

ON THE SOVIET UNION
AND EASTERN EUROPE

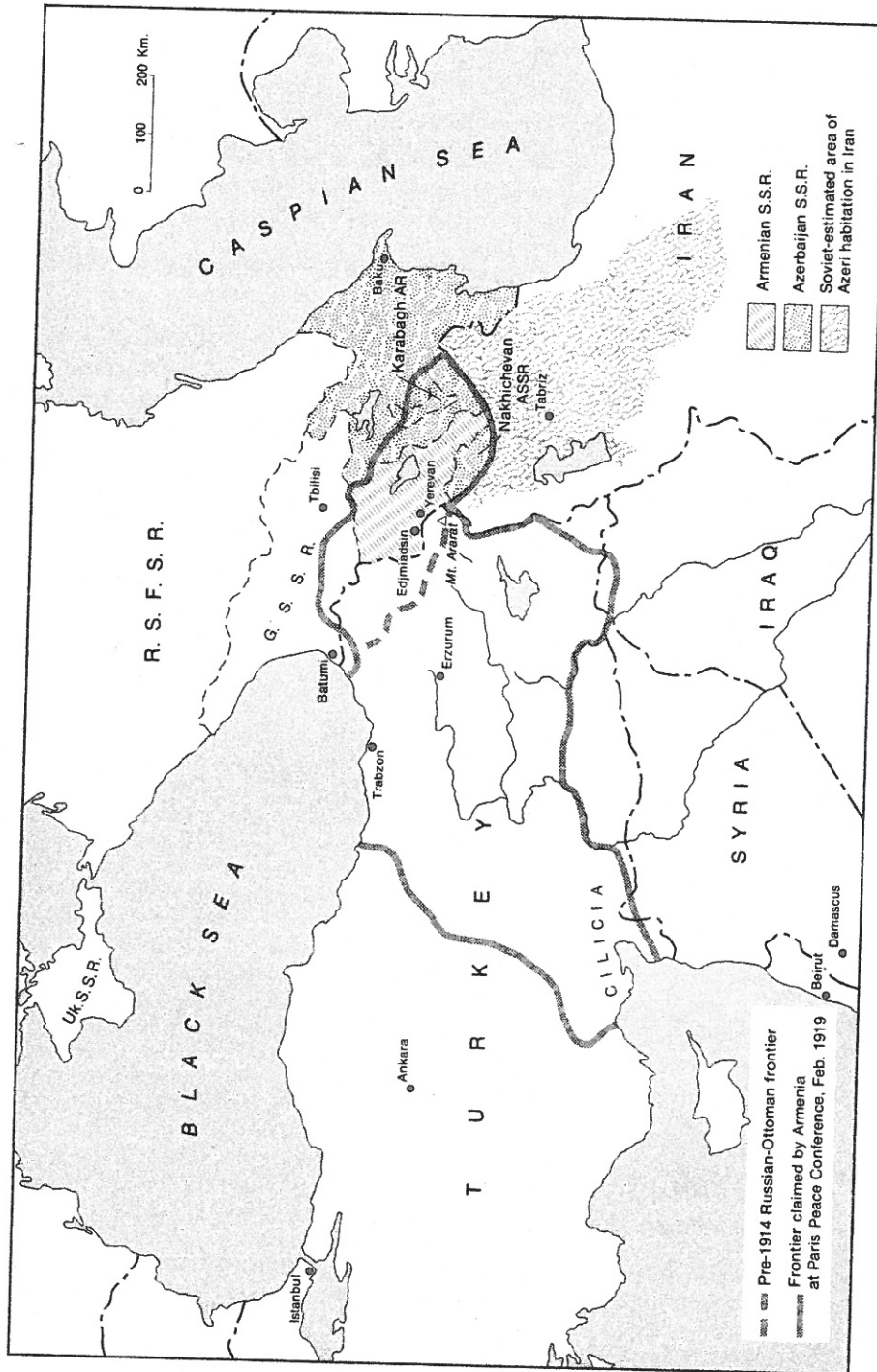
Soviet Asian Ethnic Frontiers

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Pergamon Press

NEW YORK • OXFORD • TORONTO • SYDNEY • FRANKFURT • PARIS

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3803 4239 Pre-1914 Russian-Ottoman frontier
 Frontier claimed by Armenia
 at Paris Peace Conference, Feb. 1919

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2 Armenia and Armenians: A Divided Homeland and a Dispersed Nation

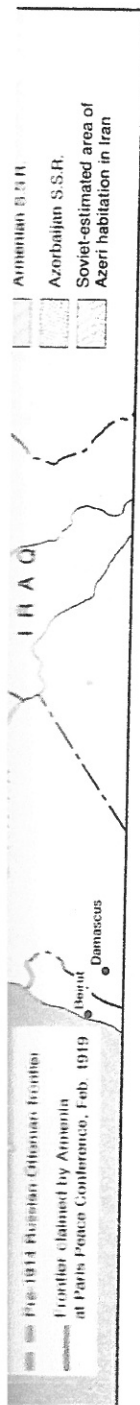
Gerald J. Libaridian

Modern nation-states nail down frontiers in order to legitimize their authority and to facilitate the execution of their policies. Yet the more they do so, the more they force the stateless peoples of the world into struggles to secure territorial footholds of their own. Such has been the case for the Armenians.

This essay will study the role of the territorial imperative in the development of Armenian nationalism. It will contend that the unsuccessful struggle for the liberation of historic Armenia began a century ago for essentially social and economic reasons that are today largely redundant. Even a thawing of the Cold War will not produce the changes presently sought by Armenians in the status and borders of their homeland, divided between Russia and Turkey. However, the fateful process of state formation during the early decades of the twentieth century gave territorial aspirations a dominant function in current Armenian perceptions which tend to divorce Armenian nationalism from consequential realities.

FROM PEOPLE TO NATION

The present border dividing Armenia dates back essentially to a treaty of 1639 between the Ottoman and Safavid Empires, which for a century had been contending for the domination of Mesopotamia and Transcaucasus. That treaty brought much-needed relief to the Armenian population from the ravages of war, but it also subjugated them to foreign rule, unwelcome because both empires imposed a harsh system of taxation and an oppressive social structure that discriminated against the non-Muslims. Before long, Armenians in both empires started searching for means to alter the status quo. For East Armenians the growing power of the "Christian King of the North," namely the Tsar,



offered a viable alternative. (1)

Russian expansion to the Caucasus occurred when modern Western imperialism was becoming the most pervasive force in international relations, and when technologically backward states such as the Ottoman and Persian realms were being integrated into the world market system. What once were issues of local significance acquired implications for major power relations, and decisions taken in Europe affected the lives of peoples in remote areas of the globe.

Modern Armenian political consciousness evolved as a reaction against the suffocating effects of medieval Ottoman and Persian imperialism in the process of disintegration and as a response to new but problematic opportunities for liberation offered by increasing Western and Russian interests in the area. Thus when Russia, a more secular and dynamic state, annexed Persian Armenia in 1828, it transformed the region into a lively arena of inter-European conflict which in turn made the politics of Western powers accessible to Armenians. It introduced new patterns in East Armenian life, and a faster pace of change. (2)

Yet, despite a growing divergence between the Armenian communities on opposite sides of the border by the middle of the nineteenth century, circumstances made it possible to transform the cultural renaissance of the 1840s and 1850s into the common political program of the last quarter of the century. First, both sectors drew on a two thousand-year-old common history to assert a distinctive national identity. Textbooks and poetry published in Constantinople and Moscow revived ancient personalities whose grandeur and heroism contrasted sharply with the prevailing servile mentality and status of most of the Armenian population. Secondly, by the 1860s a liberal intelligentsia among East as well as West Armenians won its battle for secularization of institutions and values. Their use of modern Armenian instead of the classical language was most consequential. Although a different dialect was accepted by East and West Armenians as the norm, it now became possible for them all to understand each other's writing without much effort. (3)

Thirdly, the relative lack of discrimination and oppression in Russian Armenia allowed Armenians to focus their attention on the Ottoman sector, where social and economic conditions had deteriorated considerably and where a clear danger to the physical survival of the Armenian people was seen. This was particularly true during and after the famine that followed the war of 1877-1878. Although the Russian government later decided that another Bulgaria could not be tolerated on its flanks, at the time it did not object to the Russian Armenians' advocacy of West Armenia's liberation, particularly if that meant further tsarist annexations. (4)

The road to a political program for a new Armenian nation was not straight. Circumstances directly related to Armenia's betweenland position - lack of opportunities and protection normally provided by a national government; lack of communication for the joint exploitation

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of the land's resources; absence of security of property, particularly in the Ottoman sector - produced two Armenian bourgeoisies. In the Ottoman Empire evolved a commercial class, beneficiary of the growing trade with the West; in Russia the bourgeoisie became increasingly industrial and financial. Both flourished in the capitals and in major administrative and commercial centers of the two empires, outside the Armenian heartland where the majority of Armenians lived and which had become backwaters of the Ottoman and Russian territories. By mere economic necessity, and lacking a social basis to exert any political power, affluent Armenians linked their fortunes to the regimes in their respective states. Hence, the two bourgeoisie did not seek, and could not have achieved, a common program solely on the basis of their ethnic background, notwithstanding contacts between the liberal intelligentsias supported by each. Their interest in the improvement of the lot of the common man in Armenia proper did not exceed a mild reformism; under no circumstance did they antagonize the governments that had afforded them economic prerogatives.

Thus, the East Armenian bourgeoisie, which had earlier strongly supported Russian advances into Ottoman territories as a means of freeing the West Armenians, did not protest in 1885 against the closing of hundreds of parochial Armenian schools in East Armenia ordered by the Tsar's government. Furthermore, when Russo-Turkish relations improved in the 1890s, and Russia actively opposed the anti-Ottoman activities of Armenian revolutionaries, the latter were denied any assistance by this wealthy class. Similarly, the West Armenian bourgeoisie lost much of its enthusiasm for systematic reforms in the eastern provinces once Sultan Abdulhamid II revealed his reactionary attitudes toward social change. The Armenian National Assembly in Constantinople limited its activities in this last regard to formal representations to the Porte. Most well-to-do Ottoman Armenians were only too willing to accept the Sultan's occasional paternalistic favors to chosen individuals as a proof that his rule was benevolent and his society harmonious.

In the 1880s it became clear that the reforms advocated by the traditional leadership would not be carried out. By then, the Armenian bourgeoisie and the once powerful Armenian Church associated with them had retrenched from their earlier active participation in the process of political awakening. The Ottoman constitutional movement and Armenian liberalism had failed. Consequently, revolutionary political parties emerged, organized primarily by elements from the lower classes and by the radicalized segments of the intelligentsia. (5)

The ideologies espoused by the new parties were the first in Armenian history to be rooted in the needs of the masses. They all proposed to struggle against the political despotism, economic stagnation, and social inequality of the Ottoman system. The 1892 platform of the most influential of these organizations, the ARF or Dashnaktsutiune (Hay Heghapokhakan Dashnaktsutiune, or Armenian Revolutionary Federation, founded in 1890) called, for example, for the

establishment of a popular-democratic government based on free elections. This government would guarantee security of life and right to work; equality of all nationalities and religions before the law; freedom of speech, press, and assembly; distribution of land to the landless; taxation according to ability to pay; abolition of the military exemption fee and replacement of it with equal conscription; establishment of compulsory education and promotion of national intellectual progress; and reinforcement of communal principles as a means to greater production and exports. (6)

The political parties viewed specific demands as means to achieve the larger goal of a dynamic progressive society. The slightly older Hunchakian Revolutionary Party (founded in 1887 and 1888) asserted, for example, that "Political freedom for the Armenian people will be considered as only one of the conditions necessary for the realization of a series of basic and radical reforms in its political, social and economic life. . . that will insure a solid basis and the true path for the moral, intellectual, and material progress of society." (7) The ARF, too believed that "the liberation of the people from its untenable condition in order that they may enter the mainstream of human progress could only be achieved through revolution." (8)

One feature that distinguished the new organizations from prior advocates of reform was their use of weapons to force the Ottoman state and the signatory powers of the Treaty of Berlin to live up to their responsibilities. But on a larger scale this revolution entailed first and foremost a campaign against the slavish mentality of the Armenian masses. Propaganda was to be reinforced by living examples of valor and martyrdom in situations of armed resistance to oppression. In addition to their psychological impact, the revolutionary parties viewed the acquisition of arms by the Armenian populace as the best means of defense against widespread lawlessness overlooked by the Ottoman government, and occasional pogroms condoned by it. (9)

Mass participation in the liberation movement was low despite an apparently widespread sympathy with the revolutionary activities. Many Armenians continued to believe that any opposition to the existing order would constitute an act of insubordination against God's pre-ordained scheme for the world. Others, in areas sparsely populated by Armenians, were apprehensive of the reaction of their neighbors and overlords. Moreover, the Church, fearful of losing the few prerogatives it had managed to retain, remained aloof from the movement, although a few clergymen were involved in clandestine operations. The revolutionary parties considered the Church a lethargic and regressive institution. The church, in turn, would not cooperate with parties that called for a struggle against patriarchal institutions and advocated a secular society. It is true that in 1903 the ARF had come to the support of the Church when the Russian government decreed the confiscation of Armenian Church properties; and following massive opposition and large scale demonstrations against the decree the revolutionaries had been able to force its rescission. But all of that was forgotten during the days

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of the first Russian Revolution when a General Assembly of Eastern Armenians was convened at the Holy See of Edjmiadsin. There most of the delegates elected were members or sympathizers of the ARF; the party felt strong enough to propose the distribution of Church-owned agricultural lands to the peasants who had tilled them for generations. The Assembly was disbanded in two days by the Russian police, most probably at the instigation of high-ranking churchmen. (10)

Relations between the political parties and the Armenian bourgeoisie had a similarly ambivalent character. Notwithstanding their programmatic antagonism toward all exploiting classes, the revolutionaries, especially the ARF leaders, expected the wealthy at least to provide financial assistance since the struggle undertaken had a national character. (11) Their press often criticized the Armenian upper classes for the latter's cowardice and lack of interest in the fate of the common Armenian. The mutual distrust dissipated in the Caucasus during the Armeno-Tatar conflict of 1905 to 1907. Unable to rely on government forces to protect their interests and properties, merchants, financiers, and industrialists turned to the ARF. The ARF accepted the challenge. Its leaders argued, firstly, that Tatar aggression had been instigated by the reactionary Russian government as part of a larger anti-Armenian policy; hence it was as necessary to defend Armenian-owned property as it was to protect helpless Armenian peasants. Secondly, they argued, given employment discrimination against Armenian workers in non-Armenian concerns, the assistance provided to the Armenian bourgeoisie was tantamount to the safekeeping of employment opportunities for Armenian laborers. (12) Paradoxically, this alliance coincided with the ARF's most intense socialist-oriented propaganda and activities in the Caucasus. It also allowed the flow of arms and financial assistance to the struggle in Western Armenia on an unprecedented scale. Yet the ideological inconsistency provided the best opportunity yet to the nascent Armenian Marxist group to criticize the now dominant ARF. (13)

From the beginning, though, the revolutionary parties concentrated their efforts among the artisans, peasants, and petty bourgeoisie of Western Armenia. And here there was no lack of support in provinces and districts where lawlessness and poverty had reached unbearable dimensions. Furthermore, in regions such as Sason, Mush, and Zeytun, where vestiges of the medieval Armenian feudal system remained subject to constant harassment by regular army troops and by Kurdish chieftains, the response to the appeal of the revolutionaries was immediate and overwhelming. Long before any of the parties were founded, local leaders in these mountainous districts had organized self-defense units and individual fighters had taken up arms to protect their families and villages.

The revolutionary parties provided a direction to those elements and attempted to coordinate their activities with newly organized units and within the framework of an overall strategy. Guerrilla fighters came mostly from traditionally devout families, and lacked the sophistication

of urban intellectuals in the parties; but they overcame the impediments of religion by supplanting the God of submission and patience preached by most clergymen with the God of justice and retribution, or simply by deifying local saints who could "understand their situation" better.

Moreover, revolutionary parties were readily supported in cities and towns where educational institutions founded during the cultural renaissance had been instrumental in raising the level of political consciousness among the young. In fact, in the cities of Van and Erzerum, young Armenians had attempted as early as 1872 and 1882, respectively, to establish secret organizations devoted to the "salvation" of Armenia. Finally the movement acquired a large number of adherents among provincial Armenians who had moved to Constantinople or emigrated to the Russian Empire, Europe, and the United States to escape misery.

The new parties sought to achieve political emancipation in different frameworks. (14) The Hunchakians advocated the establishment of an "independent" homeland. Although the ARF used the vague expression "free Armenia," its goal was administrative autonomy for Turkish Armenia and the basic concern was for the essence of freedom, rather than for particular forms of political organization. (15)

But regardless of what framework was thought desirable or possible at any given moment, there is no doubt that these Armenian revolutionaries thought of Armenia as a distinct geographic entity. Here lay one of their weaknesses. "Turkish Armenia" referred to the six eastern vilayets of the Ottoman Empire: Erzerum, Van, Bitlis, Diarbakir, Harput (Mamuret-ul-Aziz), and Sivas. According to Turkish sources, during the years immediately preceding World War I 666,000 Armenians lived in those provinces (comprising 17 percent of their total population), and a grand total of 1,295,000 Armenians lived in the Empire. The Armenian Patriarchate of Constantinople claimed there were 1,018,000 Armenians in Ottoman Armenia (comprising 38.9 percent of the region's total population), and that there were 2,100,000 in the whole Empire. (16) Neither set of figures is scientifically reliable, although the latter count seems closer to reality. Thus Armenians constituted at best a plurality in their homeland. Occasional attempts by revolutionaries at cooperation with similarly oppressed non-Armenian elements, which would have neutralized the numerical impediment, were largely unsuccessful. (17) But statistical facts were irrelevant to most Armenians. They simply argued that the depopulation of the Armenian plateau of its native inhabitants was the result of a deliberate Ottoman policy of reducing the number of Armenians (during the widespread massacres of 1894 to 1896 alone a minimum of 200,000 were killed) and a consequence of the lack of security and economic development. Armenians identified themselves with Ottoman Armenia, by far the larger part of the divided homeland, not because of numbers but because of a "force of history." In common usage "Armenia" (i.e., Ottoman Armenia) and "Armenian People" had

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In popular perception it was the historic past that sustained a sense of identity with the land; and in the revolutionaries' thought this relationship was evolved into a dynamic "force" that would achieve liberation. The practical problems involved in creating an independent state (not to speak of those involved in reuniting Russian and Ottoman Armenia) did not prejudice the new liberators against a deep-seated belief that weaknesses and distinctions predicated by Armenia's betweenland position could be overcome and that the nation would participate in history again. This belief was expressed most passionately at times of crisis, such as in 1903 when the Tsar's government decreed the confiscation of Armenian Church property. Anticipating the worst from the confrontation between tsarist police and politicized Armenian masses, Kristapor Mikayelian, one of the founders of the ARF and its most respected leader, exclaimed:

Now that, following the massacres in Turkish Armenia, we might be on the eve of pogroms in the Caucasus, it is time to adopt as our general motto the indomitable will to struggle and fuse as one. It is necessary to erase those borders on maps drawn by this or that chief bandit. It is necessary to obliterate those geographic colors which are separating us, which usually are not eternal, and at times are short lived. No oppression, no persecution and no border can separate a people, if that people, inspired by a consciousness of common interests, manifests an unwavering determination to fight as well (18)

The National Program Thwarted

From his hatred of sultan and tsar alike, Mikayelian had reached the ideal of national union - even though ideals must be pursued within given political realities if they are to remain relevant. Thereupon, during the first decades of this century, the Armenian revolutionary groups experienced disasters. First, the Ottoman Empire proved to be more durable than anticipated. It was sustained rather than destroyed by rivalries among the Great Powers. Secondly, the attempted tsarist governmental confiscation of Armenian Church properties in 1903, and the bloody Armeno-Tatar clashes in 1905 to 1907 in the Caucasus compelled the Armenian parties to take responsibility for reorganizing the East Armenians as well as those of the West, shattering illusions regarding tsarist sympathies for Armenians and their struggle.

The most important development of the period was the emergence of the Young Turk movement in the Ottoman Empire. The beleaguered Armenian parties at first found cause here to renew their hopes for reforms in the Empire and its eastern provinces. They consulted,

negotiated, and cooperated with prominent Young Turks, and in 1908 when the latter took control of the Ottoman government and proclaimed the Ottoman Constitution, jubilant Armenians welcomed the dawn of a new era, Armenian guerrillas put down their arms, and the parties made the necessary ideological adjustments. In its 1907 program the ARF had already endorsed democratic federalism as the system most suitable and desirable for the complex needs of Ottoman society. (19) In 1909 the Hunchakian Party renounced separatism and opted for a centralized government that would nonetheless allow cultural autonomy for its ethnic groups. Each party aligned with the Turkish organization closest to its ideas. (20)

The era of Armeno-Turkish cooperation did not last long, however. On the one hand, the Armenian leaders became impatient with the procrastination of the Young Turk CUP (Ittihad ve Terakki or Committee of Union and Progress) in implementing promised reforms. On the other hand, the more liberal democratic elements in the CUP lost control and a new ruling clique gravitated toward extreme nationalism. Turkish or Pan-Turanian doctrines began to supplant religion as the Ottoman state ideology, and the Armenians began to be regarded as a source of irritation for whom there was no room in a Turkish nation defined in territorial and linguistic-religious terms. Moreover, the CUP began to entertain ideas of expansion toward the East, and these also made the Armenians seem a nuisance.

At the end of October 1914, the militant faction of the CUP led the Ottoman Empire into war. In April 1915, systematic massacres and deportations of the West Armenian population began. The overwhelming evidence from a variety of written and oral sources indicates that these pogroms were coordinated, followed a predetermined course, and could not have been realized without the knowledge and resources of the Turkish government. By the end of the War at least one million Armenians had been killed or had perished otherwise. Some of the survivors had fled across the Russian frontier, others had settled in new lands to the south establishing a new Armenian diaspora. (21)

Meanwhile, on the opposite side of the border, the Russian revolutions, the disintegration of the Caucasus Front, and the Civil War temporarily ended Russian rule over the peoples of the Caucasus. In May 1918, following a brief and unsuccessful attempt at federation, the three major groups - the Georgians, the Azeris, and the Armenians - all declared their separate territories independent. (22) The government of the Republic of Armenia, dominated by the ARF, was confronted with the enormous task of caring not only for the native population but also for the tens of thousands of refugees from Western Armenia. Consequently, the inclusion of Armenian-populated areas of the Caucasus in the boundaries of the Republic became a crucial factor in its relations with Georgia and Azerbaijan; and its long-range foreign policy was aimed at extending its jurisdiction over Western Armenia. In 1919 the ARF declared a united and independent Armenia its political ideal, and the government of Armenia officially advanced its claim to Western

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Armenia. To realize these goals, the Republic sent plenipotentiaries to the peace conference of the victorious Allies in Paris, there joining a separate delegation of West Armenians. As a result, the treaty of Sevres (August 1920) between the Allies, Armenia, and a defeated Turkey recognized the Armenian Republic and most of its claims. A new era seemed to have dawned for the Armenians. After the horrors of the massacres, the remotest prewar dreams were to be realized.

Then came the final debacle. As the Allied projects for dissolving the Ottoman Empire came to light, revolutionaries established a new regime in Ankara. Turkish leaders, for whom the concept of an integral territorial nation had become as crucial as it had for Armenians, began a campaign against the Republic of Armenia. Western intervention in the Russian civil war lent to an alliance between the Russian Bolsheviks and Turkish nationalists. (23) The resulting military and diplomatic cooperation shattered the Armenian dream. In December 1920, less than five months after the signing of the Sevres Treaty, independent Armenia collapsed. In 1921 the West Armenian lands (denuded by then of most of their Armenian population) returned to Turkish sovereignty; and in East Armenia the Republic began to be sovietized. (24)

The Soviet Armenians: Between Old and New

East Armenia formally entered the Soviet Union in 1922, a year after the dissolution of the independent republic. It was then considered part of the Transcaucasian Soviet Federation (along with Georgia and Azerbaijan), a grouping which survived until the promulgation of the Stalin constitution in 1936. Since then Armenia has figured as the smallest of the constituent republics of the USSR (30,000 km²). It has a population of 2.5 million, 88.6 percent of which is Armenian. It contains only 62 percent of the 3.5 million Armenians in the USSR, however. Another million (26.3 percent of the total) live nearby in Caucasus, sometimes concentrated in areas such as the autonomous Karabagh province of the Azerbaijan Republic, where 80 percent of the population is Armenian. The final 350,000 Armenians are scattered in the Soviet territories outside the Caucasus. In all, the Armenians constitute 1.5 percent of the Soviet population. (25)

The path of sovietization has been difficult for the Armenians despite early promises by Revolutionary Russia. (26) Soon after assuming power, Lenin issued a decree that has been held up as a model of Russian understanding of Armenian political and territorial aspirations. The decree of December 31, 1917 stated that the new Russia "defended the right of the Armenian people to free self-determination in Russian occupied 'Turkish Armenia,' including even total independence"; it stated further that the realization of this overall objective required the return of all uprooted Armenians to Turkish Armenia and stringent measures to guarantee their security. (27) No practical steps were taken to secure any of the stated goals, however. In addition,

Soviet Russia actively sought the demise of the Republic of Armenia on the eastern part of the land; and, once that goal was achieved in December 1920, the Soviet government lost interest in "Turkish Armenia" and even disposed of territories formerly under the control of the Republic.

At that time Armenia was contesting several districts with its neighbors - with Azerbaijan, the mountainous Karabagh district to the southeast, with its dense Armenian population, (28) and the Nakhidjevan region enclosed between Armenia and the Persian frontier; with Georgia, the district of Akhalkalak, 82 percent Armenian-populated even today; and with Turkey, the provinces of Kars and Ardahan which had been part of the Russian Empire from 1878 until 1917, and the district of Igdir which contains the consecrated symbol of historic Armenia, Mount Ararat. In 1921 its control of the Caucasus in the balance and its relations with Turkey at a critical point, the Soviet government ceded all these districts to their non-Armenian claimants. Then, when the first Bolshevik commissars arrived in Armenia, they proved so thoroughly revolutionist in the poverty and disease stricken land and they so enthusiastically persecuted everyone associated with the leadership of the ARF-led Republic, that on February 21 they provoked a popular uprising, against which Lenin had to send Red Army reinforcements. (29)

Once the revolt had been put down, Lenin ^{sent to} contacted Erevan Alexander Miasnikian, a more circumspect and disciplined leader, and advised Caucasian communists to take into consideration specific local conditions and to follow "a gentler, more cautious, and more conciliatory policy toward the petty bourgeoisie, the intelligentsia, and particularly the peasantry What is feasible and necessary in the Caucasus is a slower, more prudent, and more systematic course of transition to socialism than was warranted in the RSFSR" (30)

Once settled, Miasnikian's government started implementing programs of modernization in education, hygiene, transportation, and economic reconstruction. The government also attracted a number of prominent Armenians from Europe and other parts of the USSR to enhance academic, scientific, and cultural development, and it inaugurated a period of material development in East Armenia that may not be disregarded.

Subsequently, of course, there was another turn for the worse. Stalin rose to power. He ignored Lenin's admonitions and started his notorious drive for collectivization of the Soviet Union's agriculture. In Armenia again there was massive resistance. Peasants slaughtered cattle and stock willfully, producing a famine that lasted until 1934. Soon thereafter, the great purges of 1936 to 1939 claimed the lives of hundreds of Armenian intellectuals and a new generation of communist Armenian leaders. (31) It is notable that the most prominent among the latter, the popular first secretary of the Communist Party in Armenia Aghassi Khanjian, was a West Armenian refugee from Van. Khanjian had been 14 years old when the massacres of the West Armenians began; he was a natural ally of the Soviet regime, and yet, like so many others,

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he was accused of harboring nationalist sentiments, and shot. Then came the war, which was perhaps not Stalin's fault, but in which Armenia was involved because it belonged to the Soviet Union. Over 450,000 Armenians were called upon to fight in the USSR armed forces between 1941 and 1945.

Paradoxically, World War II also opened new prospects for change. An important aspect of the war effort was the Soviet regime's toleration of Armenian national identity and pride. No doubt this was calculated to create enthusiasm for the now-threatened Soviet fatherland. But in 1945 the regime went further. Stalin abrogated the treaty of friendship and neutrality with Turkey which since 1925 had stifled Armenian national territorial aspirations, he called for a revision of the Montreux Convention which regulated the Straits, and he issued demands for the return of Kars and Ardahan. Whatever the Soviet motivations, these developments allowed both Armenians and the neighboring Soviet Georgians an extraordinary new opportunity to express national hopes.

In a memorandum forwarded to the leaders attending the Moscow Conference in December 1945, the Catholicos in Edjmiadsin, Gevorg VI, expressed the hope that justice will finally be rendered to the Armenian people by the "liberation of Turkish Armenia and its annexation to Soviet Armenia." (32) The first secretary of the Communist Party of Armenia, Grigor Harutiunian, declared in the electoral campaign of 1946 that "the question of the return of the provinces conquered by Turkey is posed by the Armenian people itself in Soviet Armenia as in Europe, America, the Near and Middle East. These claims are being defended by the government of Soviet Armenia . . . and are of vital importance for the Armenian people as a whole." (33) The speech, interspersed by much applause, also assured that there were no strategic considerations in the Armenian demands. Leaders in Soviet Armenia recalled the enormous sacrifices offered by Armenians in the struggle against fascism - as opposed to Turkey's procrastination. They had thus earned the right to see their fatherland expanded. Armenians also argued that Soviet Armenia had the moral and historical duty to provide a homeland for diaspora Armenians and that the territory of the Armenian SSR could not accommodate the large numbers expected to heed the call for repatriation.

The role of "government of all Armenians" was Soviet Armenia's only for a brief moment in its history of course. The Soviet demands on Turkey were explicitly retracted in 1953, immediately after Stalin's death. But meanwhile there had been a considerable repatriation of diaspora Armenians. Between 1946 and 1948 approximately 100,000 Armenians, mainly from the Middle East, "returned" to Soviet Armenia; (34) and in the diaspora enormous enthusiasm was generated by the Soviet initiative.

So erratic has been the record of sovietization in Armenia that radically different evaluations can be justified. Sovietization has been acclaimed as the salvation of the Armenian people and decried as a new

form of slavery. For some it represents the best available defense against Pan-Turanian imperialism and Turkish expansionism which in 1920 could have resulted in the decimation or uprooting of the East Armenian population as well; and by providing for a form of statehood with secure borders, it grants the Armenian people the opportunity to develop economically and culturally. For others this same sovietization forced Armenia back into an orbit where an independent pursuit of national interests has been impossible. It made Armenia's fate subject to the vicissitudes of Russian policy toward Turkey, the degree of autonomy it allowed was conditional upon decisions made in Moscow; and, because of it, Armenian culture fell into the danger of being submerged by the dominant Russian one.

To make sense of such contrasting evaluations, one must seek out realistic measuring tapes, and one is certainly the process of industrialization that has affected Armenia under Soviet rule. Beyond any question there has been great benefit in this respect. Whereas the average increase in production in the USSR has been 113-fold between 1913 and 1973 (117-fold in the RSFSR), Soviet Armenia's production has multiplied 222 times. The war effort accelerated the pace of production especially in the machine and chemical industries. Just between 1950 and 1975, the output in electricity has increased 9 times; chemical and petroleum products, 164 times; machine and metallurgy, 57 times. (35) The rate of urbanization has been equally dramatic. Compared to a 10 percent urban population in 1931, 59 percent of Armenians now live in cities (all-Union average, 56 percent). Soviet Armenia has one of the highest rates of workers in the sciences and professions and skilled workers with higher education in the USSR. (36) However much one weighs this sort of data against the arbitrary planning and the crash methods of the centralized Soviet economy, one must admit that East Armenia has been transformed by Soviet rule in a fashion entirely unparalleled in the other countries of the Middle East.

Population statistics provide an equally sensitive barometer of the benefits and disadvantages of sovietization in Armenia. The Armenian SSR has posted a 41 percent increase in its population between the most recent census years, 1959 and 1970. The average 3.72 percent annual increase constitutes the fourth highest in the USSR, exceeded only by Tajikistan (4.18 percent), Uzbekistan, Turkmenistan, and Kirgizia. Furthermore, during the same period, of all the major ethnic groups in the USSR, the rate of increase in the use of the mother tongue as a first language was highest among Armenians (1.5 percent).

Despite this optimal record, apprehensions concerning the threat of assimilation plague official and nonofficial Armenian circles. (37) To begin with the same empirical evidence, the high rate of increase in population is due primarily to immigration. As a result of inter-republic migrations, 146,000 new residents have come to Soviet Armenia from other areas of the USSR during the intercensus years. (38) In addition, between 1963 and 1970 approximately 16,000 resettled there from the Diaspora. (39) The large increase in the rate of those using Armenian in

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the ASSR as a first language must also be ascribed to this same phenomenon; and on the other hand one must note that of the 14 non-Russian "union republic" nationalities, Armenians rank lowest in their preference for marital endogamy within their own republic. (40) Also, the tremendous increase of the number of women at work in an expanding industrial economy has led to a reduction in size of the Armenian family. Since 1928 the birthrate among Armenians had declined steadily from 56 to 22.1 per thousand in 1970. (41) A survey conducted by an enterprising journal in Yerevan has revealed causes for this phenomenon similar to those prevalent in the West: marriage at later ages; and rising concerns for the availability of child care centers, time to spend with children, housing, and the quality of life. The researchers were thankful that very few mentioned conjugal problems as a factor, and that traditional Armenian marital harmony was still valued. (42) But this did not reduce the disturbing implications of the phenomenon for the future of the Armenian people.

In this connection one may note also that the percentage of Armenians using their native tongue as a first language varies in different parts of the USSR. In Armenia it is 97.7; in Georgia, 85; Azerbaijan, 84. In the province of Rostov (RSFSR), however, it is 71.5, and in the city of Moscow, it is only 35.5. The use of Armenian seems to decrease with the distance of one's residence from Armenia. The age of a community and its historical relationship to Armenia continue to play an important role as well. Thus, of Armenians in the Autonomous Republic of Nakhidjevan (now only 2.6 percent Armenian in population) and the autonomous province of Mountainous Karabagh (still 80 percent Armenian in population), 98.5 percent and 98 percent respectively consider Armenian their first language. Both are historically Armenian territories. Ultimately, however, the demographic context and the availability of native language schools will constitute the most decisive factors in the use of Armenian among those outside the Armenian SSR. Most communities outside the Republic lack facilities for the preservation of the Armenian language and culture. Also, for reasons of cultural and political nationalism in some areas, Armenian educational and community institutions are subject to severe local pressures. (These pressures might explain the sizeable recent Armenian immigration from Georgia and Azerbaijan to Armenia.)

The USSR is the heir of the Russian Empire and Russian is the lingua franca of the Union, as it was during tsarist times. To a large extent this is natural, given demographic and geographic realities. More than at any given time, however, opportunities for recognition and promotion on the all-Union level presently require the use of Russian for most professions, while economic interdependence growing out of regional imbalances in natural and manpower resources mandate the universalization of values consecrated and institutionalized in Moscow. Of those emigrating from the Armenian SSR to other parts of the Union, 37.2 percent go to the RSFSR. (43) It is not surprising that there are as many Armenians with higher education living outside as there are

inside the Armenian Republic, and that the absolute majority of Armenians not knowing or using their mother tongue live in the major urban industrial centers of the USSR. Assimilation is a real danger to the Armenian people in the USSR, an unavoidable concomitant of industrialization.

Since Stalin, the Soviet regime has become more permissive in Armenia. An early measure in this respect came in 1956 when the government allowed the election of a Catholicos of All Armenians to the vacant seat at Edjmiadsin in the Armenian SSR. Since then the new supreme spiritual leader, Vazken II, has enjoyed a wider margin of movement and easier access to his people than at any time since 1921. In 1965, on the 50th anniversary of the genocide of 1915, there were subdued official commemorations in Yerevan and a monument was erected to it near the city. Since then the republican leaders have institutionalized government participation in this most symbolic and emotional of Armenian ceremonies on each April 24. In recent years, the new first secretary of the Communist Party of Armenia, Garen Temirjian, has led the official delegations and masses of marchers to the monument.

Since 1956 references to places, events, and people tied to the history of Western Armenia have abounded in Soviet literature and the arts. Historians have dwelled at length on the human and political consequences of the Genocide. Earlier the term "liberation" had been exclusively applied to the activities of Armenian Bolsheviks, the effects of the November Revolution on Armenia, and the process of sovietization, while the ARF and the Hunchakians were branded as reactionary. Now historians have rehabilitated the Liberation Movement in Ottoman Armenia by recognizing its mass appeal, and studying it in the proper historical context, even though the parties leading that movement remain subject to severe criticism. A new study published in 1976 has even included a detailed description of the activities of guerrilla leaders whose names were long known and cherished by the public through revolutionary ballads. (44) A well-known novelist, Khachig Dashtents, has based his most recent work on a fictionalized version of the same theme. (45) The Soviet Armenian language has been gradually cleared of common words transferred from the Russian. Academicians have been developing a vocabulary of scientific and technical terms derived from the wealth of the Armenian language. Today, though it is in Turkey, Mount Ararat is found on the flag of the Armenian SSR, and the national soccer team carries its name. (46)

These largely symbolic concessions have not reflected Soviet policy toward Armenian territorial aspirations. As noted above, the post-Stalin era opened with Molotov's deliberate retraction in 1953 of the Stalinist demands on Turkey of 1945. In 1965 Prime Minister A. Kosygin went further; he suggested a new nonaggression pact to achieve "good relations" with Turkey. He also stated that the USSR had no territorial designs against that country. (47) Although Turkey turned down the offer, Soviet-Turkish relations have since improved. The two governments have cooperated on industrial projects in Turkey, which has

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