

THE ARMENIAN VOLUNTEER MOVEMENT DURING WWI AS GROUNDWORK FOR POLITICAL SOVEREIGNTY: SOME PRELIMINARY INSIGHTS

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The current article is part of a new research focusing on the interaction between armed conflicts and political cognitions among Armenians from the end of the 19th century up to the foundation of contemporary Republic of Armenia¹. It also holds a comparative dimension with the same research question for the Jewish case, under the same time period. The question will be to ask whether physical mass violence has been conducive to representations of national sovereignty, and if so, what was the content of that concept for political and military leaders during WWI: territorial? demographic? political? military?

Being at a very early stage of my research, I will not attempt at bringing an answer to this question here. What I will do instead is lay the hypothesis and give the factual background retrieved from secondary sources necessary to future analysis for the period of WWI. Thus, the following is no attempt at a comprehensive review of the volunteer movement during WWI, but very modestly a summary of the elements that will be used in the later analysis. Tentative design of a number of arguments that will be investigated in the future research will be sketched here. I should also add that, parallel to the volunteer movements of Transcaucasia, I have started studying the same issues regarding the Armenian Legion formed under the auspices of Boghos Nubar Pasha². These two, mostly parallel –although they sometimes met and joined efforts- episodes are in themselves proof of the plurality of political conceptions and objectives among Armenians at the time of WWI, something we will witness even more glaringly with the “double delegation” at the negotiation tables of the Allies between 1918 and 1921. In this article, I will be focusing on the impact of mass physical violence on political ideology and design. It will survey WWI’s Caucasian front, from 1914, with the decisions to form Armenian units pertaining to the Russian army, up to the treaty of Batum in 1918, which is the first act terminating war for Armenians (first, because until 1920 war was actually almost uninterrupted and it is possible to argue that those episodes were a continuation of WWI battles and political issues) and also the first official act of the RA.

My hypothesis, on which I will be working for the next years, is that statehood may not be the most relevant entry to analyze political cognitions of Armenians in the 19th and 20th century: although a state came into existence at the end of WWI, it was very much unanticipated and unwanted. Rather than state then, I want to question the relevance of sovereignty as an entry into Armenian contemporary politics. Although this may

¹ This issue has been the subject of my Ph.D., which can be found in France under the title: *Dynamique de conflit dans la construction d’un Etat contemporain: le cas de la République d’Arménie et la question du Haut-Karabakh* (2011, IEP de Paris). A publication is in process.

² Archival materials on the Armenian legion can be found at Boghos Nubar library in Paris. They will form important first-hand materials of my research regarding the episode of the *Légion d’Orient*.

sound surprising at first sight, it becomes less so if one is ready to leave aside Western conceptions of sovereignty as supreme authority detained by a state on a territory, at least for the time being, and focus on what it meant for Armenians on the ground. Consequently, one of the objectives of this research regards Armenian historiography on statehood: the issue of physical security may be another entry to further enlighten the analyses of the Armenian experience of statehood. Was there something like an understanding, an awareness, of sovereignty among Armenian political and military leaders during WWI? My hypothesis is that organizations and involvement into war efforts may have been conducive to such conceptions. In that scenario, war is not only synonymous of destruction and loss –human, territorial-, it was also an opportunity provider for more autonomy and eventually to reach some of the goals of the Armenian national leaders, all judgment on the quality of this achievement aside.

From the beginning of WWI up to the withdrawal of the Russian army

Deprived of almost all experience of sovereignty (as opposed to self-rule) for centuries, we have to consider competing contentions of sovereignty for the Armenian leaders of that time. On the one hand, sovereignty was a legal-political concept imported from the West. Applied to the political context of the Empires in which Armenians were living, that concept basically meant that supreme authority over the territories inhabited by Armenians was detained and exercised by the Sublime Porte and by the Tsar. On the other hand, however, within the context of Russian and Ottoman Empires, the reality of sovereignty was that:

- Not all of the territories inhabited by Armenians were actually under complete control, especially on the margins of the Empires, near the farthest borders.
- There were local administration structures, through community leaders, especially church and later on civic leaders. Within the scope of this article, civic leaders of interest are para-military and political leaders.

As a result of the second point, national elites, where political and military forces in great part conjoined, clustered in both Empires. By the time of WWI, these elites, having sometimes very divergent and competing views on what the Armenian future was to be like, were without a doubt, the dominant leading force at the level of the Armenian communities in both Empires.

As a result of the first point, many were the interspaces where violence could unfold, first against the Armenians and later for and by themselves in the margins of the Empires (Transcaucasia, especially Baku, Karabakh; Eastern provinces of the Ottoman Empire). By the time of WWI, Armenians had accumulated enough firsthand military experience, both in the state armies of their suzerain and through their own self-defense organizations to push for military initiatives and objectives of their own within the context of WWI and the Caucasian front.

An Armenian strategy is readable through war efforts coordinated by the National Bureau in Tiflis³. The National Bureau had been formed in 1912 to pursue the problem of Ottoman reforms aimed at alleviating the sufferings of Turkish Armenians. As soon as 1914, they entered into talks with Count Vorontsov-Dashkov, representative of the Tsar in the Caucasus, to form volunteer contingents. It was not the first time in the history of Russian Armenians: in the 19th century wars, Armenian units had assisted the Russian army. The National Bureau reckoned that each time Armenians were “insufficiently compensated for their sacrifices.”⁴ Therefore the National Bureau, on instances of Hakob Zavriev⁵ and then mayor of Tiflis, Alexandre Khatisian⁶, obtained to have 4 separate groups, commanded by popular revolutionary heroes. Agreeing to this scheme, Russian authorities in effect gave institutional form and sanctioned legality to the Armenian volunteer units. Hovannisian signals the opposition of Kachaznuni⁷ and Vratsian⁸, the future first and last premiers of the RA to this scheme, for fear that Turkish authorities would label this Armenian treachery and resort to violent measures. But to the minds of many, that initiative echoed the idea that now was a time for action. Whereas there were already Armenians in important numbers serving in the Russian army mainly on the European front, this initiative signaled that Armenians wanted not merely to do their duty but had an agenda of their own, that needed to be enacted on the Caucasion front. That agenda was to create an autonomous Armenia comprised of Turkish Armenia and Caucasian Armenia under the protection of Russia. Importantly, no explicit delineation of these territories nor of that future protectorate were given by Armenian leaders to the Tsarist authorities. It would be necessary to check whether a determination of that territory had been given somewhere officially by Armenian leaders. Although, there may be a number of reasons for that silence, one possible interpretation is that war was opening a time of opportunity for the Armenians who could, if proved efficient in making the Russian army advance into Ottoman territory sizable enough to occupy the entire Armenian plateau, substantiate a claim on territories that may have been otherwise

³ In the future research, all following contentions will have to be compared to the National Bureau's records during the war.

⁴ Hovannisian Richard, *Armenia on the Road to Independence, 1918*, Berkeley: University of California Press, 1967, p.43.

⁵ An Armenian from Russia, Zavriev studied at the Army Medical school of St Petersburg. Member of the Dachnaksoutiun.

⁶ Alexandre Khatisian (1874-1945), born in Tiflis. Mayor of Tiflis from 1910 to 1917. PM of the RA from May 1919 to May 1920.

⁷ Hovhannes Kachaznuni (1868-1938), born in Akhaltsikhe (Georgia). PM of the RA from May 1918 to May 1919. Last chairman of the NA (November 1919-1920).A member of the Dachnaksoutiun that after the fall of the RA distanced itself from the party.

⁸ Simon Vratsian (1882-1969), born in New Nakhichevan (Russian empire). Member of the Dachnak party. Editor of the Hayrenik newspaper (USA) in 1911 and of Drochaknewspaper in Paris (1923-1925). Last PM of the RA (November-December 1920). In 1945, he petitioned the UN to demand restoration of Wilsonian Armenia.

highly contested by the demographic and physical (im)balances between Armenian and other communities (Kurds notably), not mentioning Ottoman authorities.

Armenians paid a heavy price during the winter campaign of 1914. Whereas no official promise of any kind was made, the flood of public praise to Armenian combatants in the press imbued the feeling that a reward was to come after the war if Armenians were able to give ample evidence of their commitment and sacrifices. In order to compensate for the loss of 1/3 of the volunteers, the Bureau obtained to organize 3 more volunteer groups. Although all were officially subject to Russian directives, in fact orders emanated from the special committee of the Bureau in charge of volunteer activities. The experience acquired in organizing war efforts, both materially and strategically, will be very important to analyze in the future research in order to see if any sense of sovereignty was gained through it. Of the 3 Transcaucasian larger groups –Armenians, Georgians and Moslems- Armenians were the ones who were most favorable to systematic organization of armed forces and the ones that acquired the longest experience in this endeavor. Georgians had more experience in self-rule and Moslems were turning their aspirations towards the Ottoman Empire. These elements have had their legacies in contemporary politics and it is definitely important to study exactly just how instrumental they were for the political events of that time.

Whereas before the war and implementation of the genocidal policy of the Unionist party, efforts towards Turkish Armenians were directed at protecting the properties and lives of the Armenians, afterwards these efforts looked illusory unless imposed by force of Russian arms to the Turkish rulers. The conquest and then loss of Van from the summer of 1915 onto the advance into Mush and Bitlis in the spring of 1916 dramatically evidenced this to the Armenian volunteers and people of Transcaucasia. By that time the Russian occupation of the Armenian Plateau was almost complete. But the attitudes of Russian authorities –most notably of the new Viceroy for the Caucasus, Grand Duke Nicholas Romanov- towards Armenian volunteers and the Bureau was now outwardly negative, giving rise to suspicions from the Armenian leaders vis-à-vis Russian readiness to fulfill their promises. Instead the now accomplished depopulation of the Armenian lands from Armenians seemed to suit the Russian bureaucracy which was negotiating the future partition of Turkey with the Entente⁹, and planning to dispatch Russian elements on these lands. Armenian leaders were starting to grasp the territorial consequences of the demographic catastrophe caused by deportations and massacres committed in the Ottoman Empire. This growing awareness was instrumental in making demography one of the critical aspects of the physical survival issue. A number of political decisions

⁹ An aspect which will not be covered here but should be given full attention in a comprehensive research, especially with regards the other Armenian war effort under the banner of the Armenian legion, is the French and British plans regarding Lesser Armenia. By September 1916, with the Sykes-Picot agreement, the Entente forces, among which Russia, had decided of their respective shares in the partition of Turkey.

intervened in the first quarter of 1916 giving evidence to Russian reluctance towards Armenian objectives:

- December 1916: the Supreme Command of the Caucasus Army ordered the National Bureau to liquidate the volunteer contingents. They would be reorganized into regular battalions of the Russian army, in effect depriving Armenians from a war effort of their own directed towards national objectives on the Caucasian front that mattered for those.
- Tsarist opposition to give a special status for Turkish Armenia. At best, the few Armenians remaining in these lands would be very locally given some cultural and government autonomy under Tsarist full administration.
- Tsarist officials prohibited “discussion of the volunteer movement” and of other national issues such as the Armenian question in the press, implicitly pointing out at the importance of the volunteer movement in the formulation of more demanding Armenian national objectives. This link will need to be investigated in the future research.

Whereas armed effort seemed to reach a temporary but nonetheless significant halt in 1916, Armenians began to experience the physical consequences of the genocide under the form of survivors and refugees pouring in Transcaucasia. The shock of having to cope with three hundred thousand Ottoman Armenian refugees, half of them in a state of utter physical and moral annihilation, forced the Bureau to regain action for the sake of physical survival of this population. To this goal, Armenians from every corner of the Russian Empire contributed, in a *hamazgayin* effort that made all Armenians aware of the gravity of the physical security situation of the people. When the Bureau and other national leaders from a wide spectrum of parties received authorization to meet, the Tsarist administration proscribed all issues not regarding relief efforts. In spite of this, war and defense were attracting broad public participation and the role of Russia in that task was discussed, though not yet publicly criticized. Merely weeks before the March Revolution, Armenians were still hopeful that by the time war would end, they would be able to fulfil their aspirations: through the maintenance of a strong military front, autonomy for Turkish Armenia under Russian or Entente protection.

During the first weeks of the provisional government, realization of these aspirations seemed again within reach: at the appeal of Zavriev, a new arrangement about Turkish Armenia was designed by the provisional government in May 1917, whereby the occupied territories were to be administered directly by the central government, but with Armenians in almost every civil positions of local importance. Alongside this development, in the only active theater of combat in the region, in North Persia, Armenian Rifle battalions that were attached to the Caucasus Corps were fighting valiantly. They were noticed by the British troops as well, and even more so in a context of increasing unreliability of Russian troops. In July 1917, the Russian command authorized the conversion of the Armenian battalions into regiments: with this, the aspiration to have an entirely

distinct national corps was getting closer. Among Armenian leaders, some like General Andranik¹⁰, were advocating that Armenian forces should be able to hold the front from Van to Trebizond on their own in order to gain assurances from the Entente powers to a right on the Armenian plateau, in spite of –supposedly temporary- absence of Armenians.

From the Bolshevik revolution up to the treaty of Batum

In the fall of 1917, in the context of growing Bolshevik pressure on the provisional government, the concept of self-determination became pivotal in Leninist discourses. Alongside Finland and Ukraine, Lenin claimed Armenia would be recognized its right of separation from the Empire. In contrast with that alleged readiness of Lenin, Armenian national leaders were proponent of self-determination in its restricted sense of autonomy:

- regional for Transcaucasia, where complex issues of intermingled minorities were looming ahead
- national-territorial for Turkish Armenia.

Ideally, the latter and parts of the former would be united to form a single autonomous Armenian national unit.

The issue of who and how would the status of Turkish Armenia be guaranteed was left open. It contained looming contradictions between the rejection of war on part of the Bolsheviks, their fierce denunciations of imperialistic designs in that region and the necessity to safeguard the future status of Turkish Armenia by force of arms. As the Commissar for Nationalities wrote in Pravda in January 1918 accompanying the decree “About Turkish Armenia”: “The sons of Armenia – heroic defenders of their native land, but by no means farsighted politicians...”¹¹ Indeed, in spite of massive numbers of desertions from the Russian army¹², Bolsheviks efforts to end the war as soon as possible, and acute disagreements between Armenians, Georgians and Moslems on war, not all Armenian leaders understood then that the task of holding the front in Turkish Armenia would have to be assumed by their own forces, against Turkey. Armenians were still pursuing adamantly their efforts to man the front: before the November Revolution, a Turkish Armenian militia consisting in a couple hundreds men, headed by long-time military heroes, attempted to fill the gaps along the front. But on March 12, Turkish divisions entered Erzerum, marking the end of the battle for Turkish Armenia. Not only did Russia disengaged from the war in March 1918 (treaty of Brest Litovsk), abandoning

¹⁰ Andranik Ozanian (1865-1927), born in Shabin-Karahisar (Ottoman Empire). Freedom fighter, first in the Balkans then in the Ottoman Empire and Transcaucasia. Member of the Dachnak party until 1918, where he resigned over divergence of views on the issues of relations with Russia. He organized the last defence of the RA in Zangueour in 1921. Exile in the USA where he kept collecting funds for refugees and orphans until his death.

¹¹ Quoted in Richard Hovannisian, *op. cit.* p. 99.

¹² At the time of the signature of the treaty, only a few thousands Russian soldiers remained in the Caucasus compared with a half-million in 1917.

to Turkey territories it had conquered by right of war (the Eastern vilayets) and also territories owned by Russia since 1878 (Ardahan, Kars and Batum), but in addition Russia gave assurance to the Central Powers that Armenian units would be dissolved (additional treaty).

Therefore, to the Armenian leaders, most notably Dachnak, the major problem was the threat of a renewed Turkish offensive in the Caucasus, in essence meaning that the fate of Turkish Armenia would repeat itself in Transcaucasia. Therefore Dachnak leaders were still convinced that in the face of total disunity of Transcaucasian peoples, only a powerful Russia, even though communist, would be able to host a future for Armenia. The Dachnaksoutiun's main motive between the time of the Bolshevik revolution and the signature of the Batum treaty would be to safeguard the Armenian people in the most existential sense of the word. And to that effect, an armed force had still to be reorganized. Upon the initiative of the Western Armenian Bureau (a branch of the National Bureau), in December 1917, a plan was formed to recruit 20000 men, entrusted to Andranik's command. In parallel, the Caucasus army command authorized the formation of the long-awaited Armenian corps (2 divisions, each 4 rifle regiments), led by General Nazarbekov¹³, and assisted by Dro¹⁴, with approximately 20000 men too. In spite of these laudable efforts, the Armenian forces were insufficient to hold a front stretching from Erzinjan to Van. The Entente was welcoming the efforts of the Armenians, but not giving any concrete promises in reward. To them the Caucasian front was a gate to Mesopotomia, not an end in itself.

Among the Armenian leaders, an important number thought that holding firm on the armed forces and on war was the Armenian's only way to guaranty some sort of national future. In March 1918, Aram Manoukian¹⁵, at the time chairman of the Erevan National Council was entrusted the task to reunify and reorder the whole Armenian military and political war effort with "exceptional powers".¹⁶ Calling on Transcaucasian and particularly Erevan -the new "heart of the Armenians"- "sense of sacrifice and order", he urged to resort to "robust assaults to push the enemy out of the borders of the

¹³ Tovmas Nazarbekov (1855-1931), born in Tiflis. Military high-officer in the Russian Caucasian army, from Armenian descent, he played a crucial role in the military operations on the Caucasus front. Commander- in-chief of the RA.

¹⁴ Drastamat Kanayan or Dro (1884-1956), first Defense minister of the RA, member of the Dachnak party, he was charged with political assassinations of tsarist officials in Baku responsible for Armenian pogroms. Freedom fighter, he played a decisive role in the battles of May 1918 that allowed the existence of the RA.

¹⁵ Aram Manoukian (1879-1919), born in the Elizavetpol goubernia. Member of the Dachnak party. Organized the defense of Van in 1915. Named governor of Vaspurakan. With the takeover of Van by the Ottoman army in 1917, he returns to Erevan and organizes the defense of the goubernia. Minister of Interior then of Defense of the RA.

¹⁶ *Արամ Մանուկյան. փաստաթղթերի և նյութերի ժողովածու*, խմբ. Վիրաբյան Ամաստունի, Երևան: Ա.հ., 2009, էջ 298:

fatherland.”¹⁷ This is the first signal of Erevan’s transformation into the new center of the Armenian political and military activities, signaling both the immense narrowing of the Armenian world in the Empires and its redesigning into a modern political format. Aram Manoukian interprets this decision as a “resolve to live”¹⁸ expressed by the Armenians. It is no coincidence that the same Aram had been the leader of Van during the brief but significant episode of self-government gotten through self-defense in the spring and summer of 1915. As I have argued before, the existential peril to which the Armenians were confronted during WWI was their bridge to a sense of undertaking their own military course in order to sustain national aspirations: “Let’s show the world that Armenians have the right to live freely and independently. Now or never.”¹⁹ From March to June, Aram paved the way for the future Armenian government. With the reorientation of Armenian efforts on Transcaucasia, and gradually even more so on Erevan and the plain of Ararat, Armenian leaders came to face a new problem: on the way to their military efforts and political aspirations, stood the divergences with Tatars and Georgians were glaring -although ephemerally synthesized in a Transcaucasian Federative Republic-, the demographic situation of Transcaucasia, and the mixed presence of Armenians, Kurds and Tatars²⁰, the latter ostensibly favoring Ottoman Turks’ war efforts. To leaders like Aram, the stake for the Armenian people in that hour of uncertainty in war was clear. He clearly expressed it in an appeal to the Armenians in April 1918 in the name of the National Council: at this time of cease-fire, “we are going to double and even triple our operations; we are going to strengthen our positions in order to defend our borders at the hour of need and oppose fierce resistance to our relentless enemy. (...) Armenians! Put all your efforts to protect the dignity of your fatherland and its saint aspirations. On these depend your physical existence.”²¹

Confronted with the declaration of independence of Georgia (May 26, 1918), the National Council was still discussing to resolve what to do²². Fear that independence could be immediately crushed, particularly by Turkish demands, was prevalent. Eventually, the declaration of independence was a coup of a handful of leaders (Vratsian, Kachaznuni and Khatisian) who resolved that the only possibility for survival was to declare independence and secure peace at all cost with Turkey. The final move towards the inevitable was triggered by the declaration of independence of Azerbaijan, claiming “Southern and Eastern Transcaucasia”, i.e. implicitly threatening Armenians with the loss

¹⁷ Արամ Մանուկյան. *փաստաթղթերի և նյութերի ժողովածու ...*, էջ 298-99:

¹⁸ Արամ Մանուկյան. *փաստաթղթերի և նյութերի ժողովածու ...*, էջ 299:

¹⁹ Արամ Մանուկյան. *փաստաթղթերի և նյութերի ժողովածու ...*, էջ 300:

²⁰ With a ratio of approximately 1 Tatar to 6 Armenians in 1918. However, local concentrations meant that this was still a problem to handle for a government that had objectives disapproved of by 15% of the population.

²¹ Արամ Մանուկյան. *փաստաթղթերի և նյութերի ժողովածու ...*, էջ 301:

²² Inside the Council, Dachnak were split: Aharonian, TerMinassian and Badalian were against independence. Vratsian and Karjikian were in favor.

of the Erevan guberniia. Very interestingly, the Armenian Council May 30 declaration on assuming “supreme administration of the Armenian provinces” did contain neither the word independence nor Republic. Armenians’ political aspirations were suspended until proven justified on the battlefield. Since mid-May 1918, battles were raging in Erevan guberniia, which now was the only place left that was salvable, militarily speaking. Again what we see fueling Armenian political aspirations is a sense of sheer physical survival. This is perfectly illustrated by the appeal launched by General Silikian on May 24: “In the name of the physical existence of this eternally tortured people, in the name of violated justice, Arise! On to the Holy War!”²³ Before confirming the existence of a Republic of Armenia, Armenian leaders were still to assert by force of arms that this status was indeed possible to claim on a territory formed around Erevan and its periphery. That’s what the very controversial treaty of Batum, signed in the beginning of June 1918 with Ottoman Turkey, actually did: it confirmed the remnants of Armenia on a scarce enclave around Erevan. According to Richard Hovannisian, Armenian leaders who had consistently “opposed sovereignty under the prevailing conditions” “were to become the staunch champions of national independence” by the end of WWI. This is a paradox whose meaning remains to be researched.

Here I will end with opening a question to investigate in the future research: to trace what contents exactly has been fueled into this notion of national independence by the Armenian leaders at the command of the first Republic. The question arises all the more so as these leaders came mainly from the Dachnak party, a party with experience in guerilla warfare and political assassinations, which had been founded on protest actions against the way Armenians were “managed” by their Russian and Ottoman rulers, but not as an institution suggesting a new mode of government for them. If sovereignty was starting to acutely take the meaning of military and political control over a territory, then that reality was one by default for Armenia: following the treaty of Batum, Armenia encompassed only lands that were not seriously contented by its neighbors. Armenians’ main political strategy to remedy that was to plunge into diplomatic games with the Entente powers attempting at getting compensated for its –willing and unwilling– sacrifices during the war. In other terms, Armenian leaders made their political future highly dependent on other’s political benevolence, an at least paradoxical way to realize national sovereignty.

Conclusion

Since the last third of the 19th century, the main determinant of political cognitions among Armenian leaders stemmed from an acute sense of the need to ensure physical security of the communities living in the margins of the Empires: in Transcaucasia and in the Eastern provinces of the Ottoman Empire. That need for security did not equal a design for political self-autonomy right from the start. This was an option, but only

²³ Quoted in Richard Hovannisian, *op. cit.*, p. 193.

one among many others, and one representing a minor trend among Armenian national elites. On the path to the formulation of such a project for the Armenians, eventually embedded in an independent state, resorting to armed violence for their own purposes played a crucial role. The World war gave this further impetus, one unprecedented in magnitude and scale: it provided Armenian leaders with a brutal but precious experience in the use of armed violence, connecting it to their ability to sustain political objectives. National physical security, the bottom line of sovereignty in the Armenian case, has even since been caught in a dilemma of a delicate balance to find between reliance on a powerful third actor and one's own forces, thus catching sovereignty in t and securing political autonomy.

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Թային Փափազյան

ԱՄՓՈՓՈՒՄ

Հողվածը նվիրված է Առաջին համաշխարհային պատերազմի տարիներին ծավալված կամավորական շարժմանը, որը հիմք է ծառայել ձևավորելու հայկական ազգային գաղափարախոսությունը: Այս ժամանակահատվածում հայ ժողովուրդը ենթարկվել է ֆիզիկական բռնության՝ իր բազմազան դրսևորումներով. ցեղասպանության հետևանքով նա ենթարկվել է ֆիզիկական բնաջնջման իր պատմական հայրենիքում: Սկզբում ռուսական զորքերի հետ միասին, իսկ բոլշևիկյան հեղափոխությունից հետո՝ որպես ինքնուրույն ուժ, ակտիվ մասնակցություն է ունեցել Կովկասյան ճակատում ընթացող ռազմական գործողություններին. 1918-1920 թվականների ընթացքում իր հարևանների դեմ նա մի շարք ռազմական ընդհարումներ է ունեցել Հայաստանի Հանրապետության սահմանազատումների հետ կապված, մասնավորապես թուրքական բանակի հետ՝ արևմտյան ճակատում և թաթարական ուժերի հետ՝ հարավարևելյան շրջաններում, հիմնականում Ղարաբաղում:

Բանալի բառեր՝ Հայոց ցեղասպանություն, հայ կամավորներ, Կովկասյան ճակատ, Առաջին համաշխարհային պատերազմ, Հայաստանի առաջին հանրապետություն:

THE ARMENIAN VOLUNTEER MOVEMENT DURING WWI AS GROUNDWORK
FOR POLITICAL SOVEREIGNTY: SOME PRELIMINARY INSIGHTS

Taline Papazian

SUMMARY

Article will focus on the study of the volunteer movement as providing a ground work for the ideological formulation of Armenian national goals in the period of World War I.

For the Armenians, physical violence was manifold during WWI: they experienced the most dramatic physical destruction of their history due to the genocide; they also took an active part on the Caucasian and Ottoman frontlines, along with the Russian armies and, after the Bolshevik revolution, on their own; finally, they were also entangled in a series of armed conflicts with their neighbors over the territorial delimitation of the Armenian Republic from 1918 onto 1920, particularly with the Turkish army on the western front and the Tatar forces in the south-eastern regions -mainly in Karabakh, an issue which legacy is still an open conflict today. At the same time, the political context is one of unprecedented upheaval with the Bolshevik revolution, the defeat of the Ottoman Empire, the gathering of the Transcaucasian regions into a Federation and, sometime after, their break up into 3 independent Republics. The question is to ask whether the massively violent situation of WWI might have been an unanticipated but efficient input to a transformation of political ideologies that were out there since the second third of the 19th century.

Keywords: Armenian Genocide, Armenian volunteers, Caucasian frontline, First World War, First Republic of Armenia.

АРМЯНСКОЕ ДОБРОВОЛЬЧЕСКОЕ ДВИЖЕНИЕ ВО ВРЕМЯ ПЕРВОЙ МИРОВОЙ ВОЙНЫ КАК ОСНОВА ДЛЯ ПОЛИТИЧЕСКОГО СУВЕРЕНИТЕТА: НЕКОТОРЫЕ ПРЕДВАРИТЕЛЬНЫЕ ЗАМЕТКИ

Талин Папазян

РЕЗЮМЕ

Статья посвящена изучению добровольческого движения в качестве основы для обеспечения формирования идеологии армянских национальных целей во время Первой мировой войны. В данном отрезке времени армянская нация подверглась физическому насилию во всем его многообразии: она пережила самое драматическое физическое уничтожение в своей истории в результате геноцида; она также приняла активное участие в боевых действиях на Кавказском фронте наряду с российскими войсками и, после большевистской революции, в качестве самостоятельной силы; наконец, она была втянута в ряд вооруженных конфликтов со своими соседями по поводу делимитации границ Армянской Республики с 1918 на 1920 г., в частности, с турецкой армией на Западном фронте и с силами татар в юго-восточных регионах главным образом в Карабахе.

Ключевые слова: Геноцид армян, армянские добровольцы, Кавказский фронт, Первая мировая война, Первая Республика Армения.