
BOOK REVIEWS

Henrik Abrahamyan, Social and political prerequisites for the declaration of independence of the Republic of Armenia and the beginning of its formation (February 1956 – September 1991). – Yerevan, 2020. Copy Print publishing house. – 398 p. (in Armenian, Russian and English summaries).

The monograph of H. Abrahamyan is devoted to the study of social-political life of the Republic of Armenia from 1950s until early 1990s, and the history of the process of independence. The study under review has theoretical, practical, and political significance not only from the point of view of the elucidation of problems discussed in the book but also for evaluation of Armenia's achievements in order to avoid possible mistakes, to be able to predict future tendencies, and productive guiding of the social governance.

Remaining faithful to the principle of historicity, the author presents a detailed review of events prior to the problem under study – social-political realities of 1960-1980s on the background of shifts and changes which took place in the USSR. Particularly has been stressed the relative liberalization of social life during the rule of N.Khrushchev, and N.Gorbachev's reconstruction and society's democratization processes which are rightly evaluated by the author as turning and crucial realities in the Soviet peoples' political life including that of Armenia.

The monograph has been written on wide spectrum of primary sources, were used numerous archived materials which were put into scientific usage for first time.

The monograph consists of Preface, five chapters, conclusions, and annex containing an interview-questionnaire with the members of Karabagh committee and Armenian All-nation committee, declaration of independence and other documents.

In the Preface is the author substantiates actuality and importance of the monograph for the study of modern social-political processes. Here is analyzed and evaluated historical, politological, economic literature dealing with his study, the current state of the problem and its goals. The study includes a long historical period – from February 1956 (Khrushchev "Thaw") until September 1991 (referendum of independence).

In Chapter I are represented the Khrushchev "Thaw" and its consequences which triggered the rise of dissident movement, informal organizations, and warm up of underground activities throughout the USSR and particularly in Armenia in 1960-1980s. The author had succeeded to show that, unlike in other Union states, in Soviet Armenia these new phenomena were manifested in the form of awakening of national idea and spirit which appeared especially during the commemoration of the 50-anniversary of the Armenian genocide in April 24, 1965. It gave rise to the struggle for the recognition of the Genocide for future generations. The latter appeared in new shade and content in the mid-1980s, during Gorbachev's "Reconstruction" policy.

In Chapter II H.Abrahamyan has shown the character and periods of the policy of "Reconstruction (*Perestroika*)". The Artsakh movement is represented as a result of the reconstruction policy, where is highlighted the role of the "Karabagh committee" and

“All-Armenian movement”. “Seizing the opportunity given by reconstruction, Armenian people, Armenians of Mountainous Karabagh launched struggle in order to rejoin with Motherland, a challenge to Soviet system, its petrified principles”, writes the author (p.357). By means of comments of diverse sources the author reveals controversies between the party and political system of the USSR and Soviet Armenia and hundreds of thousands of ordinary people to rise to their feet through demonstrations and meetings in order to withdraw Mountainous Karabagh from Azerbaijan, rejoin with Armenia and restore historical justice.

In Chapter III is shown the position of Armenian Communist party labor collectives towards “Karabagh committee” and “All-Armenian movement” and their struggle for the democratization of political life. Here is elucidated the decisions of the Central committee of the Armenian communist party and its bureau concerning the Artsakh movement which were based upon the decisions of the Central committee of CPSU and its general headquarters – Political bureau which stated the next: “to do partial social-economic changes but leave everything as it is” (p.358).

The struggle for Artsakh problem and independence of Armenian people had widely spread and echoed through all Soviet republics and the world, especially in the Armenian Diaspora, to which is devoted Chapter IV. The author shows how the Armenian Diaspora expressed its support to the people Armenia and Artsakh, defended their justified demand sending applications and letters to the authorities of the USSR and Armenia, especially to M.Gorbachev, demanding and optimistically with the hope that the problem of Mountainous Karabagh should find its solution.

The last chapter of the monograph deals with the May-June, 1990 elections of the Supreme council of the Armenian Soviet Socialist Republic, formation of new parliament, change of power, and referendum of the independence of Armenia with following establishment of independence. H.Abrahamyan shows that the new authorities of Armenia inspired by dizzying successes, made different mistakes – contradiction between promises and actions, which led to the impoverishment of population, their dissatisfaction and disappointment (p.359).

Summarizing his analysis the author concludes that the rise and first steps of the modern, third Armenian republic, regardless some mistakes, were consistent and were aimed towards the defense and strengthening of independence, its development together with Artsakh and Diaspora, in order to build the stable future.

The monograph of H.Abrahamyan is a valuable study without doubt replenishes what was done before dealing with the discussed problems but also should facilitate their further studies.

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Translated from the Armenian by Aram Kosyan