshevik leanings) were trying to destroy our Army from the inside, but for that it was not necessary to have an agreement with the Turks.

The plot of the Bolsheviks was not the reason for our defeat, nor the power of the Turks (which was not important at that time) but our own ineptness! Of course the Bolsheviks benefited from our defeat

and that was very natural, but it was not essential that they should have come to an understanding with the Turks for that purpose.

The reason for our defeat was not the treachery of the Bolsheviks or the strength of the Turks but our weakness. The Bolsheviks certainly made use of our defeat, this was only natural. They did not need to arrive at a preliminary understanding with the Turks.

It was not difficult to see that the Bolsheviks who had been victorious in Russia and had settled in Azerbaijan, were obliged to enter Georgia and Armenia too. It was only a matter of time. They needed to choose a favourable time so that they would not have to spend too much effort. It was Armenia's turn now and the Bolsheviks did in December what they had not been able to do in May.

31. On December 1 (or November 30) our delegates signed an agreement with the Turks in Alexandropol which was not much different from the cruel treaty of Batoum. On December 1 that same Vratzian government resigned and relinquished its power to the Bolsheviks.

The Bolsheviks entered Armenia without meeting any resistance. This was the decision of our Party. There were two reasons for acting this way; first, we could not resist it even if we wanted to - we were defeated; second, we hoped that the Soviet authorities, backed by Russia, would be able to introduce some order in the state - a thing which we, all alone, had failed to do, and it was very plain already that we would not be able to do.

It was our desire to let the Bolsheviks rule the country without any obstruction, to remain loyal to the new government, to cooperate with their useful work. This decision was not unanimous. There was irreconcilables who did not expect anything good from the Bolsheviks; they demanded opposition and fighting, even though the defeat was inevitable. Small was their number; when the proposal was refused those most in opposition left the country and fled.



There was also another minority, opposed to the first one: this one wanted to approach the Bolsheviks as a party matter and form a political block with them. These were segregated and came to be known as Leftist Dashnags, and made declarations in Bolshevik spirit. They did not succeed. The Bolsheviks with reason distrusted them, and discarded them.

32. In the two and a half months until the February revolt, the Bolsheviks governed the country. The hopes of the optimists did not come true. The political and financial expectations from Russia were not realized. A regime which could be defined in no other way than "autocracy and infinite pressure" was established.

Every type of dictatorship essentially means pressure and the reverse is not possible. All revolutions need to take decisive and extraordinary measures in their struggle, when they come to power; this is an essential need and is due to the nature of things. However what the Bolsheviks did in Armenia had one characteristic: they were aimless and arbitrary.

If the Bolsheviks had applied sufficient political tactics in the first phases (which they later did), they would have guaranteed their presence in Armenia, for there were no opposing forces in the country. However, the Bolsheviks did not understand this and started looking for counter-revolutionaries in absurd places and provoked the people against them.

The February revolt is solely their own doing; it was the result of their pressures, their autocratic behavior and their endless confiscations which used up the last remains of the economy and deprived the people who already had nothing to eat, of their last morsels.

Dashnagtzoutiun not only did not take part in the organization of this revolt, it was also opposed to it.

I know that some Dashnags somehow had some connections with the preparations in some villages, before the actual revolt.

However, it was not the doing of our party but of individual members. However, after the revolt broke out, our party became active; it followed the masses and then led an action which it had no part in the preparations of.

33. At the end of the revolt, the Bolsheviks were pushed out of central Armenia towards the peripheral regions (Sharur and Gazakh regions). An "Armenian Salvation Committee" was immediately founded, came to power and led the struggle.

The civil war lasted for 1,5 months.

In our circles, the tendency to explain the defeat of the revolting people by the supremacy of the Bolshevik forces is commonplace. However, I do not share this view. Some people really struggled well and were really courageous; but those were not our people but the Bolsheviks. If our people had fought well, they could have suppressed the enemy on the Gemerli and Yelenov fronts (anti-Bolshevik Georgia was still resisting and the Bolsheviks were not able to get any outside help and their own forces were not numerous). The reason for this bad fighting on our part was not due to reluctance (if it had been, we would not have rebelled and shown the enthusiasm witnessed in Yerevan in the first days of the revolt); we did not have faith in our own strength and did not believe in success.

The revolt was a spontaneous and casual action. It broke out at an unexpected moment, flared and soon died down. I am not trying to say that if the insurgents had fought well, the Soviet government could have been brought down; no, defeat was inevitable (especially after the fall of Georgia). We could have slain all the Bolsheviks in Armenia (it would not have been difficult if the revolt had been more organized), but behind them was Russia with its Red Army. The Armenian peasants or the Dashnagtzoutiun Party was not going to resist that. However, what I would like to point out is

that the revolt was destined to be defeated, because it cherished no faith in victory.

34. When the Bolsheviks reached Kanakir and occupied Yerevan, we left Yerevan for Dereleghez through Bash-Garni.

A large mass of people who did not know where and why they were going, were also on the move, along with the insurgents and the party members.

The inevitable defeat was brought about. In the following two or three months, what happened in Dereleghez and Zangezour was no longer a fight but death throes.

After the fall of Yerevan, it was time to sovietize the mountainous part of Armenia. Our presence there might even have speeded up the flow of events.

We had thought that by moving into the mountainous Armenia, we would add to the strength of the native people and increase their capacity to resist. We had not taken into consideration that a defeated militia who were on retreat could increase the demoralization and helplessness of frightened masses of people. The native people did not favour and welcome us. We would rather not be seen by them. On top of everything, we had to share their last bits of food.

We had, unintentionally, invited confusion to their lives. A firm contradiction arose between the native and outside Armenian authorities.

The military forces were dissolving day by day. Some of the soldiers who had accompanied us and who did not like the way they were treated by the native people, were now thinking about going back home. The groups who consisted of the Turkish Armenians (both armed and unarmed ones) were trying to reach Aras (Araxe) and then pass to Iran. The native people now saw that the army was breaking up and there was disorganization. They started to doubt their own strength.

At the end of the summer, Zangezour which was the last headquarters of the Democratic Republic, was wiped out.

Armenia was completely sovietized.

35. In the meanwhile, what had been our diplomatic activity with the outer world during our liberty as an independent nation - Constantinople, Europe and America - and what were the results?

In the Spring of 1919, the Paris Delegation of our Republic presented a Memorandum of our demands to the Peace Conference in Paris jointly with the National Delegation of the Armenians in Turkey.

According to that Memorandum the frontiers of the Armenian State would include:

A. The Caucasian Republic with enlarged territory (the entire province of Yerevan, the province of Kars without the northern part of Ardahan, the southern section of the Tbilisi province, the southwestern part of Kantzag);

B. The seven vilayets of Turkish Armenia (Van, Bitlis, Diyarbakır, Harput, Sivas, Erzurum and Trabzon, excluding only the southern section of Diyarbakır and the western section of Sivas);

C. The four sanjaks of Cilicia (Maraş, Sis, Djebel-Bereket and Adana with İskenderun [Alexandretta]).

A vast state was being organized and demanded - a great Armenia from the Black Sea to the Mediterranean, from the mountains of Karabagh to the Arabian Desert.

Where did that imperial, amazing demand emanate from?

Neither the government of Armenia nor the Dashnagtzoutiun had envisaged such a childish and foolish plan. On the contrary, our Delegation had carried with it from Yerevan very moderate demands, commensurate with our very modest ability.

How did it happen that our Delegation signed the "From Sea to Sea" demand?

It was told that if they did not demand those fascinating frontiers, the Turkish-Armenians (through their National Delegation) would sever their Cause from that of the "Republic of Ararat" and would apply to the Powers accordingly. Our Delegation was also told that America would not accept a mandate over a small Armenia but would accept one over a "From Sea to Sea" Armenia. Because it would have been dangerous to proceed with the defense of our Cause with two separate bodies, each with a contradictory demand, and because the American mandate was what we wanted, our delegates signed the Memorandum and presented it to the Powers.

I am not blaming our delegation. Neither am I saying that we would have arrived at a better conclusion, had our demands been milder. What I am saying is that our Party could not manage the national affairs, did not have a strong will, could not follow our own program, but it was led by others and allowed the others to lead our Party.

The Paris Memorandum of course thrilled us. A kind of mentality was created according to which the drawing of frontiers on paper actually gave us those territories. To doubt it was a treachery. Of course there followed the rude awakening - the Treaty of Sévres, the refusal of the Senate of the United States to accept the mandate; even the frontiers drawn by President Wilson did not satisfy us. We thought he could have demanded a larger territory... There were the usual complaints that the Powers were unfair, did not appreciate us and did not compensate us as much as we deserved.

However, these narrow borders were an inaccessible and alluring "blue bird" for us.

Turks accepted neither the Wilson solution, nor our objections, nor the Sévres Treaty. Instead of vacating Armenian lands, they were heavily arming and consolidating their positions. The allies on the other hand, showed no intention of forcing the rebel Ankara to submit. It was the reverse; they had started to flirt with them. It

was as if they did not see that we were unsatisfied and they were busy straightening their own affairs.

(I often use the words "we" and "our" and do not clarify these pronouns. In many cases, I do not put any distinction between the party and the masses of people. Here is another instance of the same psychology, the same narrow scope, the same political short-sightedness)

The agony of the Armenian Cause began in 1922. At the London Conference was heard for the first time the word "Home".<sup>7</sup> The Treaty of Sévres was entirely forgotten. There was no question of an independent Armenian State. Only a doubtful "Home" in someone else's home. This was the blow dealt us in March. Things got worse at Lausanne toward the end of the year. No "Home" was demanded for us. The Turks politely refused everything. The Great Allies, in a desperate gesture, confessed and bewailed that they had done everything possible to help the Armenians but could not do anything.

Then, here came comrade Tchicherin and offered in the name of Soviet Russia to locate the Armenians of Turkey in Crimea, on the shores of Volga, in Siberia. Thus, the "State" was reduced to a "Home", and the "Home" was converted into colonies in Siberia. The mountain did not even give birth to a mouse.... This was the past.

If we are to evaluate the work we did and the results we obtained, we must confess that we have nothing to boast about from the time we declared the independence of our Republic. We must admit that our burden to organize a State and lead it was far beyond our strength.

We have always miscalculated and have always encountered with unpredictable situations because we have been unable to fore-

<sup>7</sup> Home: A region with limited autonomy belonging to an ethnic group (Arif Aca-  
loğlu).

see them. And it is evident, to me at least, that it was on account of our ineptness, individually, that prevented us from conducting affairs of state properly. We had been unable to distinguish the State from the Party and have introduced party mentality into matters of state. We have not been statesmen.

Let no one take offense from these words which are not spoken with any malice but are a mere self-estimation. Is it not true that I myself have been among the incompetents on the front line, your collaborator, equally responsible in our defeat?

I mentioned "responsibility"... I have had no courage so far to add that we were, most of the time, not aware of the responsibility we had taken upon us; and also we were not always sufficiently honest in connection with our duties. I do not have the courage, because I have worries about whether I can be sufficiently just. Yet, some people know about it and some day, perhaps some person who is more just than I am will come up and talk about it more justly.

What is the present?

We have a small Republic today between the River Araxes and Lake Sevan, nominally free, but in reality one of the fringe countries of the re-established sovereign Russian Empire. There is no Turkish-Armenia, neither State nor Home, not even an international political Question any more, killed and buried at Lausanne. Generally speaking, the Armenians in the Dispersion are not a political element for Armenia today.

I can say more: There are no longer any Armenians in the Turkish Armenia and it is out of the question that one day they will come back. Turks have firmly closed the doors and a force which will make them open the doors is nowhere to be seen.

Nearly one million Armenians are living outside the borders of the Republic; in Georgia, Azerbaijan, Northern Caucasia, Iran, Syria, Constantinopolis, Balkans and even in all the countries of the world.

Only a very small number of Armenians in the Dispersion were able to find themselves a sanctuary in Armenia. Leaving out the

temporary difficulties, the too-narrow borders of the Republic do not permit massive migration (the issue here is the possibility of migration of the peasants in Armenian vilayets to Armenia). On the other hand, the social identity of the Armenians living outside Transcaucasia (the petty bourgeoisie who have not had the chance to make a living in their plundered agricultural country which is dependent on commercial centers) is no less a problem.

The Armenians in the Dispersion are not considered to be one of the elements which are the founders of the Armenian State. And the longer this process takes, the more alienated they will feel.

The Armenians in the colonies will perhaps be of some value for some time as an element of the *nation* (and this situation is associated with how we maintain our national ties and raise our national consciousness). Yet, only the part of the Armenian nation which remained in Armenia and the big pieces living in the neighboring republics of Georgia and Azerbaijan are only meaningful in connection with being a state founding element.

The Armenian state must depend on them and must consolidate on this basis.

The Armenians in the colonies, at best, can be considered a kind of reserve and assisting force (on a very modest scale) for an unknown future.

The immediate subject of consideration for the Armenian political mind must be the existing Republic, Armenians who live in and around it. I underscore this sentence vigorously and call it to your special attention, for that will be the starting point of our future action.

What should the attitude of our Party be, towards this Republic, its regime and Government?

This Republic is not independent; it is a part of Transcaucasian Federation or even of Russia. Armenia is actually an autonomous state under the supervision and control of Moscow.

Can this satisfy our Party? Is this our political ideal?

It certainly is not.



I mentioned earlier that Armenian Revolutionary Federation Dashnagtzoutiun had involuntarily voted for the separation of Armenia from Russia in the spring of 1918; We were afraid of separation then, we wanted to stay attached to Russia. Nevertheless, this does not mean that we disliked independence and that our ideal is being a satellite state.

I definitely believe that Armenian Revolutionary Federation Dashnagtzoutiun, consciously or unconsciously, has always struggled for the political liberation of the Armenian people.

The meaning and essence, the historical mission, the power and value of our Party is concerned with this point. Whatever his tendencies might be, there is not one single genuine Party member who has not been inspired by the idea of independence or rather, by the aspiration of independence. Within this context, the scope of our Party is extremely broad and the number of members is many times more than what has been recorded in the Party books.

I already explained my views quite broadly in *Chakatmart* last year, so I do not believe I have the right to repeat them here now. However, I want to add now, that the present fate of Armenia cannot be the ideal Dashnagtzoutiun has cherished.

We were the frantic advocates of the idea of federation (we still are) and we know that Armenia, small as it is, cannot survive in any other way. However, we are for a federation where the states are federated with their own volition and with equal rights. The present Russian Federation has not been structured on these grounds.

The Armenian Republic is a Soviet Republic. The Soviet system theoretically envisages a class dictatorship. However, what is seen in Armenia now is the dictatorship of the Communist Party.

Can this type of authority satisfy us?

It certainly cannot.

It is true that we have made an unsuccessful attempt at founding our own dictatorship, but dictatorship (whether of party or class) is not a religion for us. We, who were poisoned with political power

and inexperienced about governing a country, could not resist the attraction, but we stumbled. However, we eventually became aware of our mistake and started looking for ways out; if we had been late, we would have fallen, for not only the "religion" but the structure of our party was not suitable for a dictatorship. Armenia does not possess any class or stratum, party or group which can establish a dictatorship relying only on its own force. Only an outside power can establish a dictatorship in our country. It is as if our country has been created for democracy; what we are deficient in is only political wisdom and the habits of governing a state.

While this great deficiency makes it difficult to establish genuine democratic values, at the same time it eliminates the grounds for a dictatorship fostered on interior dynamics.

The socioeconomic life in the Soviet Union, and in Armenia for that matter, have been built on communist principles (or tried to be built).

Do we find such a policy necessary and useful for Armenia?

No, we do not.

All this is not related with how conscious we are about socialism which is our Party's banner and how much we have absorbed it. Neither does it depend on how compatible it is with our party's structure and its collective ideology.

I am using this negative statement unconditionally but as an old and incorrigible communist I know from my own world outlook that not only simple communistic principles but even a socialist order is not suitable for the present day Armenia.

Armenia is not mature enough for socialism and does not possess the minimum reasons which would call for an attempt in this direction. All the attempts made in this direction are doomed to fail and especially are crimes committed against Armenian laborers.

I also took up this issue quite broadly in the *Chakatmart* journal. Since I do not see any disagreement on this among us, I suffice with these lines.

As I have described above, neither the political situation in Armenia nor its political system, nor its domestic socio-economic policies can satisfy us. We want not the present republic but another one.

Consequently, what should our stand be towards this republic, its regime and government?

The simple and short answer is: We must struggle against it.

However, when complicated issues and affairs are in question, simple and short answers might be wrong.

Political parties are not institutions where abstract topics are taken up and solved on a theoretical basis; the *raison d'être* of political parties is not developing theories (it is a secondary work) but action and action performed *in the existing concrete conditions*.

When we think in these terms, (which we must, otherwise, we will make grave mistakes) the answer will be different.

A struggle requires a definite aim and concrete and useful means to reach that aim.

What means do we possess and what use can they bring us?

If the Soviet system allowed for civil liberties, as the opposition, we would express ourselves in the press and in public meetings openly; we would criticize the erroneous policies of the Soviets; we would gather supporters on our side; we would organize the discontented and resisting elements.

If the Soviet system allowed for political equality, we would participate in the election campaigns, try to find ourselves posts in the Soviets and try to cause certain alterations in the laws and regulations.

However, the Soviet authority wishes to accept neither civil liberties nor political equality.

This authority is a party dictatorship (let us call it a class dictatorship). It is certainly possible to deplore it, to complain or get angry about it but it will change nothing and the reality will stay the same: we have no place as the opposition in Armenia.

I am talking about Armenia itself, because I do not think an opposition outside Armenia will be of any use to us.

It is possible for us to talk and write about any issue we want in the colonies. What we need is only some paper, a printing-house and some money, and nothing more. However, what can the public opinion in the Armenian colonies in Romania, or in Egypt (accepting that such a public opinion can be created) mean for the Soviet Armenia?

Our voice in the press might be taken secretly to Armenia. In the past, in the Tsarist regime, we used to take the *Droshak* and other publications secretly to the country, and at present, if I am not mistaken, the SR's are secretly taking the publications they have published abroad, to Russia. I have no idea about what they might be hoping for and how successful they will be in this secret propaganda. However, I am asking this: Taking into consideration our realities and conditions, could these declarations published secretly and to be read only by a few hundred people have any significance in the face of numerous publications the Bolsheviks have been supplying throughout the country?

The most important thing we do not possess and will not possess is slogans which are understandable for the people and which might excite the masses of people.

Let us take this up later.

Is it possible to make a settlement with the Bolsheviks?

It seems incredible but in the past, we thought this naïve attitude possible and attempted at organizational cooperation with the Bolsheviks. Yes, it certainly is incredible because such a suggestion is misunderstanding the essence of Bolshevism. Bolshevism is

monarchic. Those who do not support it (or those who are not absolutely neutral politically) are against it. It should not be forgotten that according to the Bolsheviks, we are a party of the petty bourgeoisie which, for me, is not a mistake (if we take into account not only the party program and the individual standpoints of the individual party leaders, but the actual structure of the party and its collective ideology, this definition is not at all unrealistic). If the Bolsheviks are intolerant towards the Marxists, the Mensheviks and the SR's, they cannot naturally tolerate the Armenian Revolutionary Federation Dashnagtzoutiun as well.

Why should the Bolsheviks cooperate with us?

We have always liked to point out and persuade ourselves and others that if the Bolsheviks do not cooperate with us, they will not be able to govern Armenia.

What is the basis for these threats of ours? Why should the Bolsheviks believe that we are essential for them?

We have been expelled from Armenia or have been stifled inside the country for two years. Would the Bolsheviks encountered any obstacle which might threaten their existence, should we not come to their aid? I know nothing of these obstacles and tend to think that such obstacles do not exist.

We certainly are worthy people as simple citizens, but which party or government abandons its political line or cooperates with its adversaries in order to attract a few hundred people to its side?

Whatever the circumstances, whether we are right or wrong, or whether we have too much brains or too little, the Bolsheviks are not looking for ways to cooperate with us and they do not accept this.

There have been attempts in this direction and have received negative answers. A new attempt will be not only absurd but also degrading.

It will be absurd because there are borders which the party cannot pass over, as regards its political honour.

The remaining possibilities are either secret, clandestine, conspiratory or more general revolutionary activities, for we have been pursued by the governments of both the Tsar and the Sultan. Are we not capable of doing in the Soviet Armenia what we did in the Turkish Armenia, for tens of years?

We certainly are.

We might establish a base in the Iranian Qaradag and send people and arms to the other side of Araxe, (just as we did in Salmas once). We might establish the necessary secret relations and armed "humbas" in the Sunik and Dereleghez mountains just as we did in the Sasun mountains and the Chataq stream. We might provoke the peasants in some far off regions to rise and then we might expel the communists there or destroy them. Later we might create great commotion even in Yerevan and occupy a state building at least for a few hours just as we occupied the Ottoman Bank or we might explode any building. We could plan assassinations and execute them just as we killed the officials of the Tsar and the Sultan and kill a few Bolsheviks; in the same way, just as we did to Sultan Abdulhamid, we could plant a bomb under Myasnikov's or Lukashin's feet.

We could do all these, I think we could.

However, there is this question: Why? What are our aims and hopes?

When we created a great hubbub in Turkey, we thought we would attract the attention of the great powers to the Armenian cause and would force them to mediate for us, but now we know what such mediation is worth and do not need to repeat such endeavors. If Europe has not been able to help us in Turkey, Russia will never be able to do it, nor will they wish to do it. As a method of controlling separate individuals, terror might have been of some use on the Kurdish troublemakers or the officials of the Tsar. However, we have to admit that the Bolsheviks are of a different fibre. If there is

to be terror on both sides, the Bolsheviks will not be short of it, on the contrary, they will leave us behind in that respect.

When we use terror on one single person, they will use it on masses.

Are we capable of turning the tendencies among the people into a civil war? This is very disputable, but possible. If we take a very serious decision and we persistently strive for it and do not prove very particular about the means, we may succeed...

But why?

When the Bolsheviks are strongly in power in Russia and when in our back, there is Turkey in alliance with the Bolsheviks, is it possible to expel the Bolsheviks from Armenia?

I think not even one such naïve person who might believe this can be found among our ranks. If there is a civil war, it is going to result in our defeat. Bolshevism is not an Armenian regime and the place where it is going to be buried will not be (does it have to be buried?) Armenia. Armenian Bolshevism is an extension and only a small part of Russian Bolshevism. As the Red Banner swings in Russia, it will inevitably swing in Yerevan too. We would have thought otherwise in 1918 but we have no right to do so now.

However, Bolshevism has resolute adversaries in Russia and other places, at least in neighboring places like Georgia and Azerbaijan, if not anywhere else. Is it not natural that we should come together with the other disconcerted people and try to destroy this communist dictatorship?

Yes, it might be natural. However, the problem is that we should not do it.

The Armenian people have already been so much harmed, exhausted and weakened that nobody has the right to put them under new tests and demand new sacrifices from them. What has been done must be considered sufficient. Let us wait for the anti-Bolshevik Rus-

sia to deal with the Bolsheviks themselves. We will not be involved in it! Armenian people have deserved to rest for a while and heal their severe wounds. If some people do not want to grant us this right and some people do not like this stand that we take, let them be.

Let me go a step further to explain my thoughts. I ask myself: if, by a miracle, the existence of Bolsheviks in Armenia depended on myself, if it were possible for me to remove them from Armenia in a single second, by the movement of a single finger of mine, would I make that movement? I answer without hesitation that I would not. Not only would I not do it, but I would cut off my entire hand so that even in my dream, by mistake or inadvertently, I might not be able to make that dangerous movement

In the present conditions, the Bolsheviks are necessary for Armenia; there is no other power to replace them; this is the reality.

Since the first days of our State, we have very well known that a country like Armenia which is so small, poor, plundered and broken apart from the rest of the world cannot be really independent and self-governing. We realized that we needed a support or some outside force, so that we would be able to maintain our own existence by relying on it, at least in the first phases, until we organized and gathered our forces. We sought for such a support first in distant America, and later in Europe. The results are obvious. Two or three years ago, we might have had some hope, but today there is no hope and insisting on it would be an unforgivable naïveté. What the distant and uncertain future will bring us is not yet known. Nevertheless, the visible future is very clear at present: Today there are two actual forces and we have to take them into consideration: Russia and Turkey. The circumstances have developed that way and our country is a satellite state of Russia and is capable of protecting itself more than sufficiently from the attacks of Turkey. If Russian authority is lifted, Turkish-Tatar authority will subs-



titute it. Either Russia or Turkey; either the Bolsheviks or the Turkish nationalists; we have no other choice.

While we are facing such alternatives, we should not entertain any doubts. We will certainly choose Russia, not Turkey; and the Bolsheviks, not the Turkish nationalists.

If our alternatives were not so limited, we would have many objections to Russia in general and to the Bolsheviks in particular. Our calamity is our geographic position which binds us.

Armenia needs the Bolsheviks because it needs Russia.

What will happen tomorrow is unknown (I think what is happening now is also going to happen tomorrow), but it is Russia that is dominant today.

Today, in order to have friendly relations with Russia, Armenia must be Bolshevik itself. There is no other way; I at least see it that way.

The words I uttered above, ie "We have no slogans to be able to carry out an anti-Bolshevik struggle in Armenia" must be appraised within this context.

I am asking the same question in another way, this time about the past.

Was the arrival of the Bolsheviks a calamity for our country? This is an unexpected question coming from a Dashnag. The Bolsheviks are necessary in Armenia under the present political conditions and there is not other force that could take their place. This is the truth. Let us not be carried away by narrow political ideas.

I do not like to repeat that the Soviet regime is not at all suitable for Armenian reality, I think this view is indisputable.

On the other hand, I know the Bolshevik activities in Armenia quite well and I remember them; I mean the two and a half months when I was in Armenia (December 1921-February 1922). I know and I remember how many people suffered; it was the Dashnags who suffered primarily. I myself and many of you were immensely persecuted and pursued.

I would like to add that we should never forget these grave issues and be cautious when we are taking a decision; for as the injured party, we are inclined to see only the negative aspects and exaggerate everything.

When I remember the conditions we were in in November 1920, I ask myself: "Would it not have been better if the Bolsheviks had not occupied our country and had left it to its own fate to be governed by us?" My answer is negative: No, it would not have been better, it would have been worse.

We were already in those days aware of the irreparable situation and opened all the doors to the Bolsheviks.

I have already stated above: all our hopes were in vain. We could get neither political nor material aid from Russia (I am again talking about the first phase). For example, the Bolsheviks did not defend Armenia against Turkey and approved the Gumru Agreement we had signed under the threat of vanishing. This is the reality.

If Bolsheviks had not occupied our country and if we had been alone, would the Turks have abided by the agreement, would they not have gone any further under various pretexts (which are not difficult to create)? What would we have done in face of these intentions? We were defeated and weakened and had lost our authority inside and outside the country; what would we have done?

We had exhausted all our resources, had come to an impasse as Government and as Party in the Autumn of 1920. Had the Bolsheviks delayed their arrival, we, ourselves, would have asked them to come because we were so weakened and powerless and there was no other force in the country to replace us.

Look at the consequences of their coming:

We governed our country for two and a half years; it is nearly two and a half years that the Bolsheviks have governed it. We had wars with Georgia, Azerbaijan and Turkey. The Bolsheviks have had none.

We had continual internal fights – Agapapa, Zod, Zanki-Bazar, Vedi-Bazar, the valleys of Milli, Sharour, Nakhichevan, Zangezour. The Bolsheviks have had no internal fights, except those in connection with the "February" revolt. We had kept the entire country under arms, in constant fighting, we had kept all working hands on the battlefields all the time when there was the greatest demand for construction work. The Bolsheviks have freed the people from that calamity, from that heavy burden.

In our time the people were decimated or exhausted from famine. We destroyed bread-producing lands like Sharour and Vedi, cattelands like Agapapa, wantonly and without benefit to us. We gave to the armies of Kazim Karabekir (along with much other wealth) the harvest of 1920 - the only abundant one since the famine years. Today, I hear Armenia is not hungry any more, is not clamoring for bread, one might say, and I believe it because the people had time to sow and to reap.

We tried hard to re-establish communication with the outer world but did not succeed. The Bolsheviks did it. During our time Armenia groped in darkness, all movement and activity ceased half an hour after sunset because we had no means for providing lighting. The Bolsheviks brought much kerosene from Baku and saved the country from the slavery of darkness. Of course these things are not very important you might say, but is it not a fact that we could not achieve even that little? The Bolsheviks were necessary for Armenia then and they are necessary for Armenia today.

Nevertheless, the Bolshevik system in its entirety is not acceptable for us. But what can we do? Perhaps, fight it from without? This might be of some use perhaps, if it is used to support the war inside, fought overtly or covertly. Otherwise, what would the use be of a commotion created outside the country?

European cities are full of emigrant malcontents of all kinds who publish newspapers, write books, call protest meetings, threaten, cure the Bolsheviks... I know of no other "work" that is more futile and miserable than what is being done. Is it with these thundering words that they will blow off Soviet heads? That is not a fight nor a struggle but an exposition of a despicable stupidity.

The fighters against the Bolsheviks must fight from within so that the blow may tell; but to hide behind the frontiers and show one's fist from a safe distance – it is a gesture which, at all events, is not worthy of Dashnagzoutune.

To fight from without, to carry on an anti-Bolshevik propaganda from abroad, when our words are not heard inside the country, is an inane and indecent thing.

There are people among us who think Dashnagzoutiun should help the regeneration of Armenia from without by staying in the opposite camp.

How?

Various commercial and industrial companies should establish manufactories, factories, irrigation canals etc, in order to import goods into Armenia and to export raw materials to the external markets.

Leaving aside how competent we are, as a party, in such commercial and industrial issues or in charity work of providing assistance and protection to the needy, and how desired our mediation might be in respect to achieving a definite solution, I have this question to ask: can a political party include such work in its program? I think not. These are not among the issues a party should deal with. This would not be the political program of a party, but a repudiation of it.

If Dashnagzoutiun resorts to such ways, if it prefers this direction, it must declare that it has lost its own *raison d'être*.

We must leave trade to traders, industry to industrialists and aid to aid organizations. Dashnagzoutiun should deal with other work (if there be such work).

Yes, if there be...

As a political party, we cannot cooperate with the Bolsheviks within the country, in connection with the state work they are doing; similarly, we cannot be in the position of the official opposition no matter how much we wish it.

We should not be carrying out any clandestine work; we should not destroy the Soviet state power even if it were possible.

While we feel no urge or wish to fight within the country, fighting only orally from without and carrying on an anti-Bolshevik propaganda from abroad in the colonies is an inane and indecent thing.

Helping the economic development of a country from abroad, establishing commercial and industrial companies, on the other hand, are not what a political party should do.

What are we to do then?

It is here that I shall say the very grave word, which, I know will embarrass you, but which must be said at last, and said simply, without concealment or attenuation: **THE ARMENIAN REVOLUTIONARY FEDERATION HAS NOTHING TO DO ANYMORE.**

Our Party did everything it could do and is exhausted. New conditions of existence present new demands and we are unfit to respond. We must therefore leave the field to others abler than ourselves.

Is it necessary to repeat again the new conditions? Here they are:

Turkish Armenia does not exist anymore; half the Armenian people have been massacred, others are dispersed in the four corners of the world, the other half is homeless and bleeding, in need of

long rest and recuperation; the Armenian Republic is united with Communist Russia as an autonomous state; to separate our State from Russia we could not, even if we wished - and we must not wish it, even if we were able to do so; the Party is beaten and has lost its authority, has been expelled from the country, cannot return home, while in the colonies it has no work.

This is the situation today.

The Party cannot say "I shall therefore create work for myself" no matter what kind of work. That "therefore" is a mistake of logic. The sentence must be reversed to : "because I have no work to do I must cease to exist. Work is not for the existence of the Party, but it is the Party that must exist to do the work, and where there is no work for the Party, there can be no Party.

When I said the Dashnagtzoutun has nothing to do anymore, I did not express myself correctly. It has one more final thing to do, a supreme duty to the Armenian Cause and toward its own past. It must, and by its own decision, with full cognizance, decisively end its existence.

Yes, I suggest suicide.

There are, sometimes, such situations where an honourable way out is only suicide. Our Party is in such a situation now.

We should have done this four or five years ago. When we signed the agreement in Batoum in June 1918 and when an independent Armenian state was born as a consequence of this agreement and took its modest place among other states, in the month of August that year, when we opened the Armenian Parliament which was going to shape the new state... We should have abolished our Party then, and opened the way for new political groups. Our historical mission had been completed. This would have been a very honourable consequence of a long and arduous work of a quarter of a century with bloody struggles and great sacrifices.

However, we did not understand then, that history was entering a new phase and in this phase the forces had to realign. We did not understand and did not have the courage to understand.

It might have been a forgivable behaviour not to understand this four or five years ago in the midst of revolutionary fever, but the situation is very clear today and the new demands of life are very assertive.

Failing to understand this reality now means that both of our eyes are blind. If we do not show determination now, only a fall and an dishorouable end will be waiting for us.

It is with their work that the parties live. If there is no work and in its place there is only imitation, death is inevitable.

The ARF Dashnagtzoutiun must purge its ranks unconditionally, to be able to save its life and future; and expel the unreliable, the confused, the tired, those who do not firmly believe and who are hopeless, the lazy and the indifferent, that is to say, nine out of ten, perhaps more, of the party members. After this, only the cadres who have been closely examined, those who are morally strong, those who are firm believers and who can make every sacrifice and will not be obstructed in any circumstances will remain and these cadres will have to do underground work. This will certainly not be a political party. It will be a conspiracy organization.

Our Party can save itself by this means and only by this means, can we revive and carry the banner.

At what price?

At the price of risking the Armenian political question, and leaving the Armenian people face to face with new ordeals in the case of a failure. In such a case, the party leaders should not shrink but resolutely stand against this obstacle.

However loyal we might be to the Party ideology, I do not want to believe that there is even one single person who would consciously like to save the party at such a price.

The Party is not an aim and anyone who forgets this basic reality, should be considered a traitor and a dangerous and harmful person. The Armenian people is not a raw material for the Dashnagtzoutiun. If we are to act- consciously or unconsciously - like a person who is suffering from party fanaticism, we would be committing a capital crime.

ARF Dashnagtzoutiun was a tool in the hands of history. When a tool has done its job, when it is also worn out or when the rest of the process requires a new tool, the old tool is cast away and it must be cast away. A tool which belongs to the past can be kept only as a sign of affection and cult, but its place is the national museum.

In the context of carrying on with the Armenian political question, Dashnagtzoutiun is useless from now on and therefore, must depart from the scene.

I am constantly talking about the Armenian political question, and going back to the same subject, because I cannot separate Dashnagtzoutiun from this question. I can see the whole existence of our Party within this question. Thus, it is only natural that I cannot find another stand point to be able to argue in favour of my convictions and to determine the direction that my thoughts will take, as I am addressing this Dashnagtzoutiun Congress.

I ask you, would the political liberation of our country, which has been our aim and work thus far, die with us? It would be extreme megalomania on our part to think so - not only megalomania but a very naïve conception of historical facts. It is for the very purpose of assuring our National Cause, not to do any harm to it, that I propose the dissolution of our Party

One year ago, although I wrote in *Chakatamarta* about how harmful the death of ARF Dashnagtzoutiun would be to the Armenian question, at the same time, I also stated in the same place, that the actual borders of Dashnagtzoutiun have greatly gone beyond



our Party organizations; our Party is only one aspect of the Armenian cause, in struggle. The name, Dashnagtzoutiun may very well be lost, forgotten but the proud spirit which gave birth to Dashnagtzoutiun, the spirit of freedom will never die and this is the real Dashnagtzoutiun. The Party, that is to say, the present organization might dissolve but the mission and the work will survive.

It will never die but even gain a new joy of life.

And for this reason alone- in order that it may be guaranteed and that it may develop further in future- I suggest that the Party commit suicide.

There is one thing that we must understand: The Armenian Bolsheviks who will succeed us have to take up our work and they have taken it up. They have to do it whether or not they are aware of it and whether or not they want to do it. They are, just like us, a tool in the hands of the great master, History. We have done our job, completed a phase, and now the remainder is up to them.

We have to be thankful to the Bolsheviks. They established the same work on surer grounds (if not saved it), by overthrowing us. At that critical moment when we were overpowered by our own work, they took our place.

Our struggle has not died.

Yes, it is true, Armenia, today, is not an independent country, it is just an autonomous region under the authority of the Russian Federation, but how can we know? Perhaps it is the best solution for Armenia today.

The reality has confirmed this: Hastily founding a sovereign state under the present unfavorable conditions is beyond the powers of the Armenian people. A class which is politically prepared is needed in order to be able to attain a medium level of subsistence and to acquire the habits connected with state affairs. Following great upheavals, massacres and plunder, this class needs a peaceful period to get

organized and to gather force. In the developing conditions, Armenia has to live this period under Bolshevik banner. Let it be so.

The Dashnagtzoutun cannot assist the Bolsheviks. It is necessary that it may not be overthrown, and in order that it may not be upset the Dashnagtzoutun has only one means - to depart from the scene.

We very often hear that following one single political line will not be sufficient in order to solve our problem; for caution requires that one tendency should be accompanied by another parallel tendency. The Armenian Bolsheviks are following the Russian line; let them follow it, but other possibilities should also be kept in mind. For example, today, the Russian Bolsheviks are in the same front with the Turks, but tomorrow this artificial bloc may fall to pieces and we may have to find a common language with the Turks and the Europeans situated in their back. Consequently, we may have to maintain relations with the Turks of tomorrow. Although there is nothing left for Dashnagtzoutun to do, it must maintain its existence and its present anti-Bolshevik position at least for this purpose.

I object to neither this possibility nor the existence of a second possibility.

However, I insist on one point: This role is not suitable for ARF Dashnagtzoutun. Dashnagtzoutun is a more unacceptable participator of talks with Turks than with the Bolsheviks. If one day the need arises to hold talks with the Turks, other people who have a different understanding, a different psychology and especially, a different past (or no past) must come to the scene. At this point, Dashnagtzoutun cannot be helpful but on the contrary, might constitute an obstacle.

It is claimed that the Bolshevik regime and authority are not eternal. That is to say, Bolshevism may fall from power more or less unexpectedly, in the short or long run. Consequently, a reserve force, another organization is needed to substitute Bolshevism and to ta-

ke hold of the leadership so that the country may not fall into anarchy.

Dashnagtzoutiun should at least be kept for those days.

At this point, I would like to argue: Even if such a situation arises, I declare and I insist that the new authority will not be established by Dashnagtzoutiun.

When the present conditions show a considerable change, the Soviet authority which does not suit the Armenian reality and is alien to it, will leave its place to other political and social groups; it will consider its own role accomplished and completed. However, the force that will substitute the Bolsheviks is not Dashnagtzoutiun.

New conditions will bring new demands.

Political (especially revolutionary) parties are not constantly renewed, trying to confirm to the demands of the day; they arise in certain periods and perform certain duties, using certain means. A party cannot get rid of its past, no matter how much it desires to. The past will always hover over the present and will surround it: Memories, habits, relations, sympathies and antipathies will come to the surface and will insert a kind of anarchy into the daily work.

New wine is never stored in old barrels, because the barrel will break down and the wine will flow away.

ARF Dashnagtzoutiun was useful for Armenia and the Armenian cause in the past. In the future, it will be of no use. Another Dashnagtzoutiun, perhaps a Dashnagtzoutiun of the Armenian Republic will occupy its place.

There is nothing left for Dashnagtzoutiun to do... Neither today, nor tomorrow nor in the future. It must end its existence with its own hands. It must do this for the sake of its own past, to save its own name and honour.

Let us look around: Are we actually living the present? Is this actually a party activity and party life? Is it not clearly seen that we

have already entered a phase of corruption and the reasons for this corruption is not coincidental and external but internal and organizational.

The new generation, the youth is not with us (like they were 20-25 years ago). No new forces full of enthusiasm and faith are joining our ranks, in order to substitute the weary and the ones who have lost their faith and courage. On the contrary, they are running away from us, corrupting the party; or only the ones who are useless, indifferent, unenergetic and unenthusiastic and who have no ability to work, remain; only the ones who bear the coldness of death in their hearts and who carry a slight irony on their lips remain with us.

We do not want to see the reality and continue our old habit of bringing monotonous explanations to events. We say: The bad and the self-interested; the hired and the nerveless go away; the good and the sincere; the ones who are psychologically and mentally sane remain with us, as usual. Is this an explanation then? Is this not similar to the absurd explanations made by the Bolsheviks that the Dashnagtzoutiun is composed of only the hired people of the bourgeoisie, of bandits, robbers and all types of adventurers?

This is not an explanation; these are the words of either a naïve child or of an incorrigible demagogue.

And since the Dashnagtzoutune has nothing else to do anymore - neither at the present time nor in the future, it must end its existence.

Our Party has lost its "raison d'etre", its reason for existence.

This is the bitter truth! Shall we have the courage to confess the truth and arrive at the proper conclusion?

And the only conclusion is that we must end our existence.

\*\*\*

I know, this conference is not authorized to come to definite conclusions. However it *is* authorized to take this issue up for discussion and to find the means to solve it.

To this end, I propose the following measures:\*

With comradely salutations  
Hovhannes Katchaznoui  
Bucharrest, March 1923

\* From this point on, particular suggestions concerning the Party follow. I do not find myself authorized to publish them openly. (H. Katchaznoui.)

LETTER FROM HOVANNES KATCHAZNOUNI  
TO HIS FRIEND N.N.

I received a critical letter from N.N., my personal friend and my party comrade, concerning the report I submitted to the Party Convention and I answered it in detail.

Omitting certain parts I think it necessary to share the contents of my letter with the readers, for in this letter too, I have developed my basic ideas on the same issue.

H.K.

Dear NN,

I received your letter on June 22.

It is reassuring to see from what you have written that you do not share the views of those who assess my report as *ad hominem*.<sup>1</sup>

I can guess what these assessments are.

How can we know; perhaps these critics are right. Because, *homo sum, et humani nihil*.<sup>2</sup>

... You know the rest (I cannot trust my mastery of Latin).

You, on the other hand, found it sufficient only to doubt my mental capacities.

1 *Ad hominem*: A personal instinctive act (Arif Acaloğlu).

2 *Homo sum, et humani nihil*: What concerns human being is my concern (Arif Acaloğlu).

Perhaps you are right (Nasreddin Hoca would say this in similar situations); after all the things we have lived through, who could guarantee that one has safeguarded one's mental capacities?

Talking of moral degradation and weakness of ideas, I do not think these can be arguments against my propositions.

You say that "the nechrologue<sup>3</sup> I wrote had been prepared very neatly with rational arguments."

Do you know why?

Because my report is not "a toy manufactured out of boredom" or just "some views". In this comprehensive text, there was not a single thought I had not thought ten times over or a single word I had not considered ten times before writing down.

You should accept that, as wise Polonius said about Hamlet, "even if this is madness, there must be some system in it."

Was it not my right to expect similar rational or other arguments against the "rational arguments" I had put forward, instead of getting only fortune telling concerning my moral or mental state?

You write that "nobody tried to evaluate my views in the conference".

Why?

...

I have better thoughts about my comrades than they have about me. However, it would not be very far from reality if I said that all the participants of the conference were suffering from the narrow outlook within party boundaries.

You should not find it immodest if I told you that I have left such defects behind.

I am not a party member in the narrow sense and I have never been so in my life. For this reason I have been alone in the party for

3 Nechologue: A text written in Russia in memory of a person after his death, which tells about him as a person, his life and ideas. (Arif Acaloğlu).

all these years. I was a simple Armenian, a patriotic Armenian. Here is a word which is tainted and has been subject to much insult and sarcasm. However, the reality is such that all my existence is in this word. I love the Armenian land and the Armenian people... I love this poor and formidable country and the ignorant, uncleanly, introverted, self-loving and opportunistic people. Not only because of their virtues, but with all their shortcomings and blemishes...

A Frenchman would have said *C'est plus fort que moi*,<sup>4</sup> in such a situation.

I love them because I feel I am an inseparable part of them; of the same blood, of the same spirit... I have tied my personal happiness to their collective happiness.

Do you remember what we talked about during our long trip?

You told me that the relationship between you and the Armenian people was a relationship of common objective and that your consciousness and the sense of indebtedness tied you first to the party and then to state affairs. I, on the other hand, stated that my relationship was organizational.

I do not know how well you could analyze your inner world but I was telling the truth.

My inner self, speaking inside me is an Armenian, and here lies the explanation of my views. You should not try to find another explanation, or you would be misled. Whoever is judging, comparing and choosing inside me is an Armenian.

In my point of view, the party is meaningful only because it is capable of conducting a certain work; it does not have any significance beyond that. The party itself has never been the object of my worship. I have always believed that the person is not for the diet but the diet is for the person.

4 *C'est plus fort que moi*: More than myself (Arif Acaloğlu).



Certainly, my words are very ordinary and nobody claims the opposite. They may not say the opposite, but would they not do the opposite (whether consciously or unconsciously)?

It is not easy to get rid of party chains. A long-term party life affects one's spiritual existence; one perceives, approaches and solves the problems in party discipline.

Moreover, in time, the party stops being a mere means and turns into an aim in itself; the issues are subordinated to the means, party work becomes a kind of calling for the party member (excuse my saying so, I cannot find a better way to express myself).

I remember what Rostom and I talked about, a long time ago. It was at the beginning of the Iranian Revolution. Our participation in the revolution was under discussion. I was insisting that the Dashnagzoutiun should have no business in Iran and that an interference would simply be an adventure.

"All right," said Rostom to me, "the revolution in Russia was suppressed, they have come to terms with the Ittihad people and in Iran, as you say, we must not interfere... Then, what shall we do?"

He had a pleasant smile on his face, showing that his question was meant to be a joke. But you understand that a deep psychological meaning was hidden underneath this joke and Rostom, who was an extremely good partizan, was actually bearing this disturbing question deep down inside him.

Personally, I have never felt this way in my life. From my point of view, Rome is always more valuable than Caesar, in other words, Caesar is only valuable because he is useful for Rome.

Under the present conditions, when I see that Armenia and Armenians need the Bolsheviks, I say: Let us leave our places to the Bolsheviks, they have a right to it, for only they are capable of putting things right.

The conference did not even attempt to discuss this matter.

Why?

Because, dear NN, each of the participants, secretly and perhaps unconsciously was asking the same question in the depth of their hearts: "Then, what shall we do?"

I think, this troublesome word, "we" chained the mind of the conference.

And who are "we", that is to say, "those" who lived a party life in the past and who do not know what to do now?

A few tens or perhaps a few hundreds of people, at the most.

If my diagnosis is right, no call, no warning can shake this steadfast instinct of self- defence. I cannot persuade you because here, it is not the convictions that are in question, but other more powerful things.

I am not writing to you to persuade you, I only want you to understand me correctly.

A new question might certainly be asked: for what or for whom is it necessary that you understand me correctly; or what would happen if you misinterpreted my report? Under these circumstances, it would be quite appropriate to remember the *ad hominem* motive and the ties of comradeship and friendship which bind me to you and which make it inevitable for me to make these explanations. This writing of mine is also as "aimless" as your letter of June 2; it has no aim, but only a spiritual need.

There might be something else: As I am writing to you, it is as if I am talking to a crowd of people who have asked the matter to be cleared.

I read your letter again.

I understand that you could not put together in one letter, all the issues that I took up in a long report. In the same way, you could not support with sufficient arguments, the few matters that you wrote about.

But the most important and the crucial one has been expressed and you have put forward the strongest argument against my theses...

And I am puzzled; can this man not see how fragile, weak and unconvincing his arguments are?

You disagree with my view "that Dashnagtzoutiun was established not as a party looking forward to a distant socialism but as a party conceived as serving a definite purpose" and without even trying to understand my approach, you ask what grounds I have based my views on, when I say that Dashnagtzoutiun has completed its mission, for today, there is no independent Armenia.

This question of yours shows that either you did not listen to my report attentively enough, or I could not express my thoughts clearly enough. I asked myself, the very question you asked and answered it (actually, I had to organize my report in a very short and diagrammatic way).

I repeat:

Dashnagtzoutiun has not exhausted itself in the sense that it has achieved its aims and has realized its ideals (just like "the mathematical values" of variable quantities, ideals are always some paces ahead; you may get close to them but you can never reach them). The point is that Dashnagtzoutiun has already covered a certain distance and has brought its vital issue to a certain level and this party cannot have a leading function any longer.

Let me explain this thesis of mine in a more visual way.

We came down to the Ararat Valley from the Sasun mountains and the Varag plateaus; we walked on paths only the "vrshiks" of the mountains can walk on; we covered distances in the dark of the night in small "border humbas", under the snow, hiding behind rocks.; we wandered in this difficult course and we made the Armenian people wander in the same course with us, but nevertheless we advanced...scattering around seeds of freedom.

We were losing blood and growing weak but finally we reached a broad valley, and there new horizons opened up before us.

The Ararat Valley was the first big phase on our long way.

However, we met the forces of a new order there and the rules of struggle were different.

In a place where railways are in use, armies move and machine guns have their say, the "vrshiks" on foot, the "bandit humbas" and the simple guns used by our boys are not forceful enough. Other conditions, other dimensions are involved; the methods of struggle should also be different.

It would be wrong to think that as a party, we can get used to new conditions and can easily change the old methods. Our two (and a half) years of state ruling experience has made it clear how much we have been obstructed by our past and how weak we are even in our own ranks. Our party life of thirty years has marked us with an ineradicable stamp and has evolved traditions and customs, ways of thought and action that we have not been able to leave behind so far.

However, the most important point is that we are facing Soviet Russia now. This greatest and most determined power is either with us or against us.

In the past, we had very naïve thoughts about getting free of Russian hegemony and finding support in the west. Today, we no longer have a right to bear such hopes. Today, our sole support is the Soviet Russia. We cannot fight against it; in fact, we should not, even if we could, for we need that country not as a social system or a state regime (communism or class dictatorship), but as a political power.

Armenia should be in alliance with the Soviet Russia, there is no other way!

But you know that our party cannot form alliance with the Bolshevik rule because the Bolsheviks do not want to recognize us. We, on the other hand, cannot influence them to be able to make them want our friendship and value us.

Only Armenian Bolsheviks can enter into alliance with the Bolsheviks; the ARF Dashnagtzoutiun, however, is not necessary for Armenia any longer.

It is in this sense that our party has completed its mission and has nothing to do any more and must put an end to its existence.

The statement, "Armenian Bolsheviks are our heirs" may sound ridiculous to you (if the Bolsheviks had heard it, they would have laughed even more).

But it does not make me laugh. On the contrary, I am bewildered at the lack of understanding both of you are displaying, for what I am saying is a simple truth.

When the Dashnags hear the name Bolshevik, they shout "we renounce the Devil".

And the Bolsheviks too, when they hear the name Dashnag, they shout "we renounce the Devil".

Do not shout in vain comrades! You cannot renounce them; it is not up to your volition or choice.

The Dashnagtzoutiun took up the Armenian question, progressed it and carried the political liberation of Armenian people to a certain point; from this point on, the Armenian Bolsheviks should replace them.

History flows this way.

Try to understand me: what is condemned to die is only the Dashnagtzoutiun Party, the struggle is, however, alive.

You say that Armenia is not independent.

It certainly is not independent. But let us compare the present situation with the conditions before the war (from the point of view of independence) and we will see what a big stride has been taken.

Remember how enthusiastically we welcomed the creation of a board of European "supervisors" over the provinces of Turkish Arme-

nia and how hard we struggled to establish the practice of municipal administration in the Transcaucasian Armenia... The Myasnikov or the Lukashin governments, however, are something more than the creation of European board of supervisors in the provinces of Turkish Armenia or the establishment of municipalities in Transcaucasia. What is "more" is not, of course, comparable to our losses and the victims we have sacrificed. We should have thought about it when we were forming the volunteer units in 1914 or before that, when we established the Dashnagtzoutiun or when we were inspired by the novels of Raffi or the "free songs" of Gamar Katil.

Armenia is not free. Yes! But it has taken a big stride forward and in order to take the next stride, it has to consolidate the positions it is holding.

This consolidation has to take place under the banner of Bolshevism (and it is already taking place); and it is due to this fact that the Armenian Bolsheviks are our heirs.

I do not know the Armenian Bolsheviks, I have never met them personally, and I do not have the means to observe their activities from a distance. I do not know the dominating ideology, but in the depths of my heart, I have a belief... they are also Armenian and so much so that communism (which is not an obstruction in itself) does not prevent them from thinking as an Armenian. For, I am myself a communist with strong convictions and believe in the Kropotkin Bible; but this Bible does not hinder my being an Armenian, but on the contrary, provides fresh and strong support to express my national identity. I know, my communism is not the state communism of the Bolsheviks and the Bolsheviks are gladly chopping off the heads of defective communists like me. However, this has nothing to do with their being "Armenian". Do you think Russian Bolsheviks are less "Russian"? On the contrary, they are more Russian with their Russian national psychology and they are true to Russian national

interests. Let us assume that I am mistaken about the ideology of the Armenian Bolsheviks; let us assume that the idea of living independently on their own land is alien to them; even under these conditions, they have to continue what we have started, consolidate the positions that we have acquired and help future gains.

They must do this even in spite of their wishes (assuming that they have wishes in the opposite direction),(and are doing so now).

All right, I will say one more thing to convince you definitely that I am mad.

Here it is: The Armenian Bolsheviks are actually Dashnags; they are the sole Dashnags of the present day; they are even more Dashnag than me or you.

For they have replaced us at the point you and I proved weak and they are doing our work.

Armenia is not independent...

But when did we actually imagine we could establish a truly independent state? Even at the moments when we were at the top of our enthusiasm and thrill, did we not know that we would never be independent but "dependent" on some power or other?

We certainly did and as a result of this knowledge, we started looking for a "mandate" from the first day of our sovereignty.

The point was who and up to which degree were we supposed to be dependent on.

The problem was solved in favour of Russia and the independence of the state of Armenia was limited with the serious and active supervision of Moskow. We would perhaps have preferred America...

However, history has a rationale of its own and we cannot change it.

The Soviet Republic is the topmost level of independence that Armenia can achieve under the present circumstances.

And this is no small thing.

Despite all, the present and the future of Armenia has been provided for, better than when we ruled the state from Yerevan in November 1920.

Remember that day!

Remember those horrible times when the Bolsheviks appeared when we had lost our last forces and dispersed us but protected the country.

This is the truth.

It is indisputable that there is no other power in Armenia to replace the Bolsheviks. Bolsheviks are necessary for Armenia.

...

As I understand, you do not refute this very simple truth; however, you have demands which have not been answered and at this point, you place ARF Dashnagtzoutiun against the Bolsheviks.

You ask "where is the promised Armenia?" Is such a demand written on the banner of Bolshevism?

No, it is not.

However, which perspectives do we, who have repeated this demand over and over again in the party resolutions, have? Is this political demand serious or is it a formula to comfort ourselves? What meaning does this demand have, from the point of view of the destroyed Turkish Armenia and victorious Turkey - in the month of January of 1923?

When are these "two" Armenias going to unite? We should try to be a little serious, because it is the main task of a statesman.

The "second" Armenia no longer exists.

This is a horrible statement to make but not pronouncing the words does not change the essence of the matter.

When the Sévres Treaty was signed, we could still have cherished some hopes. Can we say the same things for today? Who will demand from Turkey, the Armenian provinces where not a single



Armenian lives? Who will dispel the Turkish armies and the Kurdish "tribes" from those provinces? Who is supposed to collect the miserable remains of the Turkish Armenians, dispersed all over the world, take them back home, develop the destroyed country and provide working and living conditions? Who is supposed to guard the long borders and prevent the Turks from crowding into our country?

Who is going to provide political support, military power and wagons of gold to Armenia, to help her overcome this difficult task?

The Bolsheviks never touch upon the matter of "unification"...

Yes! Can ARF Dashnagtzoutiun correct this Bolshevik mistake? Who or what will they depend on, to realize this enormous task? Certainly on outside forces... for inside, there are Turks.

I am repeating: we could have cherished misleading hopes in 1919-1920, but do we have the right to be deaf and blind to the facts when even a miserable *home* cannot find support?

You say that the conditions might change and the division of Turkey might be once more brought to the diplomacy table.

I cannot see such a possibility in the short term (neither can you). It is not possible even in a longer term. Nevertheless, is it not possible to think that with the changing conditions, the inclination of the Bolsheviks might also change and they might want not only a "united" but also a "from sea to sea" Armenia?

If the decline of the Ottoman Empire is a historical process, is not the passage of Russians to warm waters another historical process?

A political party should act not according to such possibilities but to the real situation.

The real situation is that a "united" Armenia is an empty word; it is nothing more.

What should be discussed is not the unification of the two parts but the broadening of the borders of the present republic, at least as

far as the 1914 borders. And the Soviet regime, depending on Russia, might perhaps be able to solve the problem... But not the ARF Dashnagtzoutiun, who I do not know it depends on (perhaps on the Armeniophile priests or doctors of philosophy).

I have heard of or learnt certain things: Turkey fears Russia and if Armenia comes under the hegemony of Russia, they will never leave the places they have occupied; for instance, they will never give back Kars, for it is necessary for them from the aspect of security. However, if Armenia separates from Russia, (that is to say, the present Soviet power leaves its place to some other power, for example to the Dashnags), Turkey will feel secure and will be more lenient in the border talks and will hand over to us not only Kars and Sürmeli but perhaps Basen and Eleşkirt as well.

Is such a "Manilov"ianism fitting for a political party?

I do not doubt that Turks fear Russia and expect a conflict in the future (perhaps in the near future) and for this reason never miss the opportunity to consolidate their borders (for example want to hold Kars in their hands). But I also do not doubt that they will never fear an Armenia that has broken away from Russia.

However, I have a question: Why should they make land concessions to an Armenia which will not pose a threat towards them?

Which country has ever displayed such a courtesy towards its weak neighbour, so that we might have a right to expect something similar from Turkey? Why, with which considerations or under whose pressure should Turkey feel the obligation to hand over Kars to us? Is it not a bigger possibility that Turkey, not seeing the Russian armies facing them, try to unite with Azerbaijan, her partner in aim and with whom she is sharing the same faith? In other words, is it not more possible that Turkey should think of acquiring more land instead of making concessions?

The problem of broadening our borders can only be solved by depending on Russia, because only Russia can force Turks to recede

and this is the most practical method of gaining land; the rest is naivety or self deception. That is to say, if there is a hope in this direction, it is again in the Bolsheviks and there is nothing the ARF Dashnagtzoutiun can do.

I say that the hope is in the Bolsheviks because what is in question is not an indefinite and far future, but "today".

You, on the other hand emphasize this indefinite and far future and focus your arguments on this point.

You say that "the present situation might change and one pleasant day-as it was in 1918- Russia might leave Armenia and go to mind its own business".

They might, once more, leave us face to face with Turks and force us to come to terms with them... and that is the point where the Dasnagsutiun will be of use, you say.

Whether such a day will come and when it will come, neither you nor I can know. What we can know is that today is not that day.

I ask you: "Can a political party maintain its existence for an indefinite future, if it does not have anything to do now? For, the present inactivity will kill it; who can exist without doing anything?"

Whoever told you that ARF Dashnagtzoutiun will save Armenia, in the situation you assume?

Just suppose that day has arrived: Russians are not there and Turks are dominating over the situation; you are obliged to come to an agreement with them, to make peace with them. Do you think that we are entitled to such a role, as a party?

For which reasons should we be the desired and preferred agents in the eyes of Turks?

Because we are against the Bolsheviks? But in the period when we were against the Bolsheviks, Turks themselves were friends with them and they were following joint policies. When they made an agreement with the Bolsheviks in Brest-Litovsk, we rose against

Turks and even fought them in order to sabotage this agreement. On the other hand, we did not become enemies to the Bolsheviks because we were fond of Turks; we were on the camp of the allies who were the enemies of both the Bolsheviks and Turks. We were demanding from Turkey a "from sea to sea" Armenia... We were demanding both Cilicia, and Harput and Sivas, and Trabzon. We signed the Sévres Treaty; this treaty was going to destroy Turkey. We made official calls to Europe and America to make them send their armies to Turkey and establish our sovereignty in the provinces which Turkey unquestionably stated that belonged to us. And finally it is also a fact that we have continuously fought Turks as long as we existed...

What kind of a confidence can we nourish in Turks? Why should they prefer us, over others as agents?

Are they supposed to consider our strength?

But they saw our strength when we held the political power in our country and I think they do not have any particular reason to display respect or fear towards it.

If we had no other consideration but coming to agreement with Turkey, it would be enough for Dashnagtzoutiun to leave the political stage. When Turkey felt the need to break its ties with Germany and make peace with the allied forces, they dissolved Ittihad Terakki itself.

You pose a very natural question: if there are no Bolsheviks and no Dashnags, who is going to make an agreement with Turks?

This is a different matter and I will come back to it later. Now let us determine that it will not be ARF Dashnagtzoutiun who will conduct the talks with Turks anyway.

...

Life with other neighbours - with Georgians and Azerbaijanis - ...

You say that in order to have a life together, the Dashnagtzoutiun must live.

But, my dear, you forget that with the Transcaucasian states, such a life together has been realized not only in the form of friendly relations, but as a close alliance.

You say that this is the result of the fear of Moscow.

Let it be so. In truth, the Armenian, Tatar and Georgian Bolsheviks have realized something that we, that is to say the Dashnags, the Musavat people and the Mensheviks were not able to.

You have to accept that the situation in Transcaucasia, from the point of view of neighbours living together, is better than what it was in our period. People no longer kill each other, destroy the towns and villages, stand in guard, night and day, arm in hand. They wander around freely, cross the borders, trade and perhaps come together for pleasure.

Why could we not make such a situation possible? Did we not want it? Were we not aware of the need? We were both aware of it and wanted it and also worked hard for it. We worked sincerely hard but were not successful

Why were we not successful? And what is the guarantee that we will be more successful in the future compared to the past?

There were such conflicts which we, the Transcaucasians could not solve without outside intervention and we cannot solve them now either (remember our talks abroad).

Georgia wants to establish a privileged position for itself, regain its "historical" borders back and does not want to give up not only Akhalkalaki and Ardahan but also Lori and Pembek. Azerbaijan, who naturally wants to get closer to Turkey and establish relations with it does not want to give up the Armenian Qarabag for economic and strategic reasons and Sharour-Nakhichevan for ethnic reasons. Among these countries, Armenia, as the most modest (because the weakest) country has to secure one thing: its existence as a state. It cannot cram into the borders of three and a half provinces (Yerevan, North Beyazet Echmiadzin and the half of Shirak) If it has to

give up Akhalkalaki in favour of Georgia and Qarabag in favour of Azerbaijan, it should at least keep Sharour-Nakhichevan. On the condition that it has to give up Kars in favour of victorious Turkey, it cannot give up Sürmeli and Kağızman. For, Armenia has no other outlet to the outside world. It can establish relations with Europe only via Georgia. For this reason, even if Georgia does not give Armenia a piece of land, it should at least seriously guarantee to provide a transit passage.

However, neither Turkey, nor Georgia or Azerbaijan tends to satisfy Armenians on this matter (not even around these minimum demands)

When tomorrow we, the Dashnags sit around a table, together with the diplomats from Ankara, the Georgian Mensheviks and the Musavat people from Azerbaijan, what is the guarantee that we will be wiser than we were in 1818, 1919 and 1920 or the present when only hollow theoretical discussions are made outside the country?

We are not mature enough to be able to solve the conflicts within us; an outside force, a foreign authority is still needed in Transcaucasia to establish peace among nations... This is a fact, no matter how sad and shameful it might be.

The outside power in question, today, is Moscow. In the case of a replacement of Moscow by Ankara, would this be more profitable for us?

When the Red Army was demanded to leave Transcaucasia, I can understand what the Georgian Mensheviks, or better still, what the Azerbaijani Musavat people felt. They know that in such a situation the right to speak belongs to Turkey. They know this and they are not afraid. They have no reason to be afraid.

From the point of view of the nationalist Azerbaijan, the Turkish hegemony is a desired and the best result. If Georgia gives up Zaqatala in favour of Azerbaijan and Ajaria in favour of Turkey and it rounds up its borders in favour of Armenia, it will be able to found a

reasonable state; Georgia, one end of the borders of which reach the mountains and the other to the sea, can live and develop; it will neither pose a threat to Turkey, nor will face any serious threat itself.

How about Armenia? Can we say the same for Armenia which remains between the two and poses a threat for both and which quite easily be erased out of the face of the earth?

Are you not aware that in the case of the red Army leaving Transcaucasia, we will be alone against the bloc of Turkey-Azerbaijan-Georgia (for I cannot see any other power to replace Russia in the near future), and the existence of Armenia will be under a big question mark?

It is for this reason that Armenia should hold tight on the Bolsheviks (certainly as long as the Bolsheviks are in power in Russia).

But you say that the situation today might change despite our wishes. The Bolshevik power in Russia may collapse or the Bolsheviks may leave Transcaucasia for some reason or other.

This might happen. And however we might wish it, it is not up to us to lengthen the life-span of the Bolsheviks.

I repeat, even in this case, the Dashnagtzoutiun cannot represent Armenia and cannot put things right. New people with a different name who have a different psychology and a different past (or with no past) will be needed.

The letter is getting longer and longer but I have so many things to say... You say that we did not think this way in Tbilisi, in Yerevan, in Zangezour or even in Tebrizi. Yes, we did not think so, but is it a reason why we should think otherwise in Paris and in Bucharest? Turn back and look... What a long way we have covered! We have come from Tbilisi to Yerevan. From Yerevan to Zangezour and from Zangezour to Tbilisi and from Tbilisi to I do not know where.

Was not this long way supposed to teach us certain things?

What I mean to say is that are taking lessons from the past, learning the realities and acting consciously from then on frivolousness or instability of ideas? And is it a virtue to repeat that if we did not think this way in Yerevan and Zangezour, we do not have the right to think differently today?

What kind of sacred and untouchable things are our thoughts, that we cannot revise them or replace them with other thoughts?

What is so "new" in my thoughts that make you so unhappy? Is this really "new" or is it something against the "old"?

Perhaps this is a self deception, a mental flaw or a hypocrisy but I cannot really see this "new" and "different" element. I am definitely sure that my thoughts now (I mean my basic thoughts) are exactly the same as those I had in 1920, 1918 and 1914 and throughout my life. The same thoughts have led me all these years and they still are. We have no new beliefs, I have not created any new idols, I am true to my old ones. What seems "new" to you is "old" for me; it is the continuation and the development of the old.

I do not write these in order to clear my name. If somebody is honestly and sincerely reassessing his beliefs and realizing that it was actually a misconception and that the gods were actually idols with no sign of life in them, it is not a sin or something to be ashamed of.

If I had experienced a similar adventure, I would not have been afraid of being qualified as "a religious convert" and would have openly entered my temple. But now today, I am not changing my temple but the priest and the guard of sacred costumes; that is to say, not anything big, but just the ordinary servants of the temple.

What am I saying?

I am saying that ARF Dashnagtzoutiun is not strong enough for the struggle of its life, the political liberation of the Armenians; it has to leave the stage and give its place to the Armenian Bolshe-



viks, for in the current conditions only they can continue the struggle and they are actually doing this.

Am I betraying myself and my past, by thinking this way and opening this proposal to discussion?

No, I am not betraying them, it is you who are treacherous, for you love the means more than the work itself.

God forbid that I think you are doing this consciously. I have neither a reason nor the right to doubt your good intentions. However, facts remain as facts.

Try to forget for one moment that these words belong to an old man who has lost his sanity (for such possibilities do not solve the questions, on the contrary, they make them more complicated) and think again... You might see that my words are not very far from reality.

Young comrades, do you know that very often I think I am the only young person among you? You have all withered too soon and old age sclerosis has turned your thoughts into stone.

You ask "is independent Armenia a misconception and a madness?"

No, it is not a misconception and a madness; it is a very healthy, lively and enlivening idea and a demand well matured; it is realizable and it has already been realized to a certain extent.

Let us not play with words.

"Independence" is not an absolute sign which has a value only within certain forms and in broad dimensions but which becomes naught under any other circumstances. It is really a madness to demand something absolute. Armenia is not England or even Switzerland and (in the foreseeable future) will not become so. Its independence is inevitably within certain boundaries. Our task is to walk this road as far as the outside conditions and our own strength permit. We have to use all the opportunities, we have to bring out all

the forces; at least if someone achieves what we have not been able to achieve, we should not obstruct his way.

Have the Bolsheviks aimed at destroying the independence of our country and tied us to Russia again?

Is it so? The Bolsheviks have provided the only form of independence for us under the present conditions, by tying us to Russia and have thus saved our future.

...

You say "the Bolsheviks are not trying to gather the people together but to disperse them."

I really do not know of any other work carried out by the Bolsheviks to disperse the people, besides dispelling a few hundred Dashnags out of the country; but you should accept that this does not actually mean dispersing the people.

Yes, the Bolsheviks are not bringing the people together.

But if we had been in their place, would we have done it?

The scarcity of Armenian land and its economic conditions do not permit a migration back; the main obstacle against bringing the people together is this.

The Bolsheviks did not want to broaden the borders and improve the economic conditions of the country on a visible scale (let us assume they did not), this is true.

But, could we have achieved it ourselves, despite all our good intentions?

The Bolsheviks could not broaden the borders but at least they were able to safeguard what was in their hands. Coming to the economic conditions: according to the really inadequate information that I have in hand now, the economic situation is better than what it was in our period.

The economic order of the Bolsheviks -that there is no private property- is really destructive for the present day Armenia and this

matter, taken together with party dictatorship is the other face of the medallion. However, the Bolsheviks brought peace to the country, they directed the working hands towards creative labour.

The Bolshevik system cannot develop our plundered country and secure its economic advancement.

However, this is not an obstacle in the way of admitting the necessity and usefulness of Soviet domination; for there are other dangers, other threats and these are not less important than too early experiments rendering no results.

...

It is the second time that I have concluded and restarted the letter. I am aware that I have repeated myself, but what can I do? You, also forget you have touched upon an issue and go back to it once more.

I continue.

You say "We must applaud that finally serious political groups have arisen and different trends have been formed in our life".

If you remember, it was myself who brought this topic onto the agenda when ARF Dashnagtzoutiun was in power; I was trying to make the partisans, who had lost their heads with victory understand what a dangerous situation it was both for the country and for the party itself.

Yes, we need people grouping. But under two conditions:

Firstly, the groups should arise out of the necessities of life and should satisfy certain serious demands which have ripened. The Bolshevik group, in other words, the reorganization of the front according to Bolshevism is a vital necessity. We cannot say the same thing for us. Dashnagtzoutiun (as a party, please understand me correctly) is a remnant of the past, it is an unnecessary organ and the body no longer needs this organ. The need that you have

pointed out is not a genuine need but a baseless projection. A political party cannot justify its present existence with prospective tasks; for if something is to be done, there will be a person to do it.

Secondly, the group ought to be inside the country, not outside. The outside forces, at best, can only help, they cannot guide the activities inside the country. You are against the parties in the colonies, yourself, but you cannot see that Dashnagtzoutiun has no other chance and it is now a colony party.

Here, I see a serious obstacle in my way.

You, quite rightly ask me what "objective date" I have in my hands to be able to insist that Dashnagtzoutiun has died within the country. I am away from my country, I do not know what is happening there. And you tell me that you have data in your hands and that the information the American, M. has conveyed to you is with you.

Your position is much stronger than mine and this situation gives you the right to claim that "I am trying to assume that the sickly feelings of the immigrants are actually felt by the people".

My feelings are perhaps really "abstract formulations of logic", and life itself presents completely different things.

I try to find my mistakes but I cannot find them.

You know that I do not trust that information and the solidity and objectivity of that information. On the other hand, I do not want to take into consideration the information conveyed by M at all, as I regard all the other irresponsible words of other famous foreigners and other chance remarks.

Why do I not trust them?

Because this information conflicts with what I know and have seen and also with the nature of things. I saw my Party when I was still at home, in Armenia; on our long way, I saw it in Iran, in Egypt, in Constantinopolis; and I have seen it here, in the Balkans. I have participated in different meetings, I have talked to comrades,

individually, I have been following the press and I always come to the same conclusion: The Party does not exist any longer. There are only remains of the old Party and these pieces have different names and correspond with each other; but they show no sign of life, for they have no work, no belief and no enthusiasm.

I am not surprised at this, for I see the reasons and I understand them.

I would need positive and sound evidence in order to believe something opposite; in my opinion, the information in your hands is not convincing, because I know the degree of their credibility.

Data, irrefutable data say completely other things.

Observe, examine and tell me what kind of mutual relationship has been established between the comrades, organs and groups in authority: Can a party survive in such circumstances of distrust, argument and condemnation? Do not tell me that this is only a situation peculiar to the colonies! No, the same thing was true for our country too; the party atmosphere was poisonous even on the first day of our coming to power.

You must remember, we tried to convene the party congress for two years, but we were not successful (due to reasons in your knowledge) to organize the convention which the party needed immensely. Does not this weakness and the reasons for it prove that the party no longer exists?

However, do you know that the most striking evidence is the resolution of the Party Conference? Only a party which had lost the grounds it tread upon could announce a resolution which is so weak in content, so contradictory, noncommittal and which meant nothing but despite all which included everything. A party which was capable of activity and which produced projects would never accept such a resolution. This resolution points out that it does not know what to do, that it does not have anything else to do and that it likes to hide its own death amid word play.

Only one thing could have saved Dashnagtzoutiun in the present day: An irresistible, widespread struggle against Bolshevism fought with every available weapon and means... But the Dashnagtzoutiun would never do this, and it should not do it too; there is one thing it should do; to die.

And "considering... and also regarding... but, for... and because... therefore... as to... or both this and also other... "; a party cannot survive with such a resolution.

This is also a kind of "necrology", but it lacks honesty and courage.

...

You say that the Conference is not authorized to abolish the party... it certainly is not. However, I have taken into consideration this important factor in my report and made propositions which did not exceed the limits of the conference authority.

You say: "I do not object, a time may come when the whole world is in peace and then our question may fall from the agenda for a while. In such a situation it might be perhaps proper to follow you but for the time being, it is too early."

You know, with these few lines, it is as if you have put down your weapon and surrendered.

All the world is not in peace yet (and will never be) but our question has already fallen from the agenda (for a while) and our days are limited... This is the bitter reality.

...

You say: "Though it was not possible to destroy your report before it was read, I wish it would soon be forgotten. And I find it useless and harmful to open this subject to discussion."

Why? Who needs these precautions, who is this diet for?

How long has the Dashnagtzoutiun been afraid of ideas? Why should the mouth of one comrade and the ears of the others be closed?

If my words are the result of personal motives (*ad hominem*) or the delirious babble of a sick person or baseless, abstract

formulations, you should solve it so that the comrades would know about it. But if the comrades are too naïve and narrow minded to be able to notice my mistakes, it should be your task to warn them and show them the truth, then.

It would not be "useless and harmful", but on the contrary, it would be very useful and necessary indeed.

Can you say that I suffer from "the sickly feelings of immigration" and there is no other sick person in the party? If I am incurable, can you say that the other sick people and half-sick people are incurable too, do you have a right to say this? What are the means of treating people suffering from a contagious disease and what are the preventive vaccinations against contagion?

You and your opinion partners should have encouraged, forced each Dashnag to read the report and say "look how low one of your old comrades have sunk", instead of banning my report.

This would have shaken the party, woken up the sleeping ones, called the lazy ones to activity, encouraged action and would have consolidated the ranks. To express it with one word, it would have been a complete antidote and would have activated the vital forces (if any such thing still exists in the party).

You did not do this.

Why?

Because you are cowardly, my dear, cowardly.

You want to censure severely, any search for ideas, you want to shut the mouths and hide what has been said, because you have no confidence in your own power.

Your hearts are full of fear and doubt.

If you had believed that the party was still alive, you would not have found my report harmful at all and would not have expressed displeasure at its submission to the Conference and would not have wished it would be forgotten.

Now hear my words.

I felt it was an obligation for me to write this report; it was a spiritual obligation from my point of view, towards Armenian people and my party. I would have committed a great sin if I had not written it. I felt I was obliged to submit my report to a senior organ of my party (for it was impossible to convene a conference) and to wait for a decision. The decision was taken: Shut your mouth and be quiet.

Has the matter been closed with this?

Not from my point of view.

Now I am going to meet with another obligation; I will raise my voice despite party decision. I must meet this obligation as far as possible in any way that I can.

...

If I am rebelling against you, you should not regard it as defiance.

The fact that you have made different evaluations of my report is a heavy burden on me. You should not be ashamed.

When I hear about several *ad hominem* criticisms all around me, as to "why did only he do such a thing, and not others?", I rebel with all my heart and I do not know how to live under the conditions where there is no mutual trust nor mutual respect left.

No matter what, honourable NN, I would like to maintain "that old belief" which focuses on human shortcomings without (or even despite) acknowledging them, that there is something sacred which directs a person's ideas and actions and also that it would be wrong and silly to look for hidden, covered or artificial motives or malice behind every step a person takes.

With love,  
Yours, H. Katchaznoui  
Bucharest  
June 17, 1923







**Hovhannes Katchaznoui**  
(The First Prime Minister of  
the Independent Armenian Republic)

## **DASHNAGTZOUTIUN HAS NOTHING TO DO ANYMORE**

(Report Submitted to the 1923 Party Convention)

When Istanbul Chamber of Commerce was founded in 1882 its first chairman was an Ottoman subject Armenian, so it wishes that the historical incidents that took place during World War I should be evaluated with no political concerns. We therefore regard it as our duty to present this book, evaluating the incidents impartially, to the attention of those concerned.

Thus, we wanted to underscore once more the necessity to evaluate the 1915 Armenian Issue based on archival documents. It is our greatest wish that instead of allowing unfounded hostilities to take root between countries and peoples, feelings of friendship and brotherhood should prevail.

This has been our understanding as we publish the English, French and German editions of this publication. We hope that this light shed by historical documents will also illuminate a future filled not with enmity but with friendship.

Murat YALÇINTAŞ  
Istanbul Chamber of Commerce  
Chairman

ISBN 975-343-453-7



9 789753 434539

