

## ARMEN GARO'S UNDERTAKING WITHIN THE FRAMEWORK OF THE CIVIL MISSION OF THE RA TO THE USA AT THE END OF 1919

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### Abstract

The serious foreign policy challenges faced by the authorities of independent Armenia since the proclamation of the First Republic have led to the need to establish diplomatic relations with both European Powers and the United States. In the difficult political situation that developed in October 1919, first of all, in order to raise the issue of recognizing the newly created Republic, a member of the Armenian delegation in Paris, Deputy Chairman of the National delegation (of the Western Armenians) Garegin Pasdermadjian (Armen Garo), was sent to the United States as the Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary Representative of the Republic of Armenia to the USA. He arrived in New York as part of the official delegation of the First Republic of Armenia headed by Hovhannes Qajaznuni on October 9, 1919.

In the fall and early winter of 1919, together with members of the Qajaznuni Civil mission and representatives of the Military mission who had joined the latter since the end of November, G. Pasdermadjian was active not only in political, diplomatic and economic directions, but also in uniting the divided Armenian community in the United States. Thus, G. Pasdermadjian also contributed to the small, but nevertheless, successes achieved by representatives of the Republic of Armenia in the USA.

**Keywords:** G. Pasdermadjian, Republic of Armenia, USA, Ambassador Extraordinary, Plenipotentiary Representative, speeches, meetings, Armenian community, periodicals.

### Introduction

Since the proclamation of the First Republic in May 1918, independent Armenia has faced a number of serious challenges. The extremely difficult socio-economic, political and military situation that developed in the Republic at the beginning of 1919, forces the government of the young state to seek help from the Great Powers - the European allies and the United States.

According to a government Decree<sup>1</sup> adopted in late January 1919, the Parliament of the Republic formed a Civil mission<sup>2</sup> that would leave for Europe in mid-June. For the

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noted mission, headed by the first Prime Minister of Armenia, Hovhannes Qajaznuni, several months spent in Europe - Great Britain and France - turned out to be unsuccessful. Regarding the future, the mission's activities unfolding in Europe and aimed at both the economic, military and political spheres also did not inspire optimism. Therefore, it becomes imperative to enlist the support of the United States in all of the above areas.

In Paris, at a joint meeting of two Armenian delegations - the National, headed by Poghos Nubar, and the Armenian Republic, headed by A. Aharonyan, a decision was made to send an official delegation to Washington to appeal to the American government directly in the USA.<sup>3</sup>

### **Appointment of Garegin Pasdermadjian**

The discussions of the Armenian delegations in Paris led to the decision that the delegation headed by H. Qajaznuni, represented by his advisers, former Minister of Finance Artashes Enfiayyan and agronomist Artem Piralyan, as well as Qajaznuni's secretary Captain Suren Melikyan, should, as a Civil mission, appeal to the US government to provide only economic and humanitarian assistance.

A separate Military mission was to deal with military assistance issues in the United States, which included the representative of the Republic of Armenia, General Hakob Bagratuni, and General Andranik as the representative of the National Delegation of Boghos Nubar. It should also be noted that another representative of Boghos Nubar, the vice-president of the National Delegation, Abr. Ter-Hakobyan, was also on his way to the United States to cooperate with the Civil mission of Qajaznuni.

It is noteworthy that the Qajaznuni mission, in addition to the main goal of receiving economic assistance from the United States, was nevertheless also authorized to ensure the resolution of certain political issues. It was for this purpose that Garegin Pasdermadjian, who was in Paris, was supposed to join the delegation led by H. Qajaznuni heading from France to the United States. G. Pasdermadjian, a well-known figure in the Armenian liberation struggle of the late 19th and early 20th centuries, and a prominent representative of the Armenian Revolutionary Federation party, did not happen to be in Paris by chance. This internationally renowned figure was simultaneously a member of two Armenian delegations in Paris. He was the Deputy Chairman of the Armenian National Delegation headed by Poghos Nubar and a member of the delegation of the Republic of Armenia.

During the discussions taking place in Paris regarding the Armenian missions, the aforementioned decision was made, which was later confirmed in Yerevan. On October 16, 1919, after Pasdermadjian's departure to the United States, A. Aharonian, the

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<sup>1</sup>National Archive of Armenia (hereinafter referred to as NAA), F. (fund) 199, c. (catalogue) 1, f. (file) 43, p. (page) 15-16; Minutes of the Meetings 2014: 106-107; Vracian 1998: 254.

<sup>2</sup> For more information about the formation of the working group, see Ghambaryan 2019: 254 -261.

<sup>3</sup> NAA, F. 200, c. 1, f. 290, pp. 55-60.

Chairman of the Armenian delegation in Paris, sent a separate telegram to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs requesting that A. Khatisian (both the Minister of Foreign Affairs and acting Prime Minister) be informed about the following: "Due to urgent circumstances, we were compelled to send Pasdermadjian to America as a temporary diplomatic representative without waiting for your approval. We kindly ask you to send a telegram directly to Washington to the State Department regarding the appointment of Pasdermadjian as Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary Minister".<sup>4</sup> This telegram was registered as "Done" on October 17. Thus, G. Pasdermadjian was authorized by the Government of the Republic of Armenia with a special mission - he was appointed the Diplomatic representative of the Republic of Armenia in the United States.<sup>5</sup> On October 28, Aharonian had already sent a telegram to Khatisian stating that G. Pasdermadjian, as Ambassador Extraordinary, was carrying out the activities entrusted to him together with members of the Armenian Civil mission in the United States.<sup>6</sup>

### **The Directions of G. Pasdermadjian's Activities**

The visit of the official representatives of the Republic of Armenia to the United States has not lost its relevance since the beginning of the same 1919. On September 4, at a session of the Parliament of the Republic, Prime Minister A. Khatisian, in his short political speech, touching upon the Armenian Question, stated the following: "Over the past three months, there has been no progress in resolving the Armenian question since the Allies associate this issue with America taking up the matter and resolving the problem of Western Armenia".<sup>7</sup> According to the Prime Minister, the government, being in a state of expectation, could not say anything about this. However, he added that "as the time for resolving our issue at the Peace Conference approaches, Turkey is extending its arms widely to our borders. Therefore, on the one hand, we must not lose hope for outside help, and on the other, organize our own forces".<sup>8</sup> This ambivalent position was also a guideline for Armenian officials who visited the United States. On the one hand, it was necessary to maintain the encouraging approach according to which the impartial US government, guided by democratic and humanitarian principles, would not only immediately provide comprehensive support, but also, finally, recognize the independence of the Republic of Armenia. The mandates of the Civil and Military missions concerned the economic, humanitarian and military spheres, respectively. As for the diplomatic representative of the Republic, G. Pasdermadjian, the latter was authorized to carry out all kinds of work within the framework of the Qajaznuni mission, naturally giving priority to the recognition of the newly created State over political issues.

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<sup>4</sup> NAA, F. 200, c. 1, f. 395, p. 1.

<sup>5</sup> NAA, F. 200, c. 1, f. 395, pp. 1-2, 4, 7.

<sup>6</sup> NAA, F. 200, c. 1, f. 395, p. 7.

<sup>7</sup> "Asparez", 1919, October 24, № 586.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid.

To achieve success in all of the above areas, it was necessary not only to work with official American structures in the direction of developing bilateral relations and ensuring sympathy and feedback in public circles, but also to coordinate the actions of all Armenian missions, both representatives of the Republic and the National Delegation. It was imperative to consolidate all efforts and ensure mutual understanding and unity both within and between the working groups, which was very important for establishing close ties with the Armenian community in America. During this period, the human resources and technical capabilities of the Armenian American community were of vital importance to the independent State of Armenia.<sup>9</sup> Consequently, among the tasks assigned to the delegates of the Republic, one of the most important points was the work to end the split in the Armenian community in the United States.<sup>10</sup> The unity factor was extremely important on the path to success in the United States. It didn't take much effort to solve this problem in the Armenian community at the initial stage. The mere presence of the newly created republic's mission in the United States was already enough to unite Armenian Americans. As for the propaganda work, in this regard, H. Qajaznuni informed the Acting Prime Minister of the Republic A. Khatisyan that the mission was carried out at a high level.<sup>11</sup>

The high wave of unity and cohesion in the Armenian community of America was also explained by the fact that, along with the delegates of the Government of the Republic of Armenia, authorized representatives of the National Delegation acted within the framework of both Civil and Military missions. The joy of the Armenian community of the USA over the visit of the official Armenian delegation was boundless. The community's enthusiasm was particularly expressed also for the Republic's Diplomatic representative, who was perceived as an international value. This rhetoric was twofold: on the one hand, it was due to the fact that Armenia, as an independent country, had finally taken its place among the world's nations, and on the other, it was connected to the fact that Armenia had established official relations with the United States.<sup>12</sup> A. Garo understood perfectly well that at that time, both ensuring the unity of the community itself and its close connection with the mother motherland by all possible physical, material and moral means also depended on the successful course of his diplomatic work.<sup>13</sup>

G. Pasdermadjian started his activity in the United States, focusing on three main areas. Namely: achieving political and legal recognition of the Republic of Armenia; informing American government and public circles about the need for Armenia's existence; ensuring material, humanitarian, military and political support from the United States. The main goal of A. Garo's diplomatic efforts was to achieve the United States'

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<sup>9</sup> Hovannisian 2014: 457.

<sup>10</sup> "Hayreniq", 1919, October 11, "Kochnak Hayastani", 1919, October 11, №41, pp. 1301-1302.

<sup>11</sup> NAA, F. 200, c. 1, f. 431, p. 5.

<sup>12</sup> "Kochnak Hayastani", 1919, October 11, № 41, p. 1301.

<sup>13</sup> "Asparez", 1919, October 17.

acceptance of a mandate for Armenia Garo embarked on a series of initiatives in this direction during the autumn and early winter of 1919.<sup>14</sup> He promoted the idea of mandatory government in Armenia in official, political, and public circles. The Armenian diplomat made every effort to convince the US government to take custody of Armenia or at least provide it with financial and humanitarian assistance.

Based on the above, the very next day after arriving in the United States, G. Pasdermadjian, together with H. Qajaznuni, testified in Washington at Hearings organized by the Subcommittee of the US Senate Committee on Foreign Relations.<sup>15</sup> The latter concerned the Resolution proposed by Senator J. Sh. Williams on the provision of troops and ammunition to the Republic of Armenia.

Sharing the concerns expressed by Qajaznuni and agreeing with the information provided by him, which mainly represented economic issues and reflected the national and cultural characteristics of the Armenian people, Pasdermadjian in his speech focused mainly on the political sphere. Underlining that the Armenians played no less a role in the World War than other Allied nations, he noted that after the armistice, despite the peace settlement organized by the Allies, the latter, with the exception of some food aid from America, did not provide any political or military assistance to the Armenians: no weapons or ammunition were provided to protect the Armenian people, surrounded by enemies.<sup>16</sup> Pasdermadjian noted that, along with the request of the Republic of Armenia for humanitarian aid, in the current situation, the supply of weapons and ammunition, as well as the presence of just a few thousand American soldiers in Armenia, were of great importance.<sup>17</sup>

Following their testimonies at the Hearings, on the same day and over the next few days, Garo, both as part of the Civil mission and personally, held a number of meetings and discussions with high-ranking American officials, including W. Wilson's Secretary J. P. Tamulty, Vice President T. R. Marshall, Secretary of State R. Lansing, and others.<sup>18</sup> Meetings were also held with representatives of various public organizations and a number of famous people. At the end of October 1919, A. Garo submitted to the US State Department a Memorandum on the independence of Armenia, entitled "The Republic of Armenia", prepared by the Civil mission headed by H. Qajaznuni.<sup>19</sup>

<sup>14</sup> For more information, see Ghambaryan 2024: 48-60.

<sup>15</sup> For Senate Subcommittee Hearings see: United States Congress 1919: 5067; US NA, RG (Record Group) 256, 867B.00/268; Maintenance of Peace in Armenia 1919: 3-125; "Armenian Review" 1980, № 4; 1981, № 1, 2, 4; Armenia in the Documents: 566; Hovannisian 2014: 447, Ghambaryan 2022: 24-314, Hovannisian 1982: 435; Makhmuryan 2018: 235-264; Ovannisyan 2007: 273-281.

<sup>16</sup> Maintenance of Peace in Armenia 1919: 112; Ghambaryan 2020: 89-94; Ghambaryan 2022: 24-314.

<sup>17</sup> Maintenance of Peace in Armenia 1919: 112; Ghambaryan 2020: 89-94; Ghambaryan 2022: 24-314.

<sup>18</sup> Hovannisian 1982: 435; Ovannisyan 2007: 279; Makhmuryan 2018: 235-264; Hovannisian 2014: 459.

<sup>19</sup> The Republic of Armenia 1919: 1-15; Ghambaryan 2023: 95-117.

### **G. Pasdermadjian's Undertakings in November and December 1919**

In November-December 1919, A. Garo was overwhelmed by diplomatic activity.<sup>20</sup> The importance of this activity was particularly significant, as it coincided with a period when the lack of action from US official circles on Armenian issues was becoming more apparent.

No steps have been taken to provide political or military assistance to the Republic of Armenia. After the Senate Subcommittee Hearings, virtually no further action was taken on the issues under discussion. The Subcommittee's report was not published or even presented to the US Senate in late 1919 or early 1920. This was due to the current circumstances in the United States. On the one hand, the prolonged isolation of pro-Armenian President W. Wilson from official affairs due to health problems, on the other hand, the negative position of opposition Republicans regarding his policies. The latter led to the fact that the US Senate, returning to the Monroe doctrine in its foreign policy orientations, rejected the Treaty of Versailles, and with it the Treaty on the League of Nations, and hence the system of mandates. This meant that the reality of mandates had virtually ceased to exist.

From the above, it became clear that the expectations of the Armenians would remain unfulfilled. In the current situation, it was necessary, at least with regard to Armenian issues, to closely monitor all the news related to US domestic and, consequently, foreign policy. It was very important to keep abreast of the development of new events and processes, so as not to miss important points related to the issues of concern to Armenians, and to ensure timely response. The main burden of this work fell on the shoulders of G. Pasdermadjian. Using his diplomatic abilities and powers, he expanded his activities in all the already mentioned directions assigned to him. Together with members of the Civil mission and individually Qajaznuni sent appeals to the White House, Congress, American Committee for Relief in the Near East, and individual entrepreneurs, negotiated and petitioned for food, clothing, grain, agricultural equipment, and rolling stock.<sup>21</sup> In order to resolve issues related to the military sphere, Garo works closely with the Armenian Joint Military mission and organizes meetings of its representatives with the US military officials represented by the Secretary of War Newton Baker<sup>22</sup>, as well as the Secretary of State Robert Lansing.<sup>23</sup> On political issues, as well as on issues of providing various types of support to Armenia, Garo established mutual contact with Secretary of State R. Lansing<sup>24</sup> and even with President W. Wilson.<sup>25</sup>

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<sup>20</sup> Ghambaryan 2024: 48-60.

<sup>21</sup> "New York Times", 1919, October 5, October 12; "Kochnak Hayastani", 1919, October 25, № 43, pp. 1386-1387, November 1, № 44, pp.1403-1404; "Hayreniq", 1919, October 19; Ovannisyan 2007: 299-300, 302.

<sup>22</sup> Ovannisyan 2007: 286.

<sup>23</sup> Ovannisyan 2007: 286.

<sup>24</sup> NAA, F. 200, c. 1, f. 431, pp. 50-58; Ghambaryan A. 2024: 48-60.

<sup>25</sup> Ovannisyan 2007: 302.

In both correspondence and personal contacts with high-ranking American officials and other government figures, Garo prioritized the issue of recognizing the newly formed Armenian State in his work on political matters. This commitment was reinforced by the Armenian government. In a letter dated November 18, sent to Garo from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, A. Khatisyan instructed the diplomatic representative as follows: "To take appropriate steps to recognize our independence, since after the departure of the British troops we are under the protection of the Americans, but this is rather platonic in nature, since the Americans do not have troops and weapons stationed in Armenia to prevent the invasion of the Turks into the Republic of Armenia".<sup>26</sup>

At the end of 1919, this recommendation became highly relevant due to the significant changes in the political direction of the United States, namely, the change of the mandate course towards independence.<sup>27</sup> Based on this, Garo frequently emphasized in his addresses and speeches the significant strategic role of independent Armenia in the Caucasus as a force ensuring political stability and a stronghold for the preservation of Christian values.<sup>28</sup>

Garo's political mission in the United States, which was clearly manifested not only in negotiations with American officials but also in his speeches, reports, addresses, interviews, and testimonies, aimed to present Armenia as a legitimate and stable country. In his appeals, he constantly emphasized the suffering of the Armenian people, especially during and after the genocide, and the moral obligation of the international community to assist the Armenian nation.

The recognition of the independence of the Republic of Armenia was an urgent task, which should have been followed by the recognition of its Government. Expectations were high. Consequently, the main purpose of the Civil mission and, in particular, the diplomatic representative was to carry out work on the recognition of the Republic. In one of the interviews, a hopeful Pasdermadjian tried to dispel the journalist's fears that "Statement by French Foreign Minister S. Pichon in the French Parliament on the non-recognition of the republics about the non-recognition of the republics of the Caucasus was made in relation to Georgia and Azerbaijan".<sup>29</sup>

The directions and content of G. Pasdermadjian's activities was reflected, in particular, on the pages of the American Armenian press. Notable in this regard were the speeches delivered at numerous public gatherings, which were published in both English-language and Armenian-language periodicals. A. Garo was undoubtedly among the representatives of the Armenian Civil and Military missions, as well as American officials and prominent public figures, who delivered speeches and addresses at rallies, meetings, dinners and other events organized by both the Armenian community and various American organizations in honor of the Armenian delegations in large and small

<sup>26</sup> NAA, F. 200, c. 1, f. 395, pp. 4-5.

<sup>27</sup> Makhmuryan 2018: 291.

<sup>28</sup> Makhmuryan 2018: 291.

<sup>29</sup> "Nor Kyanq", 1919, October 29.

cities across the United States. He attended almost all the events, despite the fact that sometimes, due to worsening health problems, he made great efforts to do so. After the event in Boston, the magazine "Renaissance" wrote "He delivered a speech in English in which he told about the great service that the Armenians rendered to the Allied cause on all fronts of the World War.<sup>30</sup> As the magazine noted, these important words of the Armenian Plenipotentiary Representative were pronounced clearly and with such an emphasis that they were understandable to everyone.

A. Garo never weakened his activities and continued his efforts, publishing articles, giving speeches and trying in every possible way to unite the divided forces of the Armenian community of America. Thus, on November 30, 1919, Pasdermajian, as a Diplomatic Representative of the Republic of Armenia, sent the following letter to the press for publication. He wrote: "Dear compatriots! Attached you will find a letter from the head of the delegation of the Republic of Armenia in Paris, Mr. A. Aharonian, with an appeal addressed to the Armenian community of America. By sending it to you, I am confident that you and your newspapers will make every effort to meet the noted urgent needs of our Motherland".<sup>31</sup>

The Boston-based Armenian newspaper "Hayreniq", on December 23, 1919, published, in particular, a short speech by G. Pasdermajian delivered at the Plaza Hotel on the occasion of a dinner given in honor of the Armenian delegations, which was also attended by prominent Americans, including representatives of the Governor of Massachusetts and the Mayor of Boston. In his speech, Garo emphasized not only the fact that the United States' support for distant Armenia was not just a duty in the name of justice, but also that the fate of the Republic of Armenia at that moment was in the hands of the American government. He noted the following: "The Armenian Political and Military missions have arrived to present the current situation and their fair position to the American government and people."

You are all aware of the activities of our people in the Middle East over the years. From the third century to the present day, the Armenian people have been at the forefront of Christian civilization. As in the past, during this World War, Armenia resolutely sided with Western civilization and, at the cost of almost a million human casualties, saved the Eastern Front of the Allies, preventing the Turkish-German offensive in the direction of Central Asia. This reality is recognized by military leaders of both our allies and our enemies. But despite this obvious reality, today, for a full year, our Allies have provided no real assistance to our brave people.

Our hope, in particular, is based on the Great Freedom-loving Republic of America. We have come to ask you to support us in any way convenient for you in the matter of organizing our newborn state and in the matter of protecting our just rights with the goal of creating a united independent Armenian state. Our people deliberately shed their blood not so that instead of the Russian tsar or the Turkish sultan, someone

<sup>30</sup> "Veratsnutiun", 1919, November-December, p. 429.

<sup>31</sup> "Nor Kyanq", 1919, December 10.



else would rule and dominate their native land, but only in order to free themselves from foreign domination once and for all.

We are sure that You, the children of that great generation who so heroically achieved their freedom, will understand us and extend your brotherly hands to us. I can assure you, gentlemen, that you will not regret the sacrifices you will make to help our suffering people”.<sup>32</sup>

### **Conclusion**

Thus, in the last quarter of 1919, G. Pasdermadjian, as a diplomatic representative of the First Republic of Armenia, was active not only within the framework of the Civil, but also the Armenian Military mission. Despite the fact that his powers as an Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary Representative mainly included consideration of political and diplomatic issues, A. Garo also actively worked in the economic field. Therefore, to summarize, we note that although there were almost no achievements in political matters at the end of 1919, the efforts of the RA Plenipotentiary Representative were not completely fruitless. He managed to inform American government and public circles about the necessity of Armenia's existence and to secure their sympathy. G. Pasdermadjian, also contributed to the successes achieved in the United States in late 1919 in terms of economic aid in favor of Armenia, and played a significant role in uniting the disunited Armenian community in the USA.

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<sup>32</sup> “Hayreniq”, 1919, December 19.

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