

ԳՐԱԽՈՍԱԿԱՆՆԵՐ

BOOK REVIEWS



ՀՈՎՀԱՆՆԻՍՅԱՆ ԼԻԼԻԹ

**ՀԱՅԿԱԿԱՆ ՀԱՐՑԻ 1915-1923 ԹԹ.
ՊԱՏՄՈՒԹՅԱՆ ՀԻՄՆԱՀԱՐՑԵՐԻ
ԼՈՒՍԱԲԱՆՈՒՄԸ ՀԱՅԱՍՏԱՆՅԱՆ
ՊԱՏՄԱԳԻՏՈՒԹՅԱՆ ՄԵՋ**

(1991-2015 ԹԹ.)

**(Երևան, ՀՀ ԳԱԱ Պատմության ինստիտուտ,
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HOVHANNISYAN LILIT

THE ELUCIDATION OF THE ARMENIAN QUESTION, 1915-
1923, IN HISTORICAL SCIENCE OF THE REPUBLIC OF
ARMENIA (1991-2015)

(Yerevan, Institute of History NAS RA, 2020, 384 p.)

In 2020 our expert society got a chance to acquaint itself with a monograph “The Elucidation of the Problems of History of the Armenian Question, 1915-1923, in Historical Science of the Republic of Armenia (1991-2015)” by Lilit Hovhannisyanyan. This volume embraces a collection of 31 primary sources in the Armenian, Russian, English and German languages, with 96 books and 61 articles by practically all the leading specialists, who deal with the given topic. The author explores thoroughly and in all details her sphere, attributed to the international relations in 1878-1923 and subdivides this period into three stages: developments

during World War I in 1915–1918; functioning of the Republic of Armenia in 1919–1920, when the Quadruple Alliance had been defeated; and the Armenian diplomatic collapse of 1921–1923, when the Ottoman Empire had successfully transmuted into Kemalist Turkey through the highly fruitful negotiations with all its partners.

It should be noted that the scope of the material and processes presented in this work prove the diligence of L. Hovhannisyan and give an ample opportunity to formulate the very gist of the selected diplomatic processes, theoretical equipment and quality of scholarship in contemporary Armenia. This great amount of material serves the author as a solid base for correct evaluation and theoretical approaches, and the very wording of the book arouses the desire to read the analysed works of the enlisted specialists by all means. At the same time, thought **and ideas of L. Hovhannisyan don't interfere with the original thinking of the reader. For example, the author doesn't contest** an opinion of L. Khurshudyan that recovery of our political independence was a cause and an aim of the Armenian Question (pp. 23–24). However, she reasonably notes, that our national question, when perceived as an exact term in the history of international relations, had been principally focused on the implementation of reforms in Western Armenia. We can also add, that a postulate by G. Galoyan, regarding the independence as a constant priority of the Armenian liberation movement in the middle of the XVI–XX centuries, also raises questions, since ensuring of the physical security, peaceful labor and safekeeping of the private property were the main tasks and actual bounds of all social-political projects, designed for Western Armenia.

We do realize that the memorandum by Hovhannes Lazarian (Ivan Lazarev) for A. Suvorov, dated January 10.01.1780, “Conception of the Treaty between Two Nations” by Archbishop Hovsep Arghuthian (Iosif Argutinskii), composed in 1783; and particularly “The Snare of Glory,” composed by Shahamir Shahamirian at Madras in 1773, manifested the sharp vision of Statehood by Armenians; however, it was well-grounded to speak about political movement only in the XIX century, when the Social Democrat Hnchakian Party coined an independent republic in its program of 1888. And this thesis, however courageous, did not yet become a guideline for the society. Even the sessions of 1917–1918, held by the Central Armenian National Council in Tiflis, together with the first and only Armenian Independence Proclamation Act, declared on February 13, 1918, in Karin, indicate

that there existed contradictions between approaches and political thinking of Western and Eastern Armenians; it also demonstrates the disinclination of our national elite in the XX century to enter a new political stage of higher status. We were rather falling behind, than ahead of current events; and this was comprehensible. It is embarrassing to demand independence, when you lack means to protect people and need external military aid. Actually, independence of 1918–1920s was produced by the historic catastrophe beyond our control and will; it was not a result of purposive Armenian activity. Independence was an outcome of Russian revolution, burst in 1917, of the World War motion in 1918, as well as of the following Entente-Turkish relations together with the Russian Civil war. And, analogously, its consummation was determined by the politics of the Russian Soviet Federation in 1920–1921, rather than by our internal developments.

In L. Hovhannisyan's view, independence is an aim of liberation struggle, and its achievement should be apprehended as a criterion of success (p. 26). However, the review does not consider independence to be a panacea or some guarantee of security; it is only a tool to attain other vitally important goals. **This status didn't rescue the first Republic from the Turkish invasion in 1918 and 1920; it doesn't eliminate the risks of an assault today: independence brings** a wider opportunity and promotes initiative, but it excepts nothing.

At the same time it should be noted that L. Hovhannisyan started doing historiography as a trained expert in primary sources and writing some positive and solid study. She had initiated her research on "The Armenian Question and the Great Powers in 1914–1917" (Yerevan, Zangak-97, 2002) first, and only then proceeded with the evaluation of other publications related to somewhat broader subject.

Her own good knowledge enables her to analyse thoroughly a qualitative drift, that took place in the international relations at the beginning of the XX century in regard to Western Armenia and the Ottoman Empire in general. Thus, the author not only adduces **G. Galoyan's** opinion that "every time, when Russia presented threat to the interests of European Powers in Asiatic Turkey, the latter put aside their contradictions and stood up against Russia who defended Western Armenian" (p. 29). L. Hovhannisyan verifies that this Western opposition was not permanent. Being an expert in the Sykes-Picot Agreement, our researcher narrates the Russian-English approachment in 1907–1916 and inability of the Entente to impose neutrality upon the Ottoman Empire.

The long-lasting opposition between the West and Russia is definite; though the Power of Tsars constantly improved its position in Western Armenia by steady undulatory advance. Its undulatory movements inflicted enormous losses to the indigenous population; and the greatest Russian successes of 1916 were combined with abominable Armenian losses wreaked by the **Genocide of 1915**. **Let's note**, it was no one but Turkey, who repelled Britain in 1914, altered the substance of the Russian-British relations (pp. 53–54), and the coalition of these two countries was also reiterated during the World War II. Besides, if up to the World War I Russia could not endure *competition*, then it appeared during these war-years that it had no vigour to *co-operate* with the West. The Russian Revolution of 1917 was an outcome of its thorough overstrain. As a whole, the long-lasting Russia-West antagonism led Lenin to the new strategy of the Russian-Turkish collaboration, incarnated in the Treaties of Brest (1918) and Moscow (1921). Now the RSFSR was a **strong and decisive part in its new alliance**. **Let's confirm that all** neighboring States have an undoubted right to live in peace and friendship, if they **don't achieve** their partnership at the expence of the third countries and nations.

As a merit of the monograph by L. Hovhannisyan her analyses of two terms: the Armenian Question and the Armenian Cause, deserve praise. The author records that the first term applies to international relations, and the second focuses on domestic policy, liberation movement, on the legal issues, in common with the problems of overcoming the consequences of the 1915–1923 Genocide and on the possibility for the exiled people to repatriate. We can add, that up to 1988–1991 the first term had always prevailed over the second and determined the bounds of our possibility. It was only the Armenian All-National Movement for the unification of Artsakh with the whole Motherland, that put an end to passivity of the people, who had served earlier for an object of political settlements. The All-national Movement transformed us into active co-authors of the developments; now we gave methods how the tasks should be solved, and completed our part of domestic and foreign policy. Independence of 1991–2021 has become an immediate result, main toolkit and successor of the All-National, unprecedented by its embrace and international reaction Movement, aimed to achieve freedom, security, self-determination and consolidation of Artsakh with the rest of Armenia.

Appraising the theoretical advantages of the monograph, we are compelled to notice, that the circumstantial description of books by G. Galoyan, V. Ghazakhetsyan, Hakob Hakobyan, K. Khachatryan in the introduction of L.

Hovhannisyan's book, and then of the work by H. Avetisyan in Chapter I (pp. 117–133, 142–152) appears to be too bulky, and it seems that the discussion of the first publications could be included in the main body, according to chronology, and H. Avetisyan's book "The Armenian Question in 1918" might have been represented more abridged. Yet, when L. Hovhannisyan examines the works of contemporary authors, she strives to mark out their practical significance (pp. 31–34). Though, to what extent the past and contemporary conditions are similar, so the current situation is worse politically to the same degree. The reiteration itself means that we have neither solved the problem earlier, nor do we use contemporary procedures, so as to evade unprofitable distribution of forces.

Simultaneously we have to record that together with numerous advantages, you can meet some errors in the book. So, when L. Hovhannisyan describes the Brest-Litovsk Treaty of 1918, she criticizes its Soviet interpretations as a deal, or "necessary respite," allegedly "wreched out of the imperialistic Powers" (pp. 75–76). Then she associates this wording with the author of the present review, rather than with a book by A. Chubaryan, explored in my article. Nevertheless, G. Makhmourian actively contests the apology of the Brest Treaty and readily shares the opinion of N. Adontz, H. Avetisyan, N. Esayan, R. Hovannisian in regard to diplomatic defeat of the RSFSR, disgraceful and capitulative document, that sacrificed the interests of our people. My own definition of the Treaty asserts that it reduced the defence capacity of Armenians and once again converted them into a small change in **international negotiations**. G. Makhmourian's point is, that the text of Brest-Litovsk "had not ceased the war, but rather brought to Transcaucasia an enemy assault on Tiflis and the occupation of Baku." Later on L. Hovhannisyan quite adequately represents the conception of the article on page 132 of her book.

Chapter II offers the historiography of the Armenian Question in its new appearance of 1919–1920, when the leading role in its political shaping passed from the German-Turkish alliance to the States of Entente and the U.S. (p. 159) – their activity was successively studied by A. Ghambaryan. L. Hovhannisyan, in her turn, pays appropriate attention to the concept of single American mandate; it would substitute the sole inspector for a partition of Ottoman possessions. They envisaged semi-independent, undermandatory Armenia in both cases, which would be later established as an utterly independent State; though this time Russia would be replaced with the USA. The latter strived to unite whole Transcaucasia with its sphere of influence (pp. 165–167); so that all this vast area would be re-

oriented from the North onto the West. Besides, separation and different mandatories would cause rivalry in the whole region and a single surveillance might facilitate economic co-operation.

Speaking in general, the reviewer shares an interpretation by L. Hovhannisyan and thinks it proper to verify, that W. Wilson did not consider the RSFSR to be a passive object of his politics; and that's why realization of his course was mostly reliant on Moscow's position. It was Turkey, that could be managed at the victor's discretion; but Russia was different and confrontation with this, recurring State did not enter into American strategy. To begin with 1918, American Congressmen considered that the Bolsheviks would not hail unification of Western and Eastern Armenia; so the legislators cautiously evaded confrontation with England and reserved the whole Mesopotamia as its zone of interests.

Nearly all the issues, associated with the Treaty of Sevres (signed on August 10, 1920), are thoroughly elucidated in the monograph under review (pp. 191–196, 201–202, 208, 215). It involves the works by L. Khurshudyan, S. Poghosyan, K. Poghosyan, A. Marukyan, A. Papyan, who pay special attention to the shaping of Armenian-Turkish relations, depending on Western or pro-Russian orientation of the Republic of Armenia (G. Galoyan, V. Melikyan, A. Hakobyan). While G. Galoyan wrote that Erevan should neglect the Bolshevik's negative attitude towards Sevres and kept pro-Russian political course (pp. 197–198), A. Hakobyan asserts on the implementation of the genuine national, Armenian-centered policy, and G. Makhmourian affirms a necessity for the Republic of Armenia to negotiate not only with the RSFSR and the West, but also to deal directly with Kemalist Turkey. This context also includes a valuable essay on the Armenian-Greek relations by H. Bartikyan.

Besides, the monograph under review gives a serious consideration to the juridical significance of the Treaty of Sevres, as well as to the arbitrary award of W. Wilson, dated November 22, 1920, together with the right of the exiled people to repatriate. These topics were studied in the publications by Hakob Hakobyan, A. Melkonyan, A. Marukyan, L. Hovhannisyan herself and, to some extent, by V. Melikyan. In contrast to their optimism, we have to record that legal demands, when they are not ensured with political and economic strength, become just a provocation against our adversary, which would stimulate his military activity and increase the danger to our **homeland and the people. That's how the Turkish-**

Armenian war of 1920 occurred (see pp. 220-223 on works by E. Zohrabyan, H. Hakobyan, A. Melkonyan, who address to the Russian factor in the empowerment of the Kemalists); then the huge Turkish assistance to the Azerbaijani assault was stimulated in 2020.

It seems quite natural, that after the juridical section we find Chapter III on tragic consummation of the Armenian Question in 1921–1923. This chapter describes a chain of documents, signed in Alexandropol (2. 12. 1920) – of the Franco-Turkish Cilicia Peace (9. 03. 1921), Italo-Turkish (12. 03) Treaties and Russian-British (16. 03) agreement in London – of the Treaties of Moscow (16/18. 03) – of Kars (13. 10.) – of the Franco-Turkish Ankara agreement (20. 10. 1921) – and of the Treaty of Lausannes (24. 07. 1923). We should naturally separate from this corps of papers the Treaties of Alexandropol, Moscow and Kars, since they are distinguished by enormous historiography of the Soviet era, by publications composed in the Diaspora, and by studies, created in 1991–2015, during the years of independence (pp. 249–251). Thus, if G. Galoyan tried to cushion negative results of the Russian-Turkish rapprochement then A. Hakobyan emphasizes contradictions and rivalry among these two sides. Unlike them, H. Avetisyan traces all agreements back to 1918 and reasonably takes into his chain decision of the Caucasus Bureau of the Central Committee of the RCP(B) on Artsakh, dated July 5, 1921. K. Khachatryan, H. Sukiasyan and G. Badalyan point out, in their turn, the extension of the same course into the 1930s and accentuate the problem of Nakhijevan. L. Hovhannysian reasonably identifies V. Ghazakhetsian, Ararat Hakobyan, A. Papyan as active critics of the Treaty of Moscow, though S. and K. Poghosyans considered its denouncement to be impossible.

At the same time, and in common with A. Hakobyan, E. Zohrabyan, L. Hovhannysian we have to exact: contrary to the opinion by A. Papyan, Azerbaijan ratified the Treaty of Kars on March 3, 1922, i. e. before the establishment of the Federative Union of the Republics of Transcaucasia; this union recognized independence and sovereignty of each contracting side. It was only on December 13, 1922, that this Union was reorganized into the unified Transcaucasian Federative Republic; and Armenia together with Georgia carried out their ratifications on March 20 and June 14 of the same year (see pp. 274–276). As a merit of the work by L. Hovhannysian we should also appreciate her analysis of the agreements, signed in 1921–1923; this documents are examined in the framework of contemporary problems and current Armenian-Turkish relations.

Her conclusions at the end of the book, seem to be well-balanced and just.

To sum up, we have to comment that the monograph “The Elucidation of the Problems of History of the Armenian Question, 1915–1923, in Historical Science of the Republic of Armenia (1991–2015)” by L. Hovhannisyan gives identical and interesting description of the quality of Armenian investigations in the selected area; thus, we can certainly recommend her book to the expert community as well as the wide range of readers.

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