PRESENT POLITICS AND PAST HISTORY

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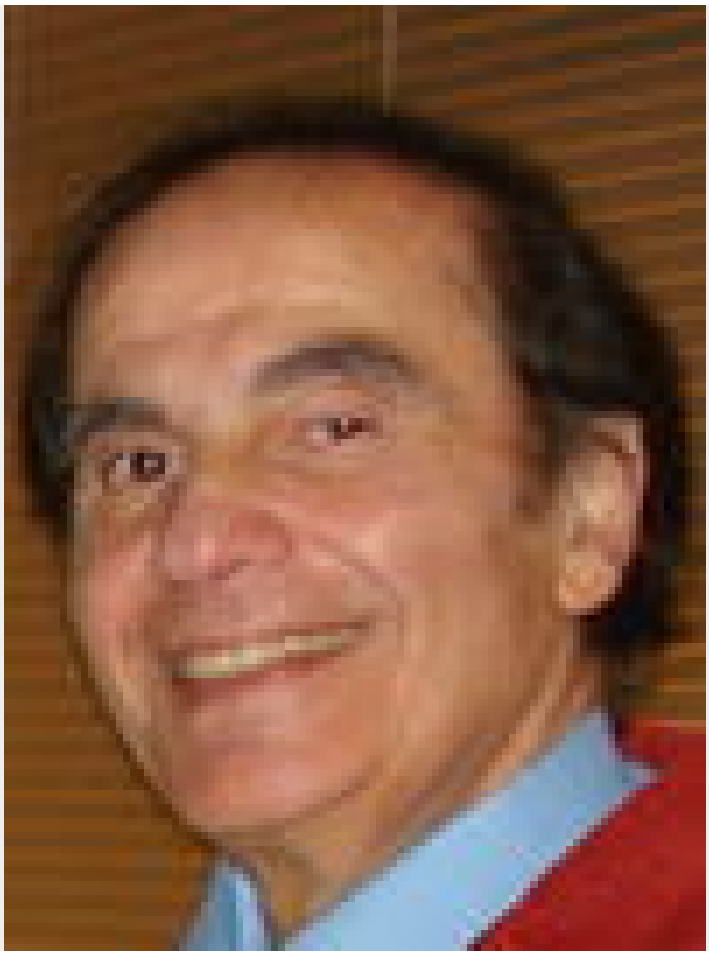

Category: Opinions

By Prof. Khatchatur I. Pilikian, **EREBOUNI** Bilingual – Armenian & English - Biweekly, London, 27 April 1991

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Sir John Seely, *The Growth of British Policy (*1895)

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Having read the editorial, I soon realized, alas, that it was focused outside the liberal and democratic perspectives of the biweekly's proclaimed politics. The editorial complained that *"A delegation, representing the Armenian Communist government…was never admitted to the conference, despite the fact that at the time the Soviet Union had not yet evolved into its present federated and centralised form and therefore Armenia was still a self-governing republic enjoying the right to hold negotiations with other states and to conclude formal treaties," (Erebouni,* No.171, p 5, London)

Concurrently, albeit in another political camp, the telegram of 15 March 1991 sent to the Armenian Supreme Soviet, Yerevan, by the London Branch of the Armenian National Committee and four affiliated Federations and Associations, is yet another message based on historical inaccuracy. Thus, referring to the Treaty of Moscow of March 16, 1921, the telegram reads: "*the Soviet-Turkish dishonourable agreement was signed between Bolshevik Armenia and the Turkish government representatives in Moscow…" (Banber,* 14 April 1991, p 4, London). Yet, unwittingly, the same *Banber* has published excerpts of the said Treaty along with the names of the only signatories, that of Soviet

Russia and Turkey (ibid, p 5).

But, let us consider facts first.

Writing about the Treaty of Moscow of March 16, 1921, without mentioning the historically crucial "February Uprising" of 1921, is simply futile, if not blatantly misleading. Breaking out on 12 February and lasting nearly two months, the fratricidal adventure claimed not only 20 thousand Armenian deaths (mostly communists and Dashnaks) but re-established in Yerevan, on 18 February, the old guards of the first Armenian Republic.

Having thus toppled momentarily the eleven weeks old Soviet Armenia (the second Armenian Republic), the *"Committee for the Liberation of the Fatherland"* under the leadership of Simon

Vratsian, hastened to ask for Turkish military aid (March 1st) against Soviet forces in Armenia. Moreover, while negotiations were being held in Moscow among the representatives of Soviet Armenia, Soviet Russia, and Turkey, Simon Vratsian sent off two fatal telegrams:

1. - March 12, 1921, to Soviet Russia's Foreign Minister, Chicherin, claiming that Begzadian, the Foreign Minister and head of the delegation representing Soviet Armenia at the ongoing Moscow conference, has no legal powers to represent Armenia, also because the new government of Yerevan accepts the Treaty of Alexandropol, therefore Armenia has no border dispute with Turkey.

2. - March 15, 1921, to the Foreign Affairs Committee of Turkey's Grand National Congress, declaring close friendship between Armenia and Turkey, while asking and hoping to get Turkey's financial and military aid to crush the Armenian bolsheviks, and that Armenia solemnly accepts the Treaty of Alexandropol as the basis for normal, international and friendly relations between the two countries.

Hence the Treaty of Moscow was signed on March 16, 1921, without Begzadian, or any other Armenian official for that matter, on the specific request of Simon Vratsian on behalf of the *"Committee for the Liberation of the Fatherland".*

Furthermore, on March 26, 1921, Simon Vratsian sent yet another telegram, this time to the Allied powers at the London Conference, declaring that Armenia is willing to live in peace and friendship with Turkey, wishing also that the decisions of the London Conference will not cause mistrust and displeasure between Turkey and Armenia.

Paradoxically, the first Armenian Republic's own representative at the London Conference, Avedis Aharonian, was trying in vain to reject the Treaty of Alexandropol, thus acting against the wishes of Vratsian, Aharonian was a signatory of the Treaty of Sevres (August 10, 1920) which the Treaty of Alexandropol, four months later, had come to reject.

The late Kersam Aharonian, one of the most prominent Liberal Democrat politicians of the Armenian Diaspora, was right to conclude: *"as a result of the political immaturity of the Leaders of the February Uprising the Turks secured a fait accompli".* And that "fait accompli" was to be ratified in Kars on Oct.

13, 1921, with the added signatures of the representatives of Soviet Armenia (re-established on April 2, 1921), Soviet Georgia, and, lo and behold, Soviet Azerbaijan.

Of course, the essence of the tragic sequence of treaties which enabled the Panturkists to usurp more Armenian Lands and cause more Armenian massacres, was formed in Batum on June 4, 1918, just three years after the Armenian Genocide of 1915 and the confiscation of the whole of Western Armenia. On Dec2, 1920, it was highlighted in Alexandropol, albeit illegally (Khatisian's signature being that of a superseded government, thus never ratified). And because of the "February Uprising" of 1921, it was revoked in Moscow on March 16, 1921, to be finally sealed in Kars on Oct. 13, 1921.

But now in 1991, the vital and crucial questions still remain. Are we repeating historical blunders with our own present politics? While initiating a rapprochement with Turkey but excluding Armenia from the All-Union Plebiscite of March 17, 1991, did the third Republic of Armenia miss an opportunity not to repeat the crushing *"fait accompli"* of march 16, 1921, when Armenia was excluded from its own border disputes because of the don quixotic infatuations of self indulgent Armenian leaders (whether Dashnak or Communist) with the Pan Turkic arch-enemy turned "comrade"? Are the resurgent nationalist leaders of Armenia today yielding to the pressures of extreme right Independence-fanatics, latter-day religious heretics, new Race-devotees, born-again Christian fundamentalists, free-market racketeers etc, etc to let loose an already weakened Armenia in the economic jaws of Panturanic racism recently "baptised" as Turkish Commonwealth to include Crimea, Caucasus, Azerbaijan, Central Asia, and much more? Can Armenia ever exist in a Turkish Commonwealth?

Armenians cannot afford forgetting that Pan Turkism in action has always meant annihilation of Armenians and confiscation of Armenian Lands.

We must not let historical events repeat genocidal crimes against humanity. People make history also by choice, more so by free choice.

We do have yet another chance to choose our present history for a better future, on September 21, 1991, with the third Armenian Republic's own Plebiscite