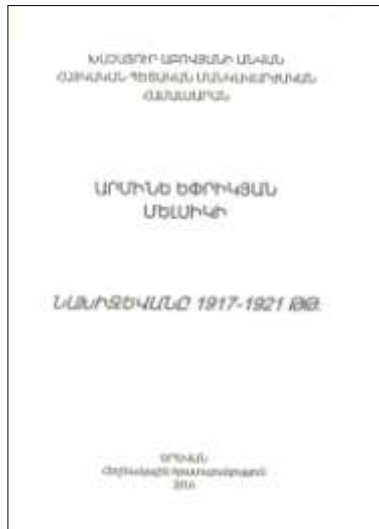


ԳՐԱԽՈՍԱԿԱՆՆԵՐ

BOOK REVIEWS



ԵՓՐԻԿՅԱՆ ԱՐՄԻՆԵ

ՆԱԽԻՋԵՎԱՆԸ 1917-1921 ԹԹ.

(Երևան, Հեղինակային հրատ., 2020, 324 էջ)

EPRIKYAN ARMINE.

NAKHIJEVAN 1917-1921

(Yerevan, Published by the Author, 2020, 324 p.)

In 2020 the reviewer of this book, as well as the general reader got an opportunity to profit from the monograph «Nakhijevan (1917-1921)» by Armine Eprikyan. We did not meet during the last four years any references or quotations from this publication in the articles,

printed in the specialized magazines, in books or reports, made at the scientific conferences. Meanwhile, the Law of the Republic of Armenia On Copyright envisages that an originator of the outcome has to ensure its availability to the public. As far as this term is not observed in our case, the author of these lines considers it to be essential and relevant to stress the noted circumstance.

With reference to the context and structure of the monograph, it should be mentioned that the monograph includes an introduction, three chapters that embrace events of 1917-1918, social processes of November 1918-1919 and 1920-1921, followed by a conclusion and an appendix with 24 archival documents. They illustrate a number of accomplishments, that took place till October 17, 1919. Let us record, that A. Eprikyan elucidates the historiography of her topic in a due manner. That is an encouraging occurrence, since she broke an unwelcome long-standing tradition, which is ingrained in our historiography. The authors, who did research in our Republic, followed for years all approaches and facts, recorded in four volumes of «The Republic of

Armenia» by the Foreign Member of the Armenian Academy of Sciences R. Hovannisian. However, they did not mention the name of their precursor; though his massive work is published in English (2100 pages in 1971–1996), Russian (900 pages in 2007) and Armenian (2400 pages in 2005–2016). A. Eprikyan pays a proper tribute to the most prominent expert of the issues, related to the First Republic; and she also cites the books by E. Zohrabyan, who was the most qualified specialist in Armenia on the history of Nakhijevan in 1918–1921.

We do appreciate, that the work by A. Eprikyan is written with feeling; it is composed by a concerned scholar, who embraces a wide scope of archival primary sources. Her volume contains a great number of new and vivid details; she properly and earnestly depicts life and manners of the people, who lived in Nakhijevan, their terrible fright and grave problems. At the same time, it would be desirable to employ more active evidence from the slightly mentioned «Formation and Development of the Republic of Armenia» by A. Khatisian together with «The Republic of Armenia» by S. Vratsian. It is equally important to record that all main problems, studied in the book by A. Eprikyan, have already been coined in the volumes by R. Hovannisian. Such an approach will arm the author with the deeper penetration into the problems of Nakhijevan, which would be perceived in the broader context of the struggle, waged by the young Republic of Armenia for its survival.

Anyhow, we apprehend all the detailed and concerned description of events easily and with steady concentration; though the exposition itself is combined with a number of methodological vulnerabilities. The first of them contains a trend to evade essential evaluations together with a struggle to establish unproven parity between the endeavors of Andranik Ozanian and regional Armenian National Council (following: ANC) in June – July of 1918. The author is compelled to admit that the national hero had not been backed in his setting-up the local self-defense or in a matter of placing refugees in the villages of Nakhijevan (pp. 45, 55, 225). The latter enterprise permitted to improve the demographic situation considerably; however, local dwellers and authorities did not support the new comers with food-stuffs or fighters for self-defense squads. They chose to surrender to the Turkish Army peacefully, though it did not help and 4,000 people, who did not depart, were massacred without mercy (pp. 64, 226).

As an illustration of unsuitable inertia of the local population, with the exception of stubborn resistance at mountainous Goghtan, **let's quote several** fragments from the Diary of the Armenian Separate Striking Division; which was kept by its Treasurer and Secretary, Eghishe Kajouni, who participated in the self-defense of Van in 1915, and later on was a member of the Armenian National Delegation in Paris. According to his notes, dwellers of Lower Agoulis complained on July 8, 1918, that the Tartars did not let them reap the harvest. However, they did not permit the Detachment to use force. Their adversaries joined very soon the Turkish Army and «seized, destroyed, took into captivity not only two towns of Agoulis, but the whole District of Goghtan». On July 12, a representative of the local ANC A. Melik-Mousayan confessed the complete disintegration of their squads in the cities of Nakhijevan and Julfa. It turned out to be that the arrival of A. Ozanian «wrecked their original plans. Your strength is so huge that it belittles our activities. Organizations lose their independence and spontaneously fall apart». A. Melik-Mousayan appealed, «sort out the Armenian-Turkish relations once and for all. When we trick Turks, we unintentionally lapse into self-deception and frequently are incapable to give ourselves an account of our actions»¹.

The ANC together with the Chief of Staff of the local forces E Kharazian promised to enlist 4,000 young fighters under the command of A. Ozanian. However, the peasants were occupied with harvesting the grain; thus, they singled out hardly one hundred men. On July 22, 1918, no one wished to take charge of cannons at the strongly fortified and secure village of Bist. At the same time, when one hundred men came to receive their ration, only 30 of them appeared to keep positions.

Anarchy and negligence toward refugees were aggravated with an acute want of food. «When everyone considered to be necessary to meddle in the business, it was in utter confusion, though the Army remained hungry» since the **first day of it's arrival from Persia, i.e. June 24**. «None of the peasants wished to make sacrifices for the sake of the Division, that came to fulfil their protection»².

As to the surrender of the district's capital on July 19, 1918, with «irresponsible attitude of Nakhijevan's old and new leaders, in common with its

¹ **Ե. Քաջունի** 1976, Անդրանիկի եւ Հայկական առանձին հարուածող զօրամասի հետ, Նիւ Ճըրսի, «Ազգ», 49, 52:

² **Ե. Քաջունի** 1976, 53, 56:

population, this fertile land and the most beautiful region passed into the hands of the Turks, thus inflicting the Armenian people an unmeasurable damage». E. Kajouni bitterly wrote: from the time when our Detachment arrived in Nakhijevan, «we asked the population more than once to donate our Army outwear, **socks, shoes, bedding, tents, etc., to meet the Army's requirements.** Unfortunately, we can prove correct that nobody donated of his free will items, which were essentially needed by the Division; even official agencies turned out to be indifferent; and now, at the moment of evacuation, we saw enormous quantity of everything necessary that they owned and presently abandoned **because of the arduous transportation. ...No one could say, how many lives and property of the Armenian population were wasted in this prosperous, populous town**»³.

What concerns the sphere of scholar generalizations, E. Eprikyan comes to a reasonable conclusion in the first chapter of the book, that after stubborn and **successful fighting in the district's center from March 2 till April 14, 1918**, the Armenians of Nakhijevan managed to ensure their peaceful coexistence with the Tartars. The subsequent humane disaster was produced by no one, but the Ottoman forces, who posed the main author of Genocide together with a handover of this land to Azerbaijan (p. 39).

When she looks into the international problems, the author effectively interprets the Russian-Persian relations in the second chapter of her book, though she propounds grossly unbalanced interpretation of the British policy in Nakhijevan. In regard to the Persian issue she has underlined, that by December 30, 1918, the Prime Minister of the Republic of Armenia H. Kajaznuni had voiced the official viewpoint of his State. Namely, his Government asserted firm and steady integration of Sharur-Nakhijevan with Armenia, which would be attained by nothing but peaceful means. Generally speaking, this region was regarded as a market place, fit to exchange commodities with Persia, while the control over the railway line was entrusted to the British (p. 68).

As to the British, in this case A. Eprikyan diligently reiterates unwarranted approaches, professed by E. Zohrabyan who alleged, that this Power had ostensibly «made no substantial contribution to promote the unification of

³ Ibid., 58–59. See also: **Հ.Ռ. Սիմոնյան** 1996, Անդրանիկի ժամանակը, 2 գրքով, գիրք Բ, Երևան, «Կախա», 216–217:

Nakhijevan with Armenia, and revealed the genuinely formal approach» (p. 10). Following her precursor, A. Eprikyan evades the striking fact, that no one but the British Army had persistently acted till March 15, 1919, and succeeded in ousting the Turkish detachments outside the Republic of Armenia. It was just the British Army and its Command who handed to Armenians whole Kars Oblast (Region) on April 19, 1919, and Nakhijevan on May 14.

As a scholar of the younger generation, she needs to step up her professional skills to the level of synthetic comprehension of the main political processes. The author of the «Nakhijevan (1917–1921)» criticizes with a bias actually all the British measures (pp. 168, 226). She overlooks the fact, that the British neither separated Nakhijevan from other units, nor they strove after any strong Azerbaijan. At first they did not tolerate its independence and considered this new formation as their possible protectorate. Soldiers of the old Empire implemented the package separation of four vast Armenian regions. The official Erevan was unable to establish its administration in two of these four areas; however, the Great Power submitted under its jurisdiction the Oblast of Kars and Nakhijevan; though Karabakh and Zangezur were demanded for Azerbaijan. Besides, the employee of the old Empire applied an ordinary geographic principle instead of ethnic or historical one. The newcomers were not worried by the fact that Karabakh had the Armenian population, while Kurds and Tartars prevailed in Nakhijevan. On the contrary, the very perspective for Armenia and Azerbaijan to be involved in serious problems in these districts perfectly suited the British. It is well known, that Zangezur did not allow to decide its fate; though Kars and Nakhijevan were openly occupied and handed over to Armenia by Great Britain, which personified all the Allies, who profited from the victory at World War I. By the way, the British did it when they made sure of a self-will, manifested by the Moslems, who agreed to obey Turkey, Persia, Baku, but not **the European Powers. So, let's revise: the Republic of Armenia had no strength** to set up its control over Nakhijevan; and when the British forces quickly withdrew from this district by May 30, 1919, the Armenian authorities there became nominal and swiftly reduced to mere formality. Just one month and a half later they were harshly eradicated by the Turkish-Tartar mutiny.

Inasmuch as the British were well-informed of the lack of strength and power in our Republic with regard to Nakhijevan (pp. 94, 98–99, 101, 104, 108–109, 226), they did not need «to imitate» its delivery under the Erevan

jurisdiction (contrary to A. Eprikyan's supposition on p. 90). Neither they needed to demand an abolition of the Armenian General Governorship (p. 103). No one compelled them to return anything; and there was enough military and political tension in the whole area. It is no mere coincidence that after the British military withdrawal both official agencies in Erevan and the Delegation under A. Aharonian in Paris had produced a lot of appeals with an ardent plea to prolong the sojourn of the Imperial Army on the spot.

With reference to the Foreign Relations, we would appreciate highly, if the author dealt more with the Turkish factor and acquainted herself with contemporary foreign publications. Thus, she states that the Ottoman Army had immediately quitted our area after the Mudros Armistice of October 30, 1918. Regarding the Nakhijevan rebellion of July 20–25, 1919, it is told that M. Khan Tekinski, the diplomatic representative of Azerbaijan in Yerevan, who had run his Mission since March 14, had become its ring-head. However, thanks to more detailed and advanced study of the historiography, A. Eprikyan would have recorded that the mutiny was supervised by the Commander of XV Turkish Army Corps, K. Karabekir, who later scrupulously described his actions in his memoirs⁴. He tells about regular transportation of arms from Bayazet through Maku; together with the arrival of Colonel Halil Bey, who was sent with 30 Officers on a special mission. It is common knowledge, that Halil commanded a cavalry in Sharur and coordinated the whole operation.

Yes, indeed, the British had abruptly departed from Nakhijevan and did not allow to disarm Moslems. It is incontestable, that they rejected any possibility to engage their forces against the assailants in July, 1919. However, the uprising was planned in Erzerum and enveloped all Kars Region, Surmalu, Vedibasar at a distance of 30 km from the capital, and Sharur-Nakhijevan. Trying to suppress this mutiny, the Republic of Armenia had to mobilize its male population on July 23 and to establish the Committee of Public Safety on July 30. And the main cause why the Armenian Administration was crushed at Nakhijevan should be looked for not in a treacherous British policy, but rather in a shortage of **military, economic and administrative means at the disposal of Yerevan**. Let's also recall an unjustified loss of the armored train with 9 engines and more than

⁴ K. Karabekir 1960, *Istiklâl Harbimiz*, Istanbul, «Türkiye Yayınevi», 64–100, 307–318, 359–360. In detail: R. Hovannisian 1982, *The Republic of Armenia*, vol. II. From Versailles to London, 1919–1920, Berkeley & Los Angeles, «University of California», 63–75.

100 freight cars; plus an inability to withdraw those notorious Moslem ring-leaders, who boycotted the Armenian Administration, Courts and commerce.

Excessive criticism, shown by the author of «Nakhijevan (1917–1921)» toward the victor Powers and to Great Britain in particular, ignores the very fact, that the latter entered the same Alliance with Russia and wages the World War I against Turkey. She also disregards the reality of the British control to be a lesser evil compared with the Genocidal policy of the Ottomans. All the circumstances indicated in this review do not diminish the merits of the assiduous work, compiled by A. Eprikyan. Nevertheless, evaluation of the Foreign Policy requires pragmatic, rather than ideological approach. We would also welcome reference to the philanthropic activities carried out by the American Committee for Relief in the Near East. Its branch operated an orphanage with the hospital in the town of Nakhijevan, where medical staff treated local patients and wounded Armenian soldiers. We would add in this connection, that the Allied High Commissioner, Colonel of the U.S. Army W. Haskell did not adhere to ambivalent policy (p. 10); his position was clearly pro-Armenian⁵. Besides, there was never any agreement on transfer of «Karabakh, Zangezur, Sharur-Daralagyaz and Nakhijevan to Azerbaijan». The High Commissioner signed nothing on August 29, 1919. Such an assertion must be proved; it's absolutely inadmissible when she merely refers to some vague «negotiations of unknown substance» (pp. 136–137).

Let's verify that content of the negotiation, conducted on August 28–29, has been published. Baku had only submitted «amendments» for a draft, mapped out by W. Haskell⁶. The Prime Minister of Azerbaijan did not sign this document either on September 6–14 at Tiflis, or on October 6, when his Foreign Minister had written to the High Commissioner from Baku. The Foreign Minister had informed of his Cabinet intent not to renounce their claims on Sharur-Nakhijevan; though they would not interfere with the American plans either. Some other remark. A letter «About the Neutral Zone» by W. Haskell,

⁵ See, for example: **Г.Г. Махмуриян** 2017, Организационная, гуманитарная и политическая деятельность Верховного комиссара Союзников В. Гаскеля в Армении в 1919 г., Вопросы истории Армении, Сборник научных статей, № 18, Ереван, «Ин-т истории НАН Армении», 62–71.

⁶ **Г.Г. Махмуриян** 2018, Армения в политике США 1917–1923 гг., Ереван, «Ин-т истории НАН Армении», 197, а также 198–199, 202–205.

dated September 1, 1919, which was sent in Yerevan and contained the gist of the recent conversation, had pointed to «an American Governor»; it did not refer to a Governor, who was merely «appointed by Haskell» (p. 136). On October 23 Acting High Commissioner J. Rhea had proclaimed in Yerevan «Declaration of establishment of an American Governorship of Sharur and Nakhijevan»; thus he informed everybody about «a zone of the Allied administration under an American Governor».⁷ Later on, the Agreement between Armenia and Azerbaijan of November 23, 1919 stipulated not only binding arbitration (p. 149), but it also appointed «Colonel of the Army of the United States of America, James Rhea»⁸, to the post of arbiter.

When we focus on the third chapter of «Nakhijevan (1917–1921)», this one is based mostly on the published collections of archival documents and contains a limited amount of new or vivid details. Actually, we would advise more extensive circulation of the paper's compilation under the title «The Armenian Genocide: Responsibility of Turkey and Commitments of the World Community» by Yu. Barseghov, which we come across, when A. Eprikyan elucidates events since September, 1920. It would also be desirable to include some maps with the main cities, border lines and geographic features. Thus, the reader would easily comprehend the character of frontiers and interrelation of different regions.

As to the concept, A. Eprikyan follows G. Galoyan and E. Zohrabyan: these specialists have stressed the insufficiency of the military means at the disposal of Russian Federation in 1920–1921. The Bolshevik leaders made tremendous concessions to the Kemalists not with the object to annihilate Armenia, though they pursued its compulsory Sovietization at any cost (pp. 172, 174, 181, 191, 198, 201). When she comes to the regional issues, A. Eprikyan notes, that by the end of May, 1920, Bolsheviks «had undertaken proper measures to wreck the Kemalists' intentions to conquer Nakhijevan» (p. 149).

⁷ Text of the Declaration under the date of 23. 10. 1919: Ibid., 206–207; the letter by W. Haskell of 1. 09. 1919: Նախիջևան-Շարուրը 1918–1921 թթ., Փաստաթղթեր և նյութեր 1993, խմբ. Հ.Հ. Ֆելքլան, Բանբեր Հայաստանի արխիվների, № 1–2, Երևան, 116–119: See also: Г.Г. Махмуриян 2017, 63–65 69; Г.Г. Махмуриян 2018, Проблема Нахичевана в американской политике (1919–1920 гг.), Историко-филологический журнал, № 1, Ереван, 41–45.

⁸ Had been published for the first time in: **Нагорный Карабах в 1918–1923 гг.**, Сб. док. и мат 1992, ред. В.А. Микаеляна, Ереван, «НАН РА», 352–353.

She cites those key documents, which have already been involved in scholar circulation; and a descriptive part of the completed work notably prevails over scientific generalization of the datum. Yet, a whole number of urgent questions are to be analyzed in the time to come. They are, namely, the issues of local administration in Nakhijevan in 1920, together with the activities of the Turkish Command there. We have to answer, when exactly the Turkish Army established its control over the District, and when precisely it subordinated its local Tartar-Kurdish population to the 11th Division, headquartered at Bayazet. At what moment did Veysel Bey become the military dictator of the area? What did Americans (General G. Moseley, Colonels E. Daley, J. Shalley, Major S. Ch. Forbes, Captain G. Villaret, C. D. Ussher, C. Ayer, F. Tredwell Smith) do in Nakhijevan; what kind of reports did they convey, regarding Turkish activity and inter-ethnic relations? The writer of this review had already published some of their testimony on widespread presence of the Turkish forces in the Region in August 1919; together with info about 1.800 askers, quartered there at the beginning of February, 1920.⁹

Besides, when we refer to A. Eprikyan's interpretation of the Nakhijevan issue in the Treaties of Alexandropol, Moscow and Kars (pp. 217–221, 226), one of the substantial works by B. Harutyunyan would essentially enrich her comprehension of these texts.¹⁰

We would also verify several misrepresented data, that had slipped into the book. So, the name of the Plenipotentiary Representative of the Transcaucasian Commissariat in Nakhijevan Ero Kharazian had been Ervand instead of Anushavan (p. 21); H. Simonyan and E. Zohrabyan indicate, that the region under our discussion had been proclaimed an independent Khanate on February 22, 1918¹¹ (pp. 23–24); that to begin with «The Diary of the Armenian Separate Striking Division» or with «The Birth of Armenia» by A-Do, everyone refers to the date when the Ottoman Army occupied the town of Nakhijevan as

⁹ Г.Г. Махмурян 2018, Проблема Нахичевана, 39–40, 43 45, 47.

¹⁰ Բ.Հ. Հարությունյան 2011, Ալեքսանդրապոլի և Մոսկվայի պայմանագրերի համադրական քննության շուրջ, Պատմաքաղաքական հանդես, № 3, Երևան, 51–61:

¹¹ Հ.Ռ. Սիմոնյան 201, Է.Ա. Ջոհրաբյան 2000, Ազգամիջյան կոիվները Երևանի նահանգում 1918 թ., Երևան, «Հայագիտակ», 79, Ջ.Ա. Յոգրաբյան 2012, Շարսր-Ուաիչեւան 1918–1919 ցց., (История геноцида нахичеванских армян.), Երեւան, «ԵԴՄ», 78–79.

the evening of July 19, 1918¹² (p. 48). Further, E. Daley represented there all the Allies and the Paris Peace Conference; he was not merely an officer of the American Relief (p. 144). F. E. Laughton was promoted to the rank of Lieutenant Colonel, it means *փոխ-գնդապետ* in Armenian or *подполковник* in Russian (p. 240).

In conclusion we should assert that the book by A. Eprikyan is composed by a concerned and thinking scholar. She puts events in a well-written, clear and apprehensible style. Thus, one reads the history of Nakhijevan in 1917–1921 with a definite interest. Meantime, the author has to overcome the difficult issue, a source of the constant and acute polemics. So, she still needs to arm herself with patience, to profit from a number of foreign publications, and to advance in her work with primary sources. It is the crucial requirement of our life to produce scholars, who are capable to take up and advance the torch, kept by historians of the previous generation. Their pages on the recent occurrences in Nakhijevan must be reiterated and enriched.

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¹² Ա-ՂԻ 2019, Հայության երկունքը, Երևան, «ՀՀ ԳԱԱ Պատմության ինստիտուտ», 483: