

THE ARMENIAN REVOLUTIONARY FEDERATION

(DASHNAGTZOUTIUN)

HAS NOTHING TO DO ANY MORE

THE MANIFESTO

Of

HOVANNES KATCHZNOUNI

First Prime Minister of the Independent Armenian Republic

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Series Editor's Notes

The *Manifesto* of Hovannes Katchznouni has been reprinted as it was published by the Armenian Information Service. Readers should note that the Information Service was made up of enemies of the Dashnak Party (the Armenian Revolutionary Federation). They included an introduction, notes, and appendices that were not in the original. The added sections are of very little historical value, but have been included here because the series always endeavors to provide unedited texts.

INTRODUCTION

However the propagandist may try, historical truth cannot be subverted forever in a free country. However hard Dashnag propagandists may try to twist and bury the truth, and glorify the failure of their Independent Armenian Republic, **truth** must eventually prevail. Now, for the first time in English, is a deep and incisive self-study by a competent Dashnag observer.

The author was a pillar of Dashnagzoutiun. He was the first prime minister of the Republic. He knew every Party secret before, during and after the founding of the ill-fated Republic. Few were in a position to know more, nor to express themselves with greater clarity, logic and foresight than Hovhannes Katchaznoui.

Unlike most Dashnag leaders who were revolutionists, and reared in the early Russian socialist-revolutionary schools, Katchaznoui was born in Akhaltzkha in the Caucasus, the son of a revered Armenian priest. He was graduated from the Architectural School of the University of Moscow. His notable works include the magnificent Cathedral at Baku, among many others.

This booklet is a condensation of his parting words to Dashnagzoutiun, given in the form of an address to the Party congress in 1923 – words which proved remarkably prophetic, and currently are as **true** as when they were first spoken.

In reprinting Katchaznoui's address neither the translator nor the editor are assumed to agree or disagree with his views. Katchaznoui's work is published at this time as a refutation to the grandiose, exaggerated and even outrageously false claims of the Dashnag leadership today, mouthed by men who for the most part were mere party functionaries during the days of the Republic, but through the years have blown up themselves into intellectual giants, saviors of Armenia, etc.

Katchaznoui's work is a basic source of Dashnag history, and the Armenian Information Service considers it a privilege to be able to present, for the first time, the writings of this Armenian patriot and prophet to an American audience.

JOHN ROY CARLSON

(Arthur A. Derounian)

August, 1955

TO THE READER

This is a manifesto which I am preparing to the Convention of foreign branches of the Armenian Revolutionary Federation convened during this month of April, 1923.

Deeply convinced that all the questions raised here will be subjected to the most serious consideration of not only the members of the Party but also of every single Armenian, I thought it was my duty to have this manifesto published and thereby make it public property.

I am having it printed complete and without any alterations* except the final three or four pages which contain concrete proposals that are reserved to the governing bodies of the Party.

HOVHANNES KATCHAZNOUNI

Bucharest, July, 1923

Comrades:

These matters have had my deliberate and serious consideration. I do not know whether you, too, have arrived at the same conclusions. Allow me to say more: I am afraid that my final conclusion – those very difficult words which I shall here state with all singleness of heart – will cause general embarrassment, perhaps resentment, in the Convention.

I am prepared for that.

I only ask that you believe: a) that it is more difficult for me to write and sign those words than for you to listen to them from my own lips; b) that those words are not the result of thoughtless or petty, transient dispositions or hasty resolve. I beg of you therefore that you be patient and approach the matters with an open mind, unhampered – something which is not easy for men who have lived a Party life and have thought from a Party angle.

Let me know proceed with my subject.

In order to present my conclusions in proper sequence I feel it is necessary for me to refresh your memory with the various phases of the Armenian Cause – from the Great War to the Lausanne Conference¹ -- and the role played by the Dashnagtzoutune during that period. So that I may not abuse your attention, I shall curtail my speech and present to you a concise yet accurate commentary.

At the beginning of 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 Transcaucasia with great enthusiasm and, especially, with much uproar. Contrary to the decision taken during their general meeting at Erzeroum only a few weeks before, the A.R.F. had active participation in the formation of the bands and their future military action against Turkey.

In an undertaking of such gravity, fraught with most serious consequences, individual agents of the Transcaucasian A.R.F. acted against the will of our superior authority, against the will of the General Meeting of the Party. Why? This example urges us to recall that the A.R.F. in Transcaucasia 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 (rebellions and demonstrations on the occasion of the seizure of Church properties); thus it was in the year 1905-1906 (bloody encounters between Tartars and Armenians); and thus it was also during the first big movements of the laboring classes (1903-1906) when the A.R.F. was being led at Baku, Tiflis and Batoum 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 afterwards generally.

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

And it was not the A.R.F. that would stop the movement even if it wished to do so. It was able to utilize the existing conditions, give effect and issue to the accumulated desires, hopes and frenzy, organize the ready forces – it had that much ability and authority. But to go against the current and push forward its own plan – it was unfit, especially unfit for one particular reason: **the A.R.F. is a people's mass strong in instinct but weak in comprehension**.

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

The Winter of 1914 and the Spring of 1915 were the periods of greatest enthusiasm and hope for all the Armenians in the Caucasus, including, of course, the Dashnagtzoutiun. We had no doubt that the war would end with the complete victory of the Allies; Turkey would be defeated and dismembered, and its Armenian population would at last be liberated.

We had embraced Russia whole-heartedly without any compunction. Without any positive basis of fact we believed that the Tzarist 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 loyalty, our efforts and assistance.

We had created a dense atmosphere of illusion in our minds. We had implanted our own desires into 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 purported to have been spoken in the palace of the Viceroy; attention was called to some kind of a letter by Vorontzov-Dashkov to the Catholicos as an important document in our hands to use in the presentation of our rights and claims -- a

¹ In the Treaty of Lausanne, signed July 24, 1923 between the Allies and Turkey, reference was no longer made to Armenia or Armenians. Both had ceased to exist in the eyes of both Turkey and the Allies. Thus

cleverly composed letter with very indefinite sentences and generalities which might be interpreted in any manner, according to one's desire.

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

The deportations and mass exiles and massacres which took place during the Summer and Autumn of 1915 were mortal blows to the Armenian Cause. Half of historical Armenia – the same half where the foundations of our independence would be laid according to the traditions inherited by European diplomacy – that half was denuded of Armenians: the Armenian provinces of Turkey were without Armenians. The Turks knew what they were doing and have no reason to regret today. It was the most decisive method of extirpating the Armenian Question from Turkey.

Again, it would be useless to ask today to what extent the participation of volunteers in the war was a contributory cause of the Armenian calamity. No one can claim that the savage 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 it is possible to have many different opinions.

The proof is, however – and this is essential – that the struggle begun decades ago against 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 unspeakable crime. Statesmen might utter menacing words against criminal Turkey. “Blue”, “yellow”, “orange” books and papers might be published condemning 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 horrible descriptions and details and the testimony 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, rebuild the ruined hearths, repopulate the country now become desolate. The Turks knew what they ought to do and did it.

The second half of 1915 and the entire year of 1916 were periods of hopelessness, desperation and mourning for us. The refugees, all those who had survived the holocaust, 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 which was itself ruined and famished. They piled upon each other, before our own eyes, on our threshold dying of famine and sickness. . .

And we were unable 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 inconsequential men, we fell from one extreme to another.** Just as unfounded was our

the “Armenian Question” and the question of the Armenians was buried in the grave of diplomatic silence.

faith in the Russian government yesterday, our condemnation of them today was equally blind and groundless.

By extraordinary mental aberration, we, a political party, were forgetting that our Cause was an incidental and trivial phase for the Russians, so trivial that if necessary, they would trample on our corpses without a moment's hesitation.

I am not saying that we did not know the circumstances. Of course we knew and understood and so **we started** when it was necessary to explain the situation. Deep down in our hearts, however, we did not grasp the full meaning of that word-formula; 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 advancing, 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 sought proofs of Russian treachery and of course we found them – exactly as we sought and found proofs of the same Russians' undeniable benevolence six months before. **To complain bitterly about our bad luck and to seek external causes for our misfortune – that is one of the main aspects of our national psychology from which, of course, the Dashnagzoutiun is not free.**

One might think we found a spiritual consolation in the conviction that the Russians behaved villainously towards us (later it would be the turn of the French, the Americans, the British, the Georgians, Bolsheviks – the whole world – to be so blamed). One might think that, because we were so naïve 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.

TRANSLATOR'S NOTE: Up to this point the words of the author have been translated verbatim in order to give an idea of Mr. Katchaznoui's logical mind and the exposition of the facts that drove him to present his "Manifesto" to his colleagues at the 1923 Convention. From here on, and solely for the sake of brevity, we shall quote excerpts of his arguments which led to his decision as to why the Dashnagzoutiun, in his opinion, should "decisively end its existence" because "there is no work for the Party."

THE INDEPENDENT REPUBLIC

Armenia was a Democratic Republic. It had the proper 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 with 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 practice our Party tended to subject to itself, to control, the legislative body and the government. We did not have the courage, nor the ability to declare and open dictatorship, but did

not wish to remain within parliamentary limits either and tried to establish in Armenia the Ittihad² system -- a party dictatorship disguises 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.

There was no Parliament; 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.

In reality, there was not even a parliamentary faction, because this latter was under the very strict supervision of the Dashnag Bureau, and was obliged to carry out its orders. 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 Bolshevistic system. But what the Bolsheviks are doing openly and consistently, we were attempting to veil under democratic forms.

The Armenian Parliament opened on August 1, 1919. The elections took place in accordance with the democratic procedure – general, equal, direct and secret balloting – but it was strange and disheartening that 72 out of 80 members were Dashnaks, with only four members from the other parties. **There was no opposition party to act as a check. We Dashnaks seemed to be victorious but did not understand that it was not a Parliament but the caricature of a Parliament.**

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. Khadissian was accepted on May 5, and by order of the Bureau Dr. H. Ohanchian was ordered to form a new cabinet; the latter presented the already-prepared list of ministers in the same meeting in which he was ordered to form a new cabinet. That was the Bureau itself. Parliament was ordered indefinitely recessed. The Armenian Parliament had given a **dictatorial government** to the Dashnagzoutuin – to the Bureau.

This was against 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.

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 Asia Minor. 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. 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.

Despite these hypotheses there remains an irrefutable fact. That we had not done all that was necessary for us to have done to **evade war**. We ought to have used peaceful language with the Turks

² The Ittihad (The Committee of Union and Progress) represented the resurgence of the Young Turk movement in 1909 against the oppressions of Sultan Hamid. It started as a revolutionary movement friendly to the Dashnags and Dashnag aspirations, but it soon followed, the established pattern of massacre, bloodshed and rabid Turkish fanaticism.

whether we succeeded or not, and 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 error. We were not afraid of war because we thought we would win. With the carelessness of **inexperienced and ignorant men** we did not know what forces Turkey had mustered on our frontiers. When the skirmishes had started the Turks proposed that we meet and confer. We did not do so and defied them.

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.

Our army was demoralized during the period of internal strife, the inane destructions and the pillages that went without punishment. It 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 the ministers of war did not know their own army.**³

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 the military uniforms in a great hurry; rifles were put into their hands and instantly sent to the front. These were ready-made, deserters which caused additional defections and demoralization in the ranks of the army.

When on November 2 [1920] the victorious armies of Karabekir had reached Alexandropol, the Bureau-government presented its resignation. It could not stay in power any longer; it was beaten, and on account of its defeat it had been discredited.⁴

Then it became necessary to begin negotiations with the Turks and it became necessary that those who negotiated should be new faces. After a short indecision, the government of Simon Vratzian was formed, composed of Dashnags and social revolutionaries. Dashnag ministers belonged to the “Left” wing of the Party, while he, the prime minister [Vratzian] was known to be a man of the Russian orientation, and the socialist revolutionaries had personal ties in the Armenian Bolshevik circles. There was a remote hope that in the event the Bolsheviks came to power (a fact we were beginning to understand was inescapable a government with such a composition would be able to find a common language with the new comers.

The Turks had already occupied Alexandropol. In the meantime the Armenian Bolsheviks at the head of the Red troops entered Itchevan and Dilijan. Was there an understanding between the Bolsheviks and the Turks? In our ranks that conviction was widespread. **I think, however, that it was wrong; in all events there was no positive proof.** It is probable that the Bolshevik agents (or individuals with

³ For corroboration see Appendix I.

⁴ For the proclamation of Surrender see Appendix II.

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.

The plot of the Bolsheviks was not the reason for our defeat, nor the power of the Turks (which was not important at that time) **but our own ineptness!** Of course the Bolsheviks benefited from our defeat and that was very natural, but it was not essential that they should have come to an understanding with the Turks for that purpose.

On December 1 (or November 30) our delegates signed an agreement with the Turks in Alexandropol⁵ which was not much different from the cruel treaty of Batoum. On December 1 that same Vratzian government resigned and relinquished its power to the Bolsheviks.

The Bolsheviks entered Armenia without meeting any resistance. This was the decision of our Party. There were two reasons for acting this way; first, we could not resist it even if we wanted to --we were defeated; second, we hoped that the Soviet authorities, backed by Russia, would be able to introduce some order in the state – a thing which we, all alone, had failed to do, and it was very plain already that we would not be able to do.

It was our desire to let the Bolsheviks rule the country without any obstruction to remain loyal to the new government, to cooperate with their useful work. This decision was not unanimous. There was irreconcilable who did not expect anything good from the Bolsheviks; they demanded opposition and fighting, even though the defeat was inevitable. Small was their number; when the proposal was refused those most in opposition left the country and fled.

There was also another minority, opposed to the first one: this one wanted to approach the Bolsheviks as a party matter and form a political block with them. These were segregated and came to be known as Leftist Dashnags, and made declarations in Bolshevik spirit. They did not succeed. The Bolsheviks with reason distrusted them, and discarded them.

THE PARIS MEMORANDUM

In the meanwhile, what had been our diplomatic activity with the outer world during our liberty as an independent nation – Constantinople, Europe and America – and what were the results? In the Spring of 1919, the Paris Delegation of our Republic presented a Memorandum of our demands to the Peace Conference at Paris jointly 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 enlarged territory (the entire district of Erevan, the districts of Kars without the northern part of Ardahan, the southern section of the Tiflis territory, the south-western part of Kantzag);

⁵ See Appendix III for provision of the humiliating Treaty signed by the Dashnags under the tragic and ill-fated Vratzian regime.

B. The seven vilayets of Turkish Armenia (Van, Bitlis, Diarbekir, Harpout, Sivas, Erzeroum and Trebizonde, excluding only the southern section of Diarbekir and the western section of Sivas);

C. The four sanjaks of Cilicia (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 Karabagh to the Arabian Desert. Where did that imperial, amazing demand emanate? Neither the government of Armenia nor the Dashnagtzoutiun had envisaged such a childish and foolish plan. On the contrary, our Delegation had carried with it from Erevan very moderate demands, commensurate with our very modest ability.

How did it happen that our Delegation signed the “From Sea to Sea” demand? It was told that if they did not demand those fascinating frontiers, the Turkish-Armenians (through their National Delegation) would sever their Cause from that of the “Republic of Ararat” and will apply to the Powers accordingly. Our Delegation was also told that America would not accept a mandate over a small Armenia but would accept one over a “From Sea to Sea” Armenia. Because it would have been dangerous to proceed with the defense of our Cause with two separate bodies, each with a contradictory demand, and because the American mandate was what we wanted, our delegates signed the Memorandum and presented it to the Powers.

I wish [therefore] to prove once more that our Party has not managed national affairs, has not had a strong will, 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 of course thrilled us. A kind of mentality was created according to which the drawing of frontiers on paper actually gave us those territories. To doubt it was a treachery. Of course there followed the rude awakening – the Treaty of Sevres;⁶ the refusal of the Senate of the United States to accept the mandate; even the frontiers drawn by President Wilson did not satisfy us. We thought he could have demanded a larger territory . . . There were the usual complaints that the powers were unfair, did not appreciate us and did not compensate us according to what we deserved.

THE AGONY BEGINS

The agony of the Armenian Cause began in 1922. At the London Conference⁷ was heard for the first time the word “Home”. The Treaty of Sevres was entirely forgotten. There was no question of an independent Armenian State. Only a doubtful “Home” in someone else’s home. This was the blow dealt us in March. Thing got worse at Lausanne toward the end of the year. No “Home” was demanded for us.

⁶ Under Article 88-93, Section VI of this treaty signed between the Allies and Turkey on August 10, 1920 Armenia was formally recognized by Turkey and the Allies as a “free and independent” state – a state more of the mind than of fact – which was promptly deserted by the Allies, rescinded by the Turks, abused and misgoverned by the Dashnags, and finally put to rout by the waiting Soviets.

⁷ As a result, Italy entered the war on the Allied side, May 23, 1915.

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.

Then, here came comrade Tchicherin and offered in the name of Soviet Russia to locate the Armenians of Turkey in Crimea, on the shores of Volga, 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 boast about from the time we declared the independence of our Republic. We must admit that our burden to organize a State and lead it was far beyond our strength.

We have always miscalculated and have always encountered with unpredictable situations because we have been unable to foresee them. And it is evident, to me at least, that it was on account of our ineptness, individually, that prevented us from conducting affairs of state properly. We had been unable to distinguish the State from the Party and have introduced party mentality into matters of state. We have not been statesmen.

Let no one take offense from 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 collaborator, equally responsible in our defeat?

What is the present?

We have a small Republic today between the River Araxes and Lake Sevan, nominally free, but in reality 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, killed and buried at Lausanne. Generally speaking, the Armenians in the Dispersion are not a political element for Armenia today.

The immediate subject of solicitude for the Armenian political mind must be the existing Republic, the Armenians who live in it and around it. I underscore this sentence vigorously and call it to your special attention, for that will be the starting point of our future action.

The Armenian Republic is a Soviet and the Armenian government today is a Communist dictatura. Is it possible to come to an agreement with the Bolsheviks? **We have tried and have been refused.** The fact is that the Bolsheviks do not wish to recognize our importance.

Let me go a step further to explain my thoughts. I ask myself: if, by a miracle, the existence of Bolsheviks in Armenia depended on myself, if it were possible for me to remove them from Armenia in a single second, by the movement of a single finger of mine, would I make that movement? I answer without hesitation that I would not. Not only would I not do it, but I would cut off my entire hand so that even in my dream, by mistake or inadvertently, I might not be able to make that dangerous movement!

Was the arrival of the Bolsheviks a calamity for our country? This is an unexpected question coming from a Dashnag. The Bolsheviks are necessary in Armenia **under the present political conditions**

and there is not other force that could take their place. This is the truth. Let us not be carried by narrow political ideas.

We had exhausted all our resources, had come to an impasse as Government and as Party in the fall of 1920. Had the Bolsheviks delayed 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.

Look at the consequences of their coming:

We governed our country for two and a half years; it is nearly two and a half years the Bolsheviks have governed it. We had wars with Georgia, Azerbaijan and Turkey. The Bolsheviks have had none. We had continual internal fights – Agapapa, Zot, Zanki-Bazar, Vedi-Bazar, the valleys of Milli, Sharour, Nakhichevan, Zangezour. The Bolsheviks have had no internal fights, except those in connection with the “Februarian” revolt. We had kept the entire country under arms, in constant fighting, we had kept all working hands on the battlefields at all time when there was the greatest demand for construction work. The Bolsheviks have freed the people from that calamity, from that heavy burden.

In our time the people were decimated or exhausted from famine. We destroyed bread-producing lands like Sharour and Vetii, cattlelands like Agapapa, wantonly and without benefit to us. **We gave to the armies of Kiazim Kara-Bekir (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 re-establish communication with the outer world but did not succeed. The Bolsheviks did it. During our time Armenia groped in darkness, all movement and activity ceased 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 important 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.

Nevertheless, the Bolshevik system in its entirety is not acceptable for us. But what can we do? Perhaps, fight it from without?

THE FUTURE

European cities are full of emigrant malcontents of all kinds who publish newspapers, write books, call protest meetings, threaten, curse the Bolsheviks. . . I know of no other “work” that is more futile 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 despicable stupidity. The fighters against the Bolsheviks must fight from within so that the blow may tell; but to hide behind the frontiers and show one’s first from a safe distance -- it is a gesture which, at all events, is not worthy of Dashnagtzoutune.

To fight from without, to carry on an anti-Bolshevik propaganda from abroad, when our words are not heard inside the country, is an inane and indecent thing. What are we to do then?

It is here that I shall state the very grave word, which, I know will embarrass you, but which must be said at last, and said simply, without concealment or attenuation: THE ARMENIAN REVOLUTIONARY FEDERATION HAS NOTHING TO DO ANYMORE.

Our Party had done everything it could do and is exhausted. New conditions of existence present new demands and we are unfit to respond. We must therefore leave the field to others abler than ourselves.

Is it necessary to repeat again the new conditions? Here they are: Turkish Armenia does not exist anymore; half the Armenian people have been massacred, others are dispersed in the four corners of the world, the other half is homeless and bleeding, in need of long rest and recuperation; the Armenian Republic is united with Communist Russia as an autonomous state; to separate our State from Russia we cannot, even if we wish -- and we must not wish it, even if we were able to do so; the Party is beaten and has lost its authority, has been expelled from the country, cannot return home, while in the colonies it has no work.

This is the situation today.

The Party cannot say "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 : because 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 the Dashnagzoutune has nothing to do anymore, I did not express myself correctly. It has one more final thing to do, a supreme duty to the Armenian Cause and toward its own past. I must, and by its own decision, with full cognizance, **decisively end its existence.**

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 a very naïve conception of historical facts. It is for the very purpose of assuring our National Cause, not to do any harm to it, that I propose the dissolution of our Party.

The Dashnagzoutune cannot assist the Bolsheviks. It is necessary that it may not be overthrown, and in order that it may not be upset the Dashnagzoutune has only one means – to depart from the scene. And since the Dashnagzoutune has nothing else to do anymore -- neither at the present time nor in the future, it must end its existence. Our Party has lost its "**raison d'être,**" its reason for existence. This is the bitter truth. Shall we have the courage to confess the truth and arrive at the proper conclusion?

And the only conclusion is that we must end our existence.

With comradely salutations,

HOVANANNES KATCAZNOUNI

Bucharest, March, 19223.

Editor's Note: Although highly critical, Katchaznoui has also been merciful toward the Dashnags by omitting the all-important historical fact Armenian Independence was by no means due to Dashnag efforts or heroics, but rather, it was **forced upon them by the Turks.** The event came about as the Turks –

plotting to conquer Armenia at a later date, but first wishing to sever Armenia from Russia as her possible ally – gave the Dashnags a 72 hour ultimatum to declare Armenia a free and independent state or face immediate invasion. These revelations are found in Appendix V.

APPENDIX 1

ARF leaders are wont to boast of their “glorious” independent Republic. Katchaznoui’s testimony is fully corroborated by the testimony of another eyewitness, Leon Z. Surmelian, an author now residing in California, who in his autobiography “I Ask You Ladies and Gentlemen” (E.P. Dutton & Co., New York, 1945), made the following observations:

“Father heaped again his scorn and sarcasm on the Armenian Revolutionary Federation. ‘It’s destroying our nation! It has ruined our schools, disunited our people. What do your leaders know about international politics? Wasn’t it all this revolutionary foolishness that caused the Massacre?’” – Page 63.

*

“Going to Armenia was like going to war. Onnik, Eugenia and I had our picture taken; I might never see them again. Turks, Tartars and even Soviet Russian troops were attacking our new-born Republic from all sides, and its population was dying of famine and epidemic diseases.” -- Page 206.

*

“I ate an apple and one of the soldiers picked up the core I threw away, and swallowed it greedily. Oh, my God, our soldiers were hungry. I recalled Napoleon’s statement; an army marches on its stomach, and was plunged into gloomy thoughts. How could we stop the Turkish Army with hungry men?

But hunger was not the only reason from their glum, dour expressions. The officers called them ‘Donkey’s head!’ ‘Stupid creatures!’ and such uncomplimentary names. Products of Russian military colleges with their social and martial traditions, these Russianized officers were using the methods employed in the old Tsarist army. No wonder communist propaganda had made so much headway among our troops.” -- Page 216.

*

“For two months I have been breathing the free air of independent Hayastan,’ he [Nurikhan] said, cynically. He was disillusioned, like many Armenians who had come to Erivan to see the miracle of independent Hayastan with their own eyes. He wanted to go back to Tiflis. I suffered one disillusionment after another. Our army, as I saw it, was incompetent or in utterly indifferent hands. We just did not have the right men, we did not have real Armenians at the head of our troops.” -- Page 217.

*

“We were told Kars could hold out for at least six months. The Armenian Army, even though it numbered only about thirty thousand men, and was ill-fed and ill-clothed, was considered quite capable of coping with anything the Turks had to offer. We had heard and read much about our army’s victories at Sardarabad, Nakhichevan, Olti, Zankezur, Karabagh.

Kars fell. The Turkish occupation of this key fortress meant the collapse of our front, but the Chief-of-Staff did not seem to be affected by the debacle at all: he came to his office promptly at ten o’clock, drank his cocoa promptly at eleven o’clock, and left promptly at three o’clock. Things continued as usual in the ministry of war; the same old indifferent expressions on the faces of generals and colonels.

It was practically a hopeless struggle from the very beginning, but I thought with the right leadership we could have kept Kars either by a successful resistance or through the intervention of Soviet Russia, which professed friendship for our people: all we had to do was to adopt a pro-Soviet policy. Politically we were a naïve and inexperienced nation.” -- Pages 109, 220.

*

“The Turks had won the war, and further resistance was futile. Armenia sued for peace. The Grand National Assembly of Ankara, speaking through its ‘People’s Commissar for Foreign Affairs,’ demanded, and got, half of the territory of our Republic, and almost **all** the arms, ammunition, mules and rolling stock Armenia had. And while negotiations for a suicidal peace treaty were going on at Alexandropol, the government sent us to Nor Bayazet, to resume our agricultural studies.” -- Page 220-1.

*

“The Armenian Government had signed an agreement with Soviet Russia and withdrawn from power. Armenia had to choose between Soviet Russia and Kemalist Turkey, which under the circumstances was tantamount to choosing between life and death. What disturbed me was the attitude of the natives toward this sudden change in regime; they were too glad about it.” -- Page 231

APPENDIX II

After about 2 ½ years of mismanagement and corruption, in the course of which it underwent four regimes, the Armenian Republic finally breathed its last. Torn within itself, distraught, tortured, with the populace clamoring for “bread and peace” which the Bolsheviks promised, the Dashnags surrendered Armenia meekly, without a fight -- abjectly, humbly, and in some instances even gratefully. A large number of leaders and followers, sharing Katchaznoui’s views, remained behind to become citizens of the new state.

December 2, 1920

Erivan

H.H. ARMENIAN REPUBLIC
COUNCIL OF MINISTERS

PROCLAMATION

In view of the situation created by the external conditions, the Government of the Armenian Republic decided at its session of December 2, 1920, to resign from power, and to turn the whole military and civil authority over to the Supreme Commander of the Army to which office is appointed War Minister Dro.

[Signed] S. VRATZIAN

President of the Council of Ministers

Ministers: A. HOVHANNISIAN

A. KHONTGARIAN
H. DERDERIAN
DRO GANAYAN

Certified copy of the Original:

[Signed] H. TOUMANIANTZ

Chief Executive [of Council of Ministers]

APPENDIX III

Simultaneously, within a few hours of each other, while one Dashnag delegation headed by the retiring prime minister was negotiating with the Soviets at Erivan, another delegation headed by a former prime minister, negotiated with the Turks at Alexandropol -- surrendering Armenia first, from the point of view of chronology, to the Soviets, then some hours later (with the participation of ministers who had already resigned from office) to the Turks: by all odds a masterful though asinine effort at double-dealing. Soviets do not recognize this treaty.

Highly significant is Article 8, wherein Dashnags agreed “to forego their rights to ask for damages. . . as a result of the general war,” thus closing the doors FOREVER to reparations for the enormous destruction of Armenian life and property.

Now revealed for the first time in English are the provisions, in their entirety, of the secret Treaty of Alexandropol, signed on December 2, 1920. It is a humiliating treaty, whose contents heretofore have never been divulged by the ARF. A reproduction of the original treaty in Turkish, together with a translation into modern Turkish, appeared in Vol. II, No 1 of “Die Velt Des Islams” (“The World of Islam”), published by the well-known book firm, E.J. Brill, Lieden, Holland.

”THIS IS THE TREATY OF PEACE BETWEEN TURKEY AND ARMENIA AT GUMRU [ALEXANDROPOL]

On the one part the Turkish Government and on the other part the Armenian Republic, for the purpose of putting an end to the hostilities and to find a thesis of agreement, have sat down for an examination of the facts.

On the part of the Turkish Government:

General Kazim Kara-Bekir Pasha, Commander on the Eastern Front
Suleyman Negati Bey of Erzeroum

On the part of the Armenian Republic:

Alexander Khadissian, Prime Minister
Avram Gulhandanian, Minister of Finance
Stepan Gorganian, Minster of the Interior

After due verification of their powers of attorney and the validity of their certificates of authority, the discussions have resulted in the following agreement:

1. State of war between Turkey and the Armenian Republic has ended.
2. The frontier between Turkey and Armenia, as seen on the attached map (starting from the mouth of the Lower Karasou, the River Araxe, the Arpatchai, north to Kekatch, from thence to the valley of Karahan, eastern Teghnis, eastern Great Kemel, Kiziltash, major Aghbaba Mountains) is the limit. The final determination of the frontier will be decided by a mixed commission on the spot two weeks after the signature.

Armenia will not interfere in the administrative form to be chosen by general election and that administration's jurisdiction in Mount Kouki, 10,282 – 8022 – Mount Gamasour, 8160 – the village of Koutoulak – Mount Saat, 7868, -- the houses in Arpatchai, 3080, Mount Kemourlu, 6930 – Sarayboulak, 807 -- the station Ararat – the southern part of the estuary of the Lower Karasou on the Araxe River (Nahkitchevan, Shahtakhti, Shamour) and the administration of this zone shall be under Turkish protection. [The numerals about are those on a military map of the time.]
3. The Government of the Grand National Assembly of Turkey may be able to consider the wishes of the Armenian Republic about relocation of the entire native population back into the territories designated in the second article, existing in the old Ottoman boundaries which shall remain to Turkey, by irrefutable historical, ethnic and legalistic rights, accepts their return by a general election within those territories, within three years after the ratification of this treaty. A mixed commission will decide the form of this.
4. So that the possibility of villainous activities and movements resulting from the incitements of imperialistic governments be once for all and permanently prevented and disallowed the Republic of Erevan undertakes not to maintain any military organization beyond a gendarmerie corps of 1500 riflemen with 8 mountain or field guns and 20 machine guns for the protection of its internal peace. There will be no military conscription in Armenia any more. The Armenian Republic is free to build fortifications and place in them as many heavy artillery pieces as it wishes for the protection of the country against external enemies. In this heavy artillery are 15 cm. Shells and 15 cm. long rifles that can be used, and lesser ones used in field armies. No larger guns will be found.
5. After the peace the Government Erevan accepts to permit the Turkish representative or ambassador in Erevan to be free to investigate all these matters at any time. In return for that the Grand National Assembly promises military assistance to Armenia in any internal or external trouble.
6. The two parties permit the return of refugees to their hearths across the old boundaries with the exception of those who, during the general war, went to the enemy's army and took arms, and those who crossed occupied territories and participated in massacres, and

mutually assure the privileges of minorities obtained in the most civilized countries to those who repatriate themselves.

7. Those of the refugees mentioned in Article 6 who do not return to their hearths within the limit of one year after the ratification of this treaty, besides not being able to benefit from the generosity of the said article, their legal claims also will not be heard.
8. Despite the great expenses which the Grand Assembly of Turkey incurred for its army during two years because of the urgency of the war it had to wage against Armenia, it renounces its right to demand lawful damages, and **in the same manner the two parties forego their rights to ask for damages because of the charges which took place as a result of the general war.**
9. The Grand National Assembly of Turkey promises to render assistance in the most sincere manner for the complete formulation and defense of the Armenian Republic mentioned in the Second Article with utmost integrity.
10. The Erevan Government declares and considers void and null the Treaty (of Sevres) which was absolutely rejected by the National Grand Assembly of Turkey, and by recalling the delegations who have been tools in the hands of the imperialist countries and their government circles in the purlieu of Europe and America, promises its determination to eliminate all kinds of misunderstandings between the two countries; the Republic of Erevan promises to keep away from government circles those pugnacious men who run after imperialist aims and play havoc with the peace of the two nations so that it may give proof of its sincerity for the maintenance of peace and tranquility and the rights of Turkey as a good neighbor.
11. The Armenian Republic admits and vouchsafes the authority of the vicar of the chief Sheri of the National Grand Assembly of Turkey to ratify the appointment of the chief Mufti, elected by the direct vote of muftis as well as the organization and enactment of the rights of the people living in the country for the realization of their aspirations and religious sentiments. [The chief Mufti and muftis were to be quartered in Armenia for the Moslems living there].
12. The two contracting parties mutually promise not to hinder the free passage of any person or any merchandise belonging to any person on all routes (also of Armenia and Iran), from side to side, by sea and between any country in transit operations. The Turkish government assures the freedom of transit operations between Sharour, Nakhitchevan, Shahtakht, and Kjoulfia via Iran, Magou and Armenia.
The Armenian government promises not to impede general transit operations of merchandise, carriages, railroad wagons between Azerbaijan, Iran, Georgia and Turkey. The Turkish State will take all railroads and transportation routes in the Erevan Republic under its own control in order to prevent treacherous acts against its integrity and totality

- by imperialists until complete peace is established and the two parties will forbid the official and unofficial agents of imperialist (Entente) powers from causing any damage or disturbance inside the Republic.
13. The government of the National Grand Assembly can take temporary military preventive measures in Armenia against attacks that may threaten its territorial integrity on condition that such measures do not disturb the rights of the Republic of Erevan conceded in this territory.
 14. All treaties signed by the Republic of Erevan with any country that relate to Turkey or are harmful to the interests of Turkey, the said Republic agrees to consider absolutely null and void.
 15. Commercial relations between the two parties will begin and ambassadors and consuls will be exchanged upon the signature of the treaty.
 16. Regulations for telegraphic, postal, telephone, consular and commercial relations will be established by mixed commissions according to the provisions of this treaty. Meanwhile Turkey will be authorized by the State to resume telegraphic, postal and railroad communications between Armenia and occupied territories as soon as the treaty is signed.
 17. In accordance with this treaty, concerning Armenia, by the provisions of the special treaty for the evacuation of territories under Turkish occupation and the repatriation and exchange of prisoners, the determination of the frontiers of the Armenian Republic will immediately be put into effect. The civilians and notable held will be delivered. The exchange of prisoners will be effected by a mixed commission.
 18. This treaty is subject to ratification within a month. The ratified copies will be exchanged at Ankara. The plenipotentiary high representatives have signed this treaty of peace and frontier demarcation. This treaty, being in two copies, has been constituted at Kumru-Alexandropol on the date 2/12/1336*. In the case of any dispute agreement can be arrived at by reference to the Turkish text.”
- December 2, 1921. The Turkish year 1336 corresponds to 1921 A.D.

APPENDIX IV

Armenians look upon former Turkish regimes as Jewry looks upon Nazi Germany. Some Armenians, as do some Jews, believe that their former tormentors “will never change.” Apparently not so with Dashnag leaders. Though the Turks had just bled the nation white and the Anatolian deserts were still strewn with the bleached bones of a million martyrs, Dashnags sought help and protection from Turkey as provided in the Treaty of Alexandropol. This shameless act placed the ARF on record as willful collaborators with the assassins of their Armenian brethren in return for the mere promise to govern an “independent Armenia” under Turkish tutelage.

In a final effort to displace the Soviets) to whom they had surrendered Armenia on Dec. 2, 1920) and occupy the country with Turkish help, the Dashnags on February 18, 1921 staged a well-planned counter-revolt against the Bolsheviks. But soon finding themselves in urgent need of help, Simon Vratzian the last prime minister and symbol of Dashnag failure and chicanery sent the following desperate note to Behaeddin, representative in Erivan of the Turkish high command.

“Please forward the present request promptly to your high authorities, and as I have explained to you, urge them for an immediate answer.

The fight of Armenia against the bolsheviks, and for its own freedom and independence, serves, as we are convinced, not only Armenia itself, but also the interests of all the nations of the Near East.

For this reason, Armenia hopes that during this fight she will receive help from her neighbors, and first of all the interests of the Turkish people also require that Armenia should come victorious out of this fight and remain independent.

Relying on this conviction, the Armenian government requests the government of the Grand National Assembly of Turkey, that, in the name of the mutual interest of the two peoples and as speedily as possible it:

1. Return the Armenian war prisoners that are now on the war front of Erivan.
2. Give the Armenian army some ammunition under certain conditions; first of all cartridges for Russian three-lined rifles and for Turkish mausers; or else rifles of the Russian and Lepel system.
3. Communicate with us, if the government of the Grand National Assembly finds it possible to send military aid to Armenia, and if able to do so, to what extent and when?

In making this appeal, the Armenian government relies on the friendly relations that have been established with the treaty of Alexandropol, and which were disturbed during the bolshevik rule.”

Respectfully,

SIMON VRATZIAN

President of the Armenian Republic

Erivan, March 18, 1921.

Distrustful, the Turks refused to help their Dashnag allies. The Soviets finally ejected them from Armenian soil in April, 1921.

APPENDIX V

The highly complex sequence of historical events which preceded the formation of an independent Armenia on May 28, 1918 may be delineated as follows.

Following the October, 1917 revolution the Bolsheviks relaxed their interest and withdrew from the Caucasus region, turning over to the Armenians their munitions, and leaving them in possession of a

relatively large territory including the vilayets of Trebizond, Moush, Erzeroum and the regions of Kars, Ardahan, Karabagh and Nakhitchevan -- a total area which later became known as "Wilsonian Armenia."

The Caucasus was then governed by a Trans-Caucasian Federation composed of Armenians, Georgians and the Azerbaijan nationals, with a representative assembly, the Symb. In December, 1917 Turkey signed an armistice with the Symb and, together with the Russian withdrawal hostilities ceased.

In the meanwhile, and in order to resist further intrusion by the Allies -- which the Bolsheviks and Turks jointly feared -- Turkey entered into a common pact with the Russians. Under these conditions the pan-Turkish dream of expansion eastward remained dormant. But in May, 1918 she had recovered sufficiently and begun a bloody march eastward. Turkey now feared that a continued advance on the Caucasus might involve her with Russia so she demanded that Armenia, Georgia and Azerbaijan dissolve the Symb and declare themselves free and independent states, so she could deal with them individually at her convenience. The Soviets were in no position to interfere, as they were busy with the aftermath of the October revolution.

Christian Georgia and Moslem Azerbaijan acquiesced readily, leaving the Armenians to shift for themselves. The Armenians resisted, forcing Turkey to grant the Dashnags a 72 hour ultimatum from "eight o'clock in the evening of May 26." This, and subsequent events are narrated in graphic detail in "The Armenian Republic" by Simon Vratzian (Imprimerie Navarre, Paris, 1928) from which the following excerpts are taken:

Pages 127, 129: "Unfortunately the Caucasian Federation does not exist. Therefore, the Symb has resigned. . . The Armenians are left in the middle, alone, without friends, without protection, abandoned by all, victims to the treachery of their neighbors. A more horrible condition is difficult to imagine. What to do? To whom to apply? Where to seek salvation?"

Page 131: "The declaration of independence came more on account of external pressure rather than from the will of the National Council," Vratzian wrote. He then noted that the declaration was actually made on May 30th (instead of May 28th as celebrated by the Dashnags) when negotiations with the Turks began. On June 4, 1918 a formal Treaty of Peace was signed between Turkey and the Armenian Republic.

What was Armenian Independence like? Vratzian paints a graphic picture. Page 155: "Thus passing between the fire and the sword, Armenia was called an independent state. Its independence was not received with applause and acclamation. On the contrary, by many it was considered a misfortune, like a mother who has born a sick child, the Armenians beat their heads in grief.

Yes, the independence of Armenia was born from the sea of suffering and tears. Many did not believe it. The words "Independence" and "Republic" were used in quotation marks. And the reasons for believing thus were strong, truly horrifying were the conditions; independence under these conditions seemed a mockery.

In reality there remained in Armenian hands only a small sliver of territory -- hardly 12,000 square kilometers, poor and half-demolished. Snuggled among arid mountains in a deaf corner of the

world, over-burdened with refugees and orphans, surrounded with teeth-gnashing enemies, without bread, without medicine, without help. Famine and sickness, ruined and looted, tears and poverty, the terror of massacre! And on the other side, the victorious army of Enver, energized by pan-Turkish dreams which were trampling on the body of Armenians in their march toward Apsheron [the oil wells of Baku, and the Caspian Sea] and Turkestan.”

Page 175: “Around November 20th the government was transferred from Tiflis and enthusiastically reforms were made. . . But this enthusiasm did not last long, and behold the escape of people and ministers from Erivan, where living conditions were desperate for those not used to black bread, sleeping on floors and lice. . . Thus a situation was created where Armenia had three ministers of food – and yet no food!”

In another book, “Independent and United Armenia”, Vratzian added: “Tears, misery and chaos were everywhere. Who had the heart to think of independence under these circumstances? Who was going to realize and protect that independence? . . . For an Armenian intellectual under the existing conditions independence was equivalent to a return of Turkish tyranny, to a new era of martyrdom, and by this is explained that session of the Armenian Council which considered ‘independence’ more like a home in mourning where lay a dead body.”

When, in final desperation -- with Turkey again threatening to loot, massacre and rape survivors of the holocaust since 1915 -- the populace accepted Soviet rule [to which Dashnags leaders themselves offered no resistance] thousands of Dashnags remained behind to become citizens of the new state. On November 20, 1923 they met in Erivan. The stenographic minutes of the “Convention of Former Dashnags of Armenia” were published in 1924. The report showed the presence of 247 delegates, the time. After a trip to the United States Katchaznoui returned to Armenia, and spent his last years on native Armenian soil.