

THE COLLAPSE OF DASHNAK ARMENIA IN 1920 AND THE DEBACLE OF NIKOL PASHINYAN'S REGIME IN 2020

Maxime GAUIN

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History never repeats itself exactly, but the element of continuity between the collapse of the Armenian Republic (at that time ruled by the Armenian Revolutionary Federation, ARF) in front of the Kemalist army and the ongoing debacle of the regime led by Armenian Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan in front of the Azerbaijani armed forces, are striking.

In both cases, all the proposals of peace and compromises had been rejected by the cabinets in power in Yerevan, the main difference being that in 1920, the war erupted after less than one year of refusals and in 2020 after twenty-six years. During the first semester 1920, Kazakh intellectual Mustafa Tcholak and reasonable Armenians of the Caucasus tried to find a compromise on the Turkish-Armenian boundary. The ARF cabinet refused to listen to them, expecting a support from European states and/or the United States, in spite of the fact that both the British cabinet and British Armenophiles themselves had rejected the possibility of the mandate on Armenia by the United Kingdom [1] and that, as early as 1919, the Harbord report was less than promising about an American mandate.[2] From 1992 to 2020, all the attempts of peace similarly failed. The Turkish and Azerbaijani negotiators warned that such expectations were fundamentally wrong, but their warnings were in vain.[3] New attempts in mid-1920 failed. The insistence of Yerevan for the integral implementation of the Sèvres Treaty made them pointless.[4] Similarly, the attempts (or so-called attempts) of mediation in 1992 did not even slow down the advance of the invading Armenian forces and all the peace plans after 1994 were buried or explicitly rejected. In particular, the Principles of Madrid presented in 2007 were theoretically accepted by the Armenian government in 2009 but abandoned by Mr. Pashinyan in 2020.

The demographic issue offers significant common points. In 1919-1920, the Armenian nationalists were warned, without any result, that the Armenia they wished (from the Black Sea to the Mediterranean Sea) would have a Muslim majority and was, as a result,

doomed to fail.[5] In 2020, namely until these last days, the heirs of these nationalists, in particular the ARF, believed that a state with a declining demography (less than three million inhabitants, according the official statistics of Armenia) can always defy a richer and more populated (almost ten millions inhabitants) neighbor. In both cases, this overestimation of the capacities of Armenia is due to a deep racism of the leadership, in Armenia and abroad: In 1920[6], like in 2020, the core of the Armenian nationalist ideology is a racism advocating the supremacy of the Aryan race. Not only Nazi war criminals Garegin Nzhdeh and Drastamat Dro Kanayan are revered in todays Armenia,[7] but the political writings of Nzhdeh are reprinted at the expenses of the state as the official ideology of the government. It is true that the ARF-dominated Republic of Armenia was defeated by the Turkish army and not the Azerbaijani one, but the insistence of Yerevan to conquer Karabakh (already part of Azerbaijan) in 1919-1920 weakened these two Caucasian republics.[8]

In 1920, Armenia began trying to occupy territories supposed to be attributed to her by the arbitration of American President Woodrow Wilson, only causing a devastating Turkish counter-offensive, completely unexpected, the Armenian intelligence having completely underestimated the Turkish capacities for such a military operation.[9] In July[10] and September 2020, the Armenian armed forces tried to implement the doctrine elaborated in 2019: A new war for new territories.[11] The homicidal violence against civilians is not the same in 2020: Since 27 September of this year, the Armenian attacks against Azerbaijani cities has cost the life of about 83 persons; in spring and summer 1920 only, the ethnic cleansing policy of the ARF cabinet murdered dozens of thousands.[12] However, this difference is largely due to the following reason: There are no Azerbaijanis in Armenia anymore;[13] only some hundreds of Kurds remain, and only because they support the PKK. The Azerbaijanis of the occupied territories have been expelled in 1992-1993, when they were not purely and simply massacred, in Khodjaly for example.

In 1920 and 2020, Moscow was/is concerned by other issues: The Polish counter-offensives and the White Army of General Pyotr Wrangel in 1920;[14] the COVID-19 pandemic, international sanctions implemented because of the illegal annexation of Crimea and the conflict with Ukraine in 2020. However, the concerns of Moscow are less serious today and the Russian government provides a significant military support to Armenia in 2020, including providing weapons for free, as well as mercenaries, but still, there is no direct intervention, a continuity that is not corrected by the support of Iran in 2020 (unlike in 1920), as the mullahs regime face considerable domestic difficulties. Among them, the exasperation of the ethnic Azerbaijanis is a serious issue.

The Russian issue leads to the consideration of another common point. In 1919, Paul Poulgy, one of the few French supporters of the territorial claims presented by the Armenian National Delegation in Paris, compared the delegation to a courtesan in need of a lover, because of the successive demands presented to France, Russia, the UK, the US, with a great concern for coherence and consistency.[15] In October 2020, Mr. Pashinyan asked Russia, France, NATO, the US, and even the United Arab Emirates, to recognize the so-called republic of Nagorno-Karabakh, always in vain. In the US, and to a lesser extent in European countries, the Christian identity of Armenia is emphasized, in spite of the fact

that the Armenian Apostolic (Gregorian) Church uses its official statute in Armenia to prevent religious freedom for the other Christian churches and even to teach anti-Catholic feelings to the youth, as education is partly under the control of the Armenian churchs hierarchy.[16]

Ultimately, it obvious that expansionist policies are pursued, in 2020 like in 1920, at the expenses of the Armenian population itself, by an incompetent leadership. Herbert Hoover, in charge of the American government-distributed relief at that time, observed in his memoirs that The Armenian Republic was hardly even a shadow of a government, as

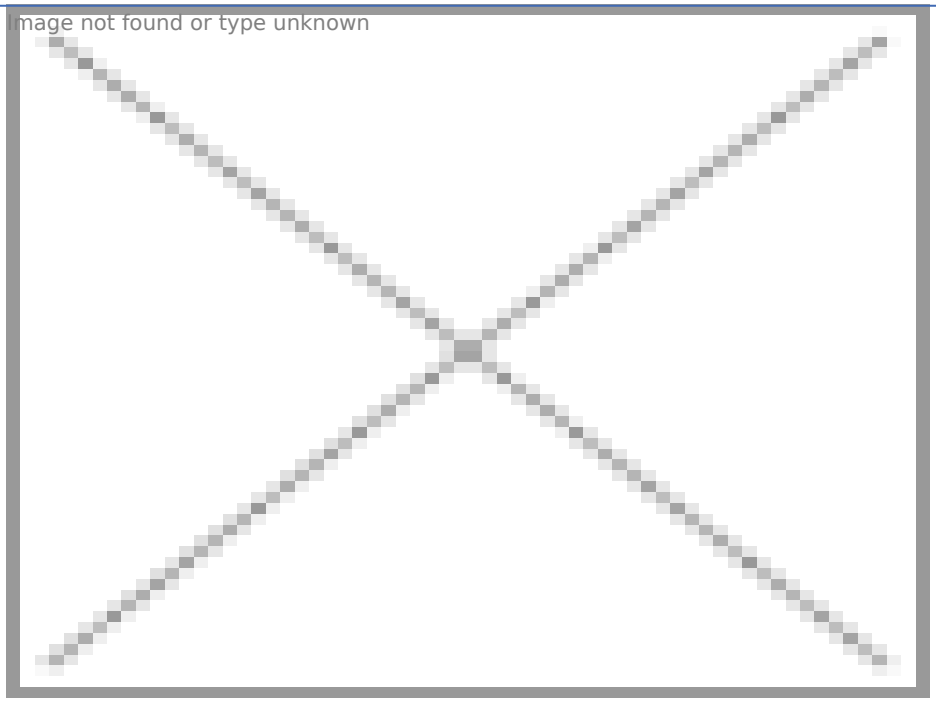
> The so-called ministers had never had an atom of administrative experience. They were either incompetent or corrupt and moved by a variety of politics that produced a new cabinet every few weeks. They were all, including the President, simply stunned and helpless in the face of their problems. If anyone wants material for a treatise on human woe, intrigue, war, massacre, incompetence and dishonesty, he can find ample source material in the mass of reports from our American officers.[17]

And at the eve of the Turkish crushing counter-offensive, Louis Nettement, the French Consul general in Tbilisi, reported, after a trip in Armenia, that finance, army, industry, commerce are nonexistent.[18] The disastrous management of the COVID-19 crisis by the Armenian cabinet or, even more terribly, the extent of criminal activities in the occupied territories,[19] show that no significant improvement is noticeable in the Yerevans leadership a century later.

Two differences, regardless, have to be noted: The incomparably more significant role of the Armenian Diaspora in the funding of roads connecting Armenia and the occupied territories, and in supporting the hardliners of Yerevan against anybody tempted by a compromise; and, in this regard, the role of Karabakhs Armenians, particularly Robert Kocharyan and Serzh Sargsyan, who ruled Armenia from 1998 to 2018.

However, these differences are relevant only in the sense that ongoing defeat will be broader in 2020 than in 1920: More losers (the other categories of Armenian nationalists mentioned in the previous paragraph; Russia; Iran), and more winners (Azerbaijan, Turkey, Israel).

**Cover picture: Map of Armenia submitted by United Armenian Delegations during the 1919 Paris Peace Conference, source: https://archive.org/details/armenianquestion00pari/page/n5/mode/2up*



A map in a Yerevan metro station, displaying the territories of Azerbaijan, Turkey, Georgia, and Iran as part of a Great Armenia.

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About the Author :

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Süleyman Nazif Sok. No: 12/B Daire 3-4 06550 Çankaya-ANKARA / TÜRKİYE
Tel: +90 (312) 438 50 23-24 • **Fax**: +90 (312) 438 50 26
@avimorgtr
https://www.facebook.com/avrasyaincelemelerimerkezi
E-Mail: info@avim.org.tr
http://avim.org.tr

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