

**Ara Krikorian, *Dictionnaire de la Cause Arménienne* (Paris: Edipol Editions, 2002), 268 pp.**

For a researcher of any subject, a dictionary is a useful tool for quick reference. A fact encapsulated in a few words, an elusive date are usually easier to find in an encyclopedia-type work than in some scholarly volume.

Unfortunately, researchers in Armenian Studies have always been at odds with reference works. The ones produced in Armenia have proved defective for a myriad of reasons: entries missing due to ideological constraints, doubtful sources, faulty scholarship, lack of access to the latest research, one-sided viewpoints, etcetera. The same has happened with the ones produced abroad to a more or less similar extent.

In the 1990's, the Yerevan-based Armenian Encyclopedia produced a one-volume encyclopedia devoted to the Armenian Question (first published in Russian translation, 1991, and afterwards in the Armenian original, 1996). A collaborative effort between authors from Armenia and the Diaspora, while imperfect, at least had quite good scholarship behind it. Given the historical and political importance of the subject, such an enterprise was greatly overdue.

Now we have another book, of a less massive scope and different contents, published in France. The author, Ara Krikorian, is a French-Armenian publisher of technical books. He is a long-term activist for the Armenian Cause through the ranks of the Armenian Revolutionary Federation and the Comité de Défense de la Cause Arménienne (CDCA), its lobby branch in France. He was also chairman of the latter from 1993-2001.

Even though the author is not an academic, this publication could have had more value had it been properly edited and slightly better researched. Unfortunately, this is not the case. In view of the elementary and even crude mistakes made in the text, the eight-page bibliography has no value.

In his note to the reader, Krikorian states that he wants this book to be just a companion to the Armenian Cause, with fast and easy access. However, such a tool needs, first of all, to be reliable. In the same note, he erroneously states that the "Armenian Question" encyclopedia was published in 1995 (he then gives the right date on p. 94). This is only the first of an endless array of mistakes, going literally to the last page.

In a five-page succinct and quite accurate introduction, the author outlines the history of the Armenian Question/Cause from the mid-nineteenth century to this day. He uses both terms interchangeably, though it is noticeable that they do not have the same meaning. In his thousand-entry alphabetical list, the reader will not find a single one, which gives a short, ready-to-use definition of both words. His statement that "la juxtaposition d'un millier d'entrées dans l'ordre alphabétique-un

ordre arbitraire mais tellement commode-ne fournit pas la réponse à cette question. D'où la présente brève introduction..." (p. 13) is actually misleading. The French quotation states that the 1000 entries do not answer what the Armenian Question/Cause is (are). Once he has gone through the introduction, a reader looking for that answer will end with empty hands.

The book seems like a Noah's Ark including everybody related, even tenuously, to political, scholarly or literary trends of the 1800-2000 period. Of course, it is a matter of choice, but it is also a matter of common sense. Even the famous 18th century minstrel Sayat-Nova - whose real surname was Sayatian, not Sayadjian (p. 213) - is here. But why? Because Persian soldiers killed him in 1795? (Incidentally, the reason for his death was not his prohibition from entering the monastery of Haghpat, as stated, but that he refused to convert to Islam). Should the composer Parsegh Ganachian be included because he made the arrangement of the Armenian national anthem or wrote the music for a famous patriotic song? Equally unclear are many other names, such as the scholars Ghevont Alishan and Georges Dumezil; composer Kourken Alemshah; writers Nshan Beshigtashlian, Shahan Shahnour, Aharon Dadourian; AGBU presidents Alex Manoogian and Louise Simone-Manoogian; etc.

One would like to ask how the battle of Avarair, in the fifth century, could become part of a dictionary devoted to the Armenian Cause. But if this is strange, it is still more strange to read that "elle a opposé en l'an 451 les forces arméniennes commandées par Vartan Mamigonian aux armées perses de l'Empereur Chah Abbas 1er" (p. 56). This is really odd, since even an Armenian Sunday school student learns at some point that the Persian king who sent his armies to Avarair was Yesdigerdes (Hazkert) II.

We are not going to compile a full list of inaccuracies, but just give a few more examples, randomly chosen:

1) Ani was not the capital of the Bagratuni kingdom from 11th-13th centuries (only from 961-1045) and was not conquered by the Seldjuks in 1045, but in 1064 (p. 30).

2) General Antranik did not die in Chico, California, but in Fresno (same page).

3) Dzadur Aghayan: "Historien (1911-1982). Pasteur protestant. Membre de l'Union des Ecrivains d'Arménie" (p. 23). Aghayan was a historian, not a writer, so he was no member of the Writers Union, but of the Academy of Sciences. Since he was also a card-carrying member of the Communist Party from 1942, is it logical to suppose that he previously was a Protestant pastor?

4) Near East Relief: "(...) [C]rée [sic] début 1919 sous l'impulsion de l'ancien Ambassadeur Morgenthau. (...) Cesse son activité en 1931" (p. 21). The Near East Relief was created in 1915 at the request of Morgenthau, who was the U.S. ambassador in Turkey at the time, and has continued to work after 1931 under the new name of Near East Foundation.

5) "Azadamard": "L'écrivain Roupen Zartarian en assure la direction jusqu'en 1914. Nigol Aghbalian lui succède entre 1917 et 1918. Azadamard va reparaître à

Paris de 1977 à 1982" (p. 51). This daily was published in Constantinople from 1909 until its closure on the eve of the Armenian Genocide (1915), and was always edited by Zartarian, himself arrested at the fateful "St. Bartholomew" night of April 23-24 (and not April 24-25, as Krikorian writes in the first line of the first entry, "24 Avril 1915", p. 19) and killed later. Nikol Aghbalian edited a daily called *Azadamard* in Tiflis in 1917-1918, which had nothing to do with the Constantinople newspaper. Of course, the homonymous paper published in France six decades later cannot be considered as a continuation.

6) Vartan Shahbaz: "Il seconde le général Antranik et Sebastatsi Mourad pendant les combats du Zanguézour et la défense de Marach (Cilicie) en 1920" (p. 66). Neither Antranik nor Murad (killed in Baku in 1918) were in Marash in 1920.

7) "Horizon": "Quotidien en langue arménienne créé en 1931 au Canada par la FRA Dachnaksoutioun. Il est le précurseur du journal publié sous le même nom à Tiflis (1909-1918), puis à Smyrne (1919-1921) et enfin à Salonique (1928-1931)" (p. 120). The Montreal-based *Horizon* weekly (not daily) has been published since 1979. Even if it had been published in 1931, it could have never been the "precursor" of three newspapers published before in three different, unrelated cities. It goes without saying that those newspapers are not related, and that *Horizon* cannot be regarded as their continuation.

8) Karekin Nejteh: "(...) [A]ux Etats-Unis (...) contre l'avis de la FRA, il crée le mouvement de jeunesse 'Tseragrone'" (p. 173). It is a well-known fact that the Armenian Revolutionary Federation actually sent Nejteh from Bulgaria to the United States to create a youth movement and that the Tseghagron movement (renamed Armenian Youth Federation in 1940) enjoyed full support from the party from its inception.

9) Yeghishe Charents: "(...) [D]énoncé comme trotskiste et nationaliste petit-bourgeois, -il avait courageusement pris la défense de Boris Pasternak- (...)" (p. 225). Pasternak was not particularly attacked during the 1930's, and Charents, except for one mention during his speech at the First Congress of Soviet Writers (1934), did not mention Pasternak elsewhere.

As we have seen, Krikorian seems to think that almost every time two or more homonym newspapers appear, one is the continuation of the other (see *Alik*, *Aztag* and others). Fortunately, when he writes about *Mshak*, the influential daily published in Tiflis from 1873-1921, he omits to mention as a "continuation" the weekly *Mshak* published in Fresno from 1925-1957...

The book is also marred by many typographical mistakes and technical oddities, such as repetitions of entries (e.g. "Gürün, Kamuran" on p. 112 and "Kamuran Gürün" on p. 127), contradictions and wrong translations.

One is tempted to say that Krikorian would have done a real service if he had produced a revised version of the 1996 Armenian encyclopedia. Readers will still have to wait for a worthwhile "Dictionary of the Armenian Cause" in a Western language.

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