

Thus, the peace treaty with Turkey was signed at Sevres on August 10, 1920. It was at this time that Mustafa Kemal became a power with whom to contend.

The Treaty of Sevres made the United States an arbitrator in all Armenian and Turkish disputes and forced Turkey to recognize Armenia as a free and independent Republic. The success of the Kemalist movement however doomed the execution of the Treaty of Sevres which remains however a valid international treaty.

One month after the signing of the Treaty of Sevres, Kemalist Turkey and Soviet Russia attacked the Republic of Armenia. The Republic could not withstand the joint attack and succumbed on December 2, 1920. By this joint military aggression, Armenia was partitioned between the Turks and the Soviet Turkey, with the approval of the Soviet, retained the Turkish Armenian provinces and made the fresh acquisition of Kars and Ardahan. The Soviet took over what remained—now called Soviet Armenia.

• A SIGNIFICANT EVENT:

The Events of April 24 In Moscow — How They Happened And Under What Circumstances

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EDITOR'S NOTE:

The following series of articles were originally published in the HAIRENIK Daily of Boston in eight installments, from October 5, to October 14, 1965. Because of editorial considerations, the author was then presented under the pen name of Norair Kermanigian.

We are happy to present these articles to our readers in English translation and take pleasure in introducing Dr. Dadrian as the actual author and at the same time, as the translator. As our readers may observe, in executing the translation, Professor Dadrian retained faithfulness not only to the general content, but also to the attributes of lucidity and precision of his original Armenian manuscript.

I

WHEN for the first time I read in the press of the Armenian diaspora that Armenian students studying in Moscow had impelled the Turks to lower their flag on the day of our Great Mourning, I was stunned first; subsequently, I became skeptical. Indeed, if through cooperation with the Turkish Ambassador, the Soviet Ambassador in Beirut could in fact hinder the parade which the Armenians of Lebanon were planning, in order to commemorate April 24, how was it possible, I wondered, that the government of the Ambassador could tolerate a similar demonstration in its' own capital?

Nevertheless, we must admit that this was a supposition. Rumors were circulating everywhere. Moreover, the fluctuations in diplomacy can

with the Russian Easter, and that it was one of the irrevocable traditions of the Armenian church to start church on the Saturday preceding Easter Sunday at four p.m. All arguments and recriminations proved of no avail; the Bishop remained unyielding and the people were forced to comply.

However, before leaving the premises, on the grounds of the cemetery many students engaged in emotive exchanges. A suggestion was made to utilize the interval of four hours to mount a demonstration in front of the Turkish Embassy. It was opposed by a number of known and unknown Armenians who admonished that such a step might bring ill-repute to the Armenians of Moscow and also jeopardize the Armenians in Turkey.

Some of these opponents were viewed with suspicion, as hirelings, whose task it was to persuade, dissuade, plead, admonish, and even warn.

In this atmosphere of uncertainty and tension, an Armenian student from the Near-East studying history at the University of Moscow, with the help of a few wooden cases, fixed a platform for himself and mounting on it delivered the following resolute speech: "We had had enough of those admonitions to be prudent. We are human beings and above all we are Armenians. Can we afford to violate our sense of national honor and ignore the memory of our martyrs? Is it not our sacred duty to remind the Turks that they have perpetrated the most heinous crime? What is so illegal, improper, or ignoble about this? I invite you all to come and in a civilized manner convey to the Turkish representative the anger and the deep sorrow of our nation."

Individual voices, followed by group cries, made themselves heard: "Let us go! Let us go!" Of those present, approximately 250 proceeded to leave and joined the parade to the Turkish Embassy. They were accompanied by policemen as well as agents in civilian uniforms using cars and motorcycles. On the way, a number of official photographers in civilian uniforms took frequent pictures of the participants. When the demonstrators reached the environs of the Turkish Embassy, a group of mounted policemen intercepted their march, and they were prevented from proceeding further. It became apparent that approximately one kilometer square area surrounding the Embassy was held under police supervision and taken under police protection. The ranks of the mounted policemen were led by high ranking police officers, mostly colonels; they were assisted by ordinary policemen on foot.

II

October 6, 1965

Having been forced to stop, the Armenians began an exchange with the policemen. Since there was no official permit at hand, the latter demanded that the demonstrators disperse. On their turn, the Armenians complained that they were being denied the opportunity to come

closer to the Embassy and confront the Turkish officials. They further argued that being Soviet citizens, as such, they wished to carry out their demonstration. The same arguments and recriminations took place here as they did in the cemetery—between the demonstrators and the small group of their antagonists. After awhile, two police officers of the rank of colonel once more suggested that the Armenians disperse, adding that they could regard the demonstrations as a success.

The Armenians demanded thereupon that the waving Turkish flag be lowered: "Today is the day of our Great Mourning. How can we tolerate that the Turkish official who represents the instigator of that mourning, add insult to our mourning." The colonels retorted: "Is this then what you want?"

A prompt contact was established thereupon with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Soviet Union. In as much as the demonstrators were Soviet citizens from Armenia, in the meantime it was deemed appropriate that the permanent representative of Armenia in Moscow, the so-called Ambassador, intercede with the Foreign Ministry. Even though there is no proof about this, it is supposed that some such intervention took place after all—compulsorily.

In the meantime, in order to enable other Soviet citizens not involved in the demonstration to continue on their way, the policemen allowed a small passageway. A small number of Armenians succeeded in eluding through this passage and came in front of the Turkish Embassy. One of them, an old man, enraged by the restrictions of the police, approached the ranks of the colonels and turning his face in the direction of the Turkish flag, spat out loud and turning to the policemen yelled: "Aren't you ashamed to defend the s-t." In calm voices, the policemen admonished him: "Come on! Move on please!"

After a lapse of some additional time, the news arrived that the flag had been lowered; but the Armenian demonstrators were unable to see and confirm this fact. They had been forced to keep a one kilometer distance from the Embassy.

A delegation was then selected on the spot, and with the guidance of the policemen it went to the location of the flag and after having established that the flag was indeed lowered, it so informed the demonstrators. The comment was offered in this connection that in all likelihood the Soviet Foreign Ministry had advised the Turkish Embassy that it might be appropriate to lower the flag that day. The news was received with great satisfaction.

The time had been drawing near for the mass; therefore the demonstrating group returned to the chapel filling it to capacity. Many of the young men were being exposed to the mass for the first time in their lives. According to the old lady caretaker of the chapel, in its history at no time was there ever such a large crowd over-filling it. According to the

same source, the atmosphere and the moods evoked by the requiem mass was "something to behold."

Enveloped by the magnificent spirit of the encyclical which was read from the platform of the church, and engrossed in the agony of the Great Mourning of the Armenian nation, with singular sublimity the youth of Armenia fused itself with the mystery of the ceremonies of the church—with candles in their hands, with sorrow in their eyes, and heads bowing. Not a single whisper; they were standing still like statues and surrendering to the spell of turbulent souls. Other eyewitnesses suggested that the mood evoked by the requiem mass created a spectacle which was both elevating and greatly touching.

In order to enhance and impart a greater meaning to the commemoration, the students had taken up a collection among themselves with which they ordered two memorial wreaths from Yerevan. However, because of a delay, they were forced to order and buy two additional wreaths in Moscow which, however, bore Russian instead of Armenian letters—evoking the memory of the Armenian martyrs and of the Russian soldiers who died for the defense of these martyrs.

During the church ceremonies, they were placed in the center aisle of the chapel; subsequently, they were placed at a tomb outside the chapel and near it.

Since the day was drawing to a close, many people departed home after church. It is necessary to point out here that many other Armenians who had to work on Saturday until two or three o'clock in the afternoon, could not participate in the demonstrations. But having heard of the postponement, they did come to church at four o'clock.

Reinforced with these new elements, a segment of the group which engineered the demonstration in front of the Turkish Embassy, wished to go there again, to particularly ascertain as to whether the authorities had played a trick on them. Namely, they wanted to find out whether the flag was still lowered. A group of approximately 150 people proceeded thereupon once more to the Embassy, and again accompanied by policemen who hitherto had refrained from interfering with the whole episode. Upon arrival at the scene, doubts were dispelled however; the flag was still lowered. It was already seven-thirty p.m. Many of the participants were aware that Melkounov, the "Ambassador" of Soviet Armenia in Moscow, had played an obstructionist role in connection with the memorial of April 24. With all the means at his disposal, he had tried to dissuade the young people from their plans of a demonstration. Along these lines, he had tried to establish the identity of the leaders involved. Having failed, he proceeded to personally contact those whom he had suspected as being leaders; words of scolding and threats were combined to warn against "the consequences". Also, he had dispatched Armenians who were under him, or in league with him, to discourage the demonstrators. In

the same vein, he had telephoned a number of employers asking them to engage their Armenian employees for that day, so that they could not be free to demonstrate. Furthermore, the Administration of University of Moscow had warned the Armenian students at the University to remain on the premises on April 24, or surrender their identity cards. On that same day, a group of coeds from the Pedagogical Institute of Yerevan, who happened to be in Moscow that day and who knew of the planned demonstration, were detained; they were not allowed a chance to participate.

In order to stifle the whole thing in its very inception, Melkounov had informed the authorities about the impending demonstration in exaggerated terms, such as the probable number of the participants and their aims. Thus, when the students approached the Turkish Embassy, they were dismayed in the face of such a huge number of policemen waiting for them—in order to cope with any eventuality. The disproportion between the demonstrators and the number of policemen was ridiculously great. In their turn, the policemen too sensed that there was a misunderstanding, or that they were victims of misinformation. As a matter of fact, during the second march to the Embassy, the mounted police contingents were absent and the number of regular police had dwindled considerably.

The last minute change of the program by Bishop Barkev was interpreted to be the result of the instructions of Melkounov; it was understood that the latter had strictly admonished the Bishop to try to deter the demonstration.

III

October 7, 1965

Part of these obstructions attributed to Melkounov is true, and another part appears to be mere conjecture. Nevertheless, the character of available evidence, his general conduct as well as his past record easily suggest that he spared no effort to avert the demonstration.

Sensitive to this fact, the students decided to raid Melkounov's headquarters and to demand that he account for his actions. Approximately 70-80 people agreed to participate in this last act of the drama.

Accompanied once more by the police, they started their march. This time however, the police wanted to know as to where they were headed and what their objectives were. After taking care of the policemen's questions, they decided among themselves to continue their march by singing Armenian songs. Quickly taught, and led by a few female graduate students of the Department of History in Moscow, the group sang one after another the nationalistic songs: "Mere Hairénik" (Our Fatherland), "Antranegh Katch" (Antranegh the Brave), "Tzangam Dessel Zim Geeligia" (I Long For My Geelegia), etc. Many Moscovites stopped to ask as to what was going on. About eight-thirty p.m. they finally arrived at his

headquarters; at the entrance they were stopped, however. Melkounov sent word to the effect that instead of the whole group only a small delegation should come up to see him. The demonstrators absolutely refused to yield, and surging forward they eventually entered the premises en masse. Thereupon, Melkounov sent for them; but the students once more refused to go to his main reception room and forced the "Ambassador" to come to see them.

The confrontation lasted approximately two and one-half hours; actually, it would be more correct to call it a clash. According to a prearranged plan, with a sort of division of labor, a number of students spoke up on subjects which were assigned to them. Even though their main objective was to take him to task for his acts of obstruction regarding the commemoration of April 24, exploiting this opportunity, the young Armenians proceeded to ventilate the grievances which had accumulated in the depths of their hearts and which concerned the torments of the Armenian people.

They asked Melkounov as to what kind of an Armenian representative he was that, resorting to all sorts of transgressions, he tried to thwart the demonstration which involved such a sacred date as April 24. Rejecting the charge with consternation, the latter pointed out that as an experienced man he can see much farther, and that as young and inexperienced people they themselves are not in a position to grasp the political significance and anticipate the consequences of such a demonstration. He cited as a case in point the grim possibility of "a new Turkish massacre of 200,000 Armenians in Turkey".

Retorting to this, the students declared: "In as much as our government is in a friendly relationship with Turkey, why can't it merely let it be known that it is opposed to the repetition of such a barbarism, and if necessary, why can it not interfere?" They also added that Soviet foreign policy has very little to do with the sentiments of the Armenians against the Turks, and that as an independent factor, Soviet foreign policy can prevent new Turkish massacres.

Melkounov once more indignantly rejected the charge which questioned his Armenian sentiments and in a counter-attack, he reprimanded the students for their impudent behavior. In the ensuing commotion the young Armenians decried him as a "traitor."

The Armenian representative in Moscow persisted in his denials that he did not issue threats to the students involved. In the same vein, he repeatedly emphasized that in principle he was not opposed to the idea of commemoration and that as a genuine Armenian he, too, harbors in his heart the grief of all the Armenians relative to the Great Massacre.

The students, thereupon proposed that this being the case, he assist them in organizing a big memorial festivity in Moscow to which all

Armenians in Moscow can be invited; the rationale of this proposal was the recognition that a holy mass and a demonstration are inadequate for the occasion and that of the approximately 110,000 community in Moscow only a trifle of Armenians participated.

The Ambassador unhesitatingly consented to this suggestion and agreed on a date at which time he could meet the students and form a Planning Committee.

It should also be noted that in the course of this clash with him, the following additional problems were raised:

a. The fact that Soviet commitments to annex Karabagh to Armenia still remain unfulfilled.

b. The disconsolate and hopeless condition of Karabagh today.

c. The perils of assimilation of the Armenians in Moscow.

d. The total indifference of the Armenian representative concerning the need of preserving in Moscow a sense of ethnic and national identity. In this connection, they admonished him that "the white massacre" is creating havoc among the estimated 110,000 Armenians of Moscow. The lack of a gathering place in the capital for Armenian students, graduate students, and post-graduate students, as well as professional people was also underscored. Along the same lines, they asked him as to how he can reconcile this fact with the pride and self-respect of the state whose negligence is forcing the students to use the vestibule of the main post office in the capital, as a gathering place.

e. By extending the argument, the Armenian cultural "home" was also made an issue. They indicated that up to 1951 this center was serving such cultural purposes; Beria, however, terminated this arrangement and transferred the building to the domain of All Union properties. As a result, it is being presently used to promote the cultures of African and Asian countries.

The demonstrators expressed the desire to repossess that building as property of Armenia and to make it serve the needs of Armenian culture. The Ambassador again resisted this move and even raised serious objections.

Shortly after a Committee for the Preservation of Armenian Historical Monuments was formed in Soviet Armenia, under the leadership of Mardiros Sarian and Sero Khanzadian, the young Armenians of Moscow considered establishing a branch in the capital of the Soviet Union in order to promote the objectives of that group; they therefore applied to Yerevan and received approval. As a result, approximately 200 Armenians applied for membership in Moscow. Melkounov agreed to intervene and to secure a hall in that very Armenian cultural home (the so-called Lazarian Djemaran) so that they could convene for their first meeting. A pro-

fessor of Armenian extraction gladly consented to make his office available in that same building for this purpose.

After agreeing on the day and the hour, invitations were sent to the applicants. When on the designated time the applicants arrived, they found the door closed. A guard informed them that he had instructions not to allow any one in. Confused and dismayed, the organizers sought to reach Melkounov by phone who had, however, conveniently disappeared; the same experience was made with the Armenian professor. They were not available and their whereabouts unknown: the will of the guard prevailed and the invited Armenians departed with disappointment and anger.

IV

October 8, 1965

This proved to be their first and last meeting, and Yerevan was thus deprived of a branch in Moscow. As in other aspects of Armenian life in Moscow, here too, Melkounov emerged as an opportunist operating behind the scenes to undermine national interests. The deceitful fiasco of this enterprise was held by the Armenians to be the result of his machinations.

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It was this incident which the demonstrators had brought up during their confrontation in the headquarters of Melkounov on the night of April 24. Agitated by this fact, the students openly declared that he, the Ambassador, is a man who, for the sake of his personal ambitions and for self-aggrandizement could trample upon the interests of his nation. In this respect, they threatened to dispatch to the Chairman of the Council of Ministers of Soviet Armenia, A. Kochounian, a petition protesting against him. This threat subdued him even more and rendered him pale; he tried to placate the students with words of compliment and to convince them again that he loves Armenia as much as they do. After having thus discussed all the problems on which they had agreed upon in advance, the demonstrators left Melkounov's headquarters and proceeded to depart. But, they noted that the police were still waiting for them in front of the building. Thereupon, they decided not to disperse right away. It was already eleven o'clock at night and everyone was tired and eager to go home. However, the danger of getting arrested, dawned on them as a critical problem. To obviate this danger, it was decided to move again as a group.

With the last accompaniment by the police, the group proceeded to the major centers of public transportation, particularly to subway stations where the male and female students, depending upon this kind of transportation, cryptically took leave from their colleagues and fused them-

selves with the rest of the public. The ranks of the demonstrators were thusly depleted and the turbulent commemoration of April 24 drew to an end.

The collision with Melkounov became particularly meaningful in the light of the abominable fact that in spite of his denials and several assurances that he was not opposed to the idea of commemoration and that the entire Armenian community of Moscow should solemnly commemorate the 50th anniversary of the Great Massacre, that same Ambassador with baseness and deceitfulness had reneged on his promise and had not honored his appointment. Subsequently and once more, the students had in vain tried to establish contact with him so that they could proceed with the task to implement the agreement reached on a city-wide commemoration.

V

Interpretative Comments

HERE are many noteworthy facts in this descriptive account; one can even call some of these facts sensational. From a number of viewpoints therefore, it is worth critically examining that account, so that some lessons can be derived from it. It should be stressed once more that errors in detail might have intruded in the account. Nevertheless, I can categorically state that the general sequence of events and the structure of the episode are not open to question; they should be no doubt about this.

I would like to recognize first of all that the initiative, audacity, energy, and the determination of the Armenian students was a revelation in the truest sense of the word. Removed by thousands of miles from Armenia, surrounded with all kinds of alien and unsuitable conditions and devoid of any organizational facilities, they managed to accomplish a task which is both exemplarily and impressive. Who could have anticipated that in the giant capital of the Soviet Union where one can reckon with many other preoccupations, anxieties, and even alluring recreational facilities, a group of young Armenians would commemorate the most tragic martyrdom of their nation, and for that purpose they would plunge into zealous and laborious activity?

One has to recognize that the Armenians in Moscow are dispersed; there is no regular communication between them. The vast majority of the members of the permanent community of the city speaks Russian and by the same token is divorced from the problems and concerns that deal with the Armenian people. Even the Armenian students of the various colleges and departments of Moscow University, as a rule, are unaware of each other. It was under these conditions that this small group of young men initiated the action. Such watchwords as "April 24", "commemoration", "requiem", "50th anniversary", served to evoke powerful emotions

among those Armenians who were quick to consent to participate, at any price.

One should not underestimate the meaning of this occurrence. In spite of the lack of organizational set-ups, and in as much as the conditions permitted the spell of a sacred date and all the symbols allied with that date were sufficient to mobilize the actors. The galvanizing force of hidden psychological dispositions and their controlled and lofty channelization more than compensated for the absence of clever propaganda, of public relations or the incidence of personal interests and speculations. In other words, when the hour came and the message was received, all material and administrative difficulties receded in the background.

One must know the conditions obtaining in the city of Moscow in order to appreciate the scope of the effect which ensured success. The extent to which we in the west are used to access to private telephone, and personal means of transportation, is not operative there. Constant work and patience are necessary to maintain contact. But, compared with another obstacle the surmounting of which was the most difficult problem, these difficulties were insignificant.

VI

October 9, 1965

As everyone knows, it is not only impossible but even inconceivable that in the Soviet Union particularly in its capital, without the instigation, assistance, or guidance of the authorities, a demonstration could be carried out. The organizing of a protest march in front of the Turkish Embassy is but an act of political demonstration. It should be added that not only was there no official permit, but considering the role of the permanent representative of Soviet Armenia, there was even a certain official prohibition. Hence, this is one of the most signal aspects of the episode. The actors particularly emphasized to me that, as far as they knew, this was the first time that a political demonstration was effected in the capital of the Soviet Union—without permission and in spite of official obstacles.

It is naturally difficult to accept this declaration as absolute truth. During the formative years of the Soviet Union and after the death of Stalin, there were demonstrations particularly in Tbilisi and Moscow—not against a foreign country, as was the case on April 24, but against the authorities of the Soviet Union herself.

There is another circumstance which must be placed at the other end of the balance scale—lest the picture becomes distorted and lest it creates false perspectives and prospects. The commemorative act, the requiem mass, and the political demonstration on April 24, are ostensibly devoid of anti-Soviet attitudes; not only this, they even are anchored on the op-

portunities afforded by the Soviet regime. In this respect, it should be noted that the participants thought, planned, and acted as Soviet citizens. That young Armenian, residing in Moscow, who for the first time conceived of the idea of a demonstration, had witnessed a number of demonstrations during which a foreign state was made the target of the insults of the demonstrators. Consequently, he had reasoned that if foreign students, particularly Chinese and North Vietnamese, were able to initiate such a demonstration, why could they, Armenians, who were Soviet citizens should be deprived of a similar opportunity. The issue was here not merely of a demonstration against a foreign state, but against a state which was a member of the NATO Alliance. In other words, anti-Turkish national feelings were propelled not within the frame-work of Armenian realities, but in tune with Soviet foreign policy. Should there have been a treaty of friendship or a pact, tantamount to a treaty between the Soviet Union and Turkey, and should there have been initiated a demonstration in spite of this bond, the problem could have assumed a very serious character. From a realistic point of view, without even having started, in all probability, the demonstration could have been strangled in its inception. But, let us assume that the impossible happened. In that case, the demonstration would definitely have meant an anti-Soviet act. Another Soviet factor morally assisting the Armenians was the traditional antagonism which the Russian people harbored against the Turks. At least it was so assumed. The main topic of discussion and argument between the Russian policemen and Armenian demonstrators in front of the Turkish Embassy involved this. Namely, the argument that the Russians had no lesser experience of fighting against and suffering from the Turks. Consequently, it was argued that the enemy of the Armenians was also the enemy of the Russians. It is likewise significant that instead of one, two wreaths were brought to the chapel in Moscow, having equal size, identical quality and inscriptions. One was dedicated to the Armenian martyrs and the other to the memory of those Russian soldiers who fought and died for the protection of the Armenians. However, is this antagonism against the Turks, attributed to the Russians, still valid today? When dealing with contemporary Soviet citizens, might this antagonism not prove a mere supposition? When the group was marching toward the headquarters of Melkoumov at night, a young Russian stopped his car, came out, and asked the Armenians what the demonstration was for? When told that it was in commemoration for the Russian and Armenian martyrs who died during World War I in the war against the Turks, the young Russian, after making a vulgar exclamation in which he cursed his nation, returned to his car, and stepping on the gas he took off in a hurry. The Armenians had the impression that the young man was somewhat intoxicated. Yet, is it not true that the impact of alcohol can often be beneficial for the expression of telling truths. This fact has its curious application to the Soviet Union

VII

October 12, 1965

In any event, one can conclude without hesitation that in its external manifestation, the spirit of April 24 was not only devoid of any anti-Soviet ingredients, but such a manifestation was possible because its bearers took advantage of some of the opportunities of the Soviet regime.

The question poses itself then as to why the Moscow representative of Soviet Armenia stubbornly fought against the idea of demonstration in particular. Before we can examine this problem however, let us turn our attention to the problem of his peculiar methods of fighting against it; he applied, namely, many such methods. First, he personally established contact with those youths whom he suspected to be implicated; taking advantage of his authority, he tried to do that which other authorities in similar positions do. Namely, using certain threats as a leverage, he tried to dissuade and to induce them to abandon their plans. Having failed in this method, Melkounov tried to capture them psychologically by employing those Armenians who were somehow subordinate to, sympathetic with, or hired by him. For this purpose, he had assigned a group of Armenians who during the march from the cemetery to the Turkish Embassy and also in front of the Turkish Embassy, had tried to create dissension among the participants with the intention of ultimately aborting the demonstration; their recurrent pleas, occasional wistfulness, and occasional crude challenges were all part of this scheme.

To my question as to what evidence they had that these people were Melkounov's hirelings and not sincere Armenians who thought and felt differently, the students again and again repeated that a number of circumstances made this conclusion inescapable. These involved a conspicuous absence of sincerity in their mode of expression, the parrot-like repetition of the same arguments, the refusal to yield ground on any issue, the impression of unusual eagerness to accomplish an assigned task, and particularly a remarkable identity between their words, their ideas, and statistical data they adduced in their arguments on the one hand, and those expressed by Melkounov on the other.

Then, the Armenian Ambassador in Moscow exerted pressure upon certain Armenian officials who either resided in Moscow because of their work or were visiting in Moscow for some specific tasks and who were connected with Soviet Armenia for one reason or another. Among others, there was Bishop Barkev and the principal of the coeds of the Pedagogical Institute of Yerevan. By the same token, Melkounov did not hesitate to try to prevail upon a number of Soviet establishments in the capital where young Armenians were employed as experts or as civil servants. His effort

was directed towards the retention of these people on their work place on April 24, even though that day coincided with a Saturday. Finally, thanks to his close cooperation with the police, the Armenian Ambassador by way of coercion had sought to erect an anti-Armenian block against the demonstrators.

It is important to note here that it might be superfluous or unwarranted to try to make a precise diagnosis relative to these events. The accounts given to me by the young Armenians can as much approximate truth as one can expect to establish truth under such circumstances. As they themselves told Melkounov, and as they repeated to me, in their view, the negative attitude and manifold efforts of the Ambassador were intimately linked with his concern to maintain and enhance his position. Any commemoration or demonstration with regard to the date of April 24, from Melkounov's point of view, might spell disaster as far as his position was concerned. Hence, notwithstanding his disclaimers, his objection was not only directed against the anti-Turkish demonstration but against the general spirit of April 24.

This basic fact revealed itself all its ugly aspects in the wake of the events of April 24. As I had mentioned earlier, the Ambassador had promised to about 70 students confronting him in his office, to help arrange in Moscow a city-wide great commemoration involving the anniversary of April 24; he in fact had definitely committed himself to this task. He not only did not keep his appointment but even went so far as to frustrate the efforts of the students who subsequently were trying to get in touch with him and with his assistant; thus, he severed all his ties with them. No explanation and no effort of excuse was offered.

This type of decadence seems to eclipse all other instances of lack of integrity referred to previously. The Moscow Ambassador of Soviet Armenia had tramped upon such principles as state, nation, trust, prestige, and conscience—and on a date like April 24, at that.

However, let us not completely disregard certain probabilities and the incidence of other conditions. A number of suppositions can be brought forth. For instance one may wonder whether he received special instructions in this respect from Yerevan. If, however, he acted on his own initiative and with his own responsibility, what immediate objectives was he pursuing? Was he anxious to prove his communism, or was he trying to impress upon the authorities in the Kremlin the fact of his high level of devotion to the interests of communism. Perhaps he was apprehensive that, faithful to their Caucasian traditions, hot-blooded youths might lose their heads, might be led astray, and consequently insult the Turkish government, might subject the Turkish Embassy building to destructive onslaughts and ultimately might clash with the police. In such cases, would he not be held responsible?

One can likewise speculate that the immediate instructions came to

him not from Yerevan but in the name of the Ministry of Interior or of Foreign Affairs, from Moscow. If this is true, the spectre of interesting political games enters the picture. Indeed, if Soviet authorities were definitely opposed to the idea of a demonstration as pointed out earlier, long before it started, they could easily avert it—either in the Armenian cemetery or even long before that, namely, when the demonstration was in its planning stage and thus was far more vulnerable to being crushed. It is therefore conceivable that the authorities were not much opposed against the demonstration. On the other hand, if they indeed advised Melkounov so that the latter might try his best to prevent the demonstration, this could mean ambiguity or two-facedness. In other words, by trying to block the demonstration, the authorities might have cherished the hope of pleasing the Turks, while by tacitly encouraging the same demonstration, the same authorities at the same time might have let it be known to the Turks that there is an anti-Turkish element in the Soviet Union which is subject to the control of the state.

It might be worthwhile to parenthetically inject some thoughts regarding this possibility of double-standards. What is the meaning of this duality? Perhaps that, in a covert way, the Soviets might have been indicating that if they wish to, they could cause trouble to the Turks and, if necessary, by magnifying that trouble, create certain threats against Turkey.

In the heart-renting history of the origin and evolution of the Armenian question, we have often been subjected to such diplomatic manipulations. Even though on a lesser scale and with far lesser agonies, other small nations have equally been kicked around by great and mighty nations in the past. Yet, circumstances have been appreciably mitigated if not they did not reverse themselves today. Utilizing the present political and military situation of the world, with a certain measure of success, a congeries of small nations are pursuing schemes of using the great nations as a means to their ends.

VIII

October 14, 1966

We, Armenians, however, still remain deprived of any similar opportunity. Moreover, should the Armenians of the Soviet Union raise their voice a little higher and make demands to Moscow, with the same political agility, the communist regime can make the Armenians feel not only the threatening shadow of Turkey but can also instigate the Azerbaijanis as well as the Georgians to make territorial and other claims against the Armenians.

Consequently, as things stand now, the Armenians of the Soviet Union, more than any other nationality, have no choice but to relinquish

their ideas of resorting to oppositional or devious methods in the quest for national fulfillment, and to lean on the policies of the Soviet Union as much as possible.

Soviet Armenians who are bent on raising and attaining such national goals which are at variance with this or that policy of the Soviet Union, might at best address themselves to the Kremlin, not in the role of a claimant but that of a petitioner.

It is clear then that very little has changed in the depressing and grim character of our national destiny. Whereas history evolves constantly for other nations, offering reforms, opportunities, and hopes, in terms of forging a national will, of pursuing rights, and of cultivating dreams and ideals, however, history remains and remains for us an agonizing refrain.

But, precisely for that reason, we have learned the art of stubbornness, and the need to challenge history has become a collective pathos for us. We tried and we shall continue to try to counterpose to the harsh and inexorable course of history our atavistic tenacity, and to its frustrations our undying hopes. If to become not despaired is a necessary condition that we remain unconquered in the vortex of forces which deny the principle of nationality, the resolute will is a much stronger necessary condition that we sooner or later redeem ourselves in terms of our vital objectives. These include, the task of overcoming the conditions which are oppressing us and the task of becoming the master of our own destiny.

It would be hard to conceive any other nation whose history might be replete with as much sorrow, sacrifice, bitterness, and constant suffering as is the case with our national history. It is the sustained experience of a harsh destiny which imparts to our national goals a supreme quality and a sacred character. We still have to fulfill certain national dreams and yearnings which are tantamount to holy aspirations. The destiny which we would like to forge cannot simply be compared with an ordinary national program. A mighty spring involving supernatural hidden forces is patiently waiting for that magic moment when, being wound up, will propel many springs and thereby infuse new life into countless creative channels.

The pervasive motivations for our national sentiments are comprehensible only to us. Because, only we had a cataclysmic Golgotha without a corresponding resurrection; only we had indescribable and infernal agonies without much relief; and only we endured priceless sacrifices without reward.

The date of April 24 is the salient symbol of this tragedy; and its evocation is an assurance that we have not forgotten, that we cannot forget, and that we are persisting in our determination to vindicate that great tragedy, in spite of monumental obstacles.

The fact that in spite of the machinations by Melkounov, the authorities in Moscow did not want, or did not venture to block the anti-Turkish

demonstration is in itself an arch reality. One has to admit after all that presently the Soviets are extremely cautious when it comes to applying coercion by police; particularly, when there is no acute danger threatening to create internal upheavals or imperiling the security of the regime.

It seemed as if the Armenian students sensed and immensely appreciated this fact. When they were raiding the Turkish Embassy, they were tense and were even enveloped with anxiety. They did not know the fate that might be threatening them. When after the requiem mass for the second time they proceeded to march to the same Embassy, particularly to ascertain as to whether the Turkish flag was still in a condition of being lowered, they were filled with infinite joy. They were not fooled; the flag of the foe had yielded to the force of Armenian anger and Soviet authorities did not only not resist but even assisted in this accomplishment.

The ensuing elation gave impetus to a new national feeling on that cold and rainy day of April 24. After having spent hours on their feet, and in a condition of hungriness, thirstiness, and fatigue, they suddenly had felt animated. When on their way to their Ambassador, in order to demand an explanation from him, they sang songs ringing with a spirit of nationalism such as, "Mere Hairenik".

Through their accomplishment, on April 24 young intellectuals in Moscow, imbued with the spirit of Armenia, manifested a sublime attitude which symbolizes the rock-like endurance and the unextinguishable patriotism of our nation. Under the grip of a profound sorrow, Armenia and Diaspora were intertwined and spiritually fused in this attitude.

With pride, and from the very bottom of our hearts, we express our gratitude to these young men.

• FACTS AND FIGURES:

Soviet Armenian Agriculture Before Collectivization

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SOVIENT Armenia is an agricultural country of poor, hard-working people, who strive to survive in a difficult mountainous terrain. Robbed of such rich, formerly Caucasian Armenian, farming areas as Kars and Nakhitchevan, Armenia finds itself in the unenviable position of having to provide food for an expanding population compressed into an area which is but a small fragment of Historic Armenia.

Population density in the various districts of Soviet Armenia per square kilometer in about 1927 showed heavy concentrations of population in the more fertile sections.

Table IX: Population Density in
Districts of Soviet Armenia

| | |
|--------------------|-------|
| Erivan | 44.30 |
| Leninakan | 46.69 |
| Etchmiadzin | 38.81 |
| Nor Boyazit | 34.84 |