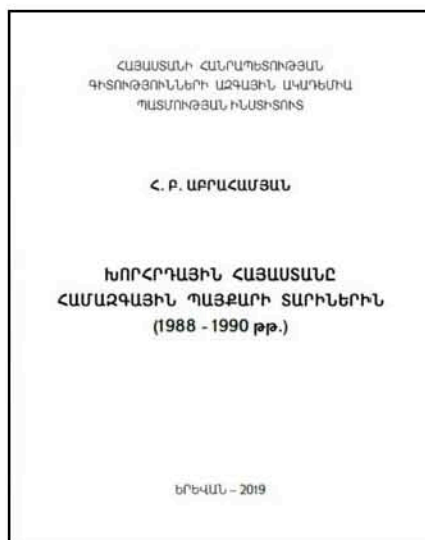


ԳՐԱԽՈՍԱԿԱՆՆԵՐ

BOOK REVIEWS



**ԱԲՐԱՀԱՄՅԱՆ ՀՐԱՆՏ
ԽՈՐՀՐԴԱՅԻՆ ՀԱՅԱՍՏԱՆԸ
ՀԱՄԱԶԳԱՅԻՆ ՊԱՅՔԱՐԻ
ՏԱՐԻՆԵՐԻՆ (1988-1990 թթ.)**

*(Երևան, ՀՀ ԳԱԱ պատմության
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**ABRAHAMYAN HRANT. SOVIET
ARMENIA DURING THE YEARS
OF THE NATIONWIDE
STRUGGLE (1988-1990)**

*(Yerevan, Institute of History, NAS RA,
2019, 384 p.)*

The monograph by H. Abrahamyan presents a remarkable alloy of personal impressions and scientific analysis, devoted to the distinguished pages of Armenian history, 1988-1990. The author personally participated in national-liberation movement in Artsakh (Mountainous Karabakh); he followed closely those processes, that went on in the society as a whole, and in Armenian All-national Movement in particular. The latter pursued the reunion of the former autonomous region with Armenia. Hrant Abrahamyan depicts events, using a wide range of facts, documents from the National and personal archives. They include records of speeches, delivered at mass meetings, during sessions of the Karabakh regional Council on February 20, 1988, as well as of appeals on the floor of the Armenian Supreme Council. They were enriched with records of statements made by the Karabakh Committee, who were arrested and interrogated from December

10, 1988, till May 31, 1989; followed by memoirs published by numerous State and civil leaders or their relatives¹.

The wide scope of studies on Armenian subjects, written in English and French,² give H. Abrahamyan a good possibility to earmark those issues and

¹ **Գորբաչով Մ.Ս.**, Վերակառուցումը և նոր մտածողությունը մեր երկրի և ամբողջ աշխարհի համար, Ե., 1988; **Սարգսյան Կ.**, Պատմություն և գրականություն, Ե., 1991; **Մոսեսովա Ի.**, **Հովնանյան Ա.**, Բաքվի ջարդերը, Ե., 1992; **Ուլուբաբյան Բ.**, Արցախի պատմությունը սկզբից մինչև մեր օրերը, Ե., 1994; ն.ի., Արցախյան գոյապայքարի տարեգրություն, Ե., 1997; Андрей Сахаров о Нагорном Карабахе, Ե., 1996; **Խոջաբեկյան Վ.Ե.**, Արցախը փորձության ժամին, Ե., 1996; **Կապուտիկյան Ս.**, Էջեր փակ գրողներից, Ե., 1997; **Мосесова И.**, Армяне Баку: бытие и исход. Документы. Свидетельства очевидцев. Газетные и журнальные публикации. Факты и комментарии к ним, Ե., 1998; **Լիպարիտյան Ժ.**, Պետականության մարտահրավերը: Հայ քաղաքական միտքը անկախությունից ի վեր, Ե., 1999; **Սարգսյան Ֆ.**, Կյանքի դասերը (հուշեր), Ե., 2000; **Зоян С.**, Нагорный Карабах: проблемы и конфликты, Ե., 2001; **Մանուկյան Վ.**, Հայկական երազանքը գոյատևման փակուղում: Եզրույթների և հոդվածների ժողովածու, Ե., 2002; **Գալստյան Հ.**, Հոդվածներ, հուշագրություններ, հարցազրույցներ, Ե., 2002; ն.ի., Չուղարկված նամակներ, Ե., 2013; Կաթիլներ մեծ ծովից: Կ. Դեմիրճյանը երախտապարտ ժամանակակիցների հուշերում, Ե., 2002; **Դեմիրճյան Ռ.**, Հիշատակ, Ե., 2003; **Հարությունյան Գ.**, Կարեն Դեմիրճյան, Հիշատակի խոսք, Ե., 2006; **Ղազարյան Ռ.**, Հաշվետու եմ..., Ե., 2003; **Амбарцумян С.А.**, Три года на пределе любви и смерти, Ե., 2005; **Ստուպիշին Վ.**, Իմ առաքելությունը Հայաստանում, 1992–1994, Ռուսաստանի առաջին դեսպանի հուշերը, Ե., 2005; **Տեր-Պետրոսյան Լ.**, Ընտրանի. Ելույթներ, Հոդվածներ, Հարցազրույցներ, Ե., 2006; **Օհանյան Ս.**, XXI դարի բանակը, Ե., 2007; ն.ի., Հայկական բանակի 20-ամյա տարեգրությունը, Ե., 2013; **Нуйкин А.**, Боль моя – Карабах, Ե., 2009; **Мелик-Шахназаров А.А.**, Нагорный Карабах. Факты против лжи, М., 2009.

² F. Thom, *Le moment Gorbachev*, Paris, 1989; **Kagarlitsky B.**, *Farewell Perestroika: A Soviet Chronicle*, Lnd. and NY, 1990; **Sakwa R.**, *Gorbachev and His Reforms, 1985–1990*, NY, 1990; **Mouradian C.**, *The Mountainous Karabagh Question: Inter-Ethnic Conflict or Decolonization Crisis ? – “Armenian Review”*, Watertown, Mass., 1990, vol. 43, № 2–3; **Keller W.**, *Did Moscow Incite Pogroms in Baku to Reimpose Authority Over Region ? «The Armenian Reporter»*, Paramus, New Jersey, 1990, vol. XXIII, № 20; **Suny R.G.**, *Looking Toward Ararat: Armenia in Modern History*, Bloomington-Indianapolis, 1993; **Chorbajian L., Donabedian P., Mutaftian C.**, *The Caucasian Knot: The History & Geopolitics of Nagorno-Karabagh*, Lnd., 1994; **Gill G.**, *The Collapse of a Single-Party System: The Disintegration of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union*, Cambridge-NY, 1994; **Malkasian M.**, *Gha-ra-bagh!: The Emergence of the National Democratic Movement in Armenia*, Detroit, 1996; **Croissant M.P.**, *The Armenia–Azerbaijan Conflict: Causes and Implications*, Westport CT, 1998; **Krikorian R.O., Masih J.R.**, *Armenia: at the Crossroads*, Lnd. and NY, 1999; **Kaufman S.J.**, *Modern Hatreds: The Symbolic Politics of Ethnic War*, Ithaca and Lnd., 2001; **Zurer C.**, *The Post-Soviet Wars: Ethnic Conflict and Nationhood in the Caucasus*, NY and Lnd., 2007.

interpretations, which seek well-founded critics, to be ensured by Armenian historians. This thesis has especially much to do with the monograph “Black Garden” by T. de Waal,³ as far as the Azerbaijani side is introduced to readers as a victim of aggressive and provocative Armenians. H. Abrahamyan represents events of November, 1987 – February, 1988 in detail (pp. 62–65, 70–74, 77); he asserts that before the assault on Armenians, arranged on February 27–29, 1988, in Sumgait, and the latter proved to be a full-blooded pogrom (see section 1.2, more concrete pp. 49–54, 59–61), neither side practiced violence.

Our historian doesn’t allow to put a sign of equality between peaceful, genuinely political movement for the reunion of Artsakh with its Motherland, and criminal, savage, rowdy assaults on people in Sumgait, caused by their nationality. Sumgait was an incontestable phenomenon; it forced Armenians to realize that no one would secure the life of their compatriot dwellers in Azerbaijan. These people were removed from the sphere of action of the Soviet legislation; they were converted into hostages of political situation, though Armenians in Sumgait were not even aware of its essence.

Advantages of this monograph include a clash of two totally different social behaviors. The first one was shaped in Armenia as a Constitutional, institutionalized movement of State nature. The second one took place on the other side of the border and brought to life an unconcealed discrimination, that extended up to pogroms; though they seemed incredible and utterly wretched out of our day’s context. H. Abrahamyan vividly conveys high morale of opening mass rallies in Hadrut, Martakert and Stepanakert, dated February 12 and 13, 1988; of the meeting with 1 million participants, held on February 25, in Yerevan (pp. 22–26, 30–34); as well as of the Autonomy’s Regional Council, assembled on February 20 (p p. 18–19); and of the following sessions of the Supreme Council in Yerevan. He depicts how regional and republican deputations made their trips to Moscow and addressed the leaders of the USSR on December 1, 1987, January 5–12, February 7–17 and 26, June 28, 1988 (pp. 18–19, 27, 41, 156–157) and performed at the sessions of the Legislative and Party authorities of the Soviet Union (pp. 165–171, 214–216, 315–316).

However, the factors of ill-fated politics of parity practiced by Moscow and

³ De **Waal T.**, Black Garden: Armenia and Azerbaijan Through Peace and War, NY, 2003. **Թոմաս դե Վաալ Ռ.**, Սև այգի, Ե., 2014.

supported there up today, its inability to resist pogroms in Azerbaijan, in common with its wholesale blockade of frontiers, all railways and roads, established from May – July 10, 1989, against Autonomous Karabakh region and from August of the same year – against the Armenian SSR, and all building works in the area of the earthquake ceased because of this operation (pp. 105, 162, 272–273, 310–320); obstruction of resolutions adopted by the republican Supreme Council, in common with the dissolution of the Soviet authorities in Artsakh on January 12, 1989, (p. 250); ambiguity of political solutions and repressive conduct on January 12 – November 28, 1989, of the Moscow offspring, named a Special Committee of Governing at the Autonomous Region deeply disappointed the Armenian society. It realized its obligation to do everything possible to ensure the self-defense of its compatriots, at least those, who lived in the boundaries of Artsakh and on its own republican border.

As soon as June 1988, and specially since the devastating earthquake of December 7, 1988, Armenia dealt simultaneously with a tangle of issues. They included support of Artsakh in every possible way, problems of maintenance of vital activity in the area of the natural disaster which encompassed one third of its territory, accommodation of refugees, reorganization of the economy, that included introduction of private property, market commodity circulation and competition, function of the national legislative power, development of multi-party system, of the alternative elections and freedom of speech. Besides, our society dealt with all these issues under the pressure of the most cruel blockade which inflicted the systems of transportation, power engineering and mass media. All these hardships were aggravated by serious shortage of food, together with permanent and exhausting negotiations with the central authorities; as well as by inevitable enrolment of emergency volunteer corps. Thus, peaceful and political national-liberation movement was inevitably, step-by-step transforming into waging of war.

In his analysis of this extremely complicated social context, H. Abrahamyan pays particular attention to the vicious pogroms of January 13–19, 1990, in Baku. He fairly and unconditionally qualifies them as genocide in the terms of international law. The author also deflates the myth in regard to the alleged multitude of the Azeri refugees from Armenia. He adduces comprehensive figures, concerning the fate of half a million Armenians, who dwelled in Azerbaijan, where they endured unrestrained violence, lost their homes and

property, sustained all-embracing ethnic cleansing. In 1988–1990 there were 300 thousand Armenians and 160 thousand Azerbaijani refugees in the USSR. Meantime, there were only 160 thousand Azeri dwellers in the whole Armenian SSR; 40,7 thousands more lived in the Autonomous Region (Oblast) of Mountainous Karabakh. At the same time, there were 500 thousand Armenians, who lived in Azerbaijan. 360 thousands of them left their place of living, 280 thousands of this number settled down in Armenia, where the earthquake had deprived over 500 thousand people of shelter in December. To sum up, there were 800 thousand homeless in our republic. Besides, 160 thousand Azerbaijanis, who emigrated from our republic, took away their belongings and got 200 million rubbles of compensation from the Government of Armenia. In contrast to this situation, 360 thousand Armenians, who were driven out of Azerbaijan, lost all their property and did not get any compensation. Even at the end of 1989 only 147.900 Azerbaijanis left the Armenian SSR, whereas 8.800 remained in their places of living (pp. 77–80).

As for the social and political activity in Soviet Armenia, the author of the research willingly and comprehensively presents the inventive and mass activity, that spread at the enterprises and meetings; he tells about the emergence of political parties; the process of the sessions held at the Supreme Council, where reunion of Artsakh with Armenia, as well as its breakaway from the Azerbaijani SSR took proper shape and was made legal.

Among the advantages of this book we would also stress the fact that the author gave prominence to the new quality of the Armenian All-national Movement of February 24, 1988–1990, in common with Krounk Committee, established in Autonomous Karabakh on March 2, 1988 (p. 30). It was the first time that our people and its national representatives did not merely ask for help and interference; they did not merely seek any suitable solution. In 1988 we supplied a problem with its solution, besides, this approach employed all capabilities of the republican State machinery and Public as well. In 1988 the Society did not merely pleade the all-Union authorities; now it pointed out the methods and fulfilled its share of the settlement itself. These days we had grown into a member, who regulated his problems, instead of being an everlasting object of someone's concern.

H. Abrahamyan depicts straight from the heart those contemporary and completely legitimate methods applied in Armenia, in 1988–1990, that were totally new for the Soviet environment. These meetings and strikes – since February 22,

1988 (p. 112), populous demonstrations, processions, pickets, hunger strikes on June 4 and in December of 1988 (pp. 150-151, 222, 245), sit-ins, measures like a “deathly city” on March 26 and July 6, 1988 (pp. 123, 128, 160), politically stipulated boycotts on October 12 and November 28, 1989, of the session, summoned by the Supreme Council of the USSR (p. 317), gatherings of workers of factories, enterprises and institutions, as well as of their Party organizations in all areas with resolutions sent out to the higher bodies and colleagues all around the Soviet Union were unprecedented for the Soviet country. People’s Diplomacy broke through the information blockade, combined with misinformation; and trust of the society into the possibility of global reforms, its motion and creative approach towards Perestroika prompted utmost interest and deep affection in the USSR, among the Diaspora Armenians, and also all around the world.

It was this affection that crucially backed up the Armenian people in painful days and long years of the Spitak earthquake of December 7, 1988. Enormous international support, that was carried to the Yerevan “Zvartnots” Airport from all over the world, was indispensable in material, spiritual and socio-political aspects. Unfortunately, this relief did not smooth over the acute Armenian-Azerbaijani conflict; the significant landmarks of the latter had become resolutions, combats and the first in Transcaucasia declaration of independence from the USSR, proclaimed in Nakhichevan on January 15, 1990 (p. 106).

Resources of peaceful activities, put into practice by the Armenian All-national Movement, were exhausted, when the public had adopted all essential juridical documents on the integration of its Motherland, confirmed by the sessions of the Regional Council of February 20, June 12, 1988, as well as by the Extraordinary Session of the Supreme Council of the Armenian SSR on June 15 (pp. 152–156), by the session of the Council of the People’s deputies of MKAO⁴ on July 12 of the same year, by the Congress of the plenipotentiary representatives of the Region’s population on August 16, 1989, by appeals of the National Council of the MKAO on October 19 and of the joint session of the Supreme Council of the Armenian SSR together with the National Council of the ARMK (MKAO) on December 1, 1989 (pp. 250–259). Amidst this historical process, our people were confronted with indifference of the central authorities, with the most outrageous

⁴ Mountainous Karabakh Autonomous Oblast or the Autonomous Region of the Mountainous Karabakh.

violations of the main legal principles, aggravated by the unacceptable tolerance, manifested by Moscow in regard to the blockade and plentiful physical attacks on the people in broad daylight (p. 5). The whole population of our Republic and Autonomous Region was forced to withstand a reluctance of the all-Union authorities to take into consideration the Armenian national interests; thus, their residents arrived at the perception of importance inherent to such kind of conceptions, as political independence and full rights of the Armenian Statehood. So, the Nation put into practice its right to self-defense, which belongs to their compatriots in Artsakh as well as to the people who live on the Armenian-Azerbaijani borders. Thus, Yerevan along with all districts moved on to the enrollment of the emergency volunteer detachments. The author of the given monograph actively contributed to the successful solution of this imperative task.

We can deduce that the monograph under the title “Soviet Armenia during the Years of the Nationwide Struggle (1988–1990)” by H. Abarahamyan is of real value; it contributes considerably to the elaboration of the topics, related to the contemporary history of the Armenian People. The book is written in vivid and peculiar language; it bears the feelings and morale of its time, introduces events identically and contains a considerable analytical component. This study is a remarkable monument to both the author, who already passed away, and to all those who asserted in 1988–1990 and in the following years the right of Artsakh to liberty and reunion with the rest of Armenia. This volume will undoubtedly be interesting to the wide circle of readers, along with advanced experts. It might surely be translated into English and Russian; and all its text in Armenian is downloaded in the World Web, at www.academia.edu/42291595. We are sure, that people who have indeed shaped these substantial years will recognize themselves and their time, while the younger generation will get the right impression of quite recent, meaningful, hard though happy, frequently tragic though glorious past, when both the State and Society, youth and mature generation complemented one another and acted as an integrated unity.

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