

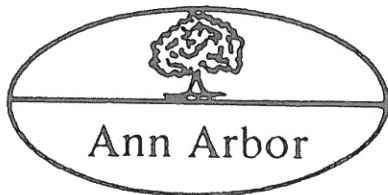
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REVOLUTION AND LIBERATION IN THE 1892 AND 1907 PROGRAMS OF THE DASHNAKTSUTIUN

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The *Hay Heghapokhakan Dashnaktsutiun* (Armenian Revolutionary Federation) was founded in 1890 in Tiflis. First established as the Federation of Armenian Revolutionaries, the organization aimed at coordinating the activities of various student and radical groups devoted to Western Armenian liberation. Some of its founding members soon concluded, however, that without the authority to provide leadership and to initiate action, the central executive body entrusted with the task of coordination was not effective. By 1892 it had also become clear that the Dashnaktsutiun had failed in its efforts to include within the federation the largest and most important of these groups, the *Hunchak* Party, founded in Geneva in 1887.

An assembly of representatives and leaders met in 1892 and decided to transform the Dashnaktsutiun into a party in its own right. This First General Congress adopted a vaguely socialistic world view and a decentralized organizational structure. The new party also decided to pursue the goal of "political and economic freedom in Ottoman Armenia through rebellion."¹

The program of the party remained essentially the same until 1907 when the Fourth General Congress reformulated its socialism along the lines of Russia's Social Revolutionaries; it redefined its goal as the establishment of federal structures in both the Ottoman and Russian empires within which the two sectors of Armenia would constitute autonomous units; it also called for collaboration with the progressive forces in the Ottoman Empire and Europe as a major strategic weapon.²

The purpose of this paper is to explain these changes within the context of nineteenth century Armenian political thought and revolutionary practice.

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The 1892 program of the Dashnaktsutiun, which set the direction of the Armenian revolutionary struggle during the fifteen years that followed, was preconditioned by the focusing of Armenian political thought on Western Armenia, the democratization of Armenian politics, the unwillingness of the Armenian bourgeoisie to lead a national struggle, the failure of

1 *Hay Heghapokhakan Dashnaktsutiun Dsragir* (henceforth *Dsragir*, 1892), Vienna, n.d., p. 17.

2 *H.H. Dashnaktsutiun Dsragir* (henceforth *Dsragir*, 1907), Vienna, 1907.

Western Armenian liberals and provincial radicals to develop a comprehensive strategy and, finally, the disparity between the "scientific" socialism of the Hunchak Party program and the objective realities in Western Armenia.³

During the second half of the nineteenth century the Western Armenian crisis was the most pressing issue for Armenians. The promise of Ottoman domestic reforms was followed by the reality of repression. The deterioration of socio-economic conditions, which affected all lower elements within the provincial population, was particularly devastating for the Armenian peasantry and petty bourgeoisie. Official indifference and unofficial policy encouraged lawlessness, illegal taxation, rural dislocation and land usurpation; whether designed to alter the demographic structure of the Eastern vilayets in favor of Turks or to prevent the transformation of a cultural Armenian community into a political power, these policies added a new dimension to the crisis of economic survival, the survival of the Armenians as a people.

In the 1880's Armenian politics was democratized with the rise of groups and parties devoted to popular and radical causes. The leadership for reforms for provincial Armenia in the Ottoman Empire had been provided at first by the traditional community structures, such as the Patriarchate and National Assembly in Istanbul, under the control of upper class elements. Also, as long as patriotism was defined in cultural and humanitarian terms the upper classes on both sides of the border provided financial, moral and personal leadership within the community. However, the program of reforms from within the Ottoman system failed and, given the worsening of conditions, cultural identification tended to change to political commitment among the young and the poor. Furthermore, the capital accumulated by the Armenian merchants and industrialists failed to become Armenian capital. Rooted in cities outside the boundaries of historic Armenia where most Armenians lived, the wealthy Armenians in Istanbul or Tiflis considered subjection to Ottoman and Russian rule a better guarantee for economic survival than the search for a nation-state. Thus, when in 1880 the Sultan started moving toward repression of any reform program and when in 1883 the Tsar lost his interest in Armenians and sought an accommodation with the Ottoman Empire, the Armenian liberals and bourgeois relinquished their leadership of the cause of the provincial Armenians. The void left by the traditional leaders and institutions was filled by groups founded by lower class elements, less indebted to the system and more willing to seek new avenues to alleviate the

3 Comments in this paper related to nineteenth century Armenian political thought are drawn largely from my doctoral dissertation entitled "The Ideology of Armenian Liberation. A study in the development of Armenian political thought until 1887."

condition of the provincial Armenians.

Organizations founded by the provincial people, such as the *Pashtpan Hayreniats* in Erzerum in 1881 and *Armenakans* in Van in 1885 were unable to transform genuine feelings of patriotism and devotion to the people into a viable movement with an adequate strategy. These groups remained local; they failed to become national organizations not only because the state's intelligence apparatus prevented expansion, but also because their articulation of grievances did not encompass a conceptual framework. This was particularly true of the Armenakans who came closest to being a native revolutionary party, but remained urban oriented in their framework. For the Armenakans, established in Van in 1885, the peasantry was to benefit from revolutionary change but would not be a participant in it, since cultural enlightenment, found mainly among educated city people, was considered a prerequisite for revolutionary consciousness.

The first Armenian political party was founded by Eastern Armenians, who shared a common culture with Western Armenians and provided humanitarian assistance to them. The founders of the newspaper *Hunchak* and the party known by the same name were all born in the Russian Empire. Many were forced to flee Russia because of their involvement in revolutionary activities. Avetis Nazarbek and Maro Vardanian were both members of *narodniki* groups. They had knowledge of clandestine operations, they had a conceptual framework which related the particular Armenian experience to larger, universal historical forces, and they had a commitment to the cause of the common people. Most importantly, the Russian Armenian radicals were firm believers in the role of the peasantry in bringing about social and political change. Having idealized the Russian peasantry and its communal institutions, the early revolutionaries in Russia thought the peasants had something to teach the advanced but corrupt societies in cities.

The *Hunchak* program, developed in late 1887 and early 1888, was unable to integrate the national problem with the social component of the Western Armenian experience. Adhering to "scientific" socialism as understood by them, the Hunchak leaders decided to keep the two struggles, national and social, apart. Thus national independence was designated the immediate goal of the party while the establishment of the socialist order, the ultimate goal, was to be realized following national independence. The extremes of nationalism and communism were both adopted as if to compensate for the inability of the theoretical framework to integrate the two.⁵ This created a gap between thought and action

4 An introductory study of these organizations in the English language can be found in L. Nalbandian, *The Armenian Revolutionary Movement*, (Berkeley and Los Angeles, 1967).

5 "Dsragir Hunchakian Kusaktsutian," *Hunchak*, no. 1, November [December] 1887.

which the party was unable to fill by its activities. In 1896 this tension caused a split in the Party, which lost its dominant position in the revolutionary struggle. As early as 1890 and during the early negotiations between the representatives of the Dashnaksutiun and the Hunchak Party, the federation supporters had questioned the wisdom of the central role assigned to an industrial proletariat which was nonexistent in Armenia. While the strategy of socialist struggle was clearly defined by scientific socialism, and emanated from it, the strategy for national liberation was hardly covered except by the transposition of guerilla tactics into Western Armenia. Finally, the Hunchak Party insisted on a centralized hierarchy; local representatives or groups were given no authority and all plans and activities had to be approved or initiated at the highest executive level in London. The Hunchak Party was unable to initiate a mass supported movement despite its appeal among Western Armenian youth.

On the one hand, the involvement of Russian Armenian radicals in the Western Armenian political struggle implied a retreat from the universalist principle they thought they had while participating in the movement of liberation of the Russian peasantry. That involvement, on the other hand, signalled the beginning of the conceptualized approach to the problem. The Eastern Armenians were schooled in the tradition of seeing the world through the abstraction of theories of historical development. They thus introduced into the ideology of the national movement interpretations and perceptions based on a vague sort of socialism. Consequently, the liberation struggle was led by a class of radicals who considered the nation a historical rather than an absolute category and whose commitment was to historically conditioned patriotism rather than blind nationalism.⁶

The parties came to articulate the needs of the "people" and devoted themselves to their satisfaction. Their revolutionary character was not defined solely by their willingness to resort to an armed struggle—a practice quite well known to Armenians in Zeytun, Sasun and Karabagh—nor in their goal to achieve reforms otherwise supported by well-meaning liberals. Rather, that revolutionary character is to be found in their willingness to relate the crisis of the provinces to an oppressive social structure and regressive political-economic system, and in their determination to transform the people from subjects of history into agents of change, thus to achieve a radical transformation of society by whatever means necessary, within whatever political framework possible.⁷

⁶ The development of Marxism in the Caucasus and especially among Eastern Armenians is discussed elsewhere in this volume by Anaïde Ter Minassian and Ronald Suny. See also Ter Minassian's "Aux origines du marxisme arménien: les spécifistes" in *Cahiers du Monde russe et soviétique*, 1 - 2 (1978), pp. 67 - 117. The attraction toward Marxism among Eastern Armenian intellectuals is partially explained by their propensity to theorize.

⁷ I have discussed the revolutionization of Armenian society in "The Changing Armenian Self-Image in the Ottoman Empire: Rayahs and Revolutionaries," *The*

The revolutionary movement began when the political parties redefined liberation as that of the people rather than a territory, and thus qualitative changes in the future structure of society acquired at least as much importance as formal changes from one to another ruler.

The 1892 program of the Dashnaksutiun must be understood in this context.

According to the 1892 program of the Dashnaksutiun, the basic pattern in history has been the exploitation and political domination of political and economic elites over the working majority. Although the specific forms of social and economic relations have changed over the centuries, class antagonism has remained a constant. The specific forms of the establishment of such an elite in the Ottoman Empire has resulted in the transformation of ethnic-religious groups, such as the Armenians, into an exploited class. This explanation recognized that some Armenians were among the beneficiaries of and exploiters in the system, while non-Armenian elements, including Turks, were among those exploited. Furthermore, change could not come by reliance on the good will of the rulers. An armed struggle was necessary for that.

Yet, at the same time, the struggle could not be conducted within the framework of a rigid, catechistic ideology; nor should the masses be misled into believing in the imminent establishment of an Eden on earth through the detailed description of an ideal system. The program stated:

The sad and cruel lessons of history have demonstrated clearly that to achieve victory it is not sufficient for the suffering segment of humanity to understand its own condition, or even to develop the willingness to see it changed; that it is also necessary to obtain real power. But since that power cannot be created overnight, and since that power is the consequence of existing conditions, and changes accordingly, it is obvious that any form of social organization, however ideal, cannot be instituted at once, and that such an institution becomes possible only through the reform of existing conditions.

It is for this reason that we do not come forth as proponents of this or that utopian ideology; it is our purpose that our program be essential. Our attention is focused on the present condition of our land. Our goal is to subject . . . to an objective critique the causes that have given rise to the present condition; . . . to identify the causes of that condition based on the positive laws of the social sciences; and at the same time to wage a relentless struggle against the factors that have conditioned these causes.⁸

For the founders of the Dashnaksutiun to understand history and to change it one should account for subjective as well as objective factors. *Armenian Image in History and Literature*, R.G. Hovannissian, ed. (Malibu, California, 1981), pp. 155 - 170.

⁸ Dsragir, 1892, pp. 5 - 6.

The party program asserted, for example, that Armenian peasants were oppressed in the Ottoman Empire, both because they were peasants and because they were Armenians. While their being peasants in a semi-feudal society accounted for certain forms of oppression and exploitation—including some by Armenian landlord and usurers—their being Armenian and Christian accounted for other forms of oppression, and rationalized exploitation. This more elaborate relationship between political and economic factors indicated a program more flexible than that of the Hunchaks. Liberation for the Armenian people would be sought through graduated reforms in the political and economic spheres simultaneously. These reforms, the “minimum demands,” constituted the sole concern of the party. The “maximum demand,” ostensibly the establishment of a socialist order, were not articulated clearly. Socialism was implied as the ultimate ideal to which the inexorable march of history was leading, and in which all clear thinking revolutionaries believed by definition. An independent Armenia was at best suggested by the vague notion of “azat Hayastan” or a “free Armenia.”

The platform of the Dashnaksutiun called for the establishment of a popular-democratic government based on free elections. This government would guarantee security of life and the 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 its replacement with equal conscription; establishment of compulsory education; promotion of national intellectual progress; and reinforcement of communal principles as a means of greater production and exports.⁹

The party 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.”¹⁰

The reforms sought by the Dashnaksutiun were to be achieved through rebellion against the Ottoman state. Such a rebellion would be led by “revolutionary fighters.” The guerilla warfare envisioned would include terrorist activities against traitors and government establishments. The struggle would also be directed against those general conditions which are a burden for non-Armenians, including Kurds and peaceful Turks. Even if not altogether successful in creating a common front against the government, such a policy might neutralize the resistance to Armenian reforms on the part of non-Armenians.¹¹

Essential to the revolution was a campaign against the slavish mentality of the Armenian masses. Propaganda was to be reinforced by living examples of valor and martyrdom, by acts of armed resistance to

⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 17 - 19.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 16.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, p. 19.

oppression. In addition to their psychological impact, the revolutionaries viewed the acquisition of arms by the Armenian populace as the best means of defense against the widespread lawlessness which was overlooked by the Ottoman government, and against the occasional pogroms condoned by it.

Yet, the armed struggle aside, the actual strategy of the Dashnaksutiun was based on the following five premises: (1) the Armenian people would snap out of its lethargy and support the revolution once they were informed of its goals, simply because Armenians were oppressed; (2) privileged Armenian classes would support the movement since, after all, the movement was a national one aimed at reforms; (3) European powers would support the Armenian movement and intervene on its behalf, since Europe had been the cradle of revolutions and had committed itself to the resolution of the Armenian Question at the Conference of Berlin; (4) Russia would not oppose the goals of the movement despite its despotic regime, because of its long standing enmity with the Ottoman Empire; and (5) the Ottoman system would collapse without much delay from the revolutionary assault from within, European pressure from without, since the system was weak at its foundations.

Subsequent developments, including the massacres of 1894 - 1896, which caused the collapse of the Hunchak Party, came to show that these premises were partially or totally false. The Dashnaksutiun was forced to explain the failure of the movement to achieve minimal success by 1896 and chart a revised strategy. Party leaders argued that a majority of Armenians remained indifferent toward revolutionary practices because the slavish mentality was too engrained; the Armenian bourgeoisie and Church failed to support the movement because they were fearful of losing their own privileged positions; Europe had failed to act because its governments, representing capitalistic interests, were materialistic and lacked any idealism; the tsar opposed the revolutionary movement because he too was despotic and anti-Armenian; and, finally, the Ottoman system did not succumb since the Sultan, free of external pressures because of conflicting imperialistic interests, had been able to institutionalize a policy of depopulating the Armenian plateau through systematic persecutions and massacres.

The solutions were almost self-evident. The revolution required more preparation and a wider popular basis to be secured by more propaganda, heroic examples, and tactical successes; the course of European diplomacy could be altered in favor of the Armenian movement if an appeal was made to its more enlightened and progressive public and opinion-makers, the socialists, whose vision they shared.

Moreover, as a tactical measure, the immediate concern was further narrowed to the removal of the person of the Sultan, now the main villain. The Sultan was a target around which it would be possible to find support

among non-Armenians. This would also expand the support for the revolution horizontally rather than vertically. A policy of cooperation with Young Turks, Kurdish tribes, and other ethnic groups within Armenia helped create a larger gap between the idea of independence and the Dashnaksutiun. It also emphasized those aspects of its program which dealt with grievances common to other discontented elements in Ottoman society.

These adjustments turned the Dashnaksutiun into a force more formidable than any of the previous organizations. Yet these too failed to produce any substantial results. In 1904 an offensive by Ottoman armies on Sasun preempted a planned uprising in selected spots of Western Armenia, an uprising which was to activate all other factors favoring the introduction of reforms.

Equally debilitating for the morale and more consequential for the ideology of the revolution were events on the other side of the border. Until the turn of the century, Russian Armenians generally filled the role of suppliers and supporters to the struggle in Ottoman Armenia. But the tsarist government's edict ordering the expropriation of Armenian Church properties, the Armeno-Tatar conflict, and the First Russian Revolution brought to the surface the question of political and economic oppression in Russian Armenia and challenged some of the basic tenets of the Dashnaksutiun.

Generally speaking the Armenian Church had remained aloof from the revolutionary movement, although a few clergymen were involved in clandestine activities. The revolutionary parties, including the Dashnaksutiun, 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 in Armenia and advocated a secular society. In 1903 the Dashnaksutiun came to the support of the Church, arguing that the expropriation decree was aimed at all Armenians and that Armenian properties should remain in Armenian hands, even if that meant clerical hands. Following massive opposition and large scale demonstrations, the revolutionaries had been able to force the rescission of the decree.

The Armeno-Tatar conflict of 1905 - 1907 was another episode which strengthened the national character of the Dashnaksutiun. Among the many problems it posed was the threat to the position and properties of the Armenian bourgeoisie in the Caucasus. Relations between the political parties and the bourgeoisie had an ambivalent character. Notwithstanding their programmatic antagonism toward all exploiting classes, revolutionaries, especially the Dashnaksutiun, expected the wealthy to provide at least financial assistance. 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 between 1905 and 1907. Unable to rely on government forces to protect

their interests and properties, merchants, industrialists, and financiers turned to the Dashnaksutiun, practically the only organized Armenian force in the Caucasus. The Dashnaksutiun 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 equally necessary to defend Armenian owned property as it was to protect defenseless 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, the 1905 - 1907 period is also marked by a heightened sense of the socialist aspect of the Dashnaksutiun ideology. Until 1903, the party had avoided verbal or military confrontations with the Russian government, despite the lack of Russian support for Armenian goals and the anti-tsarist activities of Dashnaksakan founders preceding the formation of the party. The confiscation of Armenian property released anti-tsarist sentiments. Opposition to the tsar's government on political and economic grounds too began to evolve around 1900 among many Russian Armenian students, including members of the Dashnaksutiun. This was part of the larger Russian movement that culminated in the First Russian Revolution. The Dashnaksakan leadership had opposed involvement in Russia's internal affairs vehemently, arguing that the party's efforts should concentrate on the Western Armenian struggle. The struggle against the "surplus blood" that was being extracted from Armenians under Ottoman rule had priority over the struggle against "surplus value" being extracted from Russian Armenians, argued Kristapor Mikayelian, founder and ideologue, but apparently the opportunity to practice beliefs held in reserve and to participate in a revolution that had an opportunity to succeed was more appealing to some segments of the youth.

The party finally acceded to the rising demands for socialistic action. During a regional conference held in Tiflis in 1905, it formulated the "Caucasian Platform," a document which sanctioned the involvement of party cells within Russia in socialist activities.¹³ The party changed its position because it was afraid of losing a good portion of its most dynamic and devoted youth. The Dashnaksutiun was also concerned that the Armenian working class would pursue its social and economic interests under the banner of another non-Armenian party; this would weaken the social basis of the party. Under the guidance of non-Armenian parties, the Eastern Armenians might also lose interest in the struggle of their

12 M. Hovannisian, *Dashnaksutiune ev nra hakarakordnere* [The Dashnaksutiun and its Adversaries] (Tiflis, 1906/1907), pp. 54 - 83.

13 For the text of the "Caucasian Platform" see *Niuter H.H. Dashnaksutian patmutian hamar* [Documents for the History of the Dashnaksutiun], vol. II, H. Dasnabedian, editor (Beirut, 1973), pp. 231 - 236.

Western Armenian brethren. The platform temporarily resolved a potentially disruptive crisis.

Most members remained in the ranks. The "left wing" of the Dashnaktsutium began publishing newspapers and pamphlets. They introduced socialist and democratic principles, theories, institutions, authors, and parties in Europe. They organized unions among Armenian workers and generally participated in anti-tsarist activities.

As an unmistakable sign of its rediscovered sense of economic justice in the socialist sense, to prove the relevance of socialism in Armenian life, and to show the sincerity of its devotion to socialist principles, the Dashnaktsutium pressured the Catholicos of Echmiadzin to convene a general assembly of Russian Armenian representatives to allow for popular participation in the management of Church affairs. Most of the parish delegates elected to the 1906 meeting were members or sympathizers of the Dashnaktsutium. Among other proposals, the party asked for the distribution of Church owned agricultural lands to the families of peasants who had tilled them for generations. The party had not yet decided whether non-Armenian peasants on Armenian lands should be entitled to the same benefits when the meeting was disbanded by the order of Russian police, probably at the instigation of clergymen.¹⁴

Nonetheless, the "Caucasian Platform" did not satisfy all. Some argued that the party was following a dual ideology and could, therefore, serve neither side. They split away to join existing socialist organizations or to start new ones. Western Armenians also objected to the platform. They considered it a dangerous waste of meager party resources and a betrayal of the original goal of liberating Western Armenians.

Party leaders argued that the Western Armenian struggle had never received more financial and material support from the Caucasus than at the height of socialist propaganda. The critique from the left in search of ideological purity was not as easy to countenance.

The Fourth General Congress of the Dashnaktsutium in Vienna in 1907 was a critical one. Most Western Armenian delegates, among them guerilla leaders with heroic pasts, expected the Congress to declare the "Caucasian Platform" illegal. Some Russian Armenian representatives, mainly students who considered class and nation mutually exclusive categories, proposed that the party act realistically and responsibly by creating two separate organizations along existing ideological lines. In Western Armenia the Dashnaktsutium would continue its historic mission to assure the survival and other civil rights within the Ottoman Empire. In the Caucasus, the Dashnaktsutium would become the socialist organization of the Armenian people and pursue its struggle on the basis of the "Caucasian Platform."

¹⁴ M. Varandian [Hovannisian], *H.H. Dashnaktsutian patmutiun* [History of the Dashnaktsutium], vol. 1 (Boston, 1934), pp. 468 - 472.

A leadership composed of Western and Eastern Armenian members and strongly committed to preserve the organizational unity within a nation that was already small was able to prevail. The Congress produced a new program which satisfied most of its adherents without necessarily convincing all of the wisdom of the newly discovered "different but united" formula for the continuing struggle for liberation.

The new program was based on the premise that in essence Armenians on both sides of the border were engaged in a single revolution, since in both sectors the struggle was against political despotism, national oppression, and economic exploitation. The differences in levels of economic and political development between the two empires required a different emphasis of activities rather than a different struggle or organization in each. The program further clarified the concept of "people" to include only workers and peasants. The new definition made manifest the class aspect of the revolution but also accounted for the particular composition of exploited Armenian classes on both sides of the border.

The Fourth Congress also revised its general principles to bring them closer to the widely accepted concept of "scientific socialism," without relinquishing its appreciation of the subjective factors in history. Thus throughout its new program the party sought to preserve the class aspect of the revolution in Western Armenia and guarantee, at the same time, a solution to the national problem in the Russian Empire. The program stated:

Class struggle becomes even more complex in those countries where representatives of the ruling ethnic element, having control of state and public institutions, oppress the weaker nations and minority groups.

Deprived of the possibility of active participation in public and political life, suffering in both their material and intellectual development, the weaker groups are forced to lag behind the path of progress.

There is then a slowing of the universal human development as well as of the social liberation of the workers. This delay is caused by obstacles, on the one hand to the development of class struggle within the oppressed nations and, on the other hand, to class harmony between the exploited classes of the oppressing and oppressed classes.

While struggling against the bourgeoisie within their ethnic group, the working class of the oppressed but intellectually developed people is vigilant in guarding the course of national development which has created a unique popular psychology [environment].

The struggle against ethnic oppression is even more sustained and assured of victory since national development is no longer led

exclusively from the upper classes of the nation. The idea of national development permeates masses of the people, it is internalized by them and becomes the avenue of their progress. Popular masses that move from a state of lethargy to the arena of conscious life manifest a hidden potential for growth in the intellectual and social arenas.

Socialism strives toward the elimination of all barriers and all discrimination among nations, and toward the creation of a single, harmonious, all-inclusive humanity that would replace today's divided and antagonistic contradictory world; but socialism does not require the total assimilation of national entities which, through the inherited peculiarities of their history will enrich the future socialist humanity.¹⁵

The program also included a set of minimum economic and political demands for Russian Armenians as it had done fifteen years earlier for Ottoman Armenians. As a political framework within which those demands would be realized, the party adopted federalism for both Armenias, thus clearly rejecting for the first time the idea of independence.

The struggle for Armenian liberation was now defined by the idea of a people separated by political boundaries but united through the dedication of both to common revolutionary ideals. The theoretical bond was to be further strengthened by the belief that a democratic Russia, toward which Russian Armenians would strive, would be more inclined toward accepting reforms in Western Armenia. Also, the cooperation among various national groups in the Russian Empire during the 1905 Revolution strengthened the strategy in Western Armenia of seeking reforms with the cooperation of Young Turks and other dissatisfied elements. Finally, the new program opened the way for the participation of Dashnaksakan fighters and intellectuals in the constitutional movement of Iran from 1908 onward.

The diversity of factors with which the Dashnaksutun had to come to terms produced a curious blend of nationalism and socialism. It can be regarded as the prototype of national liberation movements that evolved in other parts of the world following the First World War. Yet events, often beyond the control of the party or the Armenian people during and after the First World War, overtook formulas and theories, thwarting the national program and preempting the socialist ideal.

¹⁵ Dsragir, 1907, pp. 14 - 15.