



CONSULAR NOTES AS THE PULSE OF TIME

BABKEN SIMONYAN
CONSULAR NOTES

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"Hayastan" Publishers recently released the worthy "Consular Notes" book of Babken Simonyan, the poet, translator, publicist, specialist of Serbia, expert of Armenian-Serbian ties, and Honorary Consul of the Republic of Serbia in the Republic of Armenia. This publication is in the form of a diary, which includes 15 years of his consular mission. From the moment of the decision of the Government of the Republic of Serbia to appoint him Honorary Consul, Babken Simonyan has shorthanded all his meetings and conversations with high-rank state employees: presidents of Armenia and Serbia, representatives of the Parliaments of both republics, lawmakers, ambassadors, high-rank clergymen, historians, scientists, art and culture figures, and publishers. In these notes, the conversations related to the tragic pages of the Armenians and the Serbs come in the first place. The author had these meetings mainly in Yerevan and Belgrade, as well as in Moscow, Frankfurt-on-Maine, Vienna, Tehran, and Beirut.

Many meetings between Babken Simonyan and Darko Tanaskovich (Дарко Танасковић) – the prominent Serbian Orientalist and veteran diplomat, philologist, translator, Doctor of Philology, Professor at the University of Belgrade, and an intellectual person – have contributed to the consular notes. Tanaskovich has been on diplomatic missions in Turkey, the Vatican, and UNESCO. During these meetings, Tanaskovich has shown Babken Simonyan his notes, and told him interesting episodes from his diplomatic career and about the traditions of the Serbian Orientalist school.

In the book "Consular Notes," Babken Simonyan exhibits the details of his crucial and important meetings. He did not miss the geopolitical changes during the last thirty years, inter-ethnic clashes, bloody wars, the satanic programs of superpowers to divide the world, the bilateral negotiation process between

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Armenia and Serbia, and the diplomatic thought process of the time. But the core themes of the book revolve around the Armenian-Serbian and Armenian-Turkish relations, and the Armenian Artsakh (Karabakh) and the Serbian Kosovo geopolitical conflict situation. The latter were conquered with force and offered as a present: the Armenian Artsakh (Karabakh) was given to the artificial state of Azerbaijan, which never existed before 1918; and the Serbian Kosovo was given to the Albanians who were guests there and enjoyed hospitality in the ancient Serbian Homeland.

The notes in the book are transcribed in their original form, whereby nothing has been added nor omitted. However, the live conversations have been represented in edited format according to the rules of the Armenian literary language. The author has written not only about his thoughts and concerns, but also about the turbulent times of which he was a witness and chronographer.

In his evaluation of persons and events, Babken Simonyan has tried to be just and neutral, never sacrificing the truth even if that truth is bitter and mostly unacceptable to some. Yes, the truth is bitter. To grasp and accept it, one must be powerful enough to overcome the bitterness to learn from the mistakes. Furthermore, Simonyan deals with the gaps and mistakes of the diplomacy of RA. He mentions examples from the newest history, where he speaks about the destruction of the famous khatchkars of Joulfa by the nomad Azerbaijanis, the exhibition of the so-called Azerbaijani carpets in the Museum of Ethnology in Belgrade, the Armenophobic activities of the Embassy of Azerbaijan in Serbia, and similar issues. With many incontestable facts, the author tears off the militaristic policy of Azerbaijan. The aim of this policy, contaminated by the odor of petrol, is to breach the 8 century-old friendship between Serbians and Armenians. The author has vigorously resisted these attempts in the state, local administration, scientific, cultural, and other institutions of Serbia, sometimes having significant success. Here arises the question: What has the state diplomacy of RA done and what is it currently doing against such steps?

Some sentences in the book may seem repetitions. These repetitions (which are not so many and deal with the problems of Artsakh, Kosovo, the Armenian Genocide, the consular activity of the author) are necessary since the author has discussed these matters with different persons, trying to know their opinion and pass to them the real, uncompromised essence of these matters.

Moreover, Babken Simonyan has been impressed by the memoirs of famous diplomats and statesmen, many of whom have been famous in the fields of art and culture, and have fulfilled their diplomatic mission with dignity. He mentions famous Serbian diplomats: the poet Rastko Petrovich (Растко Петровић), the poet and prosaist Milosh Tsrnyanskiy (Милош Црњански), prosaist and Nobel prize winner Ivo Andritch (Иво Андрић), the famous satirist Branislav Nushich (Бранислав Нушић), the great poet Milan Rakich (Милан Ракић), Milovan Milovanovich (Милован Миловановић), the military personality Matia Nenadovich (Матија Ненадовић), as well as the widow of Prince Lazar (Кнез Лазар), the hero martyr of the Battle of Kosovo in 1389, Princess Militsa (Кнегиња Милица), who took on her shoulders the whole burden of the existence of Serbia after the martyrdom of her husband. In the introduction of the book, the author cites Ivo Andrich's speech: "The diplomat must serve his nation, he must be altruistic, morally healthy and with brilliant thinking, and must not expose himself to others. He must never show his plans to them". The latter is well said because a diplomat must often remain in the shadows, not bringing the attention of the public to him/herself; must have experience to make clear decisions; and must also have courage. In writing this book, Babken Simonyan has been motivated by this logic. With his consular notes, he has left indelible legacy for future generations.

Although the book has historic and diplomatic content, the light word of the poet, his intelligence, and his optimism shine brilliantly.

Whenever Babken Simonyan had meetings in Belgrade, in Yerevan, in the Embassy of the Republic of Serbia in Moscow, with the members of the Mekhitarist Congregation in Vienna, and in the Celebrations' Hall of the Serbian Orthodox Church, he had made it his mission to defend the righteous demands of the Armenians and the Serbs. This is similar to the actions of Henry Morgenthau, the ambassador of the United States of America in Constantinople in the 1910s, who with his righteous and just stand, condemned the genocide of the Armenians, confessing about it in his book "Ambassador Morgenthau's Story" (1918). Morgenthau published some other books on this topic titled: "On the Armenian Massacres" (1918), "Why the Ottoman Empire must be destructed" (1918), "Armenia Calls" (1918), "The Tragedy of Armenia" (1918), "Secrets of the Bosphorus 1913–1916" (1918), "Will Armenia be annihilated?" (1920). Babken Simonyan has dealt with the legacy of Morgenthau, whereby, based on his

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initiative, the Serbian translation of the book “Secrets of the Bosphorus 1913–1916” was published in Serbia, for which Simonyan has written a historic survey.

The book “Consular Notes” is a basic source for the history of Armenia-Serbia and Armanian-Serbian relations as a whole. The information that is analyzed with considerable detail in the book is one of its kind and invaluable for researchers.

In the 16-page inset, readers can find high quality pictures of the persons and events mentioned in the book, which gives this publication a unique value and flavor.

Babken Simonyan’s book combines history, diplomacy, culture, and literature, and is further enriched with the documentation of interesting conversations. The book is a powerful motivation for the promotion of national system of values, with which we will construct Armenia, the state of our dreams.

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