

The ARF's First 120 Years

A Brief Review of Available Sources and Historiography

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One constant feature defining the first 120 years of the Armenian Revolutionary Federation (ARF), or the Dashnak Party, has been its incessant activity within the realm of Armenian politics and often in other related domains as well, beyond politics narrowly defined. Historians of almost any post-1890 episode concerning the Armenians inevitably also deal with the ARF, usually directly, or, at the very least, indirectly.

Over these years, the ARF has established a stable following, especially in the post-Genocide Armenian Diaspora. For decades, its influence as a single faction across this—what we may describe as the traditional—Diaspora has far outweighed those of its two, long-established rivals, the Social-Democratic Hunchakian and Ramkavar Azatakan parties. Moreover, after the Sovietization of Armenia in 1920, the ARF never became reconciled with the narrow diasporic straightjacket that was imposed upon it by the exigencies of international politics, and it tried tirelessly to restore its transnational character at every opportunity. In 1990, it finally managed to return formally to the Armenian nation-state, and, since then, it has been trying to re-establish viable roots not only in the Republic of Armenia, but also in the Republic of Nagorno-Karabakh (Artsakh), the predominantly Armenian-inhabited region of Samtskhe-Javakheti in southern Georgia, and among the growing Armenian communities across the Russian Federation. The party has done so with varying levels of success, although the overall level of its achievements in this regard has arguably been more modest than what it anticipated some twenty years ago.

In parallel with this decades-long active history, the ARF also became the foremost publisher in Armenian life of various genres of political literature—theory-related, policy-outline, propaganda, and history. The existing literature by and on the ARF far exceeds that related to the Hunchakians and Ramkavars.¹ Therefore, there is more accumulated historical knowledge on the ARF both at the scholarly and popular levels than about its traditional rivals in the Diaspora.

Most of the published primary and secondary historical literature on the ARF is in Armenian. Except for some insightful analyses, very little of what has been published in other languages has made original contributions to our current knowledge of the party's history. Publications dealing with the ARF in English, French, Spanish, Russian, Farsi, Arabic, and other languages have usually relied heavily on primary and secondary sources, which had previously been available to the public in Armenian. Hourri Berberian's *Armenians and the Iranian Constitutional Revolution of 1905–1911* and Dikran M. Kaligian's *Armenian Organization and Ideology under Ottoman Rule, 1908–1914* are rare, but welcome exceptions to this pattern.² Both authors have made first use of ARF documents that were previously inaccessible to historians and interested lay readers. Therefore, this author hopes to see the contents of these two works become available to Armenian-reading audiences in some form in the near future.

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This relatively vast historical literature on the ARF is extremely imbalanced, however, regarding the different epochs of the party's history that it covers. The overwhelming majority of collections of documents and secondary literature published by the party, its leaders, and intellectuals—what we will call the “authorized” corpus of ARF literature—deals with the first 35 years of its history, from its founding in 1890 to the party's 10th World Congress in 1924–1925, the first after the collapse of the ARF-led independent Republic of Armenia (1918–1920). The most extensive published collection of primary documents is, of course, *Niuter H.H. Dashnaksutian patmutian hamar* [Documents on the History of the ARF], edited by Hrach Tasnapetian and Yervand Pampukian, of which eight volumes have been published

by the Hamazgayin Press in Beirut from 1972 to 2012. The volumes published to date focus on the pre-World War I period, although it is hoped that the next volumes in this ongoing series will sooner or later pass on to the post-1924 era. The most erudite general histories of the party published so far, Mikayel Varandian's two-volume *H.H. Dashnaksutian patmutiun* [History of the ARF] (Paris, 1932–1950) and Tasnapetian's *H.H. Dashnaksutiune ir kazmutenen minchev Zh. Endh. Zhoghov (1890–1924)* [The ARF from Its Founding to the 10th World Congress] (Athens, 1988) also confine their narratives to the pre-1924 period.³ Tasnapetian's *H. H. Dashnaksutian kazmakerpakan karuitsi holovuite* [The Evolution of the ARF Organizational Structure] (Beirut, 1974) devotes eight chapters to the study of the evolution of the party's organizational structure in the 1890–1924 period, but only two chapters to the next fifty years. In the four-volume *Patmagrutiun Hay Heghapokhakan Dashnaksutian* [Historiography of the Armenian Revolutionary Federation] (Athens, 1990–1995), edited by Harutiun Kiurkchian, the first three-and-half volumes deal with the history of the 1890–1924 period, and only the second half of the fourth volume covers some episodes that occurred after 1924. The same pre-1924 focus applies to more popular publications, which target young or lay audiences. Only two of the ten chapters in the second volume of *Dashnaksakan pataniin girke* [The Book of the Dashnak Adolescent] (Beirut, 2003), edited by Vigen Avagian, refer to the ARF's post-1921 activities. The rest—the full 287 pages of volume I, plus the first 235 pages (out of 291) in volume II—simply detail the ARF's activities in its first three decades. *Hushamatian Hay Heghapokhakan Dashnaksutian: Alpom-atlas* [ARF Commemorative Volume Album-Atlas], edited by Hakob Manchikian and published in Los Angeles in to mark the 100th anniversary of the party's founding, promised to cover the entirety of the ARF's 1890–1990 history in three volumes. However, only the first two volumes have come out so far, in 1992 and 2000 respectively, and they cover developments until 1925.

This period, 1890–1924, was indeed eventful in modern Armenian history. It witnessed the rise of the Armenian national-liberation movement in the Ottoman Empire, Armenian involvement in the anti-Tsarist struggle in the Russian Empire, the Second Ottoman

Constitutional period, the First World War and the Armenian Genocide, the post-war peace conferences in Paris and Lausanne, the Russian Revolutions of 1917, the rise and fall of the independent Republic of Armenia, and the ARF's last public stands in Eastern Armenia through the February Insurrection and the short-lived Republic of Mountainous Armenia (*Lernahayastan*) in 1921. This thirty-five-year period of ARF activity, which has enjoyed intense historical scrutiny, ends with the party's first tentative steps in exile to forge the bases of its future ideology and activities conforming to the new diasporic conditions.

The ARF was only one actor, albeit a major one, during this crucial era in Armenian history. Many professional or amateur historians outside the party's immediate circle of influence have also written extensively on this period. During their endeavors, these authors have also inevitably touched upon the ARF's involvement in these events, sometimes praising and at other times chastising the party, either in general or relevant to its involvement in certain controversial, historical episodes of this period.

Compared with the post-1924 era, today we have what this author will describe as an adequate level of knowledge about what happened during the earlier, 1890–1924 period and how the ARF both reacted to and partly shaped its important events. Polemics persist and sometimes they still get sharp, but these are more common among publicists and laypeople who like to resort to selective historical facts or interpretations to make a point or show their pre-existing sympathies for or against the ARF. To a large extent, these persisting, oft-repeated polemics are remnants of Cold War-era antagonisms between the ARF and rival factions in the Diaspora. In post-Soviet Armenia as well, the same themes are sometimes picked up by both pro- and anti-ARF politicians and publicists, again mostly for the purposes of political point-scoring. There is, on the other hand, converging consensus among most professional historians when presenting conclusions on the most pivotal events of this period and the ARF's involvement in the latter.

The increasing freedom enjoyed by historians in Armenia since the collapse of the Soviet system two decades ago, and the wider access that they now have to archival materials housed in various institutions in Yerevan, have helped us find out more about certain aspects of the

Armenian national-liberation struggle in the Ottoman Empire and even more about the period of Armenian independence (1918–1920). A lot is coming out in Armenia these days in the domain of modern Armenian history, and among these works the ARF has its fair share, especially in connection to the two broad themes just mentioned. By confining this analysis to the more elaborate works that cover the ARF directly or indirectly, we can divide them into four broad categories. In the first category, Gevorg Khudinian's *H.H. Dashnaksutian patmutiun akunknerits minchev 1895 tvakani verjere* [History of the ARF from the Beginnings to the End of 1895] (2006) and Ashot Nersisian's *H.H. Dashnaksutian patmutiun (1898–1908 tvakanner)* [History of the ARF (1898–1908)], volume II (Beirut, 2008) are new attempts to write comprehensive histories of the early years of the party.⁴ In the second category, Gevorg Khudinian's *H.H. Dashnaksutian tsnunde* [The Genesis of the ARF] (2000), Mariam Hovsepien's *HHD K. Polsi parberakan mamule azgayin-azatagrutian jahakir (1909–1915 tt.)* [The ARF Periodical Press in Constantinople as Torchbearer of National Liberation (1909–1915)] (2003) and *HHD K. Polsi parberakan mamule (1909–1924 tt.)* [The ARF Periodical Press in Constantinople (1909–1924)] (2009), as well as Hamlet Martik Gevorgian's *Hay Heghapokhakan Dashnaksutian gortsuneutiune Arevmtian Hayastanum 1895–1908 tt.* [The Activities of the Armenian Revolutionary Federation in Western Armenia 1895–1908] (2009) cover specific aspects of the party's history during the pre-1924 period. Issues related to the ARF are also prominent in many secondary studies, which focus on the Armenian national-liberation struggle in Ottoman/Western Armenia. Among these works, which constitute the third category in this section, mention should be made of Ashot Nersisian's *Azgayin-azatagrakan paykare Taronum 1894–1908 tt.* [The National-Liberation Struggle in Taron 1894–1908] (1999), Hovik Grigorian's *Hay azatagrakan paykari martavarutiune 1895–1898 tt.* [The Tactics of the Armenian Liberation Struggle 1895–1898] (2002) and *Hayots azatamarti zinman ev finansavorman khndire 1890–1908 tt.* [The Question of the Arming and Financing of the Armenian Freedom Struggle 1890–1908] (2004), Vardan Petoyan's *Sasunn antsialum yev Sasuni azatagrakan sharzhumnere* [Sasun in the Past and the Liberation Movements of Sasun] (2005), as well as Gevorgian's *Ejer hayots azatamarti* [Pages from the Armenian Freedom

Struggle] (2005) and *Azatagrakan paykari herosapatumits* [From the Heroic History of the Liberation Struggle] (2006). The ARF activities in Russian/Eastern Armenia are covered, in turn, in Gevorgian's *Azatagrakan paykari kovkasyan chakate* [The Caucasian Front of the Liberation Struggle] (2010) and Ararat Hakobian's *Hayastani khorhrdarane yev kaghakakan kusaktsutiunnere 1918–1920 tt.* [The Parliament of Armenia and the Political Parties 1918–1920] (2005).⁵ Finally, as a fourth category, a number of new biographies have also appeared of prominent ARF activists from this period. Gevorgian has published *Dro* (1999, 2000 and 2007), *Nikol Duman* (2001 and 2002), and *Sebastatsi Murad* (2003 and 2009), while Nersisian has authored *Avetik Sahakian* (2003), *Karo Sasuni* (2004), *Zoravar Sepuh* [General Sepuh] (2005), and *Ruben* (2007). Since either most of these Armenia-based authors are party members or their works were published with official party support, we should probably consider their output as among the latest additions to the “authorized” corpus of ARF literature.⁶ Among these authors, Gevorgian was in the company of the privileged few who have been given access to and made use of the primary sources, which are housed at the ARF Central Archives in Watertown, Massachusetts.⁷ On a related note, one interesting documentary publication in post-Soviet Yerevan, pertaining to ARF history and originating from the Watertown collection, is *Garegin Nzhdehi 1921 t. Tavrizi datavarutiune est norahayt vaveratgtheri* [The 1921 Trial of Garegin Nzhdeh in Tabriz, Based on Newly Found Documents], edited by Avag Harutiunian. It had two separate editions, in 2001 and 2004, respectively. It should be underlined, however, that there have been few radical departures in the studies listed above from previously established interpretations; many arguments and counter-arguments inherited from the past continue to be reiterated in these works.

The eventual unfettered opening of the ARF Central Archives may shed additional light on this period. Knowledge of certain episodes in the party's history may deepen. However, it is highly unlikely that access to these papers, at present closed to most experts, will radically alter the way the 1890–1924 period is currently interpreted by professional historians. On the other hand, it is possible that previously inaccessible information coming out of these archives, coupled with new research methods and interpretive approaches in the social sciences, may result

in the party's identity and role being analyzed along new dimensions, previously absent in ARF historiography.

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This situation changes radically when we move to the post-1924 period of the history of the ARF (i.e., the party's last 85 years). Firstly, not only do historians not have access to the party's own archives for this period (this is already an obstacle to most specialists who are studying the ARF's first 35 years), but, in this case, they are also told that the party's own archives for this particular era are not only out of bounds because of an administrative decision, but that they are still poorly organized, if at all. Secondly, the party itself has not undertaken any real effort to publish collections of primary documents pertaining to post-1924 developments, as it has done for the earlier period. Finally, more curious is the fact that ARF leaders have themselves been reluctant to pen their memoirs of this period, compared to developments between 1890 and 1924, when there is an abundance of first-hand accounts, published either in book format or in two celebrated ARF periodicals, the *Hairenik* monthly in Boston (1922–1970) and *Vem* in Paris (1933–1939).

Famous ARF leaders, who were active both before and long after 1924, rarely touched on post-1924 developments in their voluminous writings of autobiographical nature. Ruben Ter Minasian, Simon Vratsian, Vahan Papazian, and Karo Sasuni are prominent examples of this group. Among members of roughly the same generation, it seems that Shavarsh Misakian, Arshak Jamalian, Vahan Navasardian, Dro, and Gabriel Lazian never wrote memoirs. Leading figures among the next two generations of ARF leaders, Kopernik Tanturchian, Atur Gapagian, Babken Papazian, and Hrach Tasnapetian have also no published autobiographies.⁸ To my knowledge, among the numerous ARF members who served on the successive bureaus—the ARF's highest executive body—in the post-1924 period, only Andranik Urfalian has published memoirs, *Kianki me hetkerov* [Along the Traces of a Life], printed in all likelihood in California in 1991. Among ARF activists who have filled humbler positions in the party hierarchy during this period, one may add a few articles by A. Amurian, published in the periodical *Droshak* in 1986,⁹ Misak Torlakian's *Orerus het* [With My Days] (Los Angeles, 1953), S. Saruni's memoirs published as a series in the periodical *Azdak Shabatoriak* in 1970, Armen

Sevan's (Hovhannes Tevechian) *Bantarkiali me hushere: Tarapanki tariner G. Nzhdehi het* [The Memoirs of a Prisoner: Years of Torment with G. Nzhdeh] (Buenos Aires, 1970; reprinted in Yerevan, 2008), Baghdik Minasian's *Tase tari, tase amis yev tasneot or khorhrdayin banterum yev ashkhatankayin chamberum [1944, 3 Hunvar–1954, 17 Noyember]* [Ten Years, Ten Months and 17 Days in Soviet Prisons and Labor Camps (3 January 1944–17 November 1954)] (Athens, 1991), Melgon Eplighatian's unfinished, two-volume *Gaghtakayanen khorhrdaran...* [From a Refugee Camp to Parliament...] (Aleppo, 1993–2005), and Suren Antoyan's *Inknakertumi chambov* [On the Path of Self-Accomplishment] (Beirut, 2006). However, this is, I think, as far as one can go.

Some information on inner dealings within the ARF during the post-1924 period can be gleaned from autobiographical insights in the mostly polemical works penned by former ARF figures who left the party or were expelled at various times and under different circumstances. Within this group, the works of Shahan Natali,¹⁰ Grigor Merchanof,¹¹ Khosrov Tiutiunchian,¹² and Andranik Tsarukian¹³ should be mentioned.

Under these circumstances, where access to archival material remains next to impossible and autobiographical sources are minimal, the ARF press published in various centers of the Diaspora remains the major primary source to write about certain aspects of the party's post-1924 history, especially the evolution of its ideology, priorities, and tactics. However, the ARF press, with its long-established traditions of self-censorship, is very inadequate as a source to analyze and write about the party's inner dealings, its decision-making process, and its relations with other Armenian organizations as well as non-Armenian state and non-state actors.

However, the very limited access to archival sources and the dearth of published autobiographies are probably *not* the only reasons that have hindered the conduct of in-depth studies in the post-1924 history of the ARF. It also appears that there has never been a sustained interest among the party's leaders to sponsor such studies, as well as related public debates and discussions. Conducting a survey among ARF leaders and prominent intellectuals in the party about the causes behind this attitude will, of course, be very interesting per se. However, this article will not venture into the uncharted territory of offering guesses

about why it is so. Suffice it to say that the prevailing cautious attitude among contemporary Armenian elites of the Diaspora of all political persuasions, including those outside the ARF orbit of influence, toward openly tackling the nation's recent history has also not helped.

It is very difficult to mention any published, high-quality, professional study that deals with any aspect of ARF post-1924 history. The book version of Gaidz Minassian's *Guerres et terrorisme arméniens 1972–1998* [Armenian Wars and Terrorism 1972–1998] (Paris: Presses universitaires de France, 2002) unfortunately lacked the scholarly citations necessary to impose a public discussion among scholars, at least around the various interesting issues that it raised. There have been very few PhD dissertations in American and British universities. Mention can be made of Ara Caprielian's *The Armenian Revolutionary Federation: The Politics of a Party in Exile* (New York University, 1975), Hratch Bedoyan's *The Internal Power Structure and Political Leadership of the Armenian and Druze Communities in Modern Lebanon (1943–72) and Their Political Activities in Three Major Crises* (University of Oxford, 1978), and Nikola B. Schahgaldian's *The Political Integration of an Immigrant Community into a Composite society: the Armenians in Lebanon, 1920–1974* (Columbia University, 1979). However, these dissertations remain for the most part unpublished¹⁴ and are now probably also to some extent dated.

Schahgaldian and Bedoyan have been among the lucky few who have had the opportunity to consult archival material in the party's possession when writing their dissertations. Shogher (Shoghik) Ashegian has also enjoyed that rare privilege when conducting research on the ARF and activities related to what is now widely described as the Armenian Cause in Lebanon in the 1960s and 1970s. A number of Armenian-language academic and popular articles, which she has published on this subject, are usually excerpts from her dissertation at Yerevan State University.¹⁵ The latter, however, to date remains unpublished in its totality.

Another interesting set of articles by A. Avetikian, which cover the post-1924 political and ideological evolution of the ARF and are based on primary material currently inaccessible to most historians, were published in *Droshak* in 1986–1987.¹⁶ They plot the changes observed

in the political objectives of the party as enshrined in the resolutions of successive world congresses.

The recent biographies of Dro, Karo Sasuni, Avetik Sahakian, and Ruben Ter Minasian, all mentioned earlier in this study, continue to concentrate for the most part on their pre-1924 activities. These works devote only a few pages each to their activities in the Diaspora in the ensuing decades. Indeed, Sasuni's biographer, who did not have access to archival material in the party's possession, openly admits that he could not clarify the exact date when Sasuni rejoined the ARF Bureau.¹⁷ This is probably a good indicator about the very inadequate level of current historiographical knowledge on the diasporic period of ARF history; even some of the most mundane facts are often impossible to determine.

The lack of adequate interest in post-1924 developments pertaining to the ARF is probably behind another feature in contemporary Armenian historiography—the fact that Soviet Armenian and foreign (i.e., U.S., British, French, and other) archives, which can provide some glimpses on the party's post-1924 history, also remain largely untapped by historians.

Historians in post-Soviet Armenia have also shown no particular interest in the ARF's post-1924 history, which mostly occurred, after all, outside Eastern Armenia. *H.H. Dashnaksutiune yev khorhrdayin ishkanutiune* [The ARF and the Soviet Authorities] (Yerevan, 1999), a collection of documents compiled by Vladimir Ghazakhetsian and published by the ARF Bureau, covers mostly the 1920s and only to some extent the 1930s. It is certainly a commendable exception. Eduard Abrahamian, a young scholar, has also written recently about ARF groups that clandestinely breached the southern borders of the USSR in the 1920s and 1930s.¹⁸ Nevertheless, it is obvious that even in both these cases the purely diasporic component of the ARF's post-1924 history remains largely missing.

The absence of high-quality secondary literature makes it very difficult for historians to provide informed opinion on many important issues that remain indispensable to any attempt to evaluate the ARF's post-1924 trajectory as a whole—the party's role in community-building in the post-Genocide communities of the Diaspora; its individual or group responsibility for the persistence of inter-party rivalries in the Armenian Diaspora; the related issue of the ARF's involvement in Armenian Church

politics, including the persisting disputes between the catholicosates of Ejmiadzin and Antelias; the ARF's relations with Georgian and Azerbaijani exiles in the inter-war period; the participation of the ARF in electoral politics primarily in Lebanon, but also in Iran, Cyprus, and Syria; the gradual détente between the ARF and the Communist authorities in Soviet Armenia from the 1960s onward; and the party's clandestine attempts to disseminate nationalist literature among intellectuals and the youth in Soviet Armenia, particularly from the 1970s.¹⁹ I will end this partial list of examples with a topic that has intrigued me in the past few years—the gradual evolution from the 1960s of the ARF's ideology, and by extension its tactical political choices, from that of a “Cold Warrior” party, allied to right-wingers in various host countries of the Armenian Diaspora, to something more akin to a Third-Worldist party at present. This gradual, but steady shift has had localized, yet comparable manifestations in a number of countries where the ARF has established branches.

In the absence of good scholarship on the post-1924 period, polemics among those who hold pro- or anti-ARF views continue to remain more acute in relation to particular, usually violent, episodes of which the ARF was or is believed to be a part. Examples include the assassination of Archbishop Ghevond (Leon) Tourian in New York on December 24, 1933; the cooperation of some prominent ARF figures, in particular Dro, with Nazi Germany during the Second World War; Dro's subsequent political and quasi-military activities in the Arab world; the discovery of armed caches and the arrest of many ARF members in the United Arab Republic (UAR) in August 1961, followed by their subsequent trial in early 1962 under the new Syrian regime that had taken control after the disintegration of the UAR; and, finally, the occasionally bloody encounters between the ARF and the Armenian Secret Army for the Liberation of Armenia (ASALA) on the fringes of the Lebanese Civil War in the early 1980s. While each of these episodes can be treated as a thriller in its own right, a more in-depth and dispassionate study is necessary for each of them in order to separate historical fact from myth and guesswork, to cool down passions inherited from those who were participants in or contemporaries to these events, and, most importantly, and in parallel with the broader issues listed above, as a gateway to better understand the ARF's political and ideological evolution in the Diaspora.

The ARF's involvement in political events leading to and since the outbreak of the Karabakh Movement in Armenia in February 1988, especially its military exploits during the war against Azerbaijan, has generated numerous publications and has become part of the "authorized" corpus of ARF literature. For example, together with the ARF's pursuit of the international recognition of the Armenian Genocide and the activities of the Justice Commandos of the Armenian Genocide and the Armenian Revolutionary Army, the ARF's contribution to the 1988–1994 war in Nagorno-Karabakh is the only post-1924 topic that occupies considerable space in both Kiurkchian's *Patmagrutian* and Avagian's *Pataniin girke*. These events are probably too fresh to be analyzed in depth by professional historians today. There is no doubt, however, that they will concern historians in the future who will be interested in understanding the trajectory and the causes behind the sharp rift between the ruling Armenian National Movement (ANM) and the ARF in Armenia in the 1990s, its impact on internal politics in Nagorno-Karabakh and military tactics during the war against Azerbaijan, the encouragement by the ANM to instigate an abortive dissident movement within the ARF ranks in the Diaspora, and the details of the activities, arrest, trial, and sentencing of the clandestine group "Dro." For serious pieces of historical research on the post-1988 period, encouragement (or at least acquiescence) by ARF leaders to have these topics discussed openly, plus access to archival material in the party's possession for professional historians without distinction of nationality or political convictions, will be just as essential as they are, as we have noted, to uncover and analyze the earlier decades of the ARF's twentieth-century history.

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On the occasion of the party's 120th anniversary, I hope that its current leadership will from now on encourage a deeper public discussion on the ARF's post-1924 history in diasporic conditions. Such an endeavor will no doubt contribute to having a better educated Armenian public that will make more accurate decisions on important matters, informed by the best possible understanding of its past. Moreover, it goes without saying that making more primary

sources pertaining to this era available to interested individuals is a vital component toward achieving this objective. The ARF leadership can go back to the party's coffers to look for and eventually release unpublished memoirs penned by earlier generations of leaders, noted activists, and intellectuals. It should also make the party's own archives accessible to professional historians as quickly and as widely as possible. It can even take a parallel initiative and publish significant chunks of the more interesting and important documents in its possession, without necessarily waiting for the gradual release of the projected successive volumes of *Niuter H.H. Dashnaksutian patmutian hamar*. The increased specialization in the domain of modern and contemporary Armenian history makes it possible for the compiling and editing of party documents from different epochs to be assigned to different expert individuals, all working at the same time. Finally, the absence of published autobiographies from the post-1924 era, as well as more recent attempts in the social sciences worldwide to provide a voice to participants and observers who fill relatively lower ranks in the hierarchical structures of various organizations, also make tempting the initiation of oral history projects seeking out the memories and retrospective evaluations of ARF veterans with acknowledged intellectual depth, or targeting members of specific groups affiliated with the party, like the veterans of the 1988–1994 war in Karabakh or members of Armenian self-defense units in Bourj Hammoud during the Lebanese Civil War (1975–1990).

Evidently, many of these suggested measures will not be implemented immediately. However, this author will definitely be among the first to cheer loud and clear whenever he will see some progress in this direction. The pivotal role the ARF plays in the Armenian Diaspora makes us hope that any opening up by the party structures toward an informed discussion of the history of its last eight decades or so will also inevitably push other established organizations of the Diaspora in the same direction.

NOTES

- N.B.: This review article is an expanded version of the paper “The ARF’s First 120 Years: A Historian’s Perspective,” delivered at “The ARF at 120: A Critical Appreciation” public forum in New York, on November 21, 2010. The author thanks the following colleagues for their comments on an earlier draft of this article: Aram Arkun, Bedross Der Matossian, Marc Mamigonian, Garabet K. Moundjian, Garo Ohannessian, Razmik Panossian, and Khachig Tölölyan.
- 1 Because of the very different circumstances in which it was published, literature by and on the Communist Party in Armenia during the Soviet period is not included in this comparison.
 - 2 Houri Berberian, *Armenians and the Iranian Constitutional Revolution of 1905–1911* (Boulder, CO and Oxford: Westview Press, 2001); Dikran M. Kaligian, *Armenian Organization and Ideology under Ottoman Rule, 1908–1914* (New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction Press, 2009).
 - 3 The second work is available in English translation: Hratch Dasnabedian, *History of the Armenian Revolutionary Federation Dashnaksutiun 1890/1924* (Milan: OEMME Edizioni, 1990).
 - 4 All books mentioned in this paragraph were published in Yerevan, except where otherwise noted.
 - 5 For an extensive review of the secondary literature on the 1918–1920 Republic of Armenia published in Yerevan after 1988, see Samson Karian, *Hayastani arajin hanrapetutian patmutian patmagrutuun* [The Historiography of the History of the First Republic of Armenia] (2003). Understandably, more recent studies pertaining to this period have continued to come out since Karian’s work was published.
 - 6 Two other ARF activists from this period, Aram Manukian and Garegin Nzhdeh, have also been studied extensively by Armenia-based historians in the post-Soviet era. However, we are careful not to include the totality of the works that have appeared on these two historical figures in the past two decades within the “authorized” corpus of ARF literature, for a significant portion of these books were written by scholars who espouse political ideals to the right of the ARF mainstream and/or their publication was sponsored by the ruling Republican Party, other radical-nationalist factions, or organizations within the latter’s orbit of political influence.
 - 7 Other works whose authors have also enjoyed this rare privilege are Jacques Derogy, *Opération Némésis* (Paris: Fayard, 1986) [translated into English as *Resistance & Revenge: The Armenian Assassination of the Turkish Leaders Responsible for the 1915 Massacres and Deportations* (New Brunswick and London: Transaction, 1990)] and Stephan Astourian, “Testing World-System Theory, Cilicia (1830s–1890s): Armenian-Turkish Polarization and the Ideology of Modern Ottoman Historiography,” unpublished Ph.D. thesis, University of California, Los Angeles, 1996. Richard G. Hovannisian’s monumental four-volume *The Republic of Armenia* (Berkeley, CA: 1971–1996) is based extensively on the collection of some of the archives of this republic, which are kept together with the ARF party archives in Watertown. However, a much bigger collection of the Republic of Armenia (1918–1920) archives is now open to researchers in Yerevan since the dying days of the Soviet era.
 - 8 Because of the abrupt nature of their respective departures from active political life, it is unwise to expect Sargis Zeytlian and Hrayr Marukhian to have penned memoirs.

- 9 See, for example, “Gortsich parizahayutian mej` 1920akan tvakanneru B. kesin” [A Fieldworker Among the Armenians of Paris in the Second Half of the 1920s], *Droshak* 17, no. 15 (November 12, 1986): 13–14.
- 10 See, for example, *Turkizme Angorayen Paku yev trkakan orientasion: knnadatakan hay kaghakakan mtki* [Turkism from Angora to Baku and Turkish Orientation: A Critique of Armenian Political Thought] (Athens, 1928); *Turkere yev menk* [The Turks and Us] (Athens, 1928); and *Aleksandrapoli dashnagren 1930-i kovkasian apstambutiunnere (vergnahatumner), hator B.: Petrvari 18i apstambutenen Prometei hraparakume* [From the Treaty of Alexandropol to the Caucasian Rebellions of 1930 (A Re-Evaluation), Volume II: From the February 18 Rebellion to the Proclamation of Prometheus] (Marseille 1935).
- 11 *Im ktake* [My Will] (Beirut, 1972).
- 12 See *Biuroyakan snankutiune yev irav Dashnaksutian ughin: arabakan ashkharhi verjin depkeru luisin tak* [The Bankruptcy of the Bureau and the Correct Dashnak Path: In Light of Recent Events in the Arab World] (Beirut, 1959) and *Mer khoske Beklar Navasardiani elutin artiv* [Our Testimony on the Occasion of Beklar Navasardian's Declaration] (Beirut, 1966).
- 13 Only one of Tsarukian's published volumes, *Metsere yev ... miusnere* [The Greats and ... the Others] (Beirut, 1992), fits strictly into the criteria of the literary genre of memoirs. However, references to the post-1924 history of the ARF are frequent in Tsarukian's journalistic articles published in *Nayiri*, the literary periodical that he established in 1941 and edited for over four decades, until 1983. Some of his longer pieces first published in *Nayiri* were posthumously reprinted in book format, like *Amerikian koghm ashkharhi* [The American Side of the World] (Glendale, 1999) and *Arkaytsogh hayer Yevropayi luiserun mej* [Sparkling Armenians Under the Lights of Europe] (Beirut, 1999). One may also be tempted to include one of his works of fiction, *Verjin anmeghe* [The Last Innocent] (Beirut, 1980), where references to real historical personalities and events are usually less than opaque.
- 14 *The Armenian Review* has published over the years articles by all three authors: Ara Caprielian, “The Armenian Revolutionary Federation and Soviet Armenia,” 28, no. 3 (Autumn, 1975): 283–311; “Some Aspects of the Armenian Question and the Armenian Revolutionary Federation,” 29, no. 3 (Winter 1976–77): 373–401; Hratch Bedoyan, “The Social, Political and Religious Structure of the Armenian Community in Lebanon,” 32, no. 2 (June 1979): 119–130; Nikola B. Schahgaldian, “Ethnicity and Political Development in the Lebanese-Armenian Community, 1925–1975,” 36, no. 1 (Spring 1983): 46–61. Bedoyan has also published “The Policies Pursued by the Armenian Political Leadership in Lebanese Internal Politics (1943–1970),” *Panorama* 30 (1983). These articles are largely excerpts of the dissertations mentioned, but a lot of interesting information and analysis in the same dissertations remains unpublished. Bedoyan's articles have been translated into Armenian as part of the posthumously published collection of his works, *Girk hishataki: Hodvatsner yev vkayutiunner* [Memorial Book: Articles and Testimonies] (Beirut, 1995).
- 15 See, for example, “Haykakan Tseghaspanutian hartse MAK-i mej (1971–1975)” [The Question of the Armenian Genocide at the United Nations], *Lraber Hasarakakan Gitutyunneri*, 2 (May–August 2004): 230–238; “Libananahay gaghute yev Haykakan Tseghaspanutian hartse (1965–1975)” [The Lebanese Armenian Community and the Question of the Armenian Genocide (1965–1975)], in Aida Boudjikianian, ed., *Armenians of Lebanon: From Past Princesses and Refugees to Present-Day Community* (Beirut: 2009), 331–356. Other articles by Ashegian have appeared, among others, in

- Azduk* (Beirut), *Droshak* (Yerevan), *Gandzasar* (Aleppo), *Hayots Patmutian Hartser* (Yerevan), and *Nork* (Yerevan).
- 16 “Dashnaksutian kaghakakan ughegitsin holovuite H.H.D. Endhanur Zhoghovneru luisin tak” [The Evolution of the Political Platform of Dashnaksutian in Light of ARF General Meetings], *Droshak* 17, no. 15 (November 12, 1986): 26–33; “Dashnaksutian kaghakakan ughegitse yev Turkian (H.H.D. Endhanur Zhoghovneru luisin tak)” [The Political Platform of Dashnaksutian and Turkey (In Light of ARF General Meetings)], *Droshak* 17, no. 17 (December 10, 1986): 35–42 and no. 18 (December 24, 1986): 34–42; “H.H.Dashnaksutiunn u Rusakan Kaysrutium-Kh. Miutiune (H.H.D. Endhanur Zhoghovneru luisin tak)” [The ARF and the Russian Empire-Soviet Union (In Light of ARF General Meetings)], 17, no. 23 (March 4, 1987): 29–34.
- 17 Ashot Nersisian, *Karo Sasuni* (Yerevan, 2004), 277.
- 18 See Eduard Abramian, “The Caucasians in SD and Abwehr’s Service,” accessed December 26, 2010, http://www.armenian-history.com/Nyuter/HISTORY/ARMENIA20/caucasians_in_sd_and_abwher.htm.
- 19 Kiurkchian makes brief references to a few other episodes of the ARF’s post-1924 history in the fourth volume of *Patmagrutiun Hay Heghapokhakan Dashnaksutian* (Athens, 1995). These are the dissident *Martkots* movement in France in the late 1920s; the brief period of cooperation with the Kurdish nationalist movement, *Hoyboun*, also in the late 1920s; the persecution of ARF activists in the Soviet Union throughout the 1920s; Dro’s dealings with Nazi Germany during the Second World War; the arrest of Dashnak activists by the Soviet army in Iran and the Balkans toward the end of the same war, followed by their sojourn in exile in Siberia; the pursuit of the cause of the worldwide recognition of the Armenian Genocide from the mid-1960s; and the related activities of the pro-ARF hit men of the Justice Commandos of the Armenian Genocide (JCAG) and the Armenian Revolutionary Army (ARA) against Turkish diplomatic and other targets in the late 1970s and early 1980s. Garabet K. Moundjian also covers the ARF-Hoyboun links in his “Armenian Kurdish Relations in the Era of Kurdish National Movements (1830-1930),” *Bazmavep* 157, nos. 1–4 (1999): 268–347. These publications barely touch the tip of the iceberg, however, and they have not made use of any archival sources. Especially, the way JCAG and ARA activities are presented in the “authorized” corpus of ARF literature should be categorized more as contemporary myth-making rather than historiography.