ARMENIA ON THE ROAD TO INDEPENDENCE 1918

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Armenia

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on the Road to Independence



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© 1967 by The Regents of the University of California Third Printing, 1974 ISBN: 0-520-00574-0 Library of Congress Catalog Card Number: 67-13649 Designed by Betsy Davis Printed in the United States of America To a Generation Whose Ideals Continue To Inspire

Preface

The road to Armenian independence, spanning an entire century, culminated during the turbulent years of World War I and the Russian revolutions. Emerging from the dissolution of the Romanov Empire and from the fragmentation of Transcaucasia, Armenia strove from 1918 through 1920 to join the family of sovereign states. The object of this study is to present and analyze the numerous complex factors that led to the establishment of an Armenian government for the first time in more than five hundred years.

This book is based primarily on documents deposited in the National Archives in Washington, D.C., and in the Archives of the Armenian Delegation to the Paris Peace Conference. Many published documents and relevant works were also found in the Library of Congress, the Hoover Institute, the Public Library of New York City, and the Alexander Miasnikian State Library in Erevan, Armenian SSR.

The Armenian titles are transliterated in a simplified form not necessitating the use of diacritical marks. For Russian titles, the Library of Congress system is used, with diacritical marks omitted, although several proper names, both in Russian and Armenian, are given, not in conformity with the adopted system of transliteration (see Key, pp. 255–256), but in keeping with the generally accepted English spelling. Moreover, for the sake of clarity, all dates, except where noted, are according to the Gregorian calendar, which in the twentieth century is thirteen days ahead of the Julian calendar, used in Russia and Transcaucasia until 1918.

In completing this study, I have incurred indebtedness to the staffs of the libraries of the University of California, particularly to Ann T. Hinckley of the Interlibrary Loan Service, to the Hoover Library and Institute, and to the Academy of Sciences of the Armenian SSR. The Armenian Revolutionary Federation (Hai Heghapokhakan Dashnaktsutiun) placed

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at my disposal the archives of the party as well as those of the Armenian delegations to Berlin and Constantinople in 1918 and to the Paris Peace Conference in 1919–1920. These archives, now housed in Boston, Massachusetts, are among the most extensive and valuable primary sources for

the history of the Armenian Republic.

Certain individuals inspired or aided me in the development of this work.

Simon Vratzian, former premier of the Republic, provided me with insights that could not have been gained from the pages of any publication. To professors Raymond H. Fisher and Hans Rogger I owe thanks for their

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That is to Vartiter, who, besides inspiring self-confidence and assisting in the gathering of relevant material, shared with me every experience and emotion of the following pages.

R. G. H.

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The Antecedents

THE ARMENIAN PEOPLE, subjected for centuries to foreign domination, experienced a cultural and political renaissance during the eighteenth and especially the nineteenth centuries. The growth of national consciousness was manifested in literary movements, in the establishment of hundreds of schools throughout the Ottoman and Russian empires, and in the emergence of societies striving for Armenian self-administration. The focus of concern was the great Armenian Plateau in eastern Anatolia. On this land the Armenian nation had taken form in the first millennium before the Christian era. It was there that Armenian kings had reigned and a distinct native culture had developed.

The northern and southern frontiers of the Armenian Plateau are well defined by the Pontus and Taurus mountain chains, the former dividing the Black Sea littoral, and the latter the plains of Mesopotamia from the highland. The Pontic Alps lose their massive character at their eastern extremity where they splinter into several secondary subranges, separating the Plateau from the Georgian lowlands. The unambiguous character of the border is resumed in the northeastern reaches of the Plateau where minor ranges skirt Lake Sevan and extend southeastward to the Araxes River. This area, commonly referred to as Mountainous Karabagh, contrasts sharply with the steppes of Mughan and Karabagh, which, several thousand feet below, fan out toward the east.² Natural borders in the west and the southeast are much less pronounced. The western Euphrates from the Taurus Mountains to the river's abrupt turn eastward and the volcanic agglomerations from that point to the Pontic Alps are often identified as the western limits of the Plateau.⁸ The most imperceptible gradation occurs in the southeast between the Araxes River and Lake Urmia, as the Iranian tableland converges with the Armenian highland. On the Plateau rise the headwaters of the Tigris and the Euphrates, flowing southward toward the Persian Gulf, the Araxes and the Kur, winding eastward to the Caspian Sea, and the Chorokh, following a shorter course to the Black Sea.⁴
All the Plateau was included within Greater Armenia, the term applied historically to the fifteen provinces and of the European To the great of

historically to the fifteen provinces east of the Euphrates.⁵ To the west of the river, three other provinces which centered around Sebastia (Sivas) formed Lesser Armenia. The two regions were unified under a single

dynast only for short periods. Separate native princes and, more often, foreign powers dominated Lesser Armenia, which invariably was among the first of the Armenian-populated areas to be affected by external political and cultural currents. Together, Greater and Lesser Armenia encompassed an area of between 120,000 and 140,000 square miles, whereas the Republic created in 1918 began its existence on a twentieth part of that land. The strategic geographic position of the Plateau has contributed to the

turbulence that characterizes its history. As a major crossroad, a land of rich natural resources, and an excellent base for military operations against enemies in the surrounding lowlands, it has been coveted by powerful empires. Often, the possession of Armenia was the key to supremacy over much of Western Asia. Understandably then, the Plateau has served as the arena for countless rivalries and wars, its peoples have been subjected to many foreign lords, and its land has been repeatedly devastated. From the west have come the armies of the Macedonian, Roman, and Byzantine empires; from the east, the armies of the Persian, Turkic, and Mongol empires; from the south, the armies of the Seleucid, Arab, and Mamluk empires. Yet the tribulations of the Armenians produced sturdy stock, people who through-

out the generations retained many of their national characteristics, repeatedly restored the prosperity of their homeland following years of havoc, and, after the invaders had been swept away, reestablished native rule.

The tradition of self-government was well known to the Armenians long before the Christian era. They had moved onto the Plateau as Indo-European conquerors and extended their hearmony over the indigenous peoples, whom

conquerors and extended their hegemony over the indigenous peoples, whom they eventually assimilated. Then, after a period of submission to the Achaemenids and the Seleucids, they regained independence under a dynasty that wielded authority throughout the two centuries before Christ. During the reign of Tigranes of that royal Artaxiad family, the Armenians even formed the dominant element in an empire stretching from the Caucasus Mountains and Caspian Sea to Cilicia and from the Pontus to Mesopotamia and Syria.⁸ From the first century to the beginning of the fifth century A.D. Armenia was ruled by the Arsacid dynasty, which, though caught between

Syria.⁸ From the first century to the beginning of the fifth century A.D. Armenia was ruled by the Arsacid dynasty, which, though caught between the rivalries of East and West and subjected to vassal status during much of its existence, maintained the tradition of self-government. Under the Arsacids, Armenia accepted Christianity in approximately A.D. 301 and, just

over a century later, adopted its own alphabet, an event that ushered in the Golden Age of Armenian literature.9

