

ՀԱՊԱՐԱԿՈՒՄՆԵՐ PUBLICATIONS

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ARSHAK SAFRASTYAN ON THE TREATY OF SEVRES AND THE ARBITRATION OF PRESIDENT W. WILSON CONCERNING THE FRONTIER QUESTION

The Treaty of Sevres signed as of August 10, 1920 was considered by Armenian socio-political thought exclusively in the context of Articles 88-93, which are directly related to Armenia. This was quite natural, as these articles restored the right of the Armenian people to their homeland, a part of Western Armenia. The mentioned articles of the Treaty of Sevres de jure recognized not only the Republic of Armenia including the Armenian provinces of Transcaucasia, but also United Armenia with Eastern and Western Armenias united. The signatory states, including the Turkish state that was defeated in the First World War, recognized the independence of United Armenia and agreed to expand the borders of Armenia by annexing most of the territories of the provinces of Erzurum, Van and Bitlis, as well as part of the province of Trabzon, thus ensuring the exit of Armenia to the Black Sea¹.

The Conference of the Prime Ministers and Foreign Ministers of England, France, Italy and Japan, convened in London from February 12 to April 10 in

¹ NAA, f. 412, l. 1, work 85, p. 4.

1920, worked out all the main technical issues related to the Armenian-Turkish border.

On April 26, on the initiative of the Prime Minister of Great Britain D. George Lloyd the issue of the demarcation of Armenian territories was redirected to US President W. Wilson, who was invited to take on the role of border arbitrator².

The arbitration process started before the signing of the Treaty of Sevres, therefore it was a completely independent international legal document by Great Britain, France, Italy, Japan, as members of the Supreme Council of the Allied Powers on the one hand, and Woodrow Wilson, as President of the United States on the other³.

W. Wilson had signed the arbitral resolution just 10 days before the sovietization of Armenia on November 22, 1920. The official and the full name of the **resolution** is “**Decision of the President of the United States of America** respecting the frontier between Turkey and Armenia, access for Armenia to the sea and the demilitarization of the Turkish territory Adjacent to the Armenian **Frontier**”⁴. The arbitral award made by US President Woodrow Wilson on the demarcation of the Armenian-Turkish border is an international legal document by which Ottoman-era Turkey, subject to legal rights, was held politically responsible for the Armenian Genocide. This document deprived Turkey of its sovereignty over its former territories⁵. The area to be transferred to Armenia by an arbitral resolution was to be 103,599 sq. km, approximately 40% of Western Armenia⁶.

The 1921 London Conference should be considered as an attempt to review the Treaty of Sevres. In January 1921, at a meeting of the Entente General Council in Paris, France proposed a revision of the Treaty of Sevres. In February-March of the same year, at a conference in London with the participation of Germany and the Ottoman Empire, which had lost the war to the Entente Powers, the issue of revising the reconciliation of the Treaty of Sevres was discussed at the suggestion of France and Italy. On the eve of the conference, the official delegation of the

² Մախմուդյան 2020, 81:

³ See Մարուքյան 2014, 115.

⁴ Հովհաննիսյան 2016, 48:

⁵ Մարուքյան 2014, 120:

⁶ See Պապյան 2007, 75.

Republic of Armenia headed by Avetis Aharonyan and the National delegation headed by Boghos Nubar Pasha had arrived in London.

In that conference an attempt was made to replace the provisions of the Treaty of Sevres, which represented the legal rights of Armenia and the Armenian people, with the vague idea of a "Home National", which, however, was rejected by the Turks themselves. By rejecting this idea at the London conference, the Turks themselves were, in fact, the first to reject the cancellation of the Treaty of Sevres⁷.

The Treaty of Sevres could only be replaced by a new document in London, the preamble of which should have specifically emphasized that the treaty was revising or amending the previously signed Treaty of Sevres. Albeit the signatories of the Treaty of Sevres in London announced their intention to revise it, no document was signed during the London Conference. This means that the conference did not achieve its goal, and the attempt to review the Treaty failed.

No.7.

The Armenian Bureau,

153, Regent Street,
London W.1.
12th August 1920.

The Future of Armenia
President Wilson's Arbitration in the Frontier Question.

Russians – Bolshevik, Cadet or Tsarist – have lately been saying that the Western Powers in attempting to re-establish Armenia are defeating their own aims by depriving her of her legitimate, geographical and economic bases. Great Britain and France, they assert, have detached from Armenia. Cilicia and the provinces of Kharput, Diyarbakir and Sivas recognized as Armenian in all previous International pacts, have restricted Armenia to the Republic of Erivan and the immediately adjacent districts, the main part of which was formerly under Russian sovereignty. Starting from these premises the Bolshevik Russians have drawn

⁷ Ահարոնյան 2001, 142–158:

their own conclusion, and it appears that they are proceeding to effect the reunion of the Russian Empire, as it existed before the war.

It is to be hoped that by the time these lines appear, the Turks may have signed the Peace Treaty, which in the natural course of events will confront President Wilson with the necessity of delimiting the frontiers of Armenia as requested by the Supreme Council of San Remo.

In drawing the Armenian frontiers the following fundamental questions have to be considered: whether Armenia is to be a Black Sea country or an Eastern Mediterranean Power; whether the reconstruction of Armenia in the near future is to tend to national concentration in the North, or an opportunity is to be created for her gradual orientation towards the Eastern Mediterranean following the natural configuration of Anti-Taurus mountains.

It is undeniable that the pressure of historical events has dispersed the Armenian people into peripheries remote from their original nidus; and as a result the Armenian element has been established, firstly on the plateau between the Arax and Kura valleys and secondly between the Arax and the Western Euphrates, the latter plateau being bounded on the South by the Anti-Taurus.

The tendency of the whole discussion regarding the Armenian boundaries, official or otherwise, has been to make Armenia entirely dependent on the Black Sea. It must be admitted at once that the independent Armenia established within any frontiers hitherto proposed, would inevitably be driven into the ambit of Russian influence now and in the future. An independent Armenia made solely dependent on the Black Sea for its economic and political development must not be expected to be anything but the southernmost marches of the Russian Empire. It may be argued that as far as elementary security and a fair measure of material prosperity are concerned the proximity of Russian influence over the Northern frontiers of Armenia may be regarded as not an unmitigated evil.

On the other hand, however, it would be futile to maintain that a spontaneous development of the country can be ensured under those circumstances. The constitution of Armenia under the powerful domination of the Northern Colossus, would be tantamount to the very negation of all that is implied in the terms **“political independence”** and **“autonomous development”**.

The Armenia of the future, restricted to the region of the Black Sea, would be practically as much land – looked as it used to be, cut off from the West under

the Empire of Byzantium and Turkey when those two Powers were dominating the Dardanelles.

The next alternative is therefore, to provide an unhindered outlet to open seas on the Eastern Mediterranean: a point of contact with the West in emergencies when the Black Sea is again blocked up by wars and blockades in the future. In the absence of a powerful mandatory like the United States to guarantee the security of Armenia for the first generation, there does not seem to exist a single responsible Armenian who desires to see the Armenian boundaries stretching from Sea to Sea. In the light of past experiences of the Armenian people there is at this moment no desire to grab land which is bound to be a **burden rather than a blessing**. There is certainly no “Imperialistic” tendency among the leading Armenian circles, as has been suggested by certain people. It is essential, however, to draw the frontiers in such a manner as to ensure an easy approach to the Eastern Mediterranean by an economic corridor or otherwise.

Bearing in mind these political and economic factors, it may now be permissible to harmonize those factors with the geographical features of the country.

The town of Malatia, immediately West of the great bend of the Euphrates, holds a central position in regard to delimitations of the Armenian frontiers. It is not only a centre of agricultural and industrial possibilities, but also a link connecting Inner Armenia with Cilicia and Central Mesopotamia with Asia Minor. In the Middle Ages the Byzantine Empire and the Arab Caliphate fought some of their decisive battles near Malatia. The Armenian Taurus, gradually inclining westwards, suddenly drops here into the 3000 feet level and then with a series of undulating spurs juts up again into the Cilician Taurus and Eastern Mediterranean. Its trade routes lead to Mersina, to Samsoun and Diyarbakir; it is therefore likely to be a great emporium in the future.

If the frontiers of Armenia were extended to the district of Malatia in the South-West, there is every reason to believe that the gradual regrouping of the Armenian people would inevitably follow in years to come, thus enabling the Armenian state to rely more and more on its South Eastern outlets to the Sea for its political and economic development.

According to the Turkish Peace Treaty, President Wilson is asked to arbitrate in the question of the Armenian frontiers respecting the provinces of Van, Bitlis, Erzeroum and Trebizond. It is to be hoped that President Wilson will pronounce a

clear and decided moral judgment, taking the whole question into consideration as to what ought to be a scientific and reasonable frontier for Armenia.

Circular to the publisher in the British press this week,
16/2/1921 A.S

The forthcoming Conference in London on Near Eastern questions has given rise to rumours of impending modifications in the terms of the Treaty of Sevres. Whether any changes will be proposed or adopted in the provisions relating to Armenia is not known, but the British Armenia committee desires to take the opportunity of publicly declaring that no whittling down of those parts of the Treaty can be justified on any ground whatever.

Of all the nations that fought on the side of the Entente, none sacrificed as much as Armenia in proportion to her numbers. Trusting to the Allied pledge of liberation and independence, she gave about one-fourth of her population in fighting and massacre to the common cause. By the Treaty of Sevres, in August **last, both Allies and Turks solemnly recognized the justice of Armenia's** national aspirations and bound themselves to accept the frontiers, which President Wilson has since then delimited.

Between the signing of this Treaty and the present date, the only events which have occurred effecting the position of Armenia in relation to Turkey and the Allies have been a conquest of one half of the Armenian republic of Erivan by the Kemalists and the adoption of a Soviet Government by the other half. Both these changes took place under overwhelming military pressure and through no desire or action of the Armenians themselves. They cannot relieve the Allies of their obligations any more than did the parallel events in Belgium, Serbia and Rumania during the War. Surely, too, political morality has not sunk so low that the Allies would seek to evade their responsibilities upon this pretext.

The recent misfortune to Russian Armenia has cleared the situation in that they have compelled the Allies to deal with the problem of Turkish Armenia as a part of a Turkish settlement alone. It may of course be objected that Turkish Armenia is now without any Armenian population. But in this respect the situation is exactly the same as when the Treaty of Sevres was signed; and, besides, support of that objection would have the immoral effect of endorsing and justifying majority by massacre as a basis for determining political

questions. The Turkish Armenians who survive will return to their homes immediately they are allowed to, and in spite of their diminished numbers, their prolific and industrious character will soon make them once again the predominant. One possible method of obtaining the evacuation of the Armenian vilayets by the Turks suggests itself. The Allies could announce to Mustafa Kemal that the Greek troops will not retire from the territory now occupied by them in excess of what the Treaty of Sevres allots them until the Armenian vilayets are evacuated. In any case, the Allies ought to come to no decision effecting the Armenian provinces of Turkey without consulting the representative of the Turkish Armenians themselves, Boghos Nubar Pasha, who is now in London.

NAA, f. 412, l. 1, work 85, p. 1–2, 1–4.

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