

Hovhannes Kachaznuni

DASHNAKTSUTIUN
HAS NOTHING TO DO ANYMORE

TO THE READER

This is a report that I presented to the Convention of foreign branches of the Armenian Revolutionary Federation Dashnaktsutiun convened in April 1923. Completely convinced that all the questions touched upon here are going to be given the most serious consideration of not only the members of the Party but also of every single Armenian, I considered it to be my duty to have this report published, thus making it public property.

I am having it printed in full and without any changes except for the final three or four pages which include concrete proposals that are kept to the governing bodies of the Party.

Hovhannes Kachaznuni
Bucharest, 1923

Comrades,

These issues have had my careful and serious reflection. I do not doubt that you have been turning them over in your mind as well. I do not know whether you, too, have arrived at the same conclusions. Let me say more: I am afraid that my final conclusion - those very difficult words that I shall here state being guided by my conscience – are going to cause general embarrassment, perhaps resentment, in the Convention.

I am prepared for that.

I only ask that you believe that it is much more difficult for me to write and sign those words than for you to listen to them from my own lips. Be totally confident that those words are not the result of thoughtlessness or pettiness, temporary whim or hasty resolve. They are the result of deep-rooted convictions and a clear awareness, for I am capable of thinking and understanding, considering and determining a point of view.

Therefore I beg of you that you be patient and approach the matters with an open mind, unimpeded - something which is not simple for men who have lived a Party life and who have looked at everything from a Party perspective.

Sorry if the matter appears unbearable. In other circumstances these words would be inappropriate. But now I have to appeal to your healthy outlook and your consciousness.

Let me now proceed with my subject.

In order to introduce my conclusions in proper sequence I feel it necessary to refresh your memory with the various phases of the Armenian Cause - from the Great War to the Lausanne Conference - and the part played by the A.R.F. Dashnaktsutiun during that period of time. So as not to abuse your attention, I shall curtail my speech and present to you a concise yet accurate commentary.

Following 1914, what stages did the Armenian question pass through, what development did the events show, how did they come about? What sequence did they follow, and where did they lead to in the meantime? What did the A.R.F. Dashnaktsutiun achieve, and what will it have to do in the future?

When I recollect the recent past, with these considerations kept in mind, and when I differentiate the important points from the secondary and the accidental ones, and arrange them in chronological order, this is the picture that arises:

1. During the fall of 1914 when Turkey had not yet entered the war but had already been making preparations, Armenian revolutionary bands began to be formed in Southern Caucasia with great enthusiasm and, especially, with much uproar. The A.R.F. had active participation in the formation of the bands and their future military action against Turkey. It was contrary to the decision taken during their general meeting at Erzurum only a few weeks before. In an undertaking of such gravity, fraught with most serious consequences, individual agents of the

Southern Caucasus A.R.F. acted against the will of our superior authority, against the will of the General Meeting of the Party.

Why?

Because they were also suffering from the syndrome of following the masses and were flowing in the direction that the current was taking them. This example urges us to recall that the A.R.F. Dashnaksutiun in Southern Caucasus in the past had been a follower rather than an originator of movements that had their inception beyond their control. Thus it was in 1903, when there were rebellions and demonstrations on the occasion of the seizure of Church properties; thus it was in the years 1905-1906, when there were bloody encounters between Muslims and Armenians. The same thing also happened during the first large labor class movements (1903-1906) when the A.R.F. was being led at Baku, Tiflis, and Batum by the policies of foreign socialistic parties.

The same characteristic line of action appears, as we see a little later, in the conduct we pursued generally afterwards.

Historical events have their irrefutable logic. It would be worthless to argue today whether our bands of volunteers should have entered the field or not. In the fall of 1914 Armenian volunteer bands organized themselves and fought against Turkey because they could not refrain from organizing and abstain from fighting. This was an inevitable result of a psychology on which the Armenian people had nourished itself during an entire generation: that frame of mind should have found its expression, and it did so.

And it was not the A.R.F. Dashnaksutiun that would discontinue the movement even if it wished to do so. It was able to make use of the existing conditions, give effect and issue to the accumulated desires, hopes and passion, organize the ready forces - it had that much ability and authority. But it was unable to go against the current and push forward its own plan, especially for one particular reason: the A.R.F. Dashnaksutiun is a mass movement, strong in instinct but weak in understanding.

It is also useless to question today who is to blame for the wrongs if the issue of responsibility does ever come up. If it had not been Bishop Mesrop, A. Hatisov, Dr. Zavriev, S. Arutiunov, Dro and Andronic, there would have been others to do the same things in their place. If the formation of bands was wrong, the root of that error must be sought much further and more deeply. At the present time it is essential to record only the evidence that we did

participate in that volunteer movement to the largest extent and that we did that contrary to the decision and the will of the General Meeting of the Party.

2. The winter of 1914 and the spring of 1915 were the periods of greatest enthusiasm and hope for all Armenians in the Caucasus, including, of course, the Dashnaktsutiun. We had no doubt that the war would end with the absolute triumph of the Allies; Turkey would be defeated and dismembered, and its Armenian population would at last be liberated.

We headed for Russia sincerely without any regret, we obeyed it unquestioningly. Without any positive basis of fact we believed that the Tsarist government would grant us a more-or-less broad self-government in the Caucasus and in the Armenian vilayets liberated from Turkey as a reward for our trustworthiness, our efforts and support.

Our thoughts were veiled in fog. We had rooted our own desires in the minds of others; we had lost our sense of reality and were carried away with our dreams. From mouth to mouth, from ear to ear passed mysterious words supposedly spoken in the palace of the Viceroy. Attention was called to a letter by Vorontsov-Dashkov to the Catholics as an important document in our hands to use in the presentation of our rights and claims. The letter was composed very cleverly, it was full of indefinite sentences and generalities which might be interpreted in any way, according to one's desire.

We overestimated the ability of the Armenian people, its political and military power, and overvalued the extent and significance of the services our people rendered to the Russians. And by overestimating our very humble worth and merit we were naturally exaggerating our hopes and expectations.

3. The mass exiles, deportations, and massacres that took place during the summer and autumn of 1915 were fatal blows to the Armenian Cause. Half of historical Armenia - the same half where the fundamentals of our independence would be laid according to the traditions inherited by European diplomacy - that half was deprived of Armenians. In the Armenian provinces of Turkey there were no Armenians. The Turks knew what they were doing and have no reason to regret it today. It was the most definite technique to resolve the Armenian Question.

Again, it would be of no use to ask today to what extent the voluntary involvement in the war was a contributory cause of the Armenian misfortune. No one can claim that the cruel persecutions would not have taken place if our behavior on this side of the frontier was

different, as not one can claim the contrary, that the persecutions would have been the same even if we had not shown hostility to the Turks.

This is a matter about which there cannot be agreement of opinion.

The proof is, however – and this is crucial – that the struggle began decades ago against which the Turkish government brought about the deportation or extermination of the Armenian people in Turkey and the desolation of Turkish Armenia.

This was the terrible fact.

Civilized humanity might very well be shaken with rage in the face of this horrifying crime. Statesmen might utter menacing words against criminal Turkey. “Blue”, “yellow”, “orange” books and papers might be published accusing them. Divine punishment against the criminals might be invoked in churches by clergymen of all denominations. The press of all countries might be filled with horrifying descriptions and details and the evidence of eye-witnesses ... Let them say this or that, but the work was already done and words would not revive the corpses fallen in the Arabian deserts, restore the ruined hearths, repopulate the country now become desolate. The Turks knew what they ought to do and did it.

4. The second half of 1915 and the entire year of 1916 were periods of hopelessness, desperation and mourning for us. The refugees from Van, Alashkert and Basen, all those who had survived the extermination, were filling Russian provinces by tens and hundreds of thousands. They were famished, naked, sick, horrified and desperate floods of humanity, flooding our villages and cities. They had come to a country that was itself ruined and famished. The Shirak and Ararat valleys represented a huge hospital where people piled upon each other, before our own eyes, on our threshold dying of famine and sickness.

We were powerless to save those precious lives. Angered and terrified, we sought the culprits and quickly found them: the deceitful politics of the Russian government. With the politically immature mind peculiar to inconsequent men, we fell from one extreme to another. Our condemnation of them today was equally blind and groundless, just as unfounded was our faith in the Russian government yesterday.

It was stated that the Russians were deliberately slow to act, showed uncertainty and provided the grounds and the means for the Turks to slaughter the local Armenians. It was professed that the reason behind this attitude on the part of the Russians was to leave Armenia

and later settle the Cossacks there and that Count Lobanov-Rostovsky's widely known project "Armenia without Armenians" was in progress.

It was not only people, but also our party and many of our citizens with common sense who also shared this idea.

We were unwilling to understand that there did not have to be such a project as "Armenia without Armenians" to explain the Russian stand and that the Russian plans did not necessarily have to involve such an item as unconditionally taking on the defense of the Turkish Armenians. Such a plan certainly did not exist. We were only projecting our own wishes on the Russian government and accusing them of treachery.

Our volunteer units were naturally trying to capture Van and Mush without any waste of time. They headed for these places to save the Armenians. However, Russian troops did not only consist of Armenians, and they had other intentions. Their slowness and hesitation to act, which we evaluated as treachery, is explainable by the customary ineffectiveness of the Russian command, which was witnessed many times on other fronts as well, or other general military conditions unknown to us now.

Being very much characteristic and interesting, this incident demands to be taken up individually. By an extraordinary mental aberration, we, a political party, kept forgetting that our Cause was a minor and trivial issue for the Russians, so trivial that if necessary, they would walk on our corpses without a moment's hesitation.

I do not say that we did not know the circumstances. Of course we knew and understood them and so we started when it was required to explain the situation. Deep down in our hearts, however, we did not grasp the full meaning of that wording. We forgot what we already knew and we drew such conclusions as though our Cause was the center of gravity of the Great War, its cause and its purpose. When the Russians were moving on, we used to say from the depths of our subconscious minds that they were coming to save us; and when they were withdrawing, we said they are retreating so that they allow us to be massacred. ...

In both cases we misinterpreted the consequence with the purpose and intention. We were seeking proof of Russian treachery and of course we found it - exactly as we sought and found a proof of Russian unquestionable compassion six months before.

To complain resentfully about our bad luck and to seek external causes of our bad luck - that is one of the main aspects of our national psychology from which, of course, the Dashnaktsutiun is not free.

One might think we found a spiritual comfort in the conviction that the Russians behaved wickedly towards us. Later on it would be the turn of the French, the Americans, the British, the Georgians, the Bolsheviks - the whole world – to be responsible for our misfortune as well.

One could think that, because we were so inexperienced and so lacking in foresight, we placed ourselves in such a position and considered it a great virtue to let anyone who so desired to betray us, massacre us and let others massacre us.

5. In February 1917 the Russian Revolution broke out. New opportunities opened up before us unpredictably.

In Russia a democratic order was being built. Extremely important social issues, such as appropriating the lands into public ownership, were waiting to be solved. We, the socialists and democrats, welcomed this new order with enthusiasm. Also, as a national political party, we concentrated on the issues of taking over the administrative power from the central authority and the autonomy of individual regions and peoples.

We set out on hard work.

We had to change the old state mechanism and set up local units of the new authority. The central government, which was going through the first phases of the Revolution, did not have the means to look into this question. The local cadres were completely entrusted with this matter. Social institutions, such as political parties, workers' unions, and national governments, were authorized with dealing with the issue, or, rather they took it upon themselves to deal with it.

The issue of national participation in the government was a particularly complex and difficult question in Southern Caucasia. National councils among which were Armenian councils were established in important centers.

The Southern Caucasia Commissariat and the Worker, Soldier and Peasant Soviets Southern Caucasian Center were established in Tiflis. These were two independent

establishments of the central government and were assigned with governing the region until governmental institutions were set up.

“The Soviets Center” had finally lost its authority by the end of the year and it left the political scene. On the other hand, the Southern Caucasia Commissariat gained strength and turned into the governing power of the whole Southern Caucasia.

6. The “Commissariat” was also a coalition, as it later proved to be in the Seym and in the Southern Caucasia government.

It represented parties in name and form, but it was international in essence. The main parties were: The Menshevik Fraction, the Social Democrats, the Musavat, and the Armenian Revolutionary Federation Dashnaktsutiun. These parties in fact represented the three main nations of the region: the Georgians, the Azerbaijani Tatars, and the Armenians.

The Georgian Mensheviks obtained the leading position, the key role in the Commissariat and later both in the Seym and in the government.

What was the reason?

Here are some of them:

First, the Commissariat had taken over its authority from the Provisional Government, or to be more exact from the State Duma circles in Petrograd. The Georgian representatives, over a long period of time, had acquired important positions and influence and had established contacts, relying on a strong organization, which was the Russian Social Democratic Party. When a “Commissariat” was established in Southern Caucasia, priority was naturally given to the Georgians and not to the Armenians or the Tatars who were not prominent in the Duma.

Second, among the Georgians there were people more or less experienced in state affairs. These people had acquired some habits and skills due to active participation in the work done in the Duma, they were close to what we call a “statesman”. Neither we, nor the Musavat, however, had been through such a school and were not prepared. The Musavat was new and Dashnaktsutiun was in fact only prepared for underground activity. Without doubt, the qualities of the party leaders were also important to a certain extent. The Georgians had bred a few capable people or social leaders; we had nobody to sit next to them, and we used to sit behind them in the second or third rows.

Another point was that during the old regime, the state affairs in Southern Caucasia were in the hands of the Georgians. After the Revolution this continued, for more people were to be found among the Georgians, who were competent enough to carry out technical work. Experience in official service naturally formed a strong basis for the Georgians to gain further power in administrative duties. Such was the situation from the “Commissariat” to the affairs concerning the railways and the post and telegraph.

The most important was the following:

The Georgians were the best-organized people with the highest social consciousness in Southern Caucasia. On the other hand, there was no threat against the physical existence of the Georgian people. For these reasons the Georgians were stronger than the other nations.

Due to the geographical location of the Georgian people, its compactness, together with the fact that they suffered fewer losses in the War and also that they bred no mutual antagonism serious enough to be a threat to their national existence against their neighbors made them luckier in being able to be heard, in comparison to the Armenians and the Azerbaijanis.

Anyway, the Georgians could be on better terms with Turkey and Azerbaijan, as compared to the Armenians. What was more important, there was no Georgians outside the borders of Georgia, whose lives were under threat. However, the Armenians had kin living in Azerbaijan as did Azerbaijanis with kin living in Armenia.

The Georgians were living in peace on their own land; although they did have certain border problems with their neighbors. These arose from imperialist claims and could easily be increased or completely solved without putting the present or the future of Georgia at risk.

On the other hand, the relations between the Armenians and the Turks and the Armenians and the Tatars were different. There had been problems between them going on for centuries and it was impossible to solve them without major conflicts. Turkey, unconditionally defeated on the west, was trying to open up a future for itself and consolidate it on the northeast. And here the Armenians interjected themselves between Erzurum and Baku and obstructed their way.

Insolvable land difficulties stood between the Armenians and the Azerbaijanis. The problem did not concern an aim to occupy just one or two districts but a desire to create a compact national mass. This wish was fostered both by the Armenians and the Azerbaijanis.

Armenia could not survive without Sharur-Nakhichevan and the importance of Nakhichevan for Armenia was different from the significance of Zaqatala, Akhalkalaki, and Lori for Georgia. This was why both Armenia and Azerbaijan were unlucky.

It could be possible for politically mature peoples to find peaceful solutions. However neither the Azerbaijanis nor we were mature enough; for this reason, the conflict between the two peoples had mutually become a source of antagonism and distrust.

The Georgians used the Armenian-Turkish and the Armenian-Tatar conflicts cleverly, in other, stronger words, opportunistically, in order to consolidate their privileged situation. They made matters worse for us and forced us to accept their conditions, relying on the Turks and the Tatars and threatening us with moving the borderline in this or that way. Whenever they needed to ally with us, they started threatening the Azerbaijanis. This kind of behavior was politically an absolute blackmail and it provided dominance for the Georgians over their neighbors and established their hegemony over others.

I have digressed a little but in order to make the political situation clear in that period in Southern Caucasia, it was necessary.

We must understand and keep in mind that in the most difficult days the party was under the hegemony of the Georgian Social Democratic Party, dragging behind it.

7. In late September 1917, the Armenian Convention took place in Tiflis. A national board was established as its executive organ and was named the Central National Council. Later this National Council acted on behalf of the Armenian people of Southern Caucasia and became the fully authorized representative of the nation.

Dashnaktsutiun played the leading part both at the Convention and on the board and the council.

8. At the end of the same year, elections took place in Southern Caucasia for the members of the Constituent Assembly.

Out of the parties that participated in the election campaigns, the Menshevik Social Democrats won 12, the Musavat won 10 and the Dashnaktsutiun won 9 seats. The number of seats won by the other parties was negligible.

These three parties represented three great nations who could be listed, according to their political weight, as the Georgians, the Tatars, and the Armenians. As these elections showed, the strongest, or rather the only organized party was Dashnaksutiun.

9. The Constituent Assembly could not meet. In October the Bolshevik Revolution broke out and was glorious in Moscow and Petrograd. The Soviet order was proclaimed and the meeting of the Constituent Assembly was not permitted, as this assembly was considered to have bourgeois tendencies.

Southern Caucasia, loyal to the February Revolution, did not recognize Soviet sovereignty and the Soviet system.

Why?

For the reason that in our region the leading parties preferred a democratic platform based on broad mass membership and according to this they would not accept a party dictatorship. On the other hand, they thought that the country was not mature enough to be totally socialist, let alone a communist regime. Besides, the Musavat Party possessed nothing in the name of socialism. The socialism of the Armenian Revolutionary Federation Dashnaksutiun had no deep roots among the masses of people within the party. Among the Georgian Mensheviks, on the other hand, the nationalistic anti-Russian trend was strong.

Secondly, the Georgian Mensheviks who determined the atmosphere in the political life of Southern Caucasia had broken away from the Bolsheviks and were openly opposing them.

Being loyal to their party regulations and the general political line of their party, the Mensheviks were pursuing here exactly the same policy that their Russian comrades were in Russia. The Musavat, which had enthusiastic desires about capturing Baku and had Panturkist ideals, wanted an immediate separation from Russia.

The Armenian Revolutionary Federation Dashnaksutiun had formed close relations with the local Bolsheviks and was assisting them, in the event that the Tatars would invade Baku. In Tiflis, however, it could not close its eyes to the reality of the Georgians and the Tatars and so could not put in practice Bolshevik policies. It would not have been able to do so even if it had wanted to. Anyway, there was no desire to do so, because the Bolshevik ideology and tactics did not appeal to the Party.

Our Party stood in the anti-Bolshevik camp partly due to certain convictions within the Party and partly because of being under the pressure of outside factors.

10. It is appropriate to remind you here of the neutral and reluctant stand our comrades took in Baku. Baku, the industrial city that bore a proletariat of tens of thousands and strong workers' organizations offered very favorable conditions for the development of Bolshevism. That city had been the only area where the Bolsheviks could find a reliable sanctuary and a sound support in the whole of Southern Caucasia since the first days of the Revolution. Even after the October Revolution Baku did not refuse the sovereignty of the Southern Caucasian Commissariat. In reality, however, the power was in the hands of two local organs: the Social Organizations Soviet and the Workers' Representatives Soviet.

The first one there was an anti-Bolshevik trend; in the second one the Bolsheviks dominated.

The Armenian Revolutionary Federation Dashnaktsutiun was represented in both organs. Inside these organs, which were independent of each other and were of different nature, an open struggle for domination was going on.

In the first period "the Social Organizations Soviet" was stronger. Here, the mild socialists and the liberal bourgeoisie had formed a silent alliance against the Bolsheviks. "The Workers' Representatives Soviet" was gradually gaining strength and by January 1918 it had achieved control over the entire situation.

This Soviet was led by the Bolsheviks. The Bolsheviks were not a significant force then; their accomplishments were essentially due to mutual distrust prevailing in the other camp.

Only two parties, Dashnaktsutiun and Musavat could present any strength against the Bolsheviks. However, if these two parties wanted to succeed in the struggle against Bolshevism, they had to act in alliance. This was incredible, for there was no mutual trust. Dashnaktsutiun was aware that its support for Musavat was required only because of the Bolshevik threat. Musavat had to remove Dashnaktsutiun from the political scene, after having eliminated the Bolsheviks. No doubt, the Bolsheviks would do the same to Dashnaktsutiun after having destroyed the Musavat with the help of armed Dashnag troops. The Bolshevik dictatorship was more acceptable for the Armenian community in comparison to Musavat absolute rule.

The fact that our people got more and more involved in the Bolshevik movement in Baku and that they provided a kind of sustenance to them is understandable only with this.

Just as we involuntarily came under the domination of the Georgian Mensheviks in Tiflis, we were under the influence of the Bolsheviks in Baku. The Turkish-Tatar threat was the motivating force in both cases. The Bolsheviks wiped out the Musavatists in Baku with our support in March 1918; we, on the other hand were able to protect Baku against the Turkish-Tatar attack with the help of the Russian elements among the Bolsheviks.

Later, again with our initiative, British forces were invited in from Persia. This happened in the last moments when the Bolsheviks were getting ready to escape to Russia and had boarded the ships.

The outcome of the events would probably have been different, if the British had been able to settle down firmly in Baku. However, the few numbers of the British troops did not promote trust among the people, and they boarded their ships and went back to Persia.

We were left alone; we did nothing else besides following the British to Persia.

The Azerbaijani government based in Gyandzha thus far entered Baku with Turkish armed forces and armed people. The Armenians started to be cruelly massacred, just as the Muslim people were massacred, on a smaller scale, in March during the Bolshevik-Musavat conflict.

These incidents happened outside Armenia, in one of the Tatar regions; nevertheless they were reflected on our political scene, they confused the situation, and this made it more difficult.

In order to be able to enter Baku the Tatars continually provoked the Turks against us and sped up their attack. With this purpose, they were very deceitfully speculating about the March incidents and tried to place the blame of the incidents entirely on the Armenians. The Georgians were unsatisfied with our association with the Bolsheviks; they had doubts about us, thinking we were looking for an opportunity to open the doors of Southern Caucasia to the Russian Bolsheviks. Apart from this, they considered the British forces in Baku to be a betrayal of the Georgian-German-Turkish-Tatar policies.

As a result of the policies we practiced in Baku, our neighbors started to regard us as independent allies. On the other hand, our comrades in Baku were sure that they would be able to protect the rest of Armenia against Turkish assaults by consolidating their existence in Baku and attracting the Turkish-Tatar forces to the city. They developed their policies in this direction.

I return to the chronological order of events.

11. At the end of November 1917 the Russian Army began to get demoralized and the soldiers started to abandon their troops on the Caucasian front. The front was being destroyed with amazing speed.

At the end of January, there was no longer an army. An insignificant number of Armenian troops, with some soldiers left over from the army, were ordered to defend the Erzurum line.

12. The situation in Southern Caucasia was getting more and more dangerous.

The Bolshevik Revolution and the civil war were spreading wider and wider every day, and had definitively cut off the outer regions from Russia.

The Commissariat, which acted in the name of the Provisional Government led by Kerensky, lost the ground under their feet after the Government was turned out of office. There was a need to establish a new power, powerful in the eyes of the public and capable of performing governmental affairs independently and with greater authority. Such a power was established with the Southern Caucasian Sejm and its Government.

The Sejm was shaped out of the Southern Caucasian members of the Constituent Assembly by multiplying this number by three. Thus the Mensheviks (Georgia) had 36, the Musavat (Azerbaijan) 30 and the Dashnaksutiun (Armenia) had 27 seats in the Sejm.

The Sejm convened in Tiflis, the natural and indisputable capital of Southern Caucasia.

At the first general congress that took place on 10 February 1918, the executive committee report was read and the resignation of the Commissariat was accepted. Later the Sejm, taking into consideration the fact that relations between our region and Russia had been actually broken and that it was uncertain as to when they would be reestablished, announced the independence of the Southern Caucasian Democratic Republic. It was the only institution that

held the executive power in its own hands. Within this context, Y. Gegechkory, a Georgian Menshevik, was commissioned to create a provisional government (cabinet) responsible to the Seym.

This did not mean a separation from Russia. It only revealed the actual situation and was temporary. Internationally, Southern Caucasia was considered to be an inseparable part of Russia.

13. Turkish military troops, encouraged by the increasing corruption of the Russian army, got rapidly organized, got themselves in order and started to capture one after the other, the regions they had lost. In the meantime, the Turkish Command (Vehib Pasha) started to initiate an armistice and the continuation of the peace talks.

The Seym decided to stop the war and sat down for a settlement with the Turks.

The first talks were held in Trapezund in March 1918. The Dashnaktsutun fraction was able to add among other Seym demands one for self-determination of the Armenians in Turkey within Ottoman borders, as a separate individual point. There were four separate demands.

However, Turkey immediately answered the demand, which was very badly formulated and was open to negotiation, and stated that the self-determination of the Turkish Armenians was an internal matter of Turkey and nobody had the right to interfere with its internal affairs. Thus, they gave us the message that if we ever brought up the issue of the Turkish Armenians, they would cut off any talks. The Southern Caucasians did not bring up the issue any more. The reason why they had not brought it up was clear; the Seym's decision was only a sign of good will towards the Armenians, and the Seym never had the intention of insisting on this demand. The Georgians were not inclined to get into unnecessary trouble. They did not feel the need to. For the Azerbaijanis, the Turkish interests were more important than the future of the Armenians and even of the Southern Caucasian Republic. The Armenian members of the delegation were definitely not capable of making the Tatars and the Georgians accept their demands. To be fair, it must be pointed out that even if our allies at that time (the Georgians and the Tatars) had been able to defend the Armenian demands most sincerely, they would not have been successful. The balance of power was on Turkey's side, and consequently there was no reason why Turkey should give any concessions. This point was clear to us, the Armenian members of the delegation.

The problem of borders became a burning topic of discussion.

According to the Turks the border between Southern Caucasia and Turkey had been determined with the Brest-Litovsk Agreement signed by the Bolsheviks. They affirmed they had come to Trapezund not to open this agreement to question but to establish friendly relations with their neighbor, the Southern Caucasian Republic. Southern Caucasia on the other hand did not recognize the Brest-Litovsk Agreement and thought it was the Southern Caucasian peoples who were sanctioned to decide about land concessions to Turkey. In other words, the Southern Caucasian delegation did not want to admit that the Soviet government was legally authorized. The reasons were as follows: 1. This government was not recognized within Russia itself; 2. According to the slogan of self-determination expressed during the period of the Great War, the real owners of Southern Caucasia was not the Russian Government, no matter how legitimate it might be, but the peoples of the region themselves.

This stand was very difficult to defend not only because it was new and disputable in international law, but also because the Turkish Army was growing stronger every day and the Southern Caucasian Army was on the edge of breaking down. In international affairs it is no secret that the powerful party proves to be right.

Another reason why it was not easy to defend this attitude was because the delegation did not come to an agreement within itself.

The Georgians were mainly concerned with the issues of Batum and Ajaria. In order to be able to secure the whole region, they were inclined to leave Kars and Ardahan to the Turks.

However, the Armenians needed Kars. We were ready to give Ajaria large concessions in order to obtain Kars in return. On the other hand, the Azerbaijanis, as the fourth, or, if Dagestan is taken into consideration, the fifth republic of the Southern Caucasian Federation, sought after a Southwestern Muslim Republic to be established in Ajaria. If not, they thought, Ajaria ought to be attached to Turkey. They did not want it to be attached to Georgia.

The Azerbaijanis defended entirely the same views with the Turks concerning Kars and Ardahan. They considered Kars and Ardahan Turkish territory and therefore regarded it quite natural that they should be attached to Turkey.

Turkey was very well informed about our internal disagreement and therefore insisted on their plan.

There was another issue which invoked great discussion: the Turks wanted Southern Caucasia to be pronounced autonomous of Russia and thought that an agreement with us would only then be possible.

The Southern Caucasian delegates persistently confirmed that Southern Caucasia was physically separated from Russia and was in fact independent. On the other hand, the Turks declared that for an international agreement to be signed, a de facto situation was not enough and that a legal foundation was necessary. They also stated that to bring this about, certain official procedures had to be carried out.

These fruitless talks went on for about a month ... The Turks benefited from the talks being on for so long. If not, they would have ended them at any moment. Time was passing and our military force and defense potential were continuously getting weaker while those of the Turks were getting stronger. At the same time as we were busy with holding meetings and with correspondence in Trapezund, the Turkish Army was advancing without meeting any obstacle. They occupied Erzurum at the end of March and Batum at the beginning of April.

However, the Sejm did not admit its defeat.

When it was apparent that the Turks would not make any concession on anything that was included in the Brest-Litovsk Agreement, the Sejm withdrew its delegation and the Trapezund talks broke up. This was called "a break".

14. Internal discord within the Sejm and inside the government of the Federation, which had been going on since the first days, was more clearly prominent now.

The Azerbaijanis were encouraged by Turkish success; their delegation had a better chance of sitting down with the Turks and talking in Trapezund, and they certainly did use it. In the Sejm the Azerbaijanis did not put out of sight that they sided with the Turks. Defending and developing the Turkish view, they insisted that Southern Caucasia should be quickly separated from Russia, Turkey should be given considerable concessions, and the war should also be ended. What's more, the Azerbaijanis demanded an agreement with Turkey, for they stated that as Muslim democrats, their religious feelings prevented them from getting actively involved in a fight with the Turks.

These words, uttered by a Musavat orator in the Sejm, should have been understood as a possibility that the Southern Caucasian Tatars would struggle against us, let alone fighting on

our side – they had never actually been in our ranks and had never fought on the Turkish front – if the war with Turkey was continued.

The Georgians hesitated, primarily the Menshevik fraction of the Sejm.

There were two trends, two different tendencies - the Russian tendency and the German-Turkish one. Those that were inclined towards Russia did not want a decisive separation from Russia, but because they evaluated the Brest-Litovsk Agreement as unacceptable, thought that instead of a peace with such conditions, a war was more acceptable. The representatives of the second trend were against Russia. They believed the Russian menace against Georgia to be more important than the Turkish threat. Therefore, they were ready to give great concessions to Turkey to be able to compromise. In other words, they were trying to give concessions in the name of Armenia, to be able to keep at least Batum and its harbor, if not the whole of Ajaria.

The Armenians, the Dashnaktsutium fraction in the Sejm, did not want to separate from Russia. At the same time they did not have optimistic expectations from Turkey. The Armenians would rather stop Turkish attacks with armed force, because they believed that it was going to be them, rather than anybody else, or perhaps only them, who would suffer losses, and they still hoped they were capable of future military victories.

In April the Armenian National Assembly met in Alexandropol and took up this issue. Despite the presentation made there, by the author of these lines, it was agreed that the Brest-Litovsk Agreement should be refused and the war should be continued. However, we were not in a position to emphasize our ideas; we could not even determine our own fate, so the decision could never be put into practice.

The indecisiveness of the Georgians did not last long. The German-Turkish trend was triumphant in the Sejm. As a result of this victory, on April 22 the Sejm proclaimed Southern Caucasia to be separated from Russia. On this occasion, the Georgian and the Tatar leaders made very emotional speeches at the Sejm meeting. The Dashnag fraction supported the proposal of separation but did not make any speeches.

Though it was not easy for us to admit the separation, there was no other way out. If we had opposed, the Southern Caucasian Federation would have broken down; the Georgians and the Tatars would have agreed to reconcile with the Turks, and we would have been left alone. In this case we would have been standing against the Turkish Army. Russia, neither Bolshevik Russia nor the anti-Bolshevik one, could not have helped us even if they had wished to. We

were not only alone, but behind our lines it was also not secure, for it was clear that the Azerbaijanis and perhaps the Georgians too in order to capture Akhalkalaki, Lori and Bambak would come against us. We needed the Southern Caucasian Confederation more than anybody else and did not want it to break down. That was why we had to follow our neighbors.

15. On April 25 Kars fell. There was almost no fighting, for directives were received from Tiflis to surrender the fortress to the Turks. This deceitful directive had been sent without our knowledge, and it aroused great reaction among our people. That day the fate of the Federation looked very critical.

However, what was done was done. The Kars fortress, which was our most strategic area, was now in the hands of the Turks; there was no room for hesitation and neglect. The Seym accepted the Brest-Litovsk Agreement and decided to continue the talks that broke up in Trapezund.

On the first days of May the talks resumed in Batum, where the Turks had quite comfortably settled by this time. This time the Turks had a different approach. The Brest-Litovsk Agreement was no longer satisfactory for them. They said that after the Trapezund talks there was more bloodshed and this had to be compensated for. They mainly demanded more land compensations from Armenia. Long and useless talks started again. The Brest-Litovsk Agreement that we did not want to hear in Trapezund a few months ago became our only wish now. However, it was impossible to persuade the Turks. They had gripped our throat tightly and did not want to let go.

On May 15 the Turkish troops crossed Arpatchai, which was the border according to the Brest-Litovsk Agreement, invaded Alexandropol in a few hours, and moved towards Karakilise.

The situation was intolerable.

Tiflis, which was the capital of Georgia and Southern Caucasia, was also under threat. No further progress was made in the talks going on in Batum.

16. No compromise could calm the disagreement in the Seym. An explosion was inevitable.

The Georgians were able to see that we were a useless burden on their shoulders and their own problems could be very easily solved without us. The Azerbaijanis, on the other hand,

had one wish: joining the Turks to invade Baku right away. Following the Turkish victory, the Azerbaijanis no longer had any need for the Southern Caucasian Federation. They did not need the Georgians, and they saw the Armenians as their enemy.

The moment of split came.

On May 26, the Sejm dissolved itself and abandoned its rights, taking into consideration that there were fundamental disagreements concerning issues of war and peace. On the same day and in the same building, the Georgian National Council declared the sovereignty of Georgia.

One day later Azerbaijan took the same step.

Now it was Armenia's turn.

Was it right to declare our sovereignty? Did we have the means to establish our own state and maintain it?

These questions were ridiculously unnecessary. May 1918 was not the time to organize elections. History had brought us to a certain point. We did not want to be annihilated, so we had to gather courage and solve this problem. We had to own our country; otherwise, we were going to lose it forever. Even small hesitation and neglect could create a situation of *res nullius* (a thing that does not belong to anyone) and in such a situation we would become war booty for our neighbors - the Turks, the Georgians, and the Tatars.

On May 28, late at night, the Central National Council declared Armenia a sovereign state and pronounced itself its supreme organ.

The Council had not received such authority from the National Board, but nevertheless they did not hesitate in the face of such a formal obstacle. Later no one accused the Council of contravening its authority. Everybody was aware that there was no other way.

17. On May 22-26 the battle of Serdarabat and on May 25-28 the battle of Karakilise were fought.

The Armenian people had gathered all their strength to defend its life. Without doubt, these violent fights, the fearless resistance that the people – there was no longer an army –

showed, especially around Karakilise, considerably raised our status in the eyes of the Turks and provided the opportunity for a settlement.

The Armenian delegates who were now acting on behalf of the Armenian Republic and who had been authorized by the National Council, returned to Batum and a treaty was signed on June 4.

It was a new stage in the life of the Armenian people; a phase of the revival of a state organization, which had been lost long ago.

18. On August 1 the Armenian Parliament began to work in Yerevan, and the first government was formed.

The parliament had been formed by tripling the present number of the National Council members. Six Muslims, one Russian, and one Yezid member were added to the other members. The Armenian Revolutionary Federation Dashnaksutiun received a majority. The Parliament had no stable center or an explicit political identity due to the fact that our fraction held 18 votes out of the 47 and that we could not form a coalition with any other fraction.

The government was not stable either. The cabinet changed four times during the first 10 months, but the head of the government remained the same.

The first governments were coalitions: the Dashnags, the Cadets, and an independent War Minister. The coalition government did not have a solid basis, because it did not have a safe majority in the parliament; the Cadets often took a different course from the Dashnags. What was more important was that among the parties forming the government there was no common agreement on the basis of the program. The attitude our party had towards the government was also an obstacle in this context.

19. Now I would like to take up a mistake, which I find very important, and explain it below.

Armenia was a Democratic Republic. It had the appropriate organs of a democratic-parliamentarian government: a legislative body composed of the people's representatives and a responsible administration. The Parliament was composed of representatives from the four existing Parties and minorities for the widest true democratic principles. The government received its authority from the legislative body and was responsible to it.

This was the form.

But the reality was otherwise.

In fact our Party tended to control both the legislative body and the government. We did not have enough courage to pronounce an open dictatorship, but we did not wish to remain within parliamentary limits either, and we tried to establish in Armenia the Ittihad system - a party dictatorship masked as a democracy.

An intolerable dualism resulted from it - on the surface the Parliament and the government, behind the scenes, invisible - the Party and its organs.

Obviously these two brands of authority, official and informal, were only obstructing one another. The official rules prevented the party from acting unreservedly and quickly and imposing its own will. The manipulations of the party also prevented the government from acting according to its own plan. This factor made it extremely difficult to form coalitions. In actual fact, the foreign elements of the coalition government had to practice the policies that had been determined outside the government, in party offices that did not belong to them, and over which they had no control.

Last summer I prepared a report on this sensitive issue and presented it to the Party Congress, as I was instructed by the related party organ. My report was read at the regional meeting, which took place in Constantinople.

Here will suffice a few lines on this issue.

20. In November a general peace was declared. Germany and its allies lost the war. The German troops left Georgia in haste. The Turks also receded back into their old territory.

At the end of the month British troops – the troops of our ally – entered Batum. We started to entertain new hopes. Our situation in Southern Caucasia seemed to be radically changing, for the victorious and those, who had replaced the German troops in Tiflis, were our allies. We were fighting against our common enemy. We certainly would achieve the privilege of special friendship of the British, compared to the Georgians, who had flirted with the Germans, and to the Azerbaijanis, who had openly gone over to the Turkish side.

It was our next mistake. The British did not see any difference between us. They acted as if either they did not know that we had been their ally or had forgotten this. The generosity they showed towards the Georgians and the Azerbaijanis was unexpected and incomprehensible. We certainly did not like this attitude of the British and thought they were unfaithful. This was the easiest way of explaining to ourselves the incomprehensible situation. We realized that they were unfaithful and we were relieved. We did not examine the reasons for this unfaithfulness.

21. At the beginning of December, a war between Georgia and Turkey broke out, but it did not last long. When the Turks moved from Alexandropol to Bambak and captured Karakilise, the Georgians took the opportunity and sent troops to the Lori region of Armenia. However, even when the Turks retreated, the Georgians did not want to leave Lori. On the contrary, they took every opportunity to secure their presence there.

They cruelly suppressed the resistance of the people of the region. Lori became a matter of disagreement and the gravest border question between the Armenians and the Georgians.

In order to be able to apply pressure on us, Georgia broke us off from the rest of the world; they locked us up inside our own borders. Even the wheat, which was imported into our country in order to feed our immigrants, was blocked in Georgia and could not properly reach its destination.

Georgia invaded Lori and closed the railway. We were surrounded. This was actually a reason to declare war on Georgia. The revolt of some Armenian villages in Lori and the severe measures taken by the Georgian government was a direct reason for declaring war. It looked like the Georgian government was searching for reasons to massacre the Armenian population.

The provocations of the Russian officers serving in our army also likely played a part. The government in Georgia was trying hard to diminish the Russian factor, which was quite strong in Tiflis, restrain its influence and nationalize the state apparatus. For this reason they were dismissing the Russian officials and officers and were expelling them from Georgia in big groups.

A significant number of Russian officers were serving in our army and these officers had connections in Tiflis, and perhaps also in the volunteer units of the Denikin Army. They tried to provoke our military circles in order to create the hostile atmosphere necessary for initiating a military operation.

The war lasted only three weeks. On December 31, the British intervened and a settlement was reached. Lori was temporarily pronounced a neutral zone and a common Armenian-Georgian authority was established there, under the supervision of a British commissar.

From this point of view the conclusion of the war was favorable for us. We had partially achieved our goal: the railway connection was re-established with the help of the British. Nevertheless, the war made us think over many issues. We were a very young state with a history of only 4-5 months and this country, which was in need of many things, had fought a war. We had been fighting with a neighbor with whom we had to have the closest relations, for Georgia was our only neighbor to connect us with the rest of the world.

We were aware of that and sincerely wished to have friendly relations with the Georgians, but we were not able to accomplish that. The reasons were our own weakness, our political inadequacy, our inaptitude to use the state apparatus, and the attitude the Georgians took towards us.

22. I also have to mention the continuous fights going on within and outside our national borders.

We were officially at war with Azerbaijan because we were actually fighting with them in Karabakh. There were often clashes in Kazakh too. Inside the country, at certain places like Akbaba, Zod, Zangibasar, Vedibasar, Sharur-Nakhichevan, Zangezour, etc. many bloody battles were fought with the native Muslim inhabitants.

There is no doubt that the attitude of Azerbaijan in this matter was aggressive. Also it is indisputable that the native Muslim inhabitants had been acting against the Armenian state because Turkey and Azerbaijan encouraged them. What is important is that we had not been able to take the precautions either within our country or outside it to secure our stand. We could not establish an acceptable *modus vivendi* with Azerbaijan. We were not capable of establishing order by means of administrative methods in the Muslim regions. We were obliged to use arms, send troops, demolish and massacre. We were not successful even in these, so this failure shook the prestige of the central authority. In important places such as Vedibasar and Sharur-Nakhichevan we were not able to establish our authority even with arms; we lost and retreated.

23. On May 28, 1919 on the anniversary of our independence, the Parliament declared Armenia "united". It stated that we included the land, which would possibly be saved from

Turkish sovereignty, into the present territory of Armenia. This procedure was considered by some Turkish Armenians as appropriating their rights because they found it extremely dangerous from the point of view of the Armenian Question. They made a great fuss over it, they protested, and they opposed the Armenian Question in Turkey to the Armenian question in Russia. The liberal bourgeoisie inside and outside the country called this irresponsible behavior on the part of Dashnaktsutiun and started acting angrily towards the party.

These objections and worries had no basis. The Dashnaktsutiun had no intention of usurping their rights or doing any plotting; besides, it was later understood that this step would not harm the Armenian Question in Turkey. The May Declaration had no effect whatsoever on the Armenian question in Turkey, and nobody ever even became aware of it.

Later it was seen that the hopes of the people who prepared this declaration, designed to increase the political significance of Armenia and to facilitate the diplomatic work done in Europe, were in vain. The situation underwent no change in the eyes of European diplomacy. A single declaration of our parliament, this scanty record, which had not been supported with the necessary activities, could not have changed the actual effect. It could have been expected that our national delegation in Paris would be eliminated, but it was not. Even following May 28, two diplomatic missions in Europe The Delegation of the Republic and the National Delegation continued to function side by side; they were assigned to promote the same issues in the same places to the same people. However, it proved difficult to compromise the activities of these two organs that were competing for authority. In this way our undivided front in Europe was divided. In Armenia it became difficult to find an opportunity to have a coalition with liberal elements and for this reason our party was more secluded.

The psychological demands, which led us to announce the Federal Armenian Declaration, are understandable.

Those political considerations which led us and which justified the declaration are also comprehensible. Nevertheless, it is a fact that this declaration did not lead to any positive results; its unfavorable consequences – domestic strife and conflicts – are, on the other hand, very clear.

24. The Armenian Parliament opened on August 1, 1919. The elections took place in accordance with democratic procedure – general, equal, direct and secret balloting. But it was strange and discouraging that 72 out of 80 members (i.e., 90%) were Dashnags, with only four

members from the SRs. We were triumphant but did not understand that it was not a Parliament but the parody of a Parliament. We were not aware of the fact that our people are not mature enough for independent political life.

We could not grasp that our parliamentary success was not actually a victory but a defeat and that by sending 72 members into the Parliament we had lost the ground, the democratic foundation.

We did not understand that as we assumed authority, we were at the same time assuming all the responsibility. We lacked the necessary training and workers. We could not understand that a strong opposition was needed simply to discipline us and to prevent us from transgressing the present law and order. We also did not understand that by carrying our party meetings into the parliament we were actually bringing the existence of our party to an end.

There was no Parliament in Armenia; it was an empty form without content.

The problems of state were being discussed and solved behind closed doors, in the rooms of the Dashnag faction, and then declared from the rostrum of the Parliament. There was actually not even a parliamentary faction, because the latter was under the very strict supervision of the Dashnag Bureau, it was obliged to carry out its instructions. There was not a government either. This, also, was subject to the Bureau; it was a kind of executive body for the Bureau in the state. This was the Bolshevik system. But what the Bolsheviks were doing openly and consistently, we were attempting to veil under democratic forms.

25. On the first days of May 1920 there were Bolshevik demonstrations and attempts at an uprising. These were suppressed without much effort, because they had no basis; Bolshevism was strange to us. There was also no outside support.

However, a very characteristic situation appeared: a group of young Bolsheviks was making boisterous demonstrations and propaganda among the military troops even in Yerevan in front of the government), occupying the train station in Alexandropol and capturing an armored train.

This shows how careless, weak, and ignorant the government was.

26. Following the Bolshevik rebellious efforts of May 1920, there was a *coup d'etat* and the A.R.F. Bureau, the so-called “Bureau Government”, replaced the Parliament with its own dictatorial rule.

By order of the Bureau the resignation of Prime Minister A. Khatsov was accepted on May 5. Dr. H. Ohandjanian was ordered to form a new cabinet. He presented the already prepared list of ministers, which was the Bureau itself with no exceptions. The Parliament was ordered recessed for an indefinite period.

This contradicted the decision of the 9th General Meeting of the A.R.F. and had many disadvantages, but it also had the advantage of coming out in the open in its true form and color.

27. The Armenian-Turkish war, which broke our back, began in the fall of 1920. Would it have been possible to evade it? Probably not. The crushed Turkey of 1918 had recovered during the two years. There came forward patriotic, young officers who formed a new army in Anatolia. They saw the necessity of attacking in the Northeast, and also in the Southwest against the Greeks, which they could not do without first crushing their flank on the Armenian front. They probably needed the military supplies, which had been kept in large quantities in Kars and Alexandropol. One cannot say that the Turks really had such a plan, but it is possible that they did and it was also probable that the war with us was inevitable. In spite of these hypotheses there remains an irrefutable fact: we had not done all that was necessary to avoid war. We ought to have used peaceful language with the Turks whether we succeeded or not.

We did not do it.

We did not do it for the simple reason - no less culpable - that we had no information about the real strength of the Turks and relied on ours. This was the fundamental mistake. We were not afraid of war because we thought we would win. With the recklessness of inexperienced and ignorant men we did not know what forces Turkey had assembled on our frontiers. When the battles had started the Turks suggested that we should meet and confer. We did not do so and defied them. It was our grave mistake. We missed a chance to come to a peaceful settlement.

It is necessary to keep in mind that in the autumn of 1920 we were not a “negligible quantity” in the eyes of the Turks. The terrible incidents of the past years were forgotten. Our people were well rested and our army was well armed with British arms. We had sufficient ammunition. We were holding Kars, a very important fortress, in our hands. Finally there was

the Treaty of Sevres and it was not simply a piece of paper in those days; it was an important gain against the Turks.

We were not in a comparable position to what we had in May 1918 in Batum. We could easily believe we could be heard because the Turks were considered the defeated party.

We did not make an attempt.

If we had accepted their offer what would they have proposed to us? They would probably have started from where we had left at Batum and Brest and then they would have given further concessions and retreated behind the 1814 border. They could possibly have withdrawn further and could have handed over Bayazet and Alashkert too.

The Turks would never have given any further concessions than these in September 1920, and, in return, they were going to demand from the Armenian government that they give up the rights advanced by the Treaty of Sevres.

How would the Armenian government have reacted to this?

They would have certainly refused the offer. The government would never have agreed to these conditions; they would have preferred war.

Not only the Dashnag Bureau-Government but also any Armenian government would have acted in the same way. I stress this fact. And this quite significantly lessens the misdeeds committed by our party. The government could have never accepted these conditions because all the political parties and groups, all our diplomats, all the appointed and voluntary patriots, all would have revolted, rejected the government, and accused it of treason. The Sevres Treaty had blinded everyone's eyes.

We now see that if we had agreed on a direct settlement with the Turks in spite of the Sevres Treaty, we might have gained a lot. But we could not see this at that point.

All these are possibilities, but they are also the reflections of our thoughts then. On the other hand, the war remains the main point.

We did not do anything to avoid war but did just the opposite; we were trying to find excuses for it. It is also a reality, an unforgivable reality. What is also inexcusable is that we had no idea about the military power of Turkey, and neither did we know our own army.

28. The result of the war was our unarguable defeat. Our army was well fed and well armed and dressed but it did not fight. The troops were constantly retreating and deserting their positions; they threw away their arms and dispersed in the villages.

During the period of internal strife our army was disheartened due to the absurd destructions and the pillages that went without punishment. Our army was demoralized and tired. The system of roving bands, which was especially encouraged by the Bureau government, was destroying the unity of the military organization. The instruction of the army, its military spirit, its organization and discipline, and therefore its power for defense had deteriorated to the last degree, and that was a surprise to the government. The government and its war minister did not know their own army.

And then the government made a fatal mistake. Intending to increase the number of troops, it called under arms additional men who were past middle age and tired, overburdened with family and financial burdens. They were made to put on military uniforms in a great hurry; rifles were put into their hands, and they were instantly sent to the front. These were ready-made deserters that caused further demoralization in the army.

29. In the second half of November when the triumphant armies of Karabekir Pasha had reached Alexandropol, the Bureau-government presented its resignation. It could not stay in power any longer after the defeat. Then it became necessary to begin negotiations with the Turks, and it seemed vital that those who negotiated should be new faces. After a short period of indecision, the government of Simon Vratsian was formed. It consisted of Dashnags and social revolutionaries. Dashnag ministers belonged to the “left” wing of the Party, while the Prime Minister was known to be a man of the Russian orientation. The socialist revolutionaries had personal ties in the Armenian Bolshevik circles.

There was a slight hope that in the event the Bolsheviks came to power – this fact, as we began to realize, was inevitable – a government with such a composition would be able to find a common language with the newcomers.

30. The Turks had already occupied Alexandropol.

In the meantime the Armenian Bolsheviks at the head of the Red troops entered Ejevan and Delijan on Akstafa’s side.

Was there an understanding between the Bolsheviks and the Turks?

In our lines that belief was widespread. I think, however, that it was wrong. There was still no definitive evidence. It is probable that the Bolshevik agents or individuals with Bolshevik leanings were trying to destroy our Army from the inside, but for that it was not necessary to have an agreement with the Turks.

Of course the Bolsheviks profited from our defeat and that was very natural. The reason for our crushing defeat was not the treachery of the Bolsheviks or the strength of the Turks but our own weakness. The Bolsheviks certainly made use of our defeat. But they did not need to arrive to a preliminary understanding with the Turks. Our uncles from Shoragel “contributed” a lot with their sole desire to go back home as soon as possible to start mowing and get their wheat.

It was not difficult to see that the Bolsheviks, who had been victorious in Russia and had settled in Azerbaijan, were obliged to enter Georgia and Armenia as well. It was only a matter of time. They just needed to choose a favorable time so that they would not have to spend too much effort. It was Armenia's turn now and the Bolsheviks did in December what they had not been able to do in May.

31. On December 1 (or November 30) our delegates signed an agreement with the Turks in Alexandropol that was not much different from the cruel treaty of Batum. On December 1 that same Vratsian government resigned and relinquished its power to the Bolsheviks.

The Bolsheviks entered Armenia without meeting any opposition. This was the decision of our Party.

There were two main reasons why we acted this way. First, we could not resist even if we wanted to. We were beaten. Second, we hoped that the Soviet authorities, supported by Russia, would be able to set up some order in the state. It was the job we could not do, no matter how hard we tried, and it was obvious that we would never be capable of performing it.

We wanted the Bolsheviks to rule the country without any obstruction; we wished to remain loyal to the new government and to cooperate with their useful work.

This decision was not unanimous.

There were those who disagreed, those who did not expect anything good from the Bolsheviks; they demanded opposition and fighting, even though defeat was inevitable. They

were not numerous though. When their proposal was rejected, the most strong in opposition left the country.

There was also another minority, opposed to the first one. It wanted to come closer to the Bolsheviks and form a political block with them. It broke off and came to be known as the “Leftist Dashnags”. They did not succeed, however. The Bolsheviks doubted their sincerity.

32. The Bolsheviks governed the country during the two and a half months until the February revolt. The hopes of the optimists did not come true. The political and financial expectations from Russia were not realized. A regime, which could be defined in no other way than “autocracy and infinite pressure” was established.

Every type of dictatorship essentially means pressure and the reverse is not possible. Any revolutionary government, coming to power, needs to take decisive and extraordinary measures. This is an essential need and it is due to the nature of things. However, the Bolsheviks’ violence in Armenia had one characteristic - it was meaningless and excessive.

If the Bolsheviks had applied sufficient political tact in the first phases in the amount they later did, they would have guaranteed their presence in Armenia, for there were no opposing forces in the country. However, the Bolsheviks did not understand this and started looking for counter-revolutionaries in absurd places and provoked the people against them.

The February revolt is exclusively their own doing. It was the result of their pressures, their despotic behavior and their endless confiscations, which used up the last remains of the economy and deprived the people, who already had nothing to eat, of their last morsel. Dashnaktsutiun did not take part in the organization of this revolt; it was opposed to it.

I know that some irreconcilable Dashnags somehow got connected with the preparations in some villages (in Kotaik in particular), before the actual revolt. However, it was not the doing of our party but of individual members. However, after the revolt broke out, our party became active; it followed the masses and then guided an action that somebody else had been preparing.

33. At the end of the revolt, the Bolsheviks were pushed out of central Armenia towards the peripheral regions (Sharur and Kazakh). An “Armenian Salvation Committee” was immediately established. It came to power and led the struggle. The civil war lasted for 1.5 months.

In our circles, the tendency to explain the defeat of those who revolted by the supremacy of the Bolshevik forces is widespread. However, I do not share this view. Lots of people struggled well and were really brave; however those were not our people but the Bolsheviks. If our people had fought well, they could have suppressed the enemy on the Yelenov front (anti-Bolshevik Georgia was still resisting and the Bolsheviks were not able to get any outside help and their own forces were not numerous). The reason for this bad fighting on our part was not due to unwillingness. If it were, we would not have rebelled and shown the enthusiasm witnessed in Yerevan in the first days of the revolt; we did not have faith in our own strength and did not believe in success.

The revolt was a spontaneous and casual action. It broke out very unexpectedly, flared up, and soon died down. I am not trying to say that if the insurgents had fought well, the Soviet forces could have been subverted; no, defeat was inevitable (especially after the fall of Georgia). We could have killed all the Bolsheviks in Armenia. It would not have been difficult if the revolt had been more planned, but behind them was Russia with its Red Army. The Armenian peasants or the Dashnaksutiun Party was not going to resist that. However, what I would like to point out is that the revolt was destined to be defeated, because there was no self-reliance and confidence of success.

34. On April 2, when the Bolsheviks reached Kanakir and occupied Yerevan posts, we left Yerevan for Daralagez through Bash-Gyarni.

A large mass of people, who did not know where and why they were going, were also on the move, along with the insurgents and the party members.

The Defeat was inevitable. In the following two or three months, what happened in Daralagez and Zangezour was no longer a fight but a painful death.

After the fall of Yerevan, it was time to Sovietize the mountainous part of Armenia. Our presence there had probably sped up the flow of events.

We had thought that by moving into the mountainous part of Armenia, we would add to the strength of the native people and increase their ability to resist. We had not taken into consideration that a defeated militia who were on retreat could increase the demoralization and helplessness of frightened masses of people.

The native people did not favor us. They were inhospitable; they would rather not see us. On top of everything, we had to share their last bits of food.

We invited confusion to their lives. A firm contradiction between native and outside Armenian authorities began.

The military forces were dissolving day by day. Some of the soldiers who had accompanied us and who did not like the way they were treated by the native people, were now thinking about going back home. The groups consisting of the Turkish Armenians, both armed and unarmed ones, were trying to reach Araxe River and then pass to Persia. The native people now saw that the army was breaking up and there was disorganization. They started to doubt their own strength.

At the end of the summer, Zangezour, which was the last headquarters of the Democratic Republic, was wiped out.

Armenia was totally Sovietized.

35. In the meantime, what had been our diplomatic activity with the outside world (Poland, Europe and America) during our liberation, and what were the results?

In spring 1919, the Paris Delegation of our Republic presented a Memorandum of our demands to the Peace Conference in Paris in cooperation with the National Delegation of the Armenians in Turkey.

According to that Memorandum the frontiers of the Armenian State would include:

A. The Caucasian Republic with an increase in territory: the entire district of Yerevan, the districts of Kars without the northern part of Ardahan, the southern section of the Tiflis territory, the south-western part of Yelizavetpol;

B. The seven vilayets of Turkish Armenia: Van, Bagesh, Diarbekir, Kharberd, Sebastia, Karin and Trapezund, excluding only the southern section of Diarbekir and the western section of Sebastia;

C. The four sanjaks of Kilikia: Marash, Sis, Djebel-Bereket and Adana with Alexandretta.

A vast state was being organized and demanded - a Great Armenia from the Black Sea to the Mediterranean, from the mountains of Karabakh to the Arabian Desert.

How could we put this imperialistic demand into practice?

Neither the government of Armenia nor the Dashnaktsutjun took such an absurd plan seriously. On the contrary, our Delegation brought from Yerevan very light demands, commensurate with our very modest ability.

How did it happen that our Delegation advanced the “From Sea to Sea” demand?

It looks improbable now, but Paris made this demand and our Delegation fell under its influence. The phenomenon is very familiar to us.

Our Delegation was told that if its representatives did not demand those frontiers, the Turkish Armenians through their National Delegation would separate their cause from that of the “Republic of Ararat” and will apply to the Powers on their own. Besides, our Delegation was told that America would not accept a mandate over a small Armenia but would accept one over a “From Sea to Sea” Armenia.

Since it would have been unsafe to proceed with the defense of our Cause with two separate bodies, each with contradictory demands, and for the reason that the American mandate was what we wanted, our delegates signed the Memorandum and presented it to the Powers.

I do not find our party guilty. I do not want to say that in case our demands would have been more modest the results could have been different. I only want to mention that our Party has not managed national affairs, has not had a strong will, and has not followed our own program, but it has been led by others and has allowed the others to lead our Party.

The Paris Memorandum thrilled our young minds, especially in the colonies. As if it were enough to draw the frontiers on paper in order to have those territories.

Aimless and exaggerated demands resulted in a bitter awakening: the Treaty of Sevres. The Treaty that did not mention both Kilikia and Kharberd with Svaz – it did not foresee the frontier to be so broad – provoked general disappointment and typical complaints. Later on there appeared even greater disillusionment. The Senate of the United States refused to accept the mandate.

The frontier drawn by President Wilson did not satisfy us. We thought we deserved larger territory. There were the usual complaints that the powers were unfair, did not appreciate us, and did not compensate us what we deserved.

However, these narrow borders were still an inaccessible and tempting “blue bird” for us. The Turks accepted neither the Wilson solution, nor our objections, nor the Sevres Treaty. Instead of vacating Armenian lands, they were heavily arming and consolidating their positions. The allies on the other hand, showed no intention of forcing the rebel Angora to submit. It was the reverse; they had started to flirt with them. It was as if they did not see that we were unsatisfied, and they were busy with their own affairs.

I often use the words “we” and “our” and do not clarify these pronouns. In many cases, I do not put any distinction between the party and the masses of people. Here is another example of the same psychology, the same narrow scope, and the same political thoughtlessness.

In 1922 the agony of the Armenian Cause began.

At the Lausanne Conference the word “home” was heard for the first time. The Treaty of Sevres was completely forgotten. There was no question of an independent Armenian state. Only an uncertain “home” in someone else's home. They said it was the last concession for the sake of peace to stubborn Angora.

This was in March.

The situation underwent some changes, unfavorable for us, by the end of the year. No “home” was demanded for us; it was presented as a friendly piece of advice and a mild request.

The Turks politely refused everything. The Great Allies, in a desperate gesture, confessed and bewailed that they had done everything possible to help the Armenians but could not do anything... And then they proceeded to the subject of coupons.

Then comrade Chicherin came out and offered in the name of Soviet Russia to locate the rest of the Turkish Armenians in Crimea, on the shores of the Volga and in Siberia. Thus, the “state” was reduced to a “home”, and the “home” was converted into colonies in Siberia. The mountain did not even give birth to a mouse.

This was the past. If we are to evaluate the work we did and the results we obtained, we must confess that we have nothing to pride ourselves in from the time we declared the

independence of our Republic. We must admit that the job to form a State and lead it was far beyond our strength.

It is irrefutable that the situation Armenia found itself in, as well as the environment of our work, was grave. But it is also evident, to me at least, that it was our ineptness that prevented us from conducting affairs of state properly. We have always miscalculated and have always encountered with unpredictable situations because we have been unable to foresee them.

Therein lay our weakness.

Later, without a definite understanding of our work we did not have the leading force and a consistent system. We acted as if unintentionally, under the influence of accidental circumstances. We were swinging to and fro, striking our heads against the walls.

We were not aware of our potential, very often overemphasizing it. We did not realize the essence of obstacles, despised our opponents, regarded the dangers with complete unconcern.

We had been unable to distinguish the State from the Party, and we have introduced party mentality into matters of state. We have not been statesmen.

Let no one take offense at these words, which are not spoken with any malice but are a mere self-estimation. Is it not true that I myself have been among the incompetents on the front line, your teammate, equally responsible in our defeat?

I used the word “responsible”... I have had no courage so far to add that we were, most of the time, not aware of the responsibility we had taken upon us. We were not always sufficiently honest in connection with our duties. I do not have the courage, because I have worries about whether I can be sufficiently just. Yet some people know about it and some day, perhaps some person who is more just than I am will come talk about it more fairly.

What is the present?

Between the River Araxe and Lake Sevan we have a small Republic, nominally free, but in reality only one of the fringe countries of the re-established sovereign Russian Empire. There is no Turkish Armenia, neither State nor Home, not even an international political Question any more – it was eliminated and buried at Lausanne.

I can say more: There are no longer any Armenians in Turkish Armenia and it is out of the question that one day they will come back. The Turks have firmly closed the doors and a force, which will make them open the doors, does not exist any more.

There are almost one million Armenians living outside the borders of the Republic: in Georgia, Azerbaijan, Northern Caucasia, Persia, Syria, Constantinople, the Balkans, all over the world.

Only a very small number of Armenians, living in other countries, are able to find shelter in Armenia. Leaving out the temporary difficulties, the narrow borders of the Republic do not allow massive migration – I mean the possibility of migration of the peasants in Armenian vilayets to Armenia. On the other hand, the social identity of the Armenians living outside Southern Caucasia, the petty bourgeoisie who have not had the chance to make a living in their plundered agricultural country which depends on commercial centers, is no less of a problem.

The Armenians in the diaspora are not considered to be one of the fundamental elements of the Armenian Republic. And the longer this process takes, the more alienated they will feel.

The Armenians in the colonies will perhaps be of some value for some time as *an element of the nation*, and this situation is associated with how we maintain our national ties and raise our national consciousness. Now only the part of the Armenian nation, which remained in Armenia and the big pieces located in the neighboring republics of Georgia and Azerbaijan are only meaningful in connection with being a state-founding element. The Armenian state must rely on them and must consolidate on this basis.

The Armenians in the colonies could be viewed as a kind of reserve and assisting force on a very modest scale, emergency stock for an unknown future. *Nowadays the direct subject of concern for the Armenian political mind must be the existing Republic, the Armenians who live in and around it.*

I underscore this sentence strongly and call it to your special attention, for that will be the starting point of our future action.

What should the attitude of our Party be towards this Republic, its regime, and its Government?

This Republic is not independent; it is a part of the Southern Caucasian Federation or even of Russia. Armenia is actually an autonomous state under the supervision and power of Moscow.

Is this a political ideal of our party? Can this satisfy us?

Certainly not.

Earlier I mentioned that in the spring of 1918 the Armenian Revolutionary Federation Dashnaktsutiun had involuntarily voted for the separation of Armenia from Russia. We were afraid of a disconnection then; we wanted to stay attached to Russia. However, this does not mean that we did not like independence and that our ideal was being a vassal state.

I am truly convinced that the Armenian Revolutionary Federation Dashnaktsutiun, whether consciously or not, has always fought for the political liberation of the Armenian people.

The essence, the meaning, the historical mission, the power and value of our Party are all in this point. Whatever his tendencies might be, there is not a single genuine Party member who has not been inspired by the idea of independence or aspiration of liberty. Within this context, the scope of our Party is extremely broad and the number of members is many times more than what has been recorded in the Party books.

I already explained my views quite broadly in “Chakatamart” last spring, so I do not believe I have the right to repeat them now. However, I want to add now that the present fate of Armenia cannot be the ideal Dashnaktsutiun has dreamed about.

No doubt we were frantic advocates of the idea of federation. We still are, and we know that Armenia, small as it is, cannot survive in any other way. However, we would support a federation where the states are united according to their own will and with equal rights. The present Russian Federation has not been structured on these grounds.

The Armenian Republic is a Soviet Republic. The Soviet system theoretically presupposes a class dictatorship. However, what is going on in Armenia now can be called the dictatorship of the Communist Party.

Can this form of authority satisfy us?

Certainly not.

It is true that we have made an unsuccessful attempt to establish our own dictatorship, but dictatorship, whether of party or class, is not a religion for us. Inexperienced in national government, we were poisoned with political power, could not resist its attraction, but we stumbled. However, we finally recognized our mistake and started looking for ways out. If we had been late, we would have fallen down, for not only the “religion” but also the structure of our party was not appropriate for a dictatorship. There is no class or stratum, party or group in Armenia that can establish a dictatorship relying only on its own force. It seems that our country has been created for democracy; what we are deficient in is only political education and the habits of governing a state.

This deficiency makes it difficult to establish an authentic democratic order, but it cannot obviously serve as a ground for an interior dictatorship.

The socioeconomic life in the Soviet Union, and in Armenia for that matter, has been built or tried to be built on communist principles.

Do we find such a policy necessary and useful for Armenia?

No, we do not.

All this is not related to how conscious we are about socialism and how much we have absorbed it. Neither does it depend on how compatible it is with our party’s structure and its collective ideology.

I am using this negative statement without any hesitation, as an old and incorrigible communist I know from my own world outlook that not only communist principles but also simple socialist ones are not appropriate for present day Armenia.

Armenia is not mature enough for socialism and does not possess the minimal reasons that would call for an attempt in this direction. Any attempt made in this course is doomed to fail and especially is a crime committed against Armenian workers. I also took up this issue quite broadly in the “Chakatamart” journal. Since I do not see any disagreement on this among us, these lines will.

* * *

So neither the political situation in Armenia nor its political scheme and its interior socio-economic policies can satisfy us. We do not want the present republic but another one.

Consequently, what should our stand be towards this republic, its regime and government?

The simple and short answer is: we must resist it. However, simple and short answers might be erroneous when complicated issues like that are in question.

Political parties do not represent institutions where abstract topics are taken up and solved on a theoretical basis; the mission of political parties is not to develop theories – it is a secondary task – but *action* and *action performed in the existing concrete conditions*.

When we think in these terms because we must; otherwise, we will make grave mistakes, and the answer will be different.

A struggle requires a definite aim and concrete and useful means to reach it. What means do we possess and what profit can they bring us?

If the Soviet system recognized civil liberties, we, as the opposition, would express ourselves openly in the press and in public meetings; we would criticize the erroneous policies of the Soviets. We would form public opinion, we would group supporters on our side, and we would organize the dissatisfied and resisting elements.

If the Soviet system allowed for political equality, we would participate in the election campaigns, try to find ourselves posts in the Soviets and try to cause certain changes in the laws and regulations.

However, the Soviet authority does not want to accept either civil liberties or political equality.

This authority is a party dictatorship, let us call it a class dictatorship. It is certainly possible to deplore it. We can complain or get angry about it, but it will change nothing and the reality will stay the same: we have no place as the legal opposition in Armenia.

I am talking about Armenia itself, because I do not think an opposition outside Armenia will be of any value to us.

Of course, in the colonies it is possible for us to talk and write about any issue we want. What we need is only some paper, a printing-house, some money, and nothing more. However, what can public opinion in the Armenian colonies in Romania, or in Egypt, admitting that such public opinion can be created, mean for Soviet Armenia?

Maybe we should bring the press secretly to Armenia?

In the past, during the Tsarist regime, we used to take the “Droshak” and other publications secretly to the country. At present, if I am not mistaken, the SRs are secretly taking the publications they have published abroad to Russia. I have no idea what they might be hoping for and how successful they will be in this hidden propaganda. However, taking into consideration our reality, I wonder if these declarations could be published on the sly and be read by only a hundred people. Are they going to have any significance in the face of numerous publications the Bolsheviks have been making available throughout the country?

The most significant thing we do not have and will not have is slogans, which are comprehensible by people and which might excite the masses.

Let us take this up later.

Is it possible to come to an agreement with the Bolsheviks?

It is hard to believe, but in the past we thought this naive attitude possible and attempted organizational cooperation with the Bolsheviks. Yes, it certainly is incredible because such a suggestion is a misinterpretation of Bolshevism’s fundamental nature. Bolshevism is monarchic. Those who do not support it, or those who are not absolutely neutral politically, are against it. We should not forget that according to the Bolsheviks, we are a party of the petty bourgeoisie which, for me, is not a mistake (if we take into account not only the party program and the individual standpoints of the individual party leaders, but the actual structure of the party and its collective ideology, this definition is not at all unrealistic). If the Bolsheviks are not tolerant towards the Marxists – the Mensheviks and the socialist revolutionaries – they cannot obviously accept the Armenian Revolutionary Federation Dashnaksutiun as well.

So why should the Bolsheviks collaborate with us?

We have always liked to point out and persuade others and ourselves that if the Bolsheviks do not cooperate with us, they will not be able to govern Armenia.

What is the basis for these threats of ours? Why should the Bolsheviks believe that we are essential for them?

We have been expelled from Armenia or have been stifled inside the country for two years. If the Bolsheviks meet any obstacle that may threaten their being, should we not come to their help? I know nothing of these obstacles and tend to think that such obstacles do not exist.

No doubt, we are worthy people as simple citizens, but which party or government abandons its political line and collaborates with its opponents in order to draw a hundred of worthy people to its side?

Whatever the circumstances, whether we are right or wrong, and whether we have too much brains or too little, the Bolsheviks are not looking for ways to cooperate with us, and they do not accept this.

There have been attempts in this direction, and we have received negative answers. Trying one more time is not only useless but also unworthy of us.

It is worthless because there are limits, which the party cannot outdo, as far as its political honor is concerned.

The remaining possibilities are either secret, stealthy, conspiratorial or more general revolutionary activities, for we have been pursued by the governments of both the Tsar and the Sultan. Are we not capable of doing in Soviet Armenia what we did in Turkish Armenia, for tens of years?

We certainly are.

We might set up a base in the Persian Karadag, just as we once did in Salmast, and send people and arms to the other side of Araxe. We might create the necessary secret relations and establish armed “humbs” in the Sunik and Daralagez mountains just as we did in the Sasun Mountains and the Shatak ravine. We might incite the peasants in some regions that are difficult to access to rise up, and then we might force the communists out or destroy them. Later we might create great commotion even in Yerevan and occupy a state building at least for a few hours just as we occupied the Ottoman Bank, or we might blow up some building. We could

plan assassinations and implement them just as we killed the officials of the Tsar and the Sultan and kill a few Bolsheviks; in the same way, just as we did to Sultan Abdul Hamid, we could plant a bomb under Myasnikov's or Lukashin's feet.

We could do all these, I think we could.

However, there is the question: for the sake of what? What are our goals and hopes?

When we produced great noise in Turkey, we thought we would attract the attention of the great powers to the Armenian Cause and would force them to act as a go-between for us, but now we know what such mediation is worth and do not need to repeat such endeavors. If Europe has not been able to help us in Turkey, it will obviously not help us in Russia. Terror might have been of some use as a technique of controlling separate individuals on the Kurdish leaders or the officials of the Tsar. However, we have to admit that the Bolsheviks are of a different fiber. If there is to be terror on both sides, the Bolsheviks will not be short of it; on the contrary, they will leave us behind in that respect. When we use terror on one single person, they will use it on masses.

Are we able to turn mass disorders into a civil war? This is very questionable. But in the long run it can be possible. If we take a very serious decision, strive for it persistently, and do not prove to be very scrupulous about the means, we may succeed.

But for what reason?

When the Bolsheviks are firmly in power in Russia and when at our back there is Turkey in alliance with the Bolsheviks, is it possible to expel the Bolsheviks from Armenia?

I do not think that even one person, naïve to such an extent, can be found among us. If there is a civil war, it is going to result in our defeat. Bolshevism is not an Armenian system and the place where it is going to be buried will not be – does it have to be buried? – Armenia. Armenian Bolshevism is an extension and only a small part of Russian Bolshevism. As the Red Banner flies in Russia, it will certainly fly in Yerevan too. We would have thought otherwise in 1918, but we have no right to do so now.

However, Bolshevism has firm opponents in Russia and in other places, at least in neighboring places like Georgia and Azerbaijan, if not anywhere else. Is it not natural that we

should come together with the other discontented people and try to destroy this communist dictatorship?

Of course, it might be natural. However, the dilemma is that we should not do that. The Armenian people have already been so injured, worn out and destabilized that nobody has the right to involve it in new terrible ordeals and demand new sacrifices from them. What has been done must be considered sufficient. Let us wait for anti-Bolshevik Russia to deal with the Bolsheviks themselves. We will not be involved in it! Armenian people have deserved to have a break for a while and heal their severe wounds. If someone does not like the idea, does not want to admit it - let them be.

Let me go a step further and explain my thoughts in detail.

I ask myself, if, by a miracle, the existence of the Bolsheviks in Armenia depended on me, if it were possible for me to eliminate them from Armenia in a second, by the movement of a single finger, would I make that movement? I answer without any hesitation that I would not. Not only would I not do it, but also I would cut off my entire hand so that even in my dream, by mistake or even unintentionally, I would not be able to make that risky movement.

In the present political conditions, the Bolsheviks are essential for Armenia; there is no other power to replace them; this is the reality.

Since the very first days of our State, we realized that a country like Armenia, which is so small, poor, plundered and separated from the rest of the world, could not be really autonomous and self-governing. We were aware of the fact that we needed support or some outside force so that we would be able to maintain our own existence by relying on it. At least in the first period, until we organized and brought together our forces. We were looking for such support first in remote America, and later in Europe. The results are clear. Two or three years ago, we might have had some hope, but today there is no illusion, and our determination would be inexcusable naiveté. What the distant and uncertain future will bring us is not yet known. However, the visible future is very clear at present: these days there are two tangible forces - Russia and Turkey - and we have to take them into consideration. The circumstances have developed that way and our country is a vassal state of Russia, capable of protecting itself more than satisfactorily from attacks by Turkey. If the Russian authority disappears, Turkish-Tatar hegemony will replace it. Either Russia or Turkey, either the Bolsheviks or the Turkish nationalists – there is no other option.

While we are facing such alternatives, we should not hesitate. We will certainly choose Russia, not Turkey; Bolsheviks, not Turkish nationalists.

If our choices had not been so limited, we would have had many objections to Russia in general and to the Bolsheviks in particular. Our misfortune is the geographic position that binds us.

Armenia needs the Bolsheviks because it needs Russia.

What will happen tomorrow is unknown. I think what is going on now is also going to happen tomorrow, but today the Bolsheviks are the masters of Russia.

Today, in order to have friendly relations with Russia, Armenia must be Soviet itself. There is no other way; I at least see it this way.

The words I expressed above, i.e., “We have no slogans to carry out an anti-Bolshevik struggle in Armenia” must be reviewed within this context.

I am asking the same question in another way, this time regarding the past.

Was the arrival of the Bolsheviks a calamity for our country?

This is a surprising question coming from a Dashnag. We answered it a long time ago, and the answer was not favorable for the Bolsheviks. But let us think it over once again and try not be led by narrow political ideas.

I do not like to repeat that the Soviet regime is not at all suitable for Armenian reality; I think this view is indisputable.

I know Bolshevik activities in Armenia quite well, and I remember them; I mean the two and a half months when I was in Armenia (December 1920–February 1921). I know, and I remember how many people suffered; it was the Dashnags who primarily suffered. I myself, as well as many of you, was persecuted.

I would like to add that we should never forget these critical issues and be cautious when making decisions; for as the offended party, we are inclined to see only negative aspects and to amplify everything.

When I remember the situation we were in in November 1920, I ask myself: “Would it not have been better if the Bolsheviks had not occupied our country and had left it to its own fate to be governed by us?” My answer is negative: No, it would not have been better; it would have been worse.

Even those days we were aware of our desperate situation and due to this reason we opened the door for the Bolsheviks.

I have already mentioned above that all our hopes were in vain. We could not get either political or economic support from Russia. I am still talking about the first period. For example, the Bolsheviks did not protect Armenia from Turkey and ratified the Alexandropol agreement we had signed under the threat of vanishing. This is the fact.

If the Bolsheviks had not occupied our country would the Turks have abided by the agreement? Would they not have gone any further under various excuses, which are not difficult to create? What would we have done in face of these intentions? We were defeated and damaged and had lost our authority inside and outside the country; what would we have done?

In the fall of 1920 we – as Government and as Party – had exhausted all our resources, had reached a deadlock. Had the Bolsheviks postponed their arrival, we ourselves would have asked them to come because we were so weakened and powerless and there was no other force in the country to replace us.

Let us look at the consequences. We governed our country for two and a half years; it is nearly two and a half years that the Bolsheviks have ruled it.

We had wars with Georgia, Azerbaijan and Turkey. The Bolsheviks have had none. We had continual domestic fights: Akbaba, Zod, Zengibasar, Vedibasara, the valley of Milin, Sharur, Nakhichevan, Zangezur. The Bolsheviks have had no internal fights, except those in connection with the February revolt. We had kept the whole country under arms, in continuous fighting. We had kept all working hands on the battlefields at all time when there was the greatest demand for creative work. The Bolsheviks have liberated the people from that disaster, from that heavy burden.

In our time the people were decimated or exhausted from famine. We destroyed bread-producing lands like Sharur and Vedi, cattle lands like Akbaba, wantonly and without benefit to us. We gave to the armies of Kazim Karabekir Pasha, along with much other wealth, the harvest

of 1920 – the only abundant one since the famine years. Today, I hear Armenia is not hungry any more, is not clamoring for bread, one might say, and I believe it because the people had time to sow and to reap.

We tried hard to restore communication with the external world but did not succeed. Southern Caucasian railway systems were actually closed for Armenia. The Bolsheviks made them available for us: Yerevan communicates with Persia and Azerbaijan through Djulfa, with the eastern part of Russia and Caucasian countries through Baku and gets in touch with Europe through Batum. The Bolsheviks did it.

All through this our government Armenia groped in darkness; all movement and activity was dying away half an hour after sunset because we had no means for providing lighting. The Bolsheviks brought much kerosene from Baku and saved the country from the slavery of darkness. Of course, these things are not very significant you might say, but is it not a fact that we could not achieve even that little? The Bolsheviks were necessary for Armenia then, and they are necessary for Armenia today.

However, the Bolshevik system in its total is not suitable for us.

But what can we do?

Perhaps, fight it from without?

This might be of some use perhaps, if it is used to support the war inside, fought openly or secretly. If not, what would the use be of the hubbub created outside the country?

European cities are full of Russian emigrants of all kinds who publish newspapers, write books, call protest meetings, make threats, and curse the Bolsheviks. I do not know any other “work” that is more fruitless and miserable than what is being done. Is it with these thundering words that they will blow off Soviet heads? That is not a fight nor a struggle but an exposition of a dreadful foolishness. The fighters against the Bolsheviks must struggle from within so that the blow may be telling. But to hide behind the frontiers and show one's fist from a safe distance - it is a gesture that, in any case, is not worthy of Dashnagtzoutuin.

There are some people among us who think Dashnaktsutium should be kept as an opposing force and contribute to the renewal of Armenia from without.

How?

They say we should establish a variety of commercial and industrial companies in order to import goods into Armenia, we should offer an opportunity to export raw materials to the external markets, build manufacturing plants, factories, irrigation canals, etc.

Leaving aside how competent we are, as a party, in such commercial and industrial issues or in the charity work of providing assistance and protection to the deprived, and how wanted our mediation might be in respect to achieving a definitive solution, I have a question to ask: can a political party include such work in its program? I think not. These are not among the issues a party should deal with. This would not be the political program of a party, but its self-repudiation.

If The A.R.F.Dashnaktsutiun follows this path; if it chooses this direction, it must state that it has lost its own *raison d'être*.

We must leave trade to traders, industry to industrialists and charity- to charity organizations. Dashnaktsutiun should devote itself to other work, if there be such work. Yes, if there be ...

Within the country we, as a political party, cannot collaborate with the Bolsheviks in connection with the state work they are doing; similarly, we cannot be in the position of the official opponent no matter how much we wish it.

We should not undertake any secret work; we should not destroy the Soviet state power even if it were possible.

When we feel no mood or desire to fight within the country, fighting only verbally from without and carrying on an anti-Bolshevik propaganda from abroad in the colonies is an aimless and improper idea.

Helping the economic development of a country from abroad, establishing commercial and industrial companies, cannot be the main occupation of a political party,

What are we to do then?

It is here that I shall say the very grave word, which, I know will sadden you, but which must be said, and said simply, without concealment or attenuation: *The Armenian revolutionary federation has nothing to do anymore.*

Our Party did everything it could do and exhausted all the resources. New conditions of life present new demands, and we are unfit to respond. Therefore, we must make way for other people abler than we are.

Is it essential to repeat again the new circumstances? Here they are: Turkish Armenia does not exist anymore. European powers have buried our Question. Half of the Armenian nation is bleeding and needs a long rest; others are dispersed to the four corners of the world. The Armenian Republic is united with Communist Russia as an autonomous state. We cannot separate our State from Russia, even if we wish - and we must not wish it, even if we were able to do so. The Party is crushed and has lost its authority, has been expelled from the country, and cannot return home, while in the colonies it has nothing to do.

This is the present-day situation.

The Party cannot say “If I exist I shall therefore create work for me” no matter what kind of work. That “therefore” is a mistake of logic. The sentence must be reversed to: “since I have no work to do I must cease to exist”. Work is not for the existence of the Party, but it is the Party that must exist to do the work, and where there is no work for the Party, there can be no Party.

When I said that Dashnaktsutun has nothing to do anymore, I did not express myself correctly. It has one more thing to do, a supreme duty to the Armenian Cause and toward its own past. It must, and by its own resolution, with full responsibility, decisively end its existence.

Yes, I suggest suicide.

Sometimes there are situations when suicide is the only honorable way out. Our Party is in such a situation now.

We should have done this four or five years ago. When in June 1918 we signed the Batum agreement and when an independent Armenian state was born as a consequence of the agreement and took its modest place among other states, in August of that year, when we opened the Armenian Parliament which was going to shape the new state ... We should have eliminated our Party then, and opened the way for new political groups. Our historical mission had been completed by that time. This would have been a very honorable result of a long and tough work of a quarter of a century with bloody struggles and great sacrifices.

However, we did not understand in those days that history was entering a new chapter and in this phase the forces had to realign. We did not understand; we did not have the courage to understand.

It might have been explicable not to understand this four or five years ago in the middle of revolutionary agitation, but today the situation is very clear and the demands of life are much more authoritative. Failing to understand this reality now means that both of our eyes are sightless. If we do not prove to be determinant now, only a fall and a discreditable end will be in store for us. It is with their work that the parties live. If there is no work and in its place there is only imitation, death is inevitable.

The A.R.F. Dashnaktsutun has only one means to justify its future existence – a struggle against Bolshevism, a vigorous and cruel fight inside the country. There can be no other work.

To fulfill this, the A.R.F. Dashnaktsutun must wash out its ranks categorically and expel the unreliable, the confused, the tired, those who do not firmly believe and who are hopeless, the lazy and the apathetic, that is to say, nine out of ten, perhaps more, of the party members. After this, only the strained cadres who have been closely examined, those who are morally strong, those who blindly believe and who can make every sacrifice and will not be bewildered in any circumstances will remain. These cadres will have to do underground work. However, this will certainly not be a political party. It will be a conspiracy group.

Our Party can save itself by this means and only by this means, can we revive and carry the banner.

But at what price?

At the price of risking the Armenian political question, and leaving the Armenian people face to face with new suffering in the case of a failure. In such a case, the party leaders should not shrink but decisively stand against this obstacle.

No matter how devoted we might be to the Party philosophy, I do not believe - I do not want to believe that there is a single person who would like to save the party at such a cost.

The Party is not an aim in itself and it would be considered renegade, dangerous, and harmful if it forgets this simple truth. Armenia and the Armenian people are not raw material for

the Dashnaktsutiun. If we were to act - consciously or unconsciously - like a person who was suffering from party fanaticism, we would be committing a principle crime.

The A.R.F. Dashnaktsutiun was a tool in the hands of history. When a tool has accomplished its job, got worn out and shabby or when the rest of the process requires a new tool, the old one is thrown away and it must be thrown away. A tool belonging to the past can be kept only as a symbol of fondness, respect and gratitude, but it should belong to the national museum.

For running the Armenian political question Dashnaktsutiun is useless from now on, and, as a result, must quit the scene.

I am always talking about the Armenian political question and going back to the same subject because I cannot detach Dashnaktsutiun from this question. I can see the entire essence of our Party within this question. Therefore, it is only natural that I cannot find another perspective to be able to prove my point of view and to determine the direction that my thoughts will take, as I am addressing this Dashnaktsutiun Congress.

I ask you, would the political liberation of our country, which has been our aim and work thus far, die with us?

It would be extreme megalomania on our part to think so - not only megalomania but also a very naive conception of historical facts.

A year ago in Chakatamart I stated how harmful the death of the A.R.F. Dashnaktsutiun would be to the Armenian question. At the same time I mentioned that the actual borders of Dashnaktsutiun have greatly gone beyond our Party organizations; our Party is only one bit of the Armenian cause, only one expression of fighting Armenians. The name Dashnaktsutiun may very well be lost, forgotten but the proud spirit, which gave birth to Dashnaktsutiun, the spirit of freedom will never die and this is the real Dashnaktsutiun. The Party, that is to say, the present organization might fall apart but the mission and the work will survive.

It will never die but will even gain new power of life.

And for this reason – in order that it may be guaranteed and that it may develop further in future – I suggest that the Party should commit suicide.

It is necessary to understand: The Armenian Bolsheviks are our successors; they have to take up our work. They are already doing our job. They have to do it whether or not they are aware of it and whether or not they want to do it. They are, just like us, a tool in the hands of the great master, History. We have done our job, finished a phase, and now the rest is up to them.

We have to be grateful to the Bolsheviks. They established the same work on surer grounds, if not saved it, by removing us from power. They came to replace us just at that critical moment when we were fainting under the weight of our own work.

Our work has not died.

Yes, it is true, Armenia is not an independent country; it is just an autonomous region under the authority of the Russian Federation. But how can we know, perhaps it is the best position for Armenia today.

The reality has revealed the following: the quick establishment of a sovereign state under the present unfavorable conditions is beyond the power of the Armenian nation. To achieve an average level of subsistence and to obtain the habits connected with state affairs, we need a class, which is politically prepared. After great disturbances, massacres, and plunder, this class needs a calm period to get organized and to assemble strength. In the developing conditions, Armenia has to pass through this period under the Bolshevik banner. Let it be so.

Dashnaktsutiun cannot support the Bolsheviks. It remains only not to hamper their activity. But in order not to create obstacles, it has to retire.

We very often hear that following one single political line will not be enough in order to solve our problem; for caution requires that one tendency should be accompanied by another parallel one. The Armenian Bolsheviks are pursuing the Russian line; let them do it, but other possibilities should also be kept in mind. For example, the Russian Bolsheviks today belong to the same front with the Turks, but tomorrow this artificial alliance may come apart and we may have to find a common language with the Turks and the Europeans situated at their back. So we may have to maintain relations with the Turks of tomorrow. Although there is nothing left for Dashnaktsutiun to do; it must maintain its existence and its present anti-Bolshevik position at least for this reason.

Not to verbalize, I do not want to object to either this possibility or the existence of a second one. However, I still insist on one point: this role is not suitable for A.R.F.

Dashnaktsutiun. Dashnaktsutiun is a less proper participator for talks with the Turks than with the Bolsheviks. If one day there appears a need to talk with the Turks, other people should come, the ones who have a different understanding, a different psychology and especially, a different past, or no past at all. At this point, Dashnaktsutiun cannot be helpful but, on the contrary, might represent an obstacle.

They say that the Bolshevik regime and its authority are not everlasting. Bolshevism may fall from power more or less unexpectedly, in the short or long run. Consequently, a reserve force, another organization is required to substitute Bolshevism and to take hold of the leadership so that the country will not fall into anarchy.

Dashnaktsutiun should at least be kept for those days.

At this point, I would like not to argue. Such a situation may arise, but I declare and I insist that Dashnaktsutiun will not set up the new authority.

When the present conditions demonstrate a significant change, the Soviet authority that does not suit the Armenian reality and is alien to it, may give its place to other political and social groups; it will consider its own role accomplished and completed. However, the power that will replace the Bolsheviks is not Dashnaktsutiun.

New conditions will bring new demands.

Political especially revolutionary, parties cannot constantly undergo transformation, trying to confirm to the demands of the day; they appear in certain periods of time and perform certain duties, using certain means. A party cannot get rid of its past, no matter how much it wishes to. The past will always hover over the present and will surround it: memories, habits, relations, sympathies and antipathies will come – even against one's will - to the surface and will introduce a kind of anarchy into daily work.

New wine is never stored in old barrels, because the barrel will break down and the wine will flow away.

In the past A.R.F. Dashnaktsutiun was useful for Armenia and the Armenian Cause. In the future, it will be of no use. Another Dashnaktsutiun, perhaps a Dashnaktsutiun of the Armenian Republic will take up its place.

There is nothing left for Dashnaksutiun to do. Neither today, nor tomorrow, nor in the future. It must end its existence itself. It must do this for the sake of its own past, to save its own name and honor.

Let us look around: are we actually living? Is this actually party activity and party life? Is it not clearly seen that we have already entered a phase of corruption and the reasons for this corruption are not accidental and external but internal and organizational.

The new generation, the youth is not with us, as it used to be 20-25 years ago. No new forces full of enthusiasm and confidence are joining our lines to substitute for the tired and the ones who have lost their faith and cheerfulness. On the contrary, they are running away from us, breaking up the party. Only the ones who are useless, indifferent, unenergetic and unenthusiastic and who have no ability to work remain; only the ones who bear the chill of death in their hearts and who smile ironically remain with us.

We are not eager to see the reality and continue our old habit of bringing trite explanations to events. We say: the bad and the self-centered, the tired and the timid go away; the good and the sincere, the ones who are psychologically and mentally sane remain with us, as usual. Is this an explanation then? Is this not similar to the ridiculous notions made by the Bolsheviks that the Dashnaksutiun is composed of only the hired people of the bourgeoisie, of bandits, robbers and all types of adventurers?

This is not an explanation; these are the words of either a naive child or of an uncontrollable demagogue.

And since Dashnaksutiun has nothing else to do anymore - neither at the present time nor in the future, it must cease its existence. Our Party has lost its "raison d'etre", its reason for existence. This is the bitter truth! Shall we have the nerve to confess the truth and arrive at the proper conclusion?

The only conclusion is that we must end our existence.

I realize that the present conference is not authorized to carry out a resolution, but it is competent enough to advance the matter and find the means for its resolution.

With this goal in mind I suggest that the conference should *

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.....

With comradely salutations,

Hovhannes Kachaznuni

Bucharest, March 1923

* Here follows a suggestion of a purely party nature that I do not have the right to publish.

H. K.

As far as the manifesto is concerned, I received a disapproving letter from NN, my close friend and a member of the Party, and I answered him in detail.

So I made up my mind to give my readers an opportunity to look at my reply, because it represents an evolution of the same ideas.

H. K.

* * *

Dear NN,

I received your letter of the 2nd of June.

It is a comfort for me to know that you – as you say – did not follow the others and did not interpret my report as *ad hominem*. I can only guess what the commentaries are.

Who knows, the interpreters may be right. After all, it is *homo sum, humani nihil ...* you know the rest. I do not rely on my Latin.

And you personally doubted the adequate level of my intellectual ability.

Maybe you are right as well – as Nasreddin Hodja would say in this case – after everything that has happened to us who would guarantee that he managed to maintain his intellectual equilibrium.

But moral failure or weakness of thought – how can it be a weighty argument against my theses?

You wrote that my “obituary” was made up with “such conscientious and logical validity.”

You know why?

Because my report is not “a toy in the moments of idleness”. In this volumetric writing there is not a single thought that is not thoroughly elaborated; there is not a single word that I didn’t weigh dozens of times before writing it.

Admit that, as thoughtful Polonius said about Hamlet, - “if this be madness, yet there is method in it” ...

Didn’t I have a right to expect that my “logical bases” should be opposed to the bases by logical as well as by any kind of grounds, but not by mere guesses about my moral and intellectual state?

But you wrote that “at the conference nobody even tried to judge” my views.

Why?

.....

I have a better opinion of my friends than they have of me, but I think I shall not be far from the truth if I assume that the conference participants were totally at the mercy of political narrow-mindedness.

Do not consider it immodest if I tell you I am free of those weaknesses.

I’m not a party man (in the narrow meaning of the word) and I have never been it; because of that I stayed isolated inside the Party. I was a common Armenian, an Armenian patriot ... This is a disgraced word that caused so much offence, so much mockery! But the truth is as follows: all my essence is reflected in the word. I adore Armenia, my motherland, and Armenians – this poor austere country and people, ignorant, dirty, reserved, narcissistic and mercenary-minded. I love it not for its merits; I love it together with its vices and sores.

C’est plus fort, que moi, – a Frenchman would say.

I love it, because I feel myself a part of it – my flesh and blood – I bound my personal happiness with its collective happiness.

Do you remember our conversation during the long trip?

You said that your connection with the Armenian people is simply ideological, that your consciousness and your debt put you into the party and then into the state job. But I, to the contrary, told you that my connection is *organic*.

I am not sure how well you analyzed your soul, but as far as I am concerned, I told you the truth.

The Armenian inside me speaks – here there are explanations of my thoughts; do not look for another one – you will make a mistake. The Armenian inside me judges, weighs, compares, and decides.

The Party was significant for me only because it was able to perform a certain task – no more, no less than that. But the Party itself has never been an object of my devotion. I have always held the opinion that “the Sabbath was made for man, and not man for the Sabbath.”

Of course, my words are banal, and nobody thinks otherwise.

It’s not that simple to get rid of the party bondage. Many years spent as a party member influence a man’s spiritual life; a person perceives everything from the point of view of a party member and solves all problems in the same manner.

Even more than that: a party is slowly modified from a mere tool to the end in itself; a member’s status and his party work become his trade (excuse me for this rude expression, I could not find another one).

I remember my conversation with the late Rostom many years ago. It was at the beginning of the Persian revolution. We were talking about our participation in it. I insisted that Dashnaktsutiun had nothing to do there, and our appearance would be simply a reckless scheme ...

‘Well, – Rostom interrupted, – the Russian revolution is put down, in Turkey they came to an agreement with the Ittihadists, and in Persia we should not interfere... What should we do?’

His voice sounded jokingly; there was a smile on his face. But you understand what a deep psychological thought was hiding behind the joke. Rostom – an excellent comrade – indeed kept this disturbing issue in his soul.

For me personally the issue has never existed, and does not exist at the moment. For me Rome is more important than Caesar; to be more exact – I appreciate Caesar due to his necessity for Rome.

When I see that under the circumstances Armenia and the Armenians need the Bolsheviks, I say: let's give them a place; they have the right since they are the only ones who will remedy the situation.

The conference did not even want to discuss the matter.

Why?

Because, dear NN, everyone, perhaps secretly, unconsciously asked himself a question: “What are *we* going to do?” ...

This unfortunate “we”, in my opinion, chained down the idea of the conference.

And who are “we”, i.e., they, who ran a party life in the past; at the moment “they” have nothing to do any more? ...

In the long run – a few dozen, not more than a few hundred.

.....
.....

Why do I write this letter?

If my diagnosis is true, it means no appeal, no remark will ever break the instinct of self-preservation. I shall not be able to convince you of the truth of my words since it's not the views that clash but something more powerful.

I do not aim to convince you; I just want you to understand me.

Of course, that raises a question. Why do you need to understand me? What does it matter if you give the report a wrong explanation? In this case it is appropriate to remember a

motive *ad hominem*: that intimate friendly connection between you and me obliges me to explain my point of view. This writing is as “pointless” as your letter of the 2nd of June: there is no goal, but only a spiritual need ...

But there is probably something else: I try, as if over your head, to address a mass audience that needs a thorough illumination of the matter.

I read your letter once again.

I see that you could not exhaust all the questions that I had touched upon in my large report, and I understand that those few things you wrote were not enough for systematic argumentation.

But the most important views had already been discussed; you had already opposed your most powerful arguments against my ideas ...

And now I am at a loss: doesn't this man see indeed how vague, weak, and unconvincing his arguments are, how little force they have ...

You do not agree with me that “The A.R.F. Dashnaktsutiun was created as a party for a certain political goal, not as a party seeking some remote socialism”. Not even trying to understand my point of view you ask me what the reason is to assert that Dashnaktsutiun has already performed its mission since there is no independent Armenia.

Your question shows that either you were not listening to my report attentively or I did not express myself clearly enough. I asked myself the question, and I answered it (to tell you the truth, I had to make the report brief and sketchy).

I repeat myself once again.

Dashnaktsutiun exhausted its potential not by reaching its goal, performing its mission – the mission, the ideal will never be to come – but by getting to the point beyond which the Party is helpless to lead.

Let me illustrate this statement in detail.

From the Sasun Mountains and the Varag we descended to the Ararat valley: we passed the point where only mountaineers, “vrsics”, could jump across; we were walking in veiled

evening darkness, hiding in the snow and under the rocks; we went through hell, and we made the Armenians go through it ... Still we were moving forward, creating living ferments of freedom.

The Ararat valley was the first stage of our long trip.

But here we came across the forces of a new regime, and the circumstances of the struggle were completely different.

Our unmounted “vrsics” were helpless among power of trains, an army and rapid-firing guns. Different conditions, another scale Ω – our techniques should be different as well.

Do not think that we – as a party- can adjust to new surroundings and change our old methods. Two (and a half) years of administering the affairs of state proved how much the past influenced us and how helpless we were even inside the Party. Thirty years of party life left an indelible mark on us, left us its traditions, skills, and its way of thinking that we cannot get rid of.

But the crucial point is that we deal with Soviet Russia. This is the largest force against us or with us.

In the past we were so naïve as to believe that we could get free from Russian hegemony and find support in the west. Nowadays we have no longer have any right to lapse into daydreams. Our only support now is Soviet Russia. We cannot and do not have to struggle against it even if we could since we need it – not as a social or state regime (communism or class dictatorship), but as a political force.

Armenia has to enter into an alliance with Soviet Russia; there is no other way.

You realize that our party cannot ally with the Bolsheviks, because the Bolsheviks do not want to recognize us, and we have no opportunity to influence them to make them admit our values or look for our friendship.

Only the Armenian Bolsheviks are able to form an alliance with Russia, Armenia does not need the A.R.F. Dashnaktsutiun any more.

This is the point where our Party fulfilled its mission; it has nothing to do anymore, and it should cease to its existence.

You laugh at the thought that the Armenian Bolsheviks are our successors; without a doubt, the Bolsheviks themselves would laugh even more if they happened to hear this.

And I am surprised by dullness of both of you since everything I said was a simple truth.

“Let’s renounce the devil!” a Dashnag cries out the moment he hears a Bolshevik.

“Let’s renounce the devil!” a Bolshevik cries out the moment he sees a Dashnag.

Vain protests, comrades! You cannot renounce him; it is not a question of your choice or desire.

Dashnaktsutiun ran the Armenian Question and led the issue of Armenian political freedom to a certain point; from here until the next stage Dashnaktsutiun should be replaced by the Armenian Bolsheviks.

Such is the path of history.

Try to understand me: the Party is doomed, not our work.

You tell me that Armenia is not yet independent. Let’s compare what we have today with what we used to have before the war; we shall see – the jump was really colossal.

Try to recall our enthusiasm about the institute of the European “inspectors” organization in the *vilayets* and the *zemstvos* of Turkish Armenia ... but Miasnikov’s or Lukashin’s government is a bigger matter than European control and the *zemstvo* system.

Obviously this “bigger” is incommensurable with our losses. But we should have thought about it in 1914 when we formed volunteer groups, or even earlier when Dashnaktsutiun was set up; even earlier than that when we were inspired by Raffi’s stories and Gamar Katil’s “songs of freedom”.

Armenia is not independent. No! But it made great strides, and it must first strengthen this position for the next one.

A consolidation should be performed – and it is being performed – under the banner of Bolshevism; that’s why the Armenian Bolsheviks are supposed to be our successors.

I am not familiar with the Armenian Bolsheviks personally. I did not and do not watch them working. I do not know their ruling ideology. But in my heart of hearts I expect them to be Armenians to the same degree. I hope that communism will not prevent them from feeling and acting like Armenians. I am myself a communist. I practice Krapotkin's Gospel, but this Gospel does not ban the Armenian inside me; just the opposite, it creates a new basis for the establishment of my national individuality. I realize that my communism has nothing to do with that of the Bolsheviks; the Bolsheviks eagerly decapitate defective communists like me.

Let us suppose that I am wrong as far as Armenian communists' ideology is concerned. Let's admit that they are alien to the political independence of the Armenians in the motherland. They still have to continue our work, whether they want to or not. They have to contribute to the future progress.

They have to do this; they are already doing this even against their will, if they really have quite the opposite desire ...

Well, I shall tell you something else so that you could be sure of my madness.

Here you go: the Armenian Bolsheviks are actually Dashnags, the only Dashnags that exist today; they are more Dashnag than you and me.

Since they are our replacement, they are doing our job where we are helpless.

Armenia is not independent ...

But have we ever thought we would be able to create a sovereign state? Didn't we realize even at the moments of highest inspiration that we would never be free, that we were inevitably dependent upon someone?

Of course we knew, and as a consequence we were seeking a "mandate" from the very first day of our government.

The question is to what extent and upon whom to be dependent.

The question was resolved in favor of Russia, and Armenia's independent statehood is restricted by the active supervision of Moscow. We could prefer America ...

History has its own logic that we cannot change.

The Soviet Republic is the maximum amount of independence Armenia can have at the moment.

And this is not a small fact.

In any case, Armenia's present and future is protected much better now than in November 1920, when we were in Yerevan and ruled the state.

Remember that day!

Recall that dreadful hour when we exhausted all our possibilities; the Bolsheviks stepped forward. They smashed us, but they supported the state.

This is our present-day reality.

There is no other force today that could replace the Bolsheviks, Armenia needs them ...

.....

As far as I understood it, you do not deny this simple truth, but you have certain requirements, which are not met yet; at this point you oppose the Bolsheviks to the A.R.F. Dashnaktsutiun.

Where is the promised Armenia, you ask... Are the Bolsheviks going to meet the requirement?

No, they are not.

But we, who have always claimed its necessity in our party resolutions, what perspective do we have in this respect? Is it a serious political demand or just meaningless wording for self-consolation? What real meaning can it have today – in January 1923 – for the annihilation of Turkish Armenia?

What are those "two" Armenias that need to be united? Let's try to be at least a little bit realistic; it's a primary duty of a public man.

"The second Armenia" does not exist any more.

It's a terrible word, I know, but by changing the form, not pronouncing the word, we cannot alter the content.

While signing the peace treaty we still could cherish the hope. Can we do the same today? Who is going to take Armenian *vilayets*, where there is not a single Armenian, away from the Turks? Who is going to expel the Turkish army and the Kurdish “ashirets”? Who is going to unite the Turkish Armenians scattered all over the world, to return them home, to give them a chance to live and work? Who is going to protect our expansive frontiers from possible Turkish invasion?

Who will provide Armenia with political power, military tackle, and wagons of gold to carry out this difficult task?

And the A.R.F. Dashnaktsutiun able to fill the gap? What or who should it rely upon to realize this giant amount of work? Of course, on an outside force, since the Turks are inside.

I repeat once again: in 1919–1920 we could delude ourselves into false hopes, but these days when not a single person found protection, we do not have the right to remain blind and deaf.

You say that circumstances can change and the question of the division of Turkey could be brought up for discussion one more time.

I do not see any chance for it in the near future (and you do not do it either). Maybe someday in the remote future it will be possible ... I suppose that under new political circumstances the Bolsheviks could modify their course and would insist not only upon a “united” Armenia, but also upon an Armenia “from sea to sea”.

If the disintegration of the Ottoman Empire is a natural historical process, can Russia advance towards the warm seas in the same way?

A political party must take into consideration and act on the basis of the actual state of affairs, not on suppositions.

And the real fact of the matter is a “united Armenia” is a meaningless phrase and nothing else.

Today we can talk not about the fusion of the two Armenias, but only about some frontier expansion of the republic – at least to the line of 1914. The problem may be resolved by Soviet Power that rests on Russia rather than by the A.R.F. Dashnaktsutiun, which grounds on ... I do not know whom, perhaps on the works of Doctors of Philosophy.

.....

I am aware of the following objections: the Turks are afraid of Russia, and as long as Armenia belongs to the Russian sphere of influence they will never agree to cede the positions already taken. For example, they will never give Kars back as they need it for their own safety. And if Armenia becomes independent from Russia (i.e., the Soviet government cedes its place to somebody else, let's say to Dashnaktsutiun), Turkey will feel more secure and return to us not only Kars and Sürmeli, but also Basen and Alashkert...

Is it appropriate for a political party to lapse into vague daydreams?

No doubt, the Turks are afraid of Russia. They foresee future conflicts and try as hard as they can to secure the frontier (for example to keep Kars). But I am not sure that a separate Armenia will be able to frighten Turkey.

So why should the Turks cede territory to harmless Armenia?

When and where did a strong state show such generosity to its weaker neighbor? Why should we expect it from Turkey? What motive do they have to give us back Kars? It seems far more probable that without opposing the Russian army Turkey would readily link through Armenia to its associate and co-religionist Azerbaijan; in other words it will press towards other conquests, not concessions ...

The question of our frontier expansion can be solved with the help of Russia since only Russia is able to make Turkey retreat, it's the only way out. All the rest is naivety and misapprehension; i.e., in this matter we can rely on the Bolsheviks. A.R.F. Dashnaktsutiun has nothing to do any more.

I say "on the Bolsheviks", because the matter concerns "today", not an indistinct remote future.

And you in particular do emphasize this vague future and concentrate on it.

Today's state of affairs can change, you say. Russia can leave Armenia to take up its own problems, as it was in 1918.

They can leave us alone with the Turks once again; they can make us come to an agreement ... that's why we need Dashnaktsutun.

When will the day come? Would it come at all? Neither you nor I know it. The only thing I know – it cannot be today.

I wonder if a political party can maintain its own existence for an indistinct future when it has nothing to do at the moment, ... when today's idleness is killing it ...

Who told you that in the near future the A.R.F. Dashnaktsutun is going to save Armenia?

Imagine when that day comes true: no Russians, the Turks are masters of the situation; we need to come to an agreement with them. Are you sure that we – as a party – are good enough for this role?

From the point of view of the Turks, what are the reasons for them to make Dashnaktsutun a desirable and acceptable mediator?

Maybe because we were in opposition to the Bolsheviks? ... But we denied the Bolsheviks just when Turkey was on friendly terms with them and carried on the same policy. We rebelled against Turkey the moment it was signing the Treaty of Brest-Litovsk. We even aimed at a breakdown of the talks. We opposed the Bolsheviks not for the reason that we were fond of Turkey but because we belonged to the camp of both Turkey's and the Bolshevik's enemy. We demanded an Armenia "from sea to sea", Kilikia, Kharberd, Svaz, and Trapezund! We had the Sevres Treaty, which was supposed to decapitate Turkey. We appealed to Europe and America to bring in their army to establish our authority in those provinces that the Turks considered to be lands of their own. And the final argument: we have been fighting the Turks as long as the Party exists ...

So shall we get into their confidence? Why should they prefer the A.R.F. Dashnaktsutun in the role of a mediator?

Perhaps considering our power?

But the Turks already saw our power in action when we were ruling the country, and I think they do not have reasons to respect or be afraid of it.

If we do not have any other concerns besides Turkey, it would be enough to say that Dashnaksutiun should retire. When Turkey felt it necessary to break off from Germany and find a way for an agreement with Antanta – it disbanded Ittihad.

Your next inquiry is very natural: there are no Bolsheviks, no Dashnaksutiun – who is going to talk with the Turks? ...

This is another issue. I'll come back to it later. Now it is important to establish: it's not up to Dashnaksutiun to negotiate with the Turks.

.....

Cohabitation with our other neighbors – Georgians and Azerbaijanis ...

You think that's why we need Dashnaksutiun.

My dear, you forget that peaceful coexistence between the Southern Caucasian countries is already at hand, and not only peaceful coexistence, but also a close alliance.

You would say it is all due to a fear of Moscow.

Let it be. The truth is that Armenian, Tatar, and Georgian Bolsheviks implemented the plans, which we – the Dashnags, the Musavatists and the Mensheviks – could not do.

Won't you agree that nowadays neighboring cohabitation in Southern Caucasia is much better than in our time? People do not kill each other any more, do not destroy towns and villages; they easily communicate with each other, get across frontiers, develop trade, and perhaps sit down together for *keif* ...

Why couldn't we achieve this? Did not want to, perhaps? Did we not see its necessity? We did see, we did want to; we were working hard, but did not succeed.

Why didn't we succeed? Can we guarantee that in the future we are going to be more successful?

There are conflicts, which we, Southern Caucasians, cannot resolve without external negotiations.

Georgia wants to have a privilege in Southern Caucasia. It strives for its former frontier reconstruction, does not want to leave Akhalkalaki, Ardahan, Lori, and Bambak. Azerbaijan seeks Turkey's friendship. But at the same time it has economic, national and strategical reasons to keep Armenian Karabakh and Sharur-Nakhichevan. Armenia, the most humble (and therefore the weakest), must ensure at least one thing - its national status. It shall not fit into three and a half regions (Yerevan, Nor-Bajazet, Echmiadzin and a half of Shirak). If Armenia relinquishes Akhalkalaki to Georgia and Nagorno-Karabakh to Azerbaijan, it at least should keep Sharur and Nakhichevan. If we relinquish Kars to triumphant Turkey, we must keep Surmeli and Kagizman ... And then Armenia gets no way to outside world. It can touch Europe only through Georgia; this means that the latter should give its neighbor at least guaranteed transit.

Neither Turkey, nor Georgia and Azerbaijan agreed to meet even the minimal requirements.

Who would ensure that we, Dashnags, together with Angora diplomats, Georgian Mensheviks and Azerbaijani Mussavatists are going to be wiser than we were in 1918, 1919, 1920 ... And now, being abroad, where we are busy with meaningless, totally theoretical talks ...

It is a shame that we are not mature enough to resolve our own problems; we still need an external authority to keep the peace in Southern Caucasia.

Nowadays Soviet Moscow represents the authority. Will we, Armenians, benefit by substituting Angora for Moscow?

I can understand the Georgian Mensheviks when they insist on expelling the Red Army; I understand the Azerbaijani Musavat even more. They are aware of the fact that in this case Turkey will have exclusive privileges. They realize it but not afraid of it; they have no reason to be afraid.

Turkey's supremacy is a desirable outcome for Azerbaijan. Georgia, extending her boundaries at Armenia's expense, can form a fairly good state: it would have both mountains

and the sea. Georgia will be able to live and develop without threatening Turkey; therefore it could be out of danger.

And what about Armenia? It will be engaged in battle, impeding both neighbors, and each of them would like to raze Armenia to the ground.

Do you realize that Armenia's existence is going to be doubtful from the moment the Red Army leaves Southern Caucasia, leaving us face to face with Turkey, Azerbaijan, and Georgia?

That's the reason why Armenia should cling to the Bolsheviks (as long as the Bolsheviks are the ruling party, of course).

You are sure that the present state of affairs can change against our will. The Bolsheviks' power may decline, or they would leave Southern Caucasia for some reason.

It may happen. We cannot perpetuate the Bolsheviks no matter how hard we try.

Dashnaktsutiun will not help here. It is time for other people, with other names, another psychology, another past (or without the past at all). Other times, other manners, other days, other ways...

I have so much to tell you...

You say – we did not think this way in Yerevan, Tiflis, Zangezour, and Tavriz.

No, we did not. But look back, you see how long our journey was! From Tiflis to Yerevan, from Yerevan to Zangezour, from Zangezour to Tavriz, from Tavriz to ... I do not know where ...

This long trip should have taught us something, shouldn't it have?

Is it thoughtlessness – learn from experience, try to grasp reality and act knowingly? You believe it is a good point to repeat over and over again: if we were thinking this way in Yerevan or Zangezour we have no right to do otherwise? ...

Are our thoughts so sacred and inviolable that we cannot reevaluate them?

And where is that “new” substance in my thoughts, which made you so upset and disappointed? Is it really *new* and opposed to *the old*?

Perhaps it is self-delusion, weakness of mind, or unconscious hypocrisy, but indeed I do not see this “new” and “other”. I am truly convinced that I am thinking the way I did in 1920, 1918, 1914 ... all my life. I have the same ideas I have had for ages. I do not have new views, I have not created new idols, and I am still devoted to the same gods. What seems “new” to you is actually either “old” for me or an extension of the “old”.

I am not trying to justify myself. Reevaluation is not sinful. We cannot blame a person who, reevaluating his belief, found out it was nothing but a lifeless idol.

If it happened to me I will not be scared to go to the new temple. But I do not change a temple but a sacristan and a priest – its servants.

What do I say?

I say: the A.R.F. Dashnaksutiun is now helpless and useless to perform its main goal – to obtain political liberation for Armenia; it should retire and yield to the Armenian Bolsheviks, who are the only ones today to continue our work.

Am I false to myself, my past, in thinking this way?

No, I am not. It is you who betray yourselves since you like the instrument more than the idea.

God forbid! I know you do it unintentionally. I have no reason to cast doubt on your good intentions. But facts are stubborn things.

Try to forget for a moment that these words belong to a mad old man and think them all over again... Perhaps you shall see my thoughts are not far from truth.

Sometimes it seems to me that I am the only person among you who remained young. But you wasted away too early, senile sclerosis bound your mind.

“Is independent Armenia an illusion?” – you ask.

No, it is neither illusion nor madness; it is an alive, life giving, and progressive idea. It is a mature demand that can be achieved *and is being made a reality*.

Let us not to play with words.

“Independence” is not the absolute that is valuable only in a certain shape and size. To insist on the absolute is a shaky idea. Armenia is not Great Britain or Switzerland, and it cannot be the same in the near future; its independence should be limited by definite restrictions. Our task is to follow the same path as far as we can, as the situation and our strength allow us. We must make use of all the opportunities, and if somebody else is doing something we cannot do, we should not get in the way.

“The Bolsheviks deprived our motherland of free will and made us bound to Russia again.”

Is it so? Tying us to Russia, the Bolsheviks provide Armenia with independence *to the extent that it is possible today*, thus saving its future.

.....

You write: “ the Bolsheviks work not at assembling people but at their dispersion.”

To tell you the truth, I do not know what you meant by a “dispersion of people”. They turned us, Dashnags, from home, but that is all about it. We do not embody the whole nation.

The Bolsheviks do not gather nations together, it is true.

Are you sure we could do it in their place?

The tightness of Armenian territory and its economic state prevent people from re-immigration; this is the main obstacle.

The Bolsheviks could not – let us say – they did not wish to expand the frontier. They did not want to improve the country’s economic situation either. This is true.

And what about us? Could we do that even taking into consideration our enthusiasm?

The Bolsheviks did not expand the frontier, but they defended the already existing one. As for the economic situation, it is not getting worse, as far as I know. The very limited information I possess shows it is even a little bit better than it used to be.

There is no doubt that the Bolsheviks' economic system – the absence of private property – is devastating for today's Armenia. This is the other side of the coin. But at the same time they appeased the country, released hands for creative work ...

“The Bolshevik system cannot restore our ruined country, ensure its economic growth.”

But it's not an impediment to recognizing the necessity and usefulness of the Soviet Power since there are lots of other hazards that are worse than unsuccessful attempts to impose socialist ideas.

* * *

I've stopped the letter for a second time already, and for a second time I've resumed. I have noticed I am repeating myself, but what can I do if you keep forgetting as well and come back to the questions already discussed?

I continue.

“We should greet the fact that there appear serious political groups and trends.”

You remember, I required the same when the A.R.F. Dashnaktsutiun was the master of the situation. I tried to convince our comrades of the need for having opponents, to prove that it was dangerous for the country and the Party itself.

Yes, a variety of political groups is necessary. But there is an essential condition.

First, political groups must result from the demands of the time, fit the situation, and meet the actual needs. The Bolshevik group is now an absolute necessity. One cannot say the same about the A.R.F. Dashnaktsutiun. As a party it should pass into history; it looks like an extra organ, which the body does not need any more. It is not an actual need but a mere assumption. A political party cannot justify its existence by some possible future necessity. No work – no workers.

Second, a group is to have place inside the country, not outside. External forces can contribute to public work but not be at the head of it. You yourself are an opponent of a colonial party; however, you don't want to accept that Dashnaktsutiun has no future. It is already colonized.

Here I see a weighty obstacle.

You ask me what data I have to assert that Dashnaktsutiun is useless. Yes, you are right, I am cut off from Armenia; I do not know what is going on. You say that you have information... you have evidence of a certain American M.

Your position is much stronger than mine, and it gives you a right to assume that I want to “impose sickly feelings of an immigrant on the people” ...

Perhaps my thoughts are really “abstract syllogisms” and life dictates its own will.

I am looking for and want to find my mistake, but I cannot find it.

You know, I do not trust your information, it does not seem serious and objective to me.

I do not want to take into consideration that evidence as well as other irresponsible words of all noble foreigners, their accidental impressions.

Why don't I trust?

Because this evidence contradicts everything I know, it challenges logic. I saw our party in Armenia, when we were there; I saw it during our long trip in Persia, Egypt, Constantinople. I see it here in the Balkans. I have been to different meetings, had conversations with lots of people, and I read the papers. My conclusion is the same: the Party does not exist anymore. There are only its remains, which mechanically continue to bear different names and keep in touch with each other. But there is no life since there is no work, no beliefs, and no enthusiasm.

I am not surprised. I see and understand the reasons.

To take the opposite on trust we need to have facts, positive and tangible. Yours are not convincing because I know how unreliable the sources are.

The facts, true facts suggest another thing.

Watch and analyze the relations between party members, services, and groups. And then tell me, how can a party live in this atmosphere of mutual distrust, misunderstanding, and accusations? ... Do not tell me it is just a colonial phenomenon. No, inside the country we had the same, from that very day we came to power, the party atmosphere was poisoned.

Remember, we had been working for two years and still could not convene the general meeting that was necessary. Doesn't this feebleness and its reasons prove that there is no party any more?

You know what is the weightiest proof? It is the resolution adopted at the conference, a resolution that is meaningless, contradictory, has nothing specific to say and at the same time tries to be all-embracing. An able party would never accept such a resolution. The resolution shows that the party does not know what to do. It has nothing to do, and it tries hard to conceal its death.

There is only one thing that could save Dashnaktsutun today: a struggle against Bolshevism, an impetuous, universal fight. But Dashnaktsutun cannot and should not do that, so it has to die.

“Bearing in mind ... that ... and ... etc., ... taking into consideration ... but ... therefore ... regardless ... that is why ... or both ... and ...” Parties do not live with such resolutions.

This is a “necrology” lacking in straightforwardness and courage.

* * *

You say that a conference is not authorized to disband an organization ... Certainly not.

But I am aware of it. In my report I suggested something that does not go beyond the conference authority. I do not want to repeat it. Just read the last lines of the report if you are interested.

You write:

“I don't deny it – there may come a time when the world becomes appeased and our question subsides for a certain period of time. In this case we may follow your conclusion, but now it is too early.”

Do you realize the following - these lines illustrate that you have already laid down arms.

The world is not yet appeased – it will never be – but our question is mute, our days are numbered.

You write:

“I would like for your report to sink into oblivion since it was not destroyed before publication. I consider this issue to be unnecessary and harmful. It is not an object for discussion.” ...

Why? Who will need these precautions?

When did Dashnaksutiun become afraid of thinking? Why do you try to keep my mouth shut, along with ears of others?

If everything I told you is a result of personal impulses (*ad hominem*), ravings of a madman, or abstract syllogisms devoid of sense – let other comrades be aware of it. And if the comrades are so naïve and shortsighted not to notice my mistake, you shall be able to clarify everything and show them truth ...

You and your confederates should have pushed every Dashnag to read my report, look what one of our comrades came to ...

This would have shaken the Party, would have made a protest. Sleepyheads would wake up, lazy-bones would start working... In a word, it could become an antidote for decay, and set all vital power in motion.

You, my friends, did not do that.

Why?

Because you are cowards, my friend, cowards.

You are trying to censor thoughts and shut everyone up because you are not self-confident anymore.

Your hearts are full of fear and suspicion.

If you were sure that the Party was vital, you would have never have found my report harmful. You would have never expressed discontent if it were delivered at the conference.

Listen to me now.

My report was my duty to the Armenian people and to my party. It would be a sin not to write it. I chose to place it at the disposal of the conference, since we could not have a general meeting), and wait for its decision. The decision was: keep silent.

Was the question solved?

Not for me.

Now I have one more duty – to raise my voice notwithstanding the conference decision. I shall try my best.

Do not call me a stubborn person if I oppose you.

It is hard for me to realize that you interpreted my points in different ways.

When I hear around me diverse versions of why someone did this and someone else did that, I become indignant and scared. I do not know how to keep living in a stifling atmosphere of distrust, lack of faith and respect ...

In any case, my dear NN, I would like to have (in spite of human weakness) “our old faith”, which is something sacred for me. It should direct a person’s activity and a way of thinking. Looking for false and disguised motives and secret thoughts is wrong and unreasonable.

Yours truly,

Hovhannes Kachaznuni

Bucharest, July 1923.