

History of Armenia

Noah and Ararat.

Immodestly, Armenians consider themselves direct descendants of Noah, survivor of the Biblical flood. According to Genesis, ...the boat came to rest on a mountain in the Ararat range. Ararat, located in the heart of Armenia, was a Holy Mountain for the peoples of the ancient world. Many ancient scriptures placed the Biblical Garden of Eden in the Land of Armenia also called the Land of Ararat.

Tradition states that Noah founded Nakhichevan, the oldest of the Armenian cities. Moses Khorenatsi, historian of the 5th century, presents a detailed genealogy of the Armenian forefather Haik from Japheth, Noah's son. Thus, the territory of the Armenian Plateau is regarded as the cradle of civilization, the initial point for the further spreading of mankind all around the world.

Haik.

The oldest myths reflect the wars of ancient Armenians against the neighboring Assyrians. Haik, considered the patriarch of the Armenian people, led his army to defeat the Assyrian giant Baeleus. By approximately 2100 BC, a prototype of the first Armenian state was founded. Even now, Armenians call themselves Hai (pronounced high), and their country - Haik or Haiastan, in honor of Haik. The Hittite scripts also mention a Haiasa country. Meanwhile, the Assyrian cuneiform writings designate Armenia as Urtu (Arartu), which means Ararat. The Old Testament also associates Armenia with the Mount Ararat (the Kingdom of Ararat).

In ancient times, Armenia was equally associated with the rivers Tigris, Euphrates, Araks and Kura. That is why the neighboring Assyrians also called Armenia, Nairi, standing for Riverland, Country of Rivers.

Haik, once thought to be just a hero of an epic legend, is presently accepted by some researchers as an actual chieftain of Armenians in the 3rd millennium BC. Historians proved that later Haik was deified and proclaimed the prime god in the pantheon of gods in the pagan Armenia.

One of Haik's most famous scions, Aram, considerably extended the borders of his country, transforming it into a powerful state. Since then, Greeks and Persians began to call the country Armenia, i.e. the country of Aram.

Ara the Beautiful.

Aram's son, Ara the Beautiful succeeded him. A very romantic Armenian legend tells that Ara was so handsome that the Assyrian Queen Semiramis (the same who founded Babylon and planted its marvelous hanging gardens) fell in love with him. Ara repeatedly rejected her love proposals until the desperate queen began war with him. The Assyrians troops won the furious battle, and Ara was killed, in despite of Semiramis's order to preserve his life. Inconsolable Semiramis reputed to be sorceress took his body and tried in vain to enliven him. When Armenians advanced to avenge their leader, she disguised one of her lovers and spread the rumor that Gods brought Ara back to life. As a result, the war was ceased.

Van and Yerevan.

History attributes the building of Van, one of the most ancient Armenian cities at the shore of the salt lake of the same name, to the legendary Semiramis. Another ancient Armenian city is Yerevan, capital of today's Republic of Armenia. Its foundation dates from 782 BC, which is reported in a cuneiform writing of King Argiste.

The Persian dominance.

In 612 BC the Medes destroyed Nineveh and brought the Assyrian power to an end. Armenia's eternal antagonist abandoned the political arena. Some 50 years later, the king Tigranes the First in alliance with Cyrus the Great, founder of Achaemenid dynasty conquered the lands controlled by the Medes and reinforced the Armenian kingdom.

Tigranes the First had 3 sons; the third son's name was Vahagn the Dragonfighter. The Armenian pagan tradition covered this Vahagn with glory and legends: he was even deified and worshipped like Hercules.

However, the era of peace ended as a number of weak and insignificant kings ruled Armenia over the following years, and finally the country became tributary to Persia. An inscription on a rock (around 520 BC) called the Behestun Stone, found in Iran, mentions Armenia in the list of countries Darius I controlled. The dynasty of Hayk stopped: the kings of Armenia were henceforward anointed by the Persian kings. During the following centuries the Armenian troops fought for Persia in all major battles. The Armenian cavalry was well known for its valor. Vahe, the last offspring of Hayk dynasty, was killed in 331 BC, fighting for Darius in a battle against Alexander the Great.

Armenia regains independence.

Armenia regained independence after the death of Alexander the Macedonian, when the monarchy of the latter was split into many parts. By 190 BC, Prince Artashes, the governor of Greater Armenia, united the shattered Armenian lands, establishing the Artashesian dynasty. He built the city of Artashat. According to some Roman historians, the construction of this new Armenian capital was supervised by famous commander Hannibal the Carthaginian, who took refuge in Armenia fleeing from the Romans.

The country enjoyed peace and prosperity under the rule of Vagharshak, who came to throne in 149 BC. He set up the institute of nobility in his kingdom and established the new senior official ranking system. Vagharshak made the city of Armavir his royal residence. Several Greek inscriptions from around that period found in Armavir witness about the influence of the Greek culture in Armenia.

Tigranes the Great.

Vagharshak's son Arshak and his grandson Artashes were very successful rulers as well, but it was perhaps the son of the latter, Tigranes II, who distinguished himself as the most glorious among all Armenian kings. He succeeded his father in 95 BC. Brother-in-law and true ally of Mithridates the Great, the glorious King of Pontus, he struggled together with his formidable relative against the Roman dominance. Tigranes the Second also known as Tigranes the Great, extended the Armenian borders from Caspian Sea to Egypt, gaining full control over the vast territories. After having subdued the provinces in Syria, Cappadocia and Mesopotamia, Tigranes also conquered Palestine, taking many thousands of prisoners. He united all the Armenian lands and built 4 large cities in different parts of his empire all 4 called Tigranakert. Just like his father Artashes, Tigranes transported from Greece many statues of the Greek Gods. A gigantic statue of Zeus was erected in Ani fortress, and sanctuary for Anahit (Aphrodite) was raised in the city of Ashtishat.

Roman and Parthian invasions.

Tigran's expansion ended with the Roman and Parthian advances. In 69 BC, the troops of the Roman general Lucullus invaded Armenia and besieged Tigranakert. The city fell, betrayed by a Greek garrison. The Romans set the city ablaze. Many architect treasures including fine statues, temples and a splendid theater were demolished and lost in the fire.

At the same time, the Parthian army attacked the city of Artashat. The Partians were led by the treasonous son of Tigranes, who joined his father's enemy after marrying the Parthian princess. Battling on two fronts, Tigranes the Great defeated the Parthian army. Soon Lucullus was forced to turn back as well, facing the Armenian counterattacks. However, the Romans launched a new offensive expedition, under Pompey the Great. Tigranes, at time 75-year-old, was forced to sign a peace treaty. As a result, several lands were yielded to Rome, but the country and Tigranes's power remained strong.

Artavazd.

Tigranes the Great died in 55 BC. Subsequently his son Artavazd ruled Armenia. Adept of ellenistic culture, Artavazd wrote plays and poems in Greek. The Greek tragedies were performed in his royal residence of Artashat on a regular basis. Historians testify that the head and the right hand of Crassus, the eminent Roman commander killed in a battle against the joint Persian and Armenian armies, was brought to Artavazd while he was enjoying the play of Euripide's Bacchantes.

The ruling of Artavazd was unsuccessful: he lost many of the lands that Tigranes, his glorious father, had conquered. Marcus Antonius captured the Armenian King, shackled him and took to Egypt as a present to Cleopatre. With haughtiness, Artavazd refused to greet Cleopatre, and was decapitated. Armenia became a vassal state of the Roman Empire.

Abgar and the First Baptism.

Under the ruling of the aged Abgar, nephew of Tigranes the Great, the whole territory of Armenia was subdued to Rome. The Roman officials arrived to Armenia to take a census. They brought with them numerous statues of the Emperor Augustus.

Later, Abgar, planning to revolt against the Roman tyranny, settled in Mesopotamia and founded the city of Edessa. He transported there his court, the treasury, and the archives of the Armenian kings. That is why the Armenian sources designate him as King of Armenia while some Greek and Roman sources mention Abgar, ruler of Edessa. When Abgar heard about the miracles Jesus Christ was performing in Galilee, he was already ailing, in his declining years. Astonished, he came to believe in Christ and wrote a letter to Him. Abgar asked the Savior to heal him and invited Him to Edessa.

Following the Armenian tradition, Abgar's messengers met Jesus in Jerusalem. Jesus would not accept the offer to visit Edessa, but wrote a response to Abgar's request. After Christ's ascension Thaddaeus, one of the disciples, arrived to Edessa bringing a piece of cloth that some researchers identify as the Shroud of Turin. According to Moses of Khorene, Abgar and all inhabitants of his city were baptized.

Apostles in Armenia.

Abgar died after 38 years of ruling. After his death the Armenian kingdom was split in two. His son Ananun (Nameless) mounted the throne in Edessa, while his nephew Sanatruk ruled in Greater Armenia. At that time, the Apostles Thaddeus and Bartholomew traveled through Armenia to preach the word of God. Many people were converted and numerous secret Christian communities were established. However, the Apostles suffered martyrdom. Around 66, Ananun ordered to kill St. Thaddeus in Edessa. According to tradition, two other Apostles also met their death in different places of Armenia: St. Bartholomew was skinned alive in Alvanapolis, and Judas was pierced with arrows in Artaz region. In Armenia, the Apostles Thaddeus and Bartholomew are particularly revered. They are considered the first preachers of Christianity in Armenia and the Armenian Church is called Apostolic in their honor.

Armenia becomes the first Christian nation.

For all that, it's only two and half centuries later that Armenia was Christianized. In 301, the king Tiridates established Christianity as a sole religion of Armenia. Some modern researchers unsubstantially pretend the event took place in 314, and not in 301. The fact remains that the Edict of Milan decreed by Constantine the Great in 313 simply mandated tolerance of the Christians in the Roman Empire, while Tiridates the Great proclaimed Christianity as a sole religion throughout all Armenian lands. Thus, Armenia became the first Christian State in the history of the world.

Gregory the Illuminator, the first Patriarch of the Armenian Church, converted Tiridates and his court. Before his conversion Tiridates, famous for his tyranny, persecuted Christians. After many horrible tortures, he threw Gregory into an underground pit full of serpents and dead bodies, where Gregory spent 13 long years.

Agathangeghos, historian of 4th century, states that during Gregory's imprisonment a group of Christian virgins under the guidance of Gayane Abbess arrived in the city of Vagharshapat. The King Tiridates fell in love with Hripsime, one of the virgins. As Hripsime rejected his love, he put the whole group of virgins to the sword. As a result of this evil deed, Tiridates was stricken with an incurable illness. Then Khosroviducht, his Christian sister, urged him to free Gregory. The King did so, and was miraculously healed.

During the following years, Tiridates and Gregory implanted the new religion with fire and sword. The sanctuaries and heathen temples were destroyed throughout the country. The only pagan temple remained intact to this day is Garni.

The first Christian churches appeared in Vagharshapat (Echmiadzin), in Nakhijevan, in Artsakh. According to different accounts presented in ancient legends and in the History of Moses Khorenatzi, the first cathedral of St.Echmiadzin (now the official center of the Armenian Church) was built between 301 and 303. The exact design and place came to St.Gregory in a divine vision: Christ himself descended to the Ararat valley and struck with a golden hammer to indicate the future location of the cathedral.

Arshak II, Papes and Varazdat.

The adoption of Christianity put an end to the pagan traditions and abolished the secular fine arts and poetry. The Persian influence was still very strong in Armenia, but now Armenia and Persia worshipped different Gods. The political consequences of the evolution were tragic. A series of wars weakened Armenia during the ruling of Arshak II. The Persian King Shapur II succeeded in sowing discord between Arshak II and his principal feudal lords, called Nakhharars. Some of the lords defected to Shapur. The Armenian King was summoned to Persia and then imprisoned for life in the Castle of Oblivion. His wife, Queen Parandzem, led the Armenian defense in the Artagers castle, but after 14 months of siege was also imprisoned, taken to Persia and then killed.

Arshak's successor, King Papes was as contradictory figure as his father. He was assassinated by order of the Emperor Flavius Theodosius after he allegedly had ordered the Armenian Catholicos Nerses the Great be poisoned. At that time Papes' two sons were not of age to take the throne, so Theodosius crowned Varazdat, Papes's nephew. This Varazdat was a handsome young man, a formidable warrior and a skillful fisticuffs fighter. He took part in the Olympic Games at Olympia, Greece and became victor. But the end of his ruling was unfortunate. His intention to marry the Persian Princess angered Theodosius, Persia's sworn enemy. The perfidious Emperor ordered that Varazdat be enchained and exiled to an island.

St. Mesrob and the Golden Age of Armenia

The Armenian Kingdom fell into decay, but Christianity in Armenia strengthened considerably. At that time the necessity emerged to revive the lost Armenian alphabet. The Masses in Armenian churches were sung in Greek, the Royal Court and nobility spoke Greek and Parthian, priesthood, schools and different educational institutions widely used Greek and Syrian. Therefore, the recreation of the alphabet became vital to oppose the possible assimilation.

King Vramshapouh and Catholicos Sahak Partev assigned the task to Mesrob Mashtots, a genius scholar monk. For several years, he traveled throughout Greater and Lesser Armenias and Mediterranean world in quest for the lost scriptures. In Edessa, he finds some of the scrolls in old Armenian, and after carefully reviewing them and exploring the possibilities, he recreates the Armenian alphabet in 405.

In 425, the Bible was translated into the Armenian language from the authentic copies of the Bible brought from Constantinople and Edessa. The Armenian translation is the fifth known translation of the Bible. Earlier, the Bible was only translated into the Syriac, the Latin, the Coptic and the Abyssinian languages. Some specialists estimate this translation, performed by St.Mesrob and his disciples, as the best Bible translation ever. The French linguists of the 19th century termed it as the "Queen of translations". St.Mesrob, later elevated into sainthood, is also known as the author of the actual Georgian alphabet. He also invented an alphabet for the large tribe of Gargareans, that inhabited Aghuank.

Paradoxically, the 5th century, marked by serious political losses, became the Golden Age of the Armenian literature. The works of Faustus the Byzantine, Moses of Khorene, Eliseus, Koriun, Lazarus Barbedzi, Eznik of Kolb, David the Invincible, and others, may be considered milestones of historiography and philosophy.

St. Vardan and the first war for the Christian faith.

Meanwhile, Armenia lost independence. Over the next 200 years the eastern provinces were ruled by the Persian marzpons. A number of insurrections took place during that period. The most famous among them was the so-called Vardanank, War of St.Vardan in 451, described in details by Eliseus and Lazarus Barbedzi. The Persian King Yazdegerd II tried to put an end to Christianity in Armenia, and to disseminate the doctrine of Zoroaster. Armenians revolted when the numerous Persian priests were sent to Armenia to build temples and conduct fire worship.

On May 6, 451 a horrifically bloody battle took place in the Avarayr place. 66 thousand Armenians heroically fought the overwhelmingly superior Persian troops. Most of the Armenian lords including St.Vardan fell in battle, but Armenia

undoubtedly won a great moral victory. Over 60 thousand of Persian soldiers were killed, and Yazdegerd's hopes were dashed. That was the first known war for Christian faith in history.

Vahan Mamikonean.

30 years later a new resurrection took place, headed by Prince Vahan Mamikonean, St.Vardan's nephew. This commander fought the Persian king Firuz II with changeable success. Firuz's successor was a moderate ruler conceding the freedom of religion. Vahan was granted the title of marzpan. Another offspring of Mamikonean family, known as Red Vardan, rose against Persians in the middle of the next century. He captured the city of Dvin, the old Armenian capital. But soon the rising was put down, and Vardan made his escape to Greece.

In 551 Moses , the Armenian Catholicos set a new Armenian calendar from AD 551.

After Ashot's death in 890 his son, Sembat I became King of Armenia. Bellicose and energetic, he waged non-stop warfare during 22 years of his ruling. He was very successful in the beginning, putting down a number of revolts in northern Armenia and subjecting the Moslem rulers of Dvin. The major Armenian Nakharars supported Sembat at that time, and his army was very efficient. But later, some of the most ambitious vassals sought independence. As a result the Kingdom was split into several rebellious principalities. Perhaps the King Sembat had only himself to blame. He began the destructive process in 899, when he granted the title of King to his friend and loyal vassal Adrnerseh, the Prince of the vast Vyrk province. The accession of Adrnerseh in Vyrk originated the future Georgian Kingdom.

The jealousy of other influential Princes caused unrest and trouble in Armenia. The ostigan Afshin, sworn enemy of King Sembat, was now able to turn the situation to his profit. He repeatedly attacked the Armenian cities and captured the important fortress of Kars, making Armenian Queen and other members of the royal family his hostages. The truce was established after Sembat I agreed to pay a huge ransom and give one of his nieces in marriage to Afshin.

Shortly after, Afshin died, but his brother Yussouf was even worse. He concluded an alliance with Gagik Ardsrouni, ruler of Vaspurakan province. A few later, Gagik was declared King of Armenia. Also the Sparapet Ashot seceded and declared himself King of Armenia. A number of fratricidal wars devastated the country. Then Yussouf, in alliance with the apostate Armenian princes, besieged and destroyed many of key cities and fortresses. At the end of his tether, the King Sembat locked him-self in an impregnable fortress of Kapuit.

The siege of Kapuit lasted over two years. Finally, Sembat surrendered to Yussouf making it a condition to spare his loyal soldiers. Yussouf hypocritically swore eternal friendship, but after a while he perfidiously captured the Armenian King again. Sembat I was accused of preparing a new war, tortured in a barbarous fashion, and finally put to death.

Ashot Erkat.

The internecine strife continued to destroy Armenia during the next decade. Ashot II, son of Sembat, came to throne of his father. He forthwith began the war against another King Ashot, his cousin and namesake who had for residence the city of Bagharan. The third Armenian king, Gagik Ardsrouni, ruled in relative peace the Vaspurakan province. An unprecedented renaissance in architecture marked his ruling. A number of splendid churches and a beautiful palace were built on the Akhtamar Island. Later, the Church of Holy Cross became the residence of the Catholicosate of Aghtamar.

In 914, Ashot II visited Constantinople. The Emperor Constantine VII Porphyrogenitus treated him with affection and sent him back to Armenia with a huge army. Now Ashot II was able to rout Yussouf and put an end to the Arab dominance. Historians called Ashot, Erkat i.e. Iron.

Heyday of Trade and Literature.

Under the ruling of Abas I, and Ashot III, Armenia reentered the period of peace and prosperity. The capital moved into the glorious city of Ani, known as "the city of one thousand and one churches". Under the next kings, Sembat II and his brother Gaguik I, the resumption of trade made Ani one of the most prosperous cities of that time. Its population reached 200 000 inhabitants.

The 10th and the 11th century produced new illustrious names in Armenian historical and ecclesiastic literature, such as John of Draskhanakert, Thomas Ardsrouni, Moses Kaghankatvatsi, Asoghik and Gregory Narekatsi.

The Turks emerge.

However, new disastrous invasions marked the beginning of a new millennium. The Seljuk Turks emerged as a new dangerous power. The Vaspurakan province was the first to be attacked. As mentioned above, this province was ruled by Ardsrouni princes who proclaimed themselves kings. Unable to secure the country against the new enemy, the King Senekerim sought the protection of Emperor Basil II. As a result of their mutual accord, Basil II took the possession of Vaspurakan giving Senekerim one of the Greek provinces in exchange. Meanwhile, the Seljuks tried to capture the old Armenian city of Dvin, but were put to rout by Vahram Pahlavouni, Sparapet of Armenia.

Gagik II.

During the next 50 years the Greeks gradually annexed the important part of the Great Armenia. Torn between the Turkish danger and co-religionist Byzantine power, Armenia was at the threshold of a national disaster. The army of Constantine IX besieged Ani in 1041. The Sparapet Vahram Pahlavouni, at the time 80 years old, repeatedly repulsed the enemy. Soon after, the Greeks raised the siege. A 16-year-old Gaguik II arrived in Ani and was proclaimed King of Armenia.

However, Gaguik II was fated to be the last king of the Armenian Bagratouni dynasty. Young and inexperienced, he was

betrayed by some of his pro-Greek princes, especially by Prince Sarkis. During Gaguk's visit in Constantinople the Emperor Constantine IX told him that Sarkis and the other Armenian grandees had recognized the Greek authority over Armenia. Confused and upset, Gaguk refused to return to Armenia.

Armenia falls under the Turks

The Greek dominance in Armenia ended in 1071, after the famous battle of Manzikert. The 100-thousandth army of Byzantines including the Armenian forces met with the huge army of Seljuks under Alp Aslan. The Christians led by the Emperor Romanus Diogenes were defeated, and Diogenes was imprisoned by Alp Aslan. The Turks took control over all of the Greater Armenia.

Armenians and Georgians unite.

In the 12th century and in the beginning of the 13th century, a number of Armenian nobles joined with the neighboring Georgians, in an attempt to liberate the Armenian lands. The strengthening Georgian Kingdom was at the time ruled by a branch of the Armenian Bagradouni dynasty. After a number of uprisings that took place in 1124, 1161 and 1174, the Seljuk rule was overthrown in different cities of Greater Armenia. During the reign of Queen Tamar (1184-1213), some important cities of Greater Armenia, such as Ani, Kars and Dvin were retaken from the Turks. The military expeditions were led by Armenian nobles Zakare Zakarian and his brother Ivane, favorite of Queen Tamar.

Mongols and Turkomans in Armenia.

The short revival in Armenia ended with the first Mongol invasions in the early 1220's. During the next 100 years the country was subjected to new campaigns of terror and destruction. The cities and the entire provinces, such as Ani, Kars, Lori, Gandzak, Shamkhor, Khachen, Nakhichevan and many others were destroyed, plundered and set ablaze. After the census taken in 1254, the population was overtaxed. According to Kirakos Gandzaketsi, eyewitness to the events, "...they demanded the most severe taxes, more than a man could bear...They harassed the people with incredible beatings and tortures... Those who hid were seized and killed."

A number of rebellions led by Armenian and Georgian lords were brutally crushed by Mongols.

From the beginning of the 14th century, the Mongol dominance in the region recedes. Now numerous Turkoman nomadic tribes invade the Armenian lands. Different parts of Armenia become the theater of warfare for the various nomadic clans, such as Kara Koyunlu (Black Sheep) and Ak Koyunlu(White Sheep) .

Establishment of Rubenids dynasty.

After the devastating raids of Seljuks thousands of Armenians moved toward Cilicia - region of Armenia Minor situated between the Taurus and Amanus mountains close to Mediterranean coast. The Armenian population in Cilicia gradually became predominant. In 1080 a certain Prince Ruben, that the historians believe to be descendant of the Bagradouni and Ardzrouni dynasties, asserted authority over the local Armenian and Greek princes. Ruben became founder of a new glorious royal House of Rubenids that ruled over Cilicia for more than 300 years.

Ruben I and his successors maintained close contacts with the Crusaders. As a result, the new Armenian Principality, which later became Kingdom, imitated the principles of State organization accepted in European countries. A number of new ranks and titles were established. Armenian Nakharars became Knights and Barons, Sparapets were often called Constables etc. The Armenian Cilician noblemen used the Latin and French languages alongside the Armenian. Intermarriages between the members of the Armenian and European noble families were widespread.

The first rulers of Cilicia.

The first Armenian rulers of Cilicia, such as Constantine I and Thoros I led successful warfare against both Saracens and Greeks. The next ruler, the bellicose Leon I was less fortunate, as the Emperor John II Comnenus arrested him and seized all of his domains. Later Leon I and his elder son Ruben were murdered in prison, but Leon's younger son Thoros known as Thoros II was spared.

5 years later, Thoros II escaped to Cilicia to declare the country's independence. Then the Emperor Manuel I Comnenus sent his commander Andronicus (later known as Emperor Andronicus I Comnenus) to punish the fugitive prince. However, Thoros defeated the Greek army several times. Unable to subject Thoros, the Greeks even concluded a military alliance with Sultan of Konya, but the troops of the latter were also routed by Thoros.

Leon II and the Crusaders.

During the ruling of Leon II, when Cilicia enjoyed the period of a prosperous development, the Third Crusade was proclaimed in Europe. The Roman Emperor Frederic I Barbarossa, the French King Philip II Augustus and the English King Richard the Lion-Hearted assembled their forces to recapture Jerusalem from Saladin. Arriving in Asia Minor, Frederic Barbarossa proposed an alliance to Leon II. The Armenian King promised to supply the Europeans with food and horses. Although Frederic I was tragically drowned in the Calycadnus River in Cilicia, Leon II continued to support the Crusaders. Wishing to reward Leon II for his loyalty, Henry IV, the son of Frederic Barbarossa, sent him a splendid crown. Other leaders of the Third Crusade also promised their friendship and protection. Nevertheless, the European monarchs and the Popes of Rome were never disinterested toward the Armenian state. Some religious concessions and the further reunion of the Armenian and Catholic churches were stipulated as an important condition.

The Cilician Armenian Kingdom was reinforced after Leon II gained the long-term conflict over the Latin princes of the neighboring Antioch Principality. The Armenian King captured Antioch twice. He also marked the end of his ruling with victories over the Sultans of Konya and Aleppo.

The Armenian Renaissance.

While the inhabitants of the Greater Armenia eye-witnessed the loss of their national statehood and numerous foreign invasions, the Cilician Armenians lived in wealth and prosperity. Good geographic location involved the country into an intensive international trade. Science and culture flourished. This period of Armenian history is regarded as the brilliant Age of Ecclesiastical manuscript painting. The school of genius Thoros Roslin was especially famous. Theology, philosophy, rhetoric, medicine and mathematics were taught in a large number of new schools and monasteries. New significant names appeared in the Armenian literature, such as: Nerses Shnorhali, Matthew of Edessa, Vardan Aygektsi and Sembat the Constable.

Hetum I and the Mongols.

Meanwhile, the enormous Empire of Mongols expanded on the East, and the Turks were consecutively ousted from the Greater Armenia, Syria and Mesopotamia. During the ruling of Hetum I, Mongols approached the borders of Cappadocia and Cilicia. A far-sighted politician, Hetum I was prompt to establish the good relations with Khan Batu. Later, when Khan Mangu assumed the title of Great Khan, Hetum I made a long trip to the Golden Horde with the many sumptuous presents. As a result the military alliance with the Mongols was reaffirmed. The Mongols supported Hetum I in his conflict against the Sultans of Konya and Aleppo. The next Armenian kings also maintained friendly connections with the Khans of Golden Horde. The situations drastically changed however, as the Mongols declined in power and were gradually converted to Islam.

Cilician Kingdom in danger.

By the beginning of the 14th century, the aggressive Mamelukes dynasties becoming stronger and dangerous, the Armenian Kings had no way out but seeking protection of the European monarchs. The King Leon IV repeatedly sent messengers to Rome promising the reunion of the Armenian and Catholic churches. Later his brother Oshin I tried to make alliance with Philip V, King of France. Also Leon V, Oshin's son asked Philip VI to render assistance. But the European leaders, although sympathetic, were not able or willing to intervene.

End of Rubenids.

Leon V was the last king of the Rubenids dynasty. Then, the descendants of Armenian branch of the royal Lusignan family ruled Cilicia. The country was already depleted as a result of the permanent Moslem invasions. As a matter of fact, the Christian Cilicia was doomed. The surrounding Moslem states feared new possible Crusades and often considered the Cilician Armenia as an eternal source of conflicts and an eternal pretext for European Kingdoms to interfere.

Fall of the Kingdom.

Under the ruling of Constantine IV, the Cilician Armenians gained perhaps their last victory, defeating the troops of Mamelukes near Alexandria. After Constantine's death in 1364 the Cilician throne remained unoccupied for more than 2 years. Finally, Leon VI, the last Armenian King, was elected in 1366. 8 years later, after a series of fatal battles against the superior enemy he locked himself in the Kapan fortress, but soon surrendered. The Mamelukes sent him to Egypt when he remained imprisoned for several years. Later the King of Castile mediated for his liberation. Leon VI died in Paris in 1393.

Decline of Armenia.

In the early 15th century Armenia was still divided into many small-scale principalities. However, after the conquest of Constantinople by Sultan Muhammad II in 1453, the country gradually lost all vestiges of political sovereignty. Armenia was incorporated into the Ottoman Empire. The systematic invasions and ravages caused decline of the major Armenian cities. The Nakharar system was definitely destroyed. The Armenian Church also remained in disorder until the Holy See was transferred from the former Cilician capital of Sis to Vagharshapat.

A large number of Armenians continued to migrate from their devastated lands to Crimea, to Russia, to Poland, to India. As Constantinople became a thriving center of the Ottoman Empire, its Armenian community increased to the extent that a special see was set up apart from the Patriarchal See in Vagharshapat. The Armenian Church in Constantinople had particular privileges among the other branches of the Christian church.

While the Armenian colonies prospered in different countries, the population of Armenia proper suffered incredible privation and persecution. The peasantry was especially oppressed, discriminated and overtaxed. Several uprising against Turkish conquerors took place, but all of them were brutally crushed.

Partition of Armenia.

From the beginning of the 16th century, Armenia became a scene of confrontation between the Ottoman Empire and Iran. The Armenian population fell victim of that bloody conflict that lasted more than two centuries. Following the final armistice in 1639 the territory of Great Armenia was split into two. The Western Armenia fell to the Ottoman Empire, and the Eastern Armenia fell to Iran.

The Shah Abbas I, the greatest of the Safavid rulers, led the policy of intensive settling of the Muslims on the Armenian lands, while the Armenian population was moved to Iran. A big colony was founded in New Julfa, a suburb of Safavid capital of Isfahan. Very soon, New Julfa became one of the centers of the Armenian intellectual and cultural life, just like Constantinople or Venice. In all of these cities, also in Amsterdam and in Vagharshapat, several Armenian printing houses were set up. The first printing of the whole Bible in Armenian was done in 1666 in Amsterdam, but the first book

printed in Armenian appeared in Venice in the early 16th century.

The Russian Hope.

From the early 17th century, Armenians began to place their hopes on the growing Russian Power. A number of messengers were sent to the Russian czars in order to ask protection. The rich Armenian community of New Julfa made the czar Alexis I Mikhailovich a sumptuous present of a golden throne adorned with precious stones. In the late 17th century, the ties with Russia strengthened as military victories of Peter the Great over Persians and Turks inspired Armenians. At the same time, a number of patriots, such as Israel Ori, traveled all over the Europe trying to find support of Christian powers. Unfortunately, their activities brought little results.

The Meliks of Karabakh.

At the same time, the Eastern Armenian provinces rose against the Moslems. Uprisings were headed by the princes of Artsakh (the so-called Meliks of Karabakh). In 1697, the Meliks adopted Gandzasar Treaty, which proclaimed "the entry of Armenia under the patronage of Russia". Unfortunately, the Russian territorial expansion stopped soon, and Armenians met with great disappointment. David-Bek, ruler of Artsakh and Siunik provinces, supported by Mkhitar Sparapet, consolidated Armenian forces against the Turks. However, after David-Bek died in 1730, the Turkish tribes gradually dominated most of Artsakh, proclaiming the Khanate of Karabakh in the late 50s.

The Armenian nation took heart under the reign of Russian Empress Catherine the Great (1762-1796). As a result of the two successful wars against the Ottoman Empire, Russians annexed new vast territories. The Count Potemkin, illustrious statesman and favorite of the Empress, propounded the idea of forming a new Armenian-Georgian Kingdom. A number of enthusiastic rich Armenians abroad suggested financing the project. Unfortunately, it turned out Utopian just like another similar project of creating a Greek monarchy.

However, the Russian influence in Caucasus kept growing, while the Persian power fell in decline. In 1800, Georgia became part of the Russian Empire. 5 years later, the rebellious leaders of Karabach proclaimed themselves loyal subjects of the Russian czar. The Persian troops were defeated several times, and the Russian army besieged Erevan. The Treaty of Gulistan (1813) officially asserted the Russian sovereignty over a number of former Khanates including the Khanate of Karabakh.

Eastern Armenia becomes part of Russian Empire.

After the Treaty of Turkmenchaj(1828), the greater part of the Eastern Armenia was brought under Russian control. As a result, a large number of Armenians moved back from Persia to Armenia. The Armenian Oblast (Province) was created, which lasted from 1828 to 1840.

From the middle of the 19th century, capitalist relations in the Eastern Armenia developed intensively. The newborn Armenian bourgeoisie invested its capital in the new industrial centers, such as Tiflis and Baku, also in Alaverdi and Zangezur, centers of the copper industry.

Meanwhile, the Western Armenia with most of the Armenian lands still remained under the yoke of the Ottoman Turks. The large Armenian population of the Ottoman Empire continued to experience immeasurable sufferings. Periodic uprising took place during the entire 19th century in Sassun, Mush, Zeytun, Van and other Armenian cities, but all of them were severely suppressed.

Uprisings in the Ottoman Empire.

The 20s and the 30s of the 19th century were marked by a series of revolts of the non-Turkish peoples throughout the Ottoman Empire. Greece obtained independence in 1829. The Serbs, Bulgarians, Albanians and Armenians were about to throw off the Turkish sway. The fall of the declining Empire seemed inevitable. However, the Turks held on as a result of the European disagreement about how to divide the spheres of influence. Once again, Armenians put their hopes on Russia. During the Russo-Turkish war of 1829, the czar Nicholas I captured Erzerum and was already advancing to Constantinople, but was stopped by European powers. Paradoxically, just 3 years later, Russians were involved in a conflict against Egypt in order to protect the Ottoman Sultan. The inconsistent Russian policy resulted in a number of setbacks for Russia's further expansion. On the other hand, England, Germany and France, though sympathetic toward the enslaved nations of the Ottoman Empire, tried hard to reduce the Russian influence and finally became involuntary allies of the Turks.

First Armenian Political Parties.

During the next decades, the Turk rulers led the policy of large-scale reforms known as the Tanzimat (Turkish for "reorganization"). The reforms were aimed to "civilize" Turkey making it look a more "European" country. The Tanzimat lasted for about 30 years and affected all aspects of political and social life. For the enslaved nations, it marked an unprecedented raise of the national-liberation movement.

The uprisings of Balkan peoples and the plight of Armenians urged the Russian intervention in 1877-1878. After the Treaty of San Stefano Russia gained control over a large part of Armenia and obtained the independence of Romania and Serbia. However, Russia had to step back as a result of the English and German pressure. The Treaty of San Stefano was revised and the Czar Alexander II withdrew the Russian troops from the Armenian territories.

The coming to power of the despotic Sultan Abd al-Hamid II in 1876 put an end to the Tanzimat. Nonetheless, the Armenian liberation movement gathered momentum. The three major Armenian political Parties were founded: Hnchak, Dashnaktsutiun and Ramkavar.

Massacres of Abdul-Hamid.

From 1894 to 1896, the systematic massacres were organized by Abdul-Hamid in order to punish Armenians for their aspiration for freedom. The Sultan considered the Armenian population as an eternal excuse for Europeans and for Russians to interfere. The government instigated assaults on the Armenian villages, that quickly spread to all regions of Western Armenia. Despite the armed resistance in some places, particularly Zeytun, over 200 thousand of Armenians were killed as a result of these bloody pogroms. Historians named Abdul-Hamid "Red Sultan".

Young Turks and massacres in Adana.

Meanwhile, the new opposition Party of the Young Turks rose in the Ottoman Empire. Propagating the attractive slogans of "fraternity and common homeland", the leaders of Young Turks inspired many short-sighted Armenians, who believed in the reality of an "autonomous Western Armenia". As the Young Turks struggled against the Red Sultan, Armenian parties and leaders assisted them and supported financially.

After the so-called Young Turk Revolution of 1908, the Sultan's authority was reduced to the point that he became a sheer symbolic figure. Although an attempt to a counterrevolution was made, the Young Turks managed to retain the real power. Abdul-Hamid, forced to abdicate in 1909 was removed to solitary confinement. He was replaced by Mehmet V, who was only a puppet of the Young Turks. Then, the leaders of the Young Turks founded a new powerful party called Ittihad ve Terakki (Turkish for "Union and Progress").

The victory of the Young Turks marked the immediate end to the Armenian illusions. In 1909, a series of bloody rampages took place in Adana, Cilicia, where the Turkish mobs were supported by the Turkish army. The sporadic pogroms took place in different cities. Some 35,000 Armenians were killed as a result of these massacres. In despite of the promises and oaths to "establish order", the threat of the physical extermination of the Armenian nation was imminent.

Andranik.

In 1912, the Balkan wars began. Serbia, Montenegro, Bulgaria and Greece formed a coalition against the Ottoman Empire. The coalition gained a number of important victories and the Turks sued for peace. An Armenian hero Andranik (later known as General Andranik) fought for the Bulgarians forming an Armenian volunteer unit.

The Armenians at death's door.

The First Balkan war marked serious territorial losses for the Ottoman Empire, but during the Second War in the next year the Turks regained the large territories as a result of a discord between the Balkan States. In 1913, a coup d'etat within the Union and Progress committee brought an extreme nationalist triumvirate headed by Enver, Talaat and Gemal to the absolute power in the Ottoman Empire. The racist doctrines of Pan-Turkism, Turkish national exclusiveness and Turkish homogeneous state were preached by party's ideologists, such as Zia, Dr.Nazim and Dr.Shakir. Armenians were openly termed as superfluous and dangerous elements inside the Ottoman Empire. In many places, the Armenian bankers were accused of "looting the country" just like the Armenian intelligentsia was blamed of undermining the state foundations.

The Armenian nation entered the gloomiest period of its history.

The Turkish Plan.

It is generally accepted that the Armenian Genocide started on April 24, 1915. The Armenians commemorate this date because on April 24, 1915 more than 200 Armenian intellectuals and community leaders were arrested and then murdered in Constantinople. However, the Turkish plan of uprooting the Armenians from their ancestral homeland was masterminded far beforehand. The outbreak of the WWI in 1914 gave the Young Turks the perfect opportunity to solve the Armenian Question.

At first Dr. Nazim, the Young Turks ideologist, traveled throughout the vilayets (provinces) of the Ottoman Empire calling for the boycott of the Armenian businesses. Then Enver-Pasha, the idol of the Turkish revolution issued the order to form special battalions. Later, these units of violent criminals and Kurdish irregulars attacked, looted and burned thousands of Armenian shops in Dyarbekir. At the same time, Talaat-Pasha, one of the triumvirs and the most influential figure in the Turkish cabinet, ordered to carry out the disarmament of the Armenian villages. Since the Moslem Turkey was involved in war against the Christian countries, the Christian Armenians were considered "unreliable" and sympathizing to their coreligionists. The weapons collected from the Armenians were distributed in neighboring Turkish villages.

Disarmed, arrested and executed.

The Armenian soldiers in the Turkish army were disarmed, put in labor battalions, and then killed. Meanwhile, the legitimated bands of chete (Kurdish irregulars, criminal hirelings) began systematic raids on the defenseless Armenian villages to rape women and ransack houses.

In all major cities, the Armenian businesses were looted under the convenient pretext of "war contributions". In October 1914, mass arrests and killings of Armenians were reported in Erzerum and Zeytun. In November, as Russia had declared war on Turkey, the jihad (holy war against non-believers) was proclaimed and publicly read in all the vilayets of the Ottoman Empire. Together with the mass execution of the Armenian soldiers in the army, a number of notable Armenian community leaders, including religious were slain in different cities. In the provinces, the Armenian bakers were publicly charged for poisoning the bread of the Turkish Army.

Hypocrisy of Turkish leaders.

In March, 1915 a special decision to exterminate all Armenians throughout the Ottoman Empire was already issued by

the Ittihad committee. Meanwhile, a severe censorship was established, and all foreign postal offices in Turkey were closed. Even the neutral US Ambassador was unable to read uncensored dispatches from his own government. In Constantinople, where a large number of Europeans, including foreign ambassadors were present, the Turkish leaders made hypocritical speeches. Enver-Pasha congratulated the brave Armenian soldiers for their admirable service on the Caucasus front, while Talaat-Pasha met with the Armenian leaders shortly before their mass arrests to declare they had nothing to fear.

Armenian defense.

In April, 1915 the regular Turkish troops began the non-stop attacks on the city of Van. The Armenians under the leadership of Aram Manukian organized a heroic defense. They decided to rise up arms after they were informed that more than 30 thousand of Armenians in surrounding villages had been killed in three days. The desperate defense of Van lasted 36 days with 55 thousand of Armenians being killed. The survivors were rescued by the units of the Armenian volunteers serving in the Russian army on the Caucasus front. Later, a handful of unarmed Armenians desperately defended themselves in Shabin-Karahisar, the native village of General Andranik. Another heroic example was the defense of Musa-Dagh in Cilicia, described by Austrian author Franz Werfel.

Turkish atrocities.

After the events that the Turks had termed as "revolution of Van", the Armenians were declared "internal enemies" of the Ottoman Empire. In Constantinople, many of the most eminent Armenians, including intellectuals, political and religious leaders were arrested and murdered. Among them were Grikor Zohrab and Vartkes Serengulian, members of the Ottoman Parliament and generally known as friends of Talaat-Pasha. At the same time, the mass killings took place in Bitlis, Mush and Dyarbekir. The special instructions for the detailed procedure of deportations were sent to all Governors of the vilayets throughout the Ottoman Empire. The Armenians would be told they must be deported or relocated, and then marched off to the Syrian deserts between Jerablus, Mosul and Deir el-Zor. Only a small part of them would reach the final point. Many died of starvation, but most of them were killed on the march in extremely barbaric fashion. An American missionary testified to see, while traveling from Malatia to Sivas, a countless number of disfigured corpses all along both sides of the road for 9 hours running. Tens of thousands of dead bodies were thrown to the Euphrates River. In Trebizond, thousands of Armenians were sunk out at the sea...

In July 1915, there were virtually no Armenians remaining in Van, Bitlis, Dyarbekir, Sivas, Erzerum and Trebizond. Only a part of the orphan boys were converted to Islam and adopted by the Turkish families. Soon thereafter, Talat-Pasha told the German Ambassador that the Armenian Question had been finally solved. The depopulation of the Western Armenia was successfully completed.

Deportations continued.

In 1916, the deportations and the massacres continued with unremitting cruelty. The numerous instructions went to exterminate the remnants of the Armenian orphans. The survivors were subject to Islamization. But the most of the deportees who later reached the Syrian deserts were murdered or died from hunger or sicknesses.

In October 1916, the German Ambassador Wilhelm Radowitz reported to Berlin that out of the two and a half millions of Armenians in the Ottoman Empire alive were left only 300 000. The rest were killed or deported; some were lucky enough to escape eastward to the Caucasus or somewhere else. The ambassador mentioned "the two and a half millions" in accordance with the falsified results of the census taken in the Ottoman Empire in 1887, under the Sultan Abd al-Hamid. The actual number of Armenians was deliberately reduced, at least 3 times.

End of Young Turks.

Remains of the ArmeniansThe governments of all European countries, and the United States condemned the Genocide of Armenians. Henry Morgenthau, the US Ambassador to the Ottoman Empire, wrote: "...the whole history of the human race contains no such horrible episode as this. The great massacres and persecutions of the past seem almost insignificant when compared to the sufferings of the Armenian race in 1915."

The Ittihad Cabinet resigned in October 1918. The triumvirs and other leaders of the Young Turks fled the country. They later were convicted by different courts-martial. Enver, Talat, Gemal and Nazim were sentenced to death by default. Kemal Bey, responsible for Yozgat massacres, was publicly hanged. Rashid Bey, governor of Dyarbekir, committed suicide. Other culprits of massacres were sentenced to different terms of imprisonment. Some of them were later released; others fled to join the army of Mustafa Kemal. However, the Genocide of Armenians was never officially recognized and condemned by the Turkish government. Even now, the Turkish authorities continue to deny the fact of the Genocide.

Talat-Pasha, one of main designers of the Genocide, was assassinated in 1921 in Berlin by Soghomon Tehlirian.

Enver-Pasha also fell from an Armenian in 1922 in a battle in Tajikistan.

Gemal-Pasha was assassinated in 1922 in Tiflis by an Armenian Tzagikian.

Gemal Azmi, former governor of Trabzon and Beahaddin Shakir, one of the Genocide's propagandists were both assassinated in 1922 in Berlin.

Collapse of Transcaucasian Federation.

The triumph of Bolsheviks in 1917 put an end to the Russian Empire. In winter 1918, the Armenian, Georgian and Moslem leaders of Transcaucasia united to convene the Transcaucasian Federation, which proclaimed the secession of Transcaucasia from Russia.

The Turks, rapturous over the Russian Revolution, took it almost as a miracle produced by Allah. With the decline of the Russian military power, the Caucasus front collapsed, and the decaying Turkish power survived. To prevent the further destruction of the new Bolshevik State, Vladimir Lenin was forced to conclude the humiliating Treaty of Brest-Litovsk. The treaty had drastic consequences for the Armenians. The Turkish forces reoccupied the lands of the Western Armenia, earlier liberated by Russians.

In late May 1918, under the threat of a new Turkish offensive on the Caucasus, the Transcaucasian Federation collapsed after only 3 months of existence. In fact, the Federation was a still-born creature from the very beginning. Insuperable divergences existed between the Armenian, Georgian and Moslem deputations. The Georgians were oriented to Germany, and the Moslems to Turkey, whereas the Armenians, though loyal to the Entente, were supported by nobody.

On May 26 the independence of Georgia was declared. At the same time, the Moslems proclaimed a "Musavat Republic of Azerbaijan". This new Turkish state, created in the historical lands of the eastern Armenia, immediately and shamelessly laid claims on the Armenian territories in Karabakh, Zangezur and Nakhichevan.

The independence of Armenia proclaimed.

Left alone, Armenians faced the total annihilation as the 100 thousandth Turkish army crossed the pre-war Russian frontier, annexed the city of Kars and approached the Armenian capital of Yerevan. After having depopulated the Western Armenia, the Turkish military were now about to destroy the rest of Armenia and achieve their goal of eliminating the Armenian nation.

The Armenians raised an army of 40,000 men, including soldiers, officers, volunteers and mass levies. At first the Dashnak leaders wanted to evacuate the population and to surrender Yerevan, but the Military Council headed by the Colonel Pirumian finally decided to do battle.

The two armies met on May 28, 1918 near Sardarapat. The battle was crowned with an outstanding Armenian victory. Some 30 thousand of Turkish soldiers were killed; the Turks were flung out. Vahib-Pasha, the defeated Turkish commander, termed the Armenian soldiers as "the best fighters in the world". The Armenians also held defenses at Karaklis and at Abaran.

On the same day of May 28, 1918 Armenia was proclaimed an independent republic. However, the embryo state was devastated, with a dislocated economy, dozens of thousands of refugees and the population starving. The danger of a new Turkish aggression was still imminent. Also, the country was soon involved in a territorial conflict with Georgia. Moreover, the situation in Karabakh was especially dangerous as the new Azerbaijani state made a series of ultimatums to the Armenian population.

In September, 1918 the Turkish troops invaded Baku and joined the Turkish-Azeri mobs in massacring some 30, 000 Armenians. Dozens of surrounding Armenian villages were destroyed.

The Wilsonian borders.

Meanwhile, the European powers found themselves unable to solve the Armenian Question. The unification of the Caucasian Armenia with the Turkish Armenia proclaimed by the Armenian government in 1919 turned out Utopian. After Armenia was officially recognized by the governments of Allies and by the United States, the US President Woodrow Wilson was invited to determine the borders of the Armenian State. According to Wilson's map, a new Armenia would include most of its historically belonging lands. The project would never come true.

Armenia falls to Bolsheviks.

Furthermore, Armenia would face the new territorial losses. Mustafa Kemal, the new Turkish opposition leader, was able to reach an agreement with the Bolshevik leaders of Russia. Enthusiastic with the idea of "exporting the revolution eastward", Lenin and Stalin were prompt in starting an unprecedented financial and military aid to Kemal. At that time Armenia exploded into anarchy as the Armenian Bolsheviks rose in the cities of Nakhichevan, Alexandropole and Kars. The Soviet government hypocritically negotiated with both Dashnak and Bolshevik leaders of Armenia.

In August 1920, the Treaty of Sevres, signed by England, France and Turkey, bound Turkey to recognize the independence of Armenia and the Wilsonian boundaries. The new Armenian state was recognized by most of the countries, including the United States. However, after the triumph of Mustafa Kemal, the Turks, supported by the Bolshevik Russia, attacked the infant Armenian Republic again. The Armenian and Russian Bolsheviks played a fatal role in demoralizing the population and the Armenian army. The Bolshevik propaganda now called the Turks "socialists" and "friends of Russians". On the other hand, the victorious Russian XI Red Army, after successfully Sovietizing Baku, Azerbaijan, and Karabakh, approached Yerevan to "overthrow the Dashnaks". The disoriented Armenian army retreated, surrendering Kars and the uyezd of Surmali. The whole Armenian population there was then pitilessly butchered by the Turks.

On November 29, 1920, Armenia was declared a Soviet state.

New losses.

On December 1, 1920 as the news about the Sovietization of Armenia reached Azerbaijan, Narimanov, the chief of the Revolutionary Committee of Azerbaijan, surprisingly declared about the cessation of the Azerbaijan's claims to the Armenian territories and proclaimed Karabakh, Nakhichevan and Zanguezur, integral parts of Armenia. However, just a day later, the Narimanov's decree appeared in a slightly different wording: Nakhichevan and Zanguezur were recognized parts of Armenia, whereas Karabakh was given the right of self-determination.

Nonetheless, the strange alliance between the Turks and the Russian Bolsheviks played a fatal role in the final

determination of borders. The Treaty of Alexandropol, signed in December of 1920 asserted the defeat of Armenia. Then in March of 1921, Turkey and Russia signed a mysterious Treaty of Moscow to tear Nakhichevan away from Armenia and to attach it to the Soviet Azerbaijan.

In summer of 1921, the Caucasian Office of the Communist Party of Bolsheviks held a number of sessions to solve the Karabakh problem. On July 4, the plenary session issued a decree confirming the belonging of Karabakh to Armenia. However, on the next day, Stalin convened an extraordinary session to transfer Karabakh to Azerbaijan. The Treaty of Kars signed in October of 1921 completed the carve-up of Armenia.

As a result of the Soviet and Turkish manipulations, the territory of the Soviet Republic of Armenia was reduced to 30,000 square km. Armenia was even deprived of Mount Ararat, its main symbol.

Fate of Nakhichevan.

During the Soviet rule, Nakhichevan, the Armenian province with the Armenian name and the unique Armenian historical and cultural heritage underwent an unprecedented period of "white genocide" and "ethnic cleansing". Predominant there in the 19th century, the Armenians composed 50% of the population in the 20s. From 1936, when the Turks of Azerbaijan became "Azerbaijanis" instead of "Caucasian Tartars", the Soviet historians followed the instructions of the Communist Party leaders and began creating the so-called "history of Azerbaijan". In order to erase any trace of the region's Armenian past, many unique Armenian monuments were destroyed, including khachkars and churches of early Christian period. The land was then extensively peopled with the Turks while the Armenians left on a large scale. According to the census of 1959, the number of Armenians in the region decreased to 1, 5%!

Stalin's purges.

From 1922 to 1936, Armenia formed part of the Transcaucasian Soviet Federal Socialist Republic, consisting of Armenia, Georgia and Azerbaijan. The new Constitution of the USSR adopted in 1936 dissolved the Transcaucasian Republic. Armenia became one of 15 Soviet Socialist Republics. Like the other Republics, Armenia was governed by the Central Committee of the Republican Communist Party. The 1st Secretaries of the Party were appointed from Moscow.

In the 30s, just like the other peoples of the Soviet Union, Armenians suffered from a large-scale campaign of political terror launched by Joseph Stalin. The purges touched virtually every Armenian family. Thousands of writers, artists, scientists and political leaders were executed or exiled.

The WWII.

During the World War II, Armenians made an important contribution to the Soviet victory. Over 500 thousand of Armenians fought for the Soviet army, and half of them fell in battles. 5 Armenian infantry divisions were formed. Armenia gave 4 marshals and 60 generals. The Armenian Church and the Armenian colonies abroad donated large sums of money.

After the WW II, the Armenian and Georgian Republics laid territorial claims to Turkey. However, the Soviet Government was not willing to return the Armenian lands, and shortly thereafter stated to have no claims to Turkey.

The Armenian Marshals: Ivan Bagramian, Ivan Isakov (Admiral), Hamazasp Babajanian and Armenak Khanferiants (Sergei Khudiakov).

The new wave of the Armenian migration.

In 1946, many patriotic Armenians from the foreign Armenian colonies decided to repatriate to their historical homeland to contribute the post-war restoration. However, in years 1948-1949, Stalin launched a new campaign of terror, and thousands of those repatriated Armenians were illegally arrested and forcibly deported to Siberia and Altay.

From the beginning of the 60s, Armenians began to emigrate from the Soviet Union on a large-scale. The Soviet leaders considered the Armenians, together with the Jews and the Germans as "unreliable elements" of the Soviet system.

The Genocide commemorated.

On April 24, 1965 the Armenians throughout the world took part in the mass meetings and manifestations, to commemorate the 50-th anniversary of the Armenian Genocide. In Yerevan, a grand monument was raised to the 1915-1921 victims' memory. Since then, the funeral marches and meetings on April 24 became an Armenian tradition.

At the same time, the Armenian colonies and organizations abroad began the large-scale campaign for the recognition of the Genocide. In the 70s, a number of secret organizations were founded, such as ARA (Armenian Revolutionary Army) and ASALA (Armenian Secret Army for the Liberation of Armenia). These organizations stated to have no faith in the effectiveness of the peaceful demonstrations, and were involved in the terrorist activities. During the following decade, many terrorist attempts were committed against the Turkish representatives in the European countries, in order to attract public attention.

The Karabakh Question.

The Armenian liberation movement also manifested itself in several petitions of Armenians of Nagorno-Karabakh, requiring the reunification with Armenia. The leaders of the USSR discussed the problem in 1967-1970, while Anton Kochynian, Armenian 1st Secretary carried on the fruitless negotiations with the Azeri leaders Akhundov and Aliyev. In 1977, the problem of Nagorno-Karabakh was raised again. However, the issue was shelved again.

Karin the Builder.

Under Karin Demirchyan, the 1st Secretary from 1975, the economy of Armenia went through the period of stagnation,

just like the economies of the rest of the Soviet Union. However, Demirchyan succeeded in construction and house building and later was deservedly nicknamed as Karin the Builder. Various sites and new buildings modernized Armenia, especially Yerevan. Armenia became a highly urbanized Republic.

Armenians support Perestroika.

In 1985-1986, the new Soviet leader Mikhail Gorbachev launched a campaign aimed at reforming the Soviet Empire. The Armenians were almost unanimous in their enthusiastic support of perestroika and glasnost.

In late 1987, the Armenians of Nagorno-Karabakh collected over 80,000 signatures to petition the Soviet Government about the secession of the region from the Soviet Azerbaijan and its reunification (Miatsum, in Armenian) to Armenia. After suffering for decades under the Azeri tyranny, the people of Karabakh thought the time was favorable to restore the historical truth.

At the same time, an unprecedented movement of support began in Armenia. Mass meetings, manifestations and general strikes frightened the Soviet leaders. These actions, both in Karabakh and Armenia were peaceful and well organized. As a matter of fact, the Gorbachev's perestroika experienced its first serious trial. To the great disappointment of the Armenians, Moscow first took a wait-and-see attitude, and then openly supported Azerbaijan by saying: "The map of the USSR will never be redrawn".

Azeri atrocities in Sumgait.

In February 26-28, Azerbaijan took measures in a classic Ottoman fashion. Mass pogroms occurred in a small city of Sumgait, near Baku. Hundreds of innocent Armenians, including old people, women and children, were attacked in their homes by Azeri fanatic mobs to be beaten, raped, killed and burned alive. For the period of 3 days the city was plunged into complete anarchy. The deadly riots were designed and led by the members of the local government in Sumgait. The apartments of Armenians were ransacked or destroyed.

The Karabakh Committee.

The rallies and peaceful protest actions in Armenia were organized by a group of intellectuals who formed the Karabakh Committee. The movement initially aimed at protecting the constitutional rights of Armenians in Artsakh gradually transformed into the All-Armenian national liberation movement. The leaders of the Karabakh Committee rapidly gained general support and admiration. By the fall of 1988, the Karabakh Committee became a powerful political force in Armenia.

Pogroms in Kirovabad.

In late November, as tensions increased and the danger of the new pogroms threatened the Armenians in Azerbaijan, a new wave of meetings and strikes began in Armenia. A large number of Armenian refugees fled Azerbaijan and arrived in Armenia.

In Kirovabad, the second large city of Azerbaijan, the barbaric atrocities were committed. The armed Azeri bandits broke into an old people's home and killed a dozen of aged Armenians. Following the common practice of a "parity rule", the Soviet Government imposed marshal law in both unruly Azerbaijan and peaceful Armenia.

December 7, 1988.

On December 7, 1988, the Armenian history turned a new tragic page. A devastating earthquake wiped off the northern regions of the Republic, killing at least 25 thousand and making 500 thousand homeless. An unprecedented campaign of direct aid to Armenia (not via Moscow) began in many countries, symbolizing the near end of the Iron Curtain.

Against the backdrop of a general mourning, Moscow tried to put an end to the Karabakh movement. The leaders of the Karabakh Committee were arrested and taken to Moscow. However, they were released from prisons 6 months later and returned in triumph to Armenia to found the Armenian Pan-National Movement. In summer of 1989, the 4 APNM representatives were elected members of the Armenian parliament.

The Azeri blockade of Armenia and Karabakh.

From the early 1989, Azerbaijan imposed a severe economic blockade of Armenia and Artsakh. That resulted in the dramatic shortages of gas and other energy sources. At the same time, the Metsamor plant, the only nuclear station in Transcaucasia was shut down in Armenia, which severely diminished energy supply. Food supplies also greatly diminished.

Meanwhile, the situation extremely aggravated in Artsakh. In November of 1989, the USSR Supreme Soviet abolished the Special Administration Committee of Nagorno-Karabakh which was decreed earlier to subordinate the region directly to Moscow. Instead, the Organizational Committee of Nagorno-Karabakh was formed to reinstate the jurisdiction of Azerbaijan. On December 1, 1989 the Armenians of Armenia and Nagorno-Karabakh responded with a mutual decision of their parliaments, proclaiming the reunification of Armenia and Artsakh. That provoked mass disturbances and unrest in Azerbaijan.

Massacres in Baku.

In January 1990, the Azerbaijan capital of Baku exploded into chaos and anarchy. The extremists from the Popular Front of Azerbaijan in fact seized the power, making extermination or expulsion of the Armenians their banner. From January 10, mass pogroms took place, resulting in the slaughter of hundreds. Many Armenians were shot, burned alive, raped, and tortured in barbaric fashion. Hundreds of thousands of refugees then flooded Armenia.

The Sovereignty of Armenia proclaimed.

Just like some of the republics of the decaying Soviet Union, Armenia proclaimed its sovereignty, adopting the supremacy of the Armenian Constitution over the Constitution of the USSR. Levon Ter-Petrossian, member of the Karabakh Committee and leader of ANM, was elected Chairman of the Armenian Supreme Council.

Massacres and deportations in Karabakh.

In the spring of 1991, the united Azeri and Soviet militia forces began the so-called "Circle" operation in the Armenian-populated villages of Shahumian, Khanlar and Shusi districts. Under pretext of "passports checking", the Azeri and Russian militiamen started unparalleled robbery and killing. During the deportation of 24 Armenian villages some 100 Armenians were killed. In despite of several protests of the Armenian Government, the purges continued with growing cruelty and impunity.

In the summer of 1991, the leaders of Artsakh appealed to the United Nations, asking to prevent the physical annihilation of the population. At the same time, the leaders of Artsakh understood that the impotence of the central Soviet power and the new political situation necessitated the new strategy in the task of reunification of Armenia and Artsakh. Now they headed for laying foundation of a proper State in Artsakh. A Declaration proclaiming the foundation of the Nagorno-Karabakh Republic (NKR) was made in early September 1991.

Referendum in Armenia.

The Soviet Empire de facto collapsed in the August of 1991, after an attempt to stage a coup failed in Moscow. A referendum was organized in Armenia on September 21, 1991, the Armenian residents voting overwhelmingly for the secession from the USSR. Thus, after 70 years of Soviet ruling Armenia became an independent State. In October 1991, the presidential elections took place in Armenia. Levon Ter-Petrossian became the first popularly elected President in Armenian history.

Referendum in Karabakh.

Meanwhile, the situation in Artsakh turned critical, as Azerbaijan began systematic bombing of the Armenian-populated areas. The Azeri-populated villages and the city of Shushi were converted into the military bases. After the disintegration of the USSR the Soviet Army units withdrew from Azerbaijan, and the latter became holder of a large amount of armament and military equipment.

On December 10, 1991, 98% of Artsakh residents voted for the independence of Nagorno-Karabakh Republic in a referendum carried in presence of the international observers and Human Rights Watch groups.

Azerbaijan answered by intensive bombing of Stepanakert, the capital of Artsakh, in which it used the deadly "Grad" rocket projectiles banned by the International Conventions. At the same time, the armed forces of Azerbaijan began the large-scale offensive against the infant Republic (for more information about the war please see History of Artsakh, part 3.

Truce.

A truce has been in effect since May of 1994, but the conflicting sides did not make any substantial progress in finding a peaceful resolution of the problem. Azerbaijan continues to appeal to the international community trying to play the so-called "oil card". Armenia confirms itself ready to support any issue making it a condition that the Nagorno-Karabakh Republic must approve the issue. Artsakh, in its turn, is inflexible in its will to obtain the complete independence.

Kocharyan becomes President of Armenia.

Robert Kocharyan In March of 1997, L.Ter-Petrossian appointed as Prime Minister Robert Kocharyan, President of Nagorno-Karabakh Republic. Kocharyan declared struggle against corruption and tax evasion his priorities. In Artsakh, the presidential elections took place. Arkady Ghukassian, former NKR Minister of Foreign Affairs, was elected President of the NKR. In February 1998, as a disagreement occurred concerning the Karabakh issue between the President and the members of his administration, L.Ter-Petrossian resigned. In March 1998, Robert Kocharyan was elected President of Armenia.

The present political situation in Armenia is not firm. The country is still recovering after the October 27, 1999 shocking terrorist attack in the Parliament building in Yerevan, in which the Prime Minister Vasken Sarkissian and the Parliament Speaker Karin Demirchyan were slain. However, Robert Kocharyan stood firm during the crisis.

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