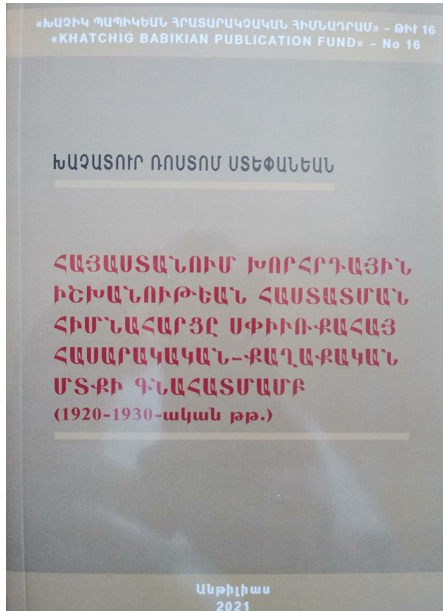


**KHACHATUR ROSTOM STEPANYAN, “THE PROBLEM OF ESTABLISHING  
SOVIET POWER IN ARMENIA ACCORDING TO THE ASSESSMENT OF THE  
SOCIAL AND POLITICAL THOUGHT OF THE ARMENIAN DIASPORA  
(1920-1930S)”, ANTELIAS, 2021, 420 PAGES.**



One of the most controversial issues in the Armenian history of the 20<sup>th</sup> century is the Sovietization of Armenia. It is self-evident how this historical event was evaluated and glorified in the Soviet country during its 70 years of existence. The issue of Sovietization was also addressed by the Diasporan historiographer and memorialist authors, the press, the wider public and political circles, whose comments and assessments were multi-layered and ambiguous depending on their party, ideological, fragmentary approaches and preferences.

Nevertheless, the events of the end of November and the beginning of December, 1920, the 1921 February uprising and the issue of Armenia's independence were assessed by the wider public and political circles and press of the Armenian Diaspora in a quite interesting, free and comprehensive way. If we try to generalize the assessments of the public and political thought of the Armenian Diaspora regarding the establishment of Soviet power in Armenia, they can be divided into two large groups. One group, represented by the Dashnaktsutyun and their supporters, assessed the Sovietization of Armenia mainly negatively. The other group - the Democratic Liberal Party (Ramgavar), the Hunchakian Party and the Armenian Communists abroad, not only welcomed the coming of the Bolsheviks to power in Armenia, but also insulted their political opponent, the Dashnaktsutyun.

Khachatur Stepanyan's monograph is dedicated to the scientific study of this multifaceted issue. The issues examined by the author were partially discussed by Soviet-Armenian historiography. Some issues were also addressed in the post-Soviet period. However, so far there has been no complete and generalized study of the issue. We think that Khachatur Stepanyan's research is the first successful attempt in this respect and it fills the gap in our historiography.

Besides the scientific interest, the work has practical application as well – the study of the processes taking place within the Armenian Diaspora, especially if they are directly related to the motherland. The use of the potential of the Diaspora is of great importance in the difficult task of strengthening the Republic of Armenia. This potential implies not only material support, but also intellectual capacity. The study of the social and political thought of the Armenian Diaspora is very topical from this point of view.

The principle of discussion of the issue adopted by the author should be considered acceptable and appreciable. In addressing each issue, the author first briefly presents the issue, then in a detailed and regulated manner he refers to the comments and viewpoints of various public circles of the Armenian Diaspora - representatives of Armenian parties in the Diaspora, the press, memorialists and respected intellectuals. The author has made a successful attempt to classify the vast amount of available materials.

The author not only demonstrates the dichotomy of the social and political thought of the Armenian Diaspora regarding the issue of Sovietization of Armenia, but also reveals a number of deep reasons for the existing contradiction.

The monograph, written on the basis of rich materials, most of which are circulated in scientific research for the first time, consists of an introduction, three chapters, conclusions and a list of sources and literature used.

In the first chapter of the work, Kh. Stepanyan demonstrates the clarifications of the Armenian political emigrants in the Diaspora about the peaceful Sovietization of Armenia. The author rightly notes that the main concern of the leaders of the first Republic of Armenia was to keep the country away from a new war. At the same time, preserving the independence was considered a priority, but the Bolsheviks did not keep their promise in regard to it. The author of the monograph also refers to the views of opposing circles, which unquestionably assessed the Sovietization of Armenia positively. Kh. Stepanyan has strong reservations about the principle of repeating the official Soviet position by the Ramgavar, Hunchakian and Communist circles of the Diaspora. If necessary, the figures of the Dashnaktsutyun also become the target of the author's criticism. For example, A. Khatisyan's and S. Vratsyan's explanations regarding the signing of the Treaty of Alexandropol are not a sufficient justification for the author.

From the point of view of a significant scientific novelty the second chapter of the monograph is no less valuable. Here the author analyzes the assessments of the social and political thought of the Armenian Diaspora regarding the 1921 February uprising. Numerous episodes of the reckless policy pursued by the Armenian Revolutionary Committee are revealed. According to the social and political thought of the Armenian Diaspora, the implementation of "military communism" and the use of violence against Armenian officers and intellectuals were completely baseless. Kh. Stepanyan also cites the social and political thought of the Armenian Diaspora who gave other reasons for the uprising, such as the violation of the idea of independence and national values, the special persecution of Western Armenians, etc. At the same time, the author refers with reservations to the attempts of the Dashnaktsutyun figures to present the failures of the foreign policy of the Armenian Revolutionary Committee as a reason for the uprising. Kh. Stepanyan rightly thinks that it was practically impossible to settle the border and territorial issues with the neighbors in a very short period of time.

Analyzing the discussions in the Diaspora regarding the consequences of the February uprising, the author comes to a number of valuable conclusions. First of all,

the salvation of the Armenian intelligentsia from the Bolshevik carnage is emphasized. It is also interesting to note the author's conviction that the February uprising was a successful experimentation of the idea of independence. According to the social and political thought of the Armenian Diaspora, the economic violence of the Bolsheviks was reduced as a result of the February uprising.

In his work the author also addresses the negative consequences of the uprising. At the end of this chapter, the author presents the views of a number of figures in the Diaspora on the Sovietization of Zangezur. According to them, due to the organization of Zangezur's self-defense and opposing its Sovietization it was possible to guarantee the region's inclusion in Soviet Armenia.

In the last chapter of the work, taking into account the actual loss of independence of Soviet Armenia, the author considers it necessary to properly address the viewpoints on the issue in the Diaspora. The position of the Dashnaktsutyun, which valued the idea of Armenia's independence, is emphasized here. At the same time, the author criticizes the anti-independence approaches of the Ramgavars, Hunchakians and Communists.

The author, in fact, fulfilled his task and presented a successful study with an in-depth and comprehensive analysis of the events of the difficult period of the Armenian history - 1920-1921. With its topic and content it is the first of its kind in our historiography.

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***Translated from the Armenian by Syuzanna Chraghyan***