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The Republic of Armenia (1918-1920) ON THE OCCASION OF ITS 90TH ANNIVERSARY

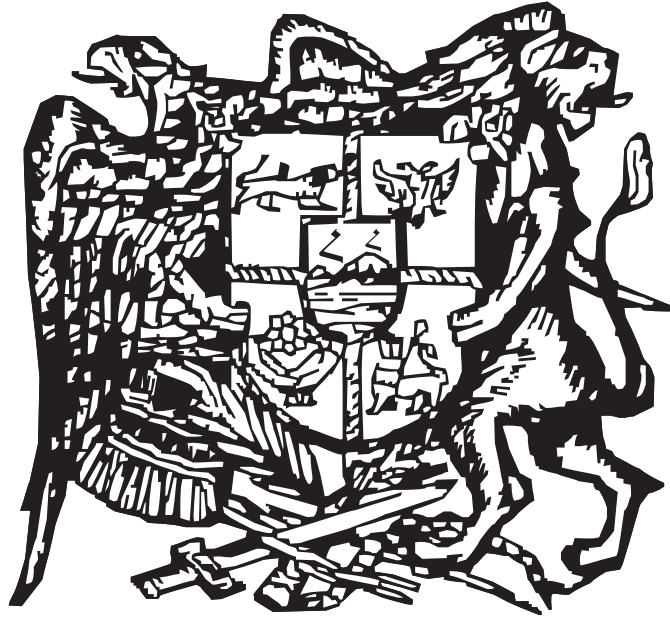
The early years of World War I provided the leaders of Ottoman Turkey an excellent opportunity to pursue their expansionist dreams, aimed at uniting Turkic people from Asia Minor to the east under Turkish banner. Armenians living in the region were an obstacle to this plan, and they had to be removed. Thus began the Genocide of Armenians in 1915.

Following the October revolution of 1917 in Russia, the Bolsheviks replaced the Provisional government and established the Soviet regime. The Transcaucasus became a military and political stage, where wars would shape history. The chaotic state of affairs was propitious for the Turkish army to carry out a new offensive against the Armenians, to complete the operation of extermination begun in 1915.

Despite inadequate military means, misery, famine, epidemics and destitution, the whole Armenian population would rise to the occasion and fight heroically in the war. If it was necessary to perish, this would at least be on the battlefield.

On May 23-28 of 1918, under the command of Generals Nazarbekian, Silikian, Dro, Araratian and Piroumian, Armenian forces repelled Turks at Gharakillisse, Bash-Aparan and Sartarabad. Without these victories, Armenia would have been erased from the map. On 28 May 1918, the Armenian National Council assumed authority, and Armenia became an independent republic.

The development of the independent republic was soon stunted, and the creation of all new economic



and social structures came to a halt. The military and political collaboration of Turkish nationalists with Soviet leaders forced the Republic of Armenia to surrender to the Bolsheviks in December of 1920.

In the Diaspora, problems were of a different dimension. Dispersed throughout the whole world, far from their ancestral lands, scarred by the aftermath of a "forgotten" genocide, Armenians had to adapt at all costs to every real and possible adversity, in order to survive.

The general profile that one retains from this history is sometimes the image of its crucifixion, and sometimes its resurrection.

The Karabagh national liberation movement in 1988 gave new impetus to Armenia's drive for independence.

Following a national referendum on September 21, 1991, Armenia once again declared its independence on September 23, 1991.

Today, the process of democratization, a difficult exercise in itself, undergoes huge perturbations under the impact of deficiencies of economic, social, and ecological order. Economic blockades imposed against Armenia by Turkey and Azerbaijan only increase the difficulties of this period of transition.

On the occasion of the 90th anniversary of Armenia's independence, the ANCC reasserts its determination and renews its dedication to the Armenian Cause as well as the defence of collective and individual rights of Armenians.

The Treaty of Sèvres (August 10, 1920) and the decision by U.S. President Woodrow Wilson (November 22, 1920)

The Allied Powers took a vow to create a unified Armenia integrating the Armenian provinces of Turkey.

As they had different agendas, Great Britain and France hoped that the United States would accept an Allied Powers mandate concerning the future unified Armenian state. However the U.S. Congress rejected this eventuality.

About two years after the Armistice, the Sèvres Treaty was finally signed on August 10, 1920 by the British Empire (for the Dominion of Canada High Commissioner of Canada in the United Kingdom, the Honourable Sir George Halsey Perley), France, Italy, Japan, Belgium, Greece, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Tchekoslovakia, and Armenia on the one hand, and Ottoman Turkey on the other.

Following a formal invitation by the Supreme Council of Allied Powers, United States of America president Woodrow Wilson was called to make a decision concerning Article 89^(*) of the Sèvres Treaty. On November 22, 1920, the president rendered his decision regarding the border between Turkey and Armenia across the provinces of Erzerum, Van, Trabizon and Bitlis.

M. A. Babian, who was named Ambassador Extraordinaire and Plenipotentiary of the Republic of Armenia in Canada from 2000 to 2005, organized a series of conferences in 2007 about the legal jurisdiction and implications of the Sèvres Treaty.

With a rigorous and implacable methodology remarkably void of emotion or romanticism, M. Babian highlighted the following essential points during his exposé.

- The only document with legal force on the matter of the Armenian-Turkish border is the decision by U.S. President Woodrow Wilson.
- The Wilsonian map grants Armenia legitimacy to claim rights to the territories of Van, Erzurum, Bitlis and Trabizon at the United Nation's International Court.
- Though Turkey constantly argues no foreign state has the right to interfere in another's history and internal affairs, particularly when it comes to the thorny issue of U.S. recognition and condemnation of the Armenian Genocide, this overlooks an important fact. Article 1, Section 8, paragraph 10 of the U.S. Constitution specifically endows the House of Congress with the "power...to define and punish...offenses against the law of nations." In other words, members of Congress may ask if Turkey's refusal to fulfill the Arbitral Award of the Turkish-Armenian Border by Woodrow Wilson (November 22, 1920) is a violation of international law, and if that is the case, why the United States does not take measures to bring the lawbreaker to responsibility.
- Precedents adopted by the U.S. Senate give the Congress a solid reason to affirm the fact of viola-

tion of international law by Turkey. In 1927, the Senate had expressed a firm and certain position on Wilson's Arbitral Award. On January 18 the Senate thus refused to endorse the American-Turkish agreement (signed August 6, 1923) and to accept the present Turkish Republic¹. Therefore, U.S.-Turkish relations are still uncertain today². The Senate listed three reasons for their declination of the agreement. The first was the following: "Turkey failed to provide for the fulfillment of the Wilson Award to Armenia³." The agreement remained pending at the Senate until 1934, when called back to the President's cabinet by the request of Franklin Roosevelt⁴. Turkey also never completed the process of endorsing the agreement⁵.

- The terms of the Democrat Party Platform provide a second strong reason for Congress to affirm Turkey's violation of international law. The 1924-1928 party platform stated the necessity of "Fulfillment of President Wilson's arbitral award respecting Armenia". The 1928-32 platform said: "We favor the most earnest efforts on the part of the United States to secure the fulfillment of the promises and engagements made during and following the World War by the United States and the allied powers to Armenia and her people⁶." Taking into consideration that in the both chambers of the US Congress the majority at present belongs to Democrats, it seems quite possible that the Senate, according to the US Constitution will define Turkey's offences against the law of nations, neglecting the arbitral award and urge the executive branch to take measures of punishment.

*) "Turkey and Armenia, as well as the other High Contracting Parties agree to submit to the arbitration of the President of the United States of America the question of the frontier to be fixed between Turkey and Armenia in the Vilayets of Erzerum, Trebizond, Van and Bitlis, and to accept his decision thereupon, as well as any stipulations he may prescribe as to access for Armenia to the sea, and as to the demilitarization of any portion of Turkish territory adjacent to the frontier."

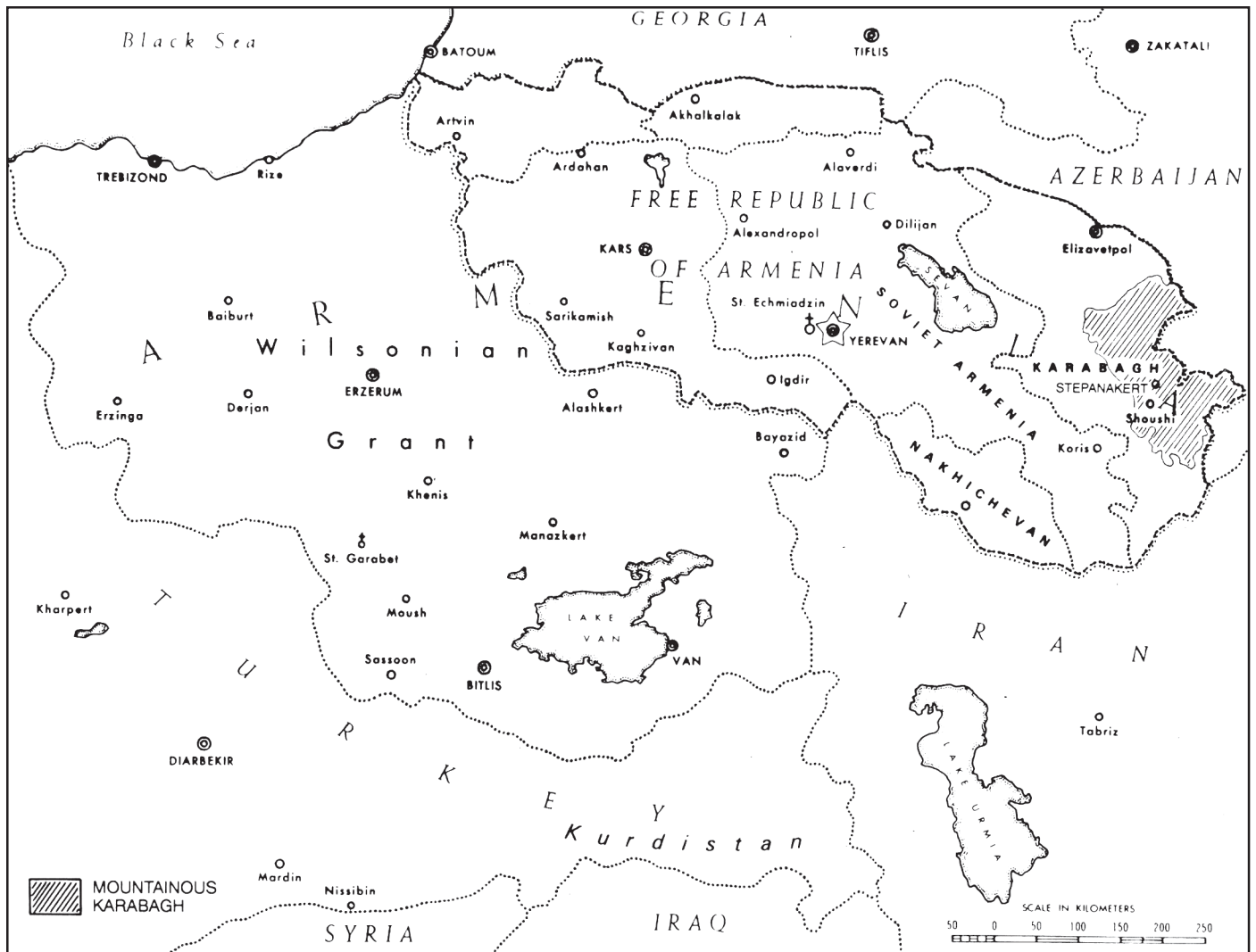
1 *Unperfected Treaties of the United States of America, 1776-1976*, edited and annotated by Christian L. Wiktor, Volume 6, 1919-1925, New York, 1984. Leland J. Gordon, Turkish-American Political Relations, *The American Political Science Review*, Vol. 22, No. 3 (Aug., 1928).

2 *The United States Response to Turkish Nationalism and Reform 1914-1939*, Trask, Roger R., The University of Minnesota Press, Minneapolis, 1971, p. 36.

3 "Lausanne Treaty is Defeated," *The Davenport Democrat*, January 19, 1927.

4 *The United States Response to Turkish Nationalism and Reform 1914-1939*, Trask, Roger R., The University of Minnesota Press, Minneapolis, 1971, p. 48.

5 *Unperfected Treaties of the United States of America, 1776-1976*,



Armenia's frontiers according to President Woodrow Wilson's decision

Zoryan Institute Map 1988

The Lausanne Treaty (July 24 1923)

The revision of the Sèvres Treaty and the burial of Wilsonian Armenia were achieved in February 1921 during the London Conference.

Though the official reason was the sovietization of Armenia, there were other fears and interests both in Moscow and among the Allies. Thus, the latter removed those clauses in the Sèvres Treaty that recognized the rights of the Armenian people on its historic territory situated in Turkey. The final

text of the treaty did not in fact include any reference concerning "Armenia" or "Armenians."

The Lausanne Treaty signatories were Great Britain, France, Italy, Greece, Romania, Yugoslavia and Turkey. This treaty is still valid, summarized into a few principles supposedly protecting non-turkish minorities in the Turkish Republic, which was proclaimed on October 29, 1923.

However, Lausanne has also been violated by the Turkish Re-

public. Turkey's blockade of Armenia (1993) is a violation of international law. Article 101 of the Lausanne Agreement states the following: Turkey must observe the Statute on Freedom of Transit adopted on the Barcelona Conference on April 14, 1921 as well as the statute on exploitation of international water communications.

According to another Lausanne Agreement article, 104, Turkey is required to observe the recommendations on railway transit.

Backed both by those obligations arising from treaties or other agreements in conformity with international law, Armenia has all the legislative background necessary to demand removal of the blockade.

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edited and annotated by Christian L. Wiktor, Volume 6, 1919-1925, New York, 1984. Leland J. Gordon, Turkish-American Political Relations, The American Political Science Review, Vol. 22, No. 3 (Aug., 1928).

6 National Party Platforms, 1840-1968, (completed by Kirk Porter and Donald Johnson), Urbana, Chicago, London, 1972, p. 277.

A first in the history of the Turkish Republic

HUMAN RIGHTS ASSOCIATION ISTANBUL BRANCH

PRESS RELEASE — 24 APRIL 2008

Today, 24th of April, is world-wide recognised as the date signifying the Armenian Genocide. Only in Turkey it indicates a taboo. The Turkish state mobilises all its resources to deny the meaning of this date.

At diplomatic platforms Turkish officials and their advocates claim that they recognise the “big tragedy” and they only object to its being named as a “Genocide”. That’s not true. At every occasion in Turkey not only the Armenian Genocide, but also the great agony of the Armenian people is denied and attempts are made to justify the genocide.

It was only last month that during a Symposium on the Armenian-Turkish relations the denialist official theses were voiced one after another, offending the Armenians in Turkey and elsewhere and insulting the memory of their grandparents. Lies were told in the name of “science”, like “Armenians have always sold their masters”, “deportation was a means of crisis management”, “death toll of deportation is comparable to the death toll of flu epidemic in England that time”, “there is no other people as noble as the Turkish nation in the world, it is impossible for them to commit a genocide”, and many more, humiliating a people who was one of the most advanced in science, art, literature, and in all other aspects.

Denial is a constituent part of the genocide itself and results in the continuation of the genocide. Denial of genocide is a human rights violation in itself. It deprives individuals the right to mourn for their ancestors, for the ethnic cleansing of a nation, the annihilation of people of all ages, all professions, all social sections, women, men, children, babies, grandparents alike just because they were Armenians regardless of their political background or conviction.

Perhaps the most important of all, it is the refusal of making a solemn, formal commitment and say “NEVER AGAIN”.

Turkey has made hardly any progress in the field of co-existence, democracy, human rights and putting an end to militarism since the time of the Union and Progress Committee. Annihilation and denial had been and continues today to be the only means to solve the problem. Villages evacuated and put on fire and forced displacements are still the manifestation of the same habit of “social engineering”. There has always been bloodshed in the homeland of Armenians after 1915. Unsolved murders, disappearances under custody, rapes and arrests en masse during the 1990’s were no surprise, given the ongoing state tradition lacking any culture of repentance for past crimes against humanity.

Similarly the removal of a public prosecutor and banning him from profession just for taking the courage to mention an accusation against the military, a very recent incident, is the manifestation of an old habit of punishing anybody who dares to voice any objection to the army. And

today’s ongoing military build up of some 250,000 troops in the southeast of Turkey is the proof of a mindset who is unable to develop any solution to the Kurdish question other than armed suppression.

Turkey will not be able to take even one step forward without putting an end to the continuity of the Progress and Union manner of ruling. No human rights violation can be stopped in Turkey and there will be no hope of breaking the vicious circle of Kurdish uprisings and their bloody suppression unless the Turkish state agree to create an environment where public homage is paid to genocide victims, where the sufferings of their grandchildren is shared and the genocide is recognised.

Today we, as the human rights defenders, would like to address all Armenians in Turkey and elsewhere in the world and tell them “we want to share the pain in your hearts and bow down before the memory of your lost ones. They are also our losses. Our struggle for human rights in Turkey, is at the same time our mourning for our common losses and a homage paid to the genocide victims”.

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