

**THE IDENTITY AND THE PRESS OF DIASPORA
(EXAMPLE OF THE ARMENIAN PRESS OF LEBANON IN 1960S)**

Key Words – Soviet Armenia, Lebanon, press, identity, Diaspora, Diaspora identify, “Azdak” “Zartonk”, “Ararat”, party periodicals, Armenian community of Lebanon, homeland

Identity of the Diaspora

People begin to talk about national identity, or the issue of identity is raised when there is a risk of losing the identity but it has not been lost yet¹. The maintenance of the national identity is an everyday issue in the Armenian Diaspora. On one side, it is necessary to maintain the Armenian kind, but the morals and manners in an alien environment are different, which, if rejected may lead to social isolation. On the other hand you may put aside the nationality, the roots, live in accordance with the morals and manners of the country, adopt the new culture and integrate into the society. The third option may be the one described by P. L. Zekiyan: to play by the rules but without adopting them or not losing the unique image, or by changing some of the rules². Ultimately, the contacts with other ethnic communities are the source of the national mentality, through which the cultural traditions, customs and ideas are reevaluated³.

Let's agree that the Armenians having appeared in a foreign land cannot refrain from contacts, which gradually turn from a passive relationship into active ones and into the “exchange” of values. And the new generation grows carrying inside the both system of values, and depending upon the personality, family and environment one of them may have stronger impact and be passed over to the next generation with greater or lesser share.

When explaining the identity fluctuations of a person having appeared in a foreign land, G. Pltyan notes that “changing” the native implies the appearance of something different in the identity. According to G. Pltyan, the issue of the Diaspora identity cannot be addressed by a simple contraposition between native and alien. What was native becomes alien to become native again afterwards⁴.

¹ See **Պըլտեան Գ.**, Ինքնութեան փորձառութիւն Սփիւռքի մէջ // «Ինքնութեան հարցեր» տարեգիրք, Երևան, 2002, էջ 90:

² See **Զեքիեան Պ. Լ.**, Հայ ինքնութիւն // Նույն տեղում, էջ 42:

³ The relation between nations are also addressed by M. Margaryan: "The system of national values attains new content and meaning after communication with the universal human values and is expressed within the existence of personalities of various levels. As a result, it becomes a substratum that feeds the process of modernization of the personal and social identity". See **Մարգարյան Մ.**, Ազգային մտահայեցողություն և ինքնակառավարում // «Ինքնութեան հարցեր» տարեգիրք, 2002, էջ 58:

⁴ See **Պըլտեան Գ.**, նշվ. աշխ., էջ 104:

A question arises: whether it is necessary to differentiate the Diaspora identity of the Diaspora instead of the generalized national identity? It is a kind of hybrid which definitely includes several identities like the identity of ethnic origin and of the national environment, where the individual lives. Identity is not frozen, instead it is expanding, incorporating new values, which however are in harmony with the identity and complement it. According to S. Holly's definition, our identity is determined not only by the past, but also by the future, hence it is "a matter of "becoming" as well as of "being"¹.

According to observation of V. Sahakyan, the identity is a situational-dependent matter: in each environment the identity is expressed in unique form². For example, in any event organized by the Lebanese Government for its citizens, will it be an election or a meeting, the Armenian participates as a Lebanese as the adopted decisions will impact her/his civil activities. Meantime she/he attends the events organized for commemorating the victims of the Great Genocide as an Armenian. The splitting of the image of a person living in Diaspora is inevitable.

When speaking about the "Diaspora" phenomenon, the Armenian theoretician Kh. Tololyan identifies the idea of "multilocality" – the idea of living in or being associated with many places, when the Diaspora representative realizes that there is another place that is important, with which she/he is not physically but mentally associated³.

Giving priority to the formation of the first Diaspora generations which have "experienced" the disaster,⁴ it would be preferable to discuss the identity issues of Armenian Diaspora established in Lebanon after the Great Genocide and its reflection in the party press in 1960s.

The Issue of Identity Fragmentation on the Example of Lebanese Armenian Community

Like other countries, the Armenians were present in Lebanon before the Genocide. However, the great inflow has started after the disaster of the beginning of 20th century. Unlike other countries, the leadership of Lebanon provided free social, religion, cultural and educational life to Armenians. As a result, the organized formation of community social structures has started. It is not a matter of coincidence that the Lebanon, where the Diaspora had clear self-organized structures starting from schools to party clubs and where future clergymen, teachers, physicians and party activists for other Armenian colonies were prepared was considered as the Diaspora centre, or an attempt was made to make it such. However, even in Lebanon it is

¹ See **Hall S.**, Cultural Identity and Diaspora, Identity: Community, Culture and Difference. Jonathan Rutherford ed. London, 1990, p. 225.

² **Սահակյան Վ.**, «Փոփոխվող սփյուռքները. հայեցակարգեր և մոտեցումներ» ամսառային ծրագիր, Հայկական բարձրագույն կրթության նախաձեռնություն, ՀԱՀ, Երևան, հունիսի 10-21, 2017:

³ **Թուրյան Խ.**, մաս 1 <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xvZ74kGxA5w> (audio material)

⁴ Considering the factor of Armenian Genocide of 1915-22, R. Cohen defines the type of Armenian Diaspora as a "victim diaspora". See **Cohen R.**, Global Diasporas: An introduction, Second edition, Taylor & Francis, 2008, p. 39.

difficult to speak about a common Diaspora identity or Lebanese Armenian identity. The separation based on party belonging, followers of Christianity branches, separation into the dwelling districts of Dashnak party [*Armenian Revolutionary Federation Party*], Ramgavar party [*Armenian Democratic Liberal Party*] or Hunchakyan party [*Armenian Social Democratic Party*], the differentiation by political orientation compel us to assume that in case of Lebanese Armenian Identity we again face the same fragmentation problem. Add to this the daily routine life in the Arab world, it would turn out that the Arab and Armenian identities in the Lebanese Armenians are indivisible.

Let us discuss the next chain link. The national identify for a person who appeared in the Lebanon is different from that of the person appeared in the US because of the alien who exists in her/him and the type of interrelations the between national and the alien. In addition, there was another more global segregation of identity – a “barrier” segregation. A Soviet identity was build up in the USSR and a Diaspora identity – in the Diaspora, for which the language, the culture and the Armenian Cause – “Haydat” were important. It looked like those identities counter balance each other in 1960s. Starting from 1960s the USSR has been building up the idea of “the Soviet Armenia is the motherland of each Armenian”¹.

The Press as an Expression of Multi-layer Identities

The disarrays in the Soviet Armenia, Diaspora and particularly in the life of Lebanese Armenians inevitably should have been reflected in the Armenian press of Lebanon in 1960s. The multi-layer identity of a Diaspora Armenian, in this specific case of a Lebanese Armenian, may also be seen in newspapers, and vice versa, it may be seen how the direct or indirect efforts of the press are trying to impact the formation of multi-layer identities or to attribute complexion to the identity conception.

One of the differentiations is made based on the party belonging or ideological orientation, which consequently implies differentiation during the attendance of educational, cultural, religion, youth and even sport events organized by a specific party. Naturally, “Azdak” of ARF, “Zartonk” of the ADLP and “Ararat” of the ASDP each presents the life of the Lebanese Armenian community mainly through the initiatives of their party schools, sport clubs and similar structures. It appears that the followers of each party ideology are independent bearers of identity developed on the basis of various values. It looks like the party newspapers dictate corresponding living style and disseminate it among readers through publications. By reflecting the real life of the bearers of “party identity”, the newspaper creates a standard sample making it an example for other bearers.

Another differentiation originates from the discrepancy in the perception of Soviet Armenia. Hunchaks and Ramgavars consider the Soviet Armenia in their press as the

¹ **Փանոսեան Ռ.**, «Ինքնությունների ձևավորումը հայրենիքներում և դրանցից դուրս» թեմայով դասախոսություն, «Փոփոխվող սփյուռքները. հայեցակարգեր և մոտեցումներ» ամառային ծրագիր, Հայկական բարձրագույն կրթության նախաձեռնություն, ՀԱՀ, Երևան, հուլիսի 10-21, 2017:

homeland and the center of Armenian people, meantime the Lebanese Armenians consider themselves as the direct observers of events occurring Soviet Armenia. Although not rejecting the existence of a homeland, “Azdak” of ARF sets a boundary between the Diaspora life and the socialist life of Soviet Armenia taking the status of mainly an outside observer-criticizers focusing on the idea of free, independent and unified Armenian nation, Armenian Diaspora and on the co-patriots not entrained by socialists ideology.

“Ararat” and “Zartonk” sometimes have addressed the routine and ceremonial activities of administrative structures of the SA (Soviet Armenia) trying to put the reader’s identity on the same plane with the identity of a person living in Armenia and even with the identity of a bearer of Soviet ideology or with the identity of the citizens of Soviet republics, abolishing the territorial barrier¹. However, the identification was made only among the “patriots of Armenia” of the Diaspora – those who accepted the Soviet system established in Armenia. The other side, which was identified with Dashnaks and was found as though being in conspiracy relations with imperialist countries against the Soviet Union² were left beyond the perimeter³. The Soviet Armenia was presented as an embodiment of the peace and hopes of oppressed people⁴, which again is the product of Bolshevik ideology. To some extent this may be seen as an outline of a pan-soviet citizenship, which is strongly criticized by the Dashnak newspaper stating that the Diaspora Armenians, who are the followers of Soviet ideology have also rejected the homeland, land, nation, history, and for them it makes no difference whether Karabakh is an Armenian or a Soviet land as it belongs to “the family of Soviet homelands”⁵.

Unlike “Zartonk” and “Ararat”, “Azdak” did not link the present and future of Armenian people with the Soviet Union and strongly condemned those who persuaded the Armenians of Armenia and Diaspora to admit the loss of independence and accept the idea of becoming a part of one empire⁶.

The fragmented identity of Diaspora Armenian comes from the different attitude and perception of the past and history, which stipulate the development of the identity and the issue of reflecting the nuances of identities in periodicals. Because of different

¹ For example: The best sons of Diaspora together with the progressive forces of foreign countries shoulder-to-shoulder were struggling heroically for the victory of ideology of Great October Revolution (Վանիկ, Հոկտեմբերեան Յեղափոխութեան Յիսնամեակին՝ Անտոն Քոչինեանի ճառին առթիւ // «Արարատ», 1967, թիվ 8, 24-ը նոյեմբերի):

² Անդրեասեան Ա., Հայկական դատին նոր հանգրուանը // «Արարատ», 1967, թիվ 273, 23-ը օգոստոսի):

³ “Azdak” uses the word “*hayastanaser* – the patriot of Armenia” - artificially imported from a foreign culture to specify 2 groups of people: one group, inspired by homeland nostalgia, ingenuously identifies the Armenia with current authorities. The other exploits the name of Armenia for the sake of powers, confess the Soviet as a goal subordinating to it the homeland and seeing the Armenia exclusively as a Soviet entity (Հայրենասերն ու «Հայաստանասեր»ը // «Ազդակ», 1963, թիվ 121, 26-ը հուլիսի):

⁴ Վանիկ, Հին ժողովուրդի նոր վերելքը // «Արարատ», 1967, թիվ 201, 8-ը հուլիսի):

⁵ Արմեն Ազատ, Հայաստանի եւ սփիւռքի հայութեան փոխ-յարաբերութեան մասին // «Ազդակ», 1963, թիվ 117, 22-ը հուլիսի):

⁶ Ընկ. Բ. Փափագեանի խօսքը Հ.Յ.Դ.ի 75ամեակին առիթով // «Ազդակ», 1965, թիվ 244, 18-ը դեկտեմբերի):

attitude of parties to the relations between ARF and Young Turks, to the issues of the creation of the first Armenian Republic, Sardarabat heroic battle, self-defence struggle, the Armenian Cause, “Zartonk” and “Ararat”, “Azdak” were speaking from their own positions compelling the readers to perceive their identity through party stereotypes. For example, Hunchak press completely neglects the role and the importance of the first Republic: “October gave us the statehood”¹, “In 1918-1920 Armenia had boundless tragic misery, epidemics, hunger, anarchy and terrorist despoty, but lacked simple “freedom” ...”². In concert with pro-Russian position, the Sardarabat and other historic events and the glory of victory was attributed to the Bolshevik army. Meantime the glory of self-protection struggle was attributed to Dashnaks, veiling the feebleness of some of its activists³.

However, when speaking about culture, Armenian national education and child education, the press did not manifest separatism. On one side, the newspapers presented the national values and great Armenian peoples, on the other side they promote the development of a consciousness of being the bearer of that heritage and of a national proudness.

In general all the three newspapers circulate the idea of a common nation, homeland and Armenian identity. Merely two of the newspapers see the life of that common homeland with the soviet administration, while the other struggles against it. As a result, the splitting of political orientations and of value perceptions among Diaspora Armenians cause the divergence of Soviet Armenia – homeland as well.

**Գայանե Ավագյան – Միյուռքյան ինքնությունը և մամուլը (1960-ական թթ.
լիբանանահայ պարբերականների օրինակով)**

Ազգային ինքնության պահպանումն ամենօրյա խնդիր է հայկական Միյուռքում: Միջավայրի ներգործությունը, այլ մշակույթի հետ շփումը անխուսափելի կնիք են թողնում անհատի ինքնության վրա: Ծագում է Միյուռքում ապրողի ինքնության տարանջատման անհրաժեշտություն: Միյուռքյան ինքնությունը ճկուն է, իրավիճակային, կարող է յուրաքանչյուր պահ դրսևորվել տարբեր կողմերով: Նույնիսկ Լիբանանում, որը 1960-ականներին Միյուռքի կենտրոն էր համարվում, դժվար է խոսել միասնական սփյուռքյան ինքնության մասին: Ազգային կուսակցությունների (ՀՅԴ, ՌԱԿ, Հնչակյան կուսակցություն) և համապատասխան կրթամշակութային կառույցների կազմակերպված գործունեությունը 1960-ականներին մի կողմից՝ նպաստում էր հայեցի դաստիարակմանը, ազգային արմատների պահպանմանը,

¹ Վանիկ, Հոկտեմբերեան Յեղափոխութեան Յիսնամեակին՝ Անտոն Քոչինեանի ճառին առթիւ:

² Անդրեասեան Ա., Հայկական դատին նոր հանգրուանը // «Զարթոնք», 1967, թիվ 275, 25-րդ օգոստոսի:

³ See Ջաղեթեան Գր., Դաշնակցական շէֆերի Հայաստանէն փախցուցած գումարները եւ հաշուետուութիւնը // «Զարթոնք», 1968, թիվ 122, 20-րդ փետրվարի, Ադան Տարօնեցի, «Պատասխանատուները Տարօնի եղեռնին» // «Զարթոնք», 1968, թիվ 151, 26-րդ մարտի, Վեզիրեան Թ., Միքանի փաստեր խմբապետ Սեպուհի ազգադաւ գործունեութիւնից // «Զարթոնք», 1968, թիվ 78, 27-րդ դեկտեմբերի:

մյուս կողմից՝ ընդգծված տարաձայնությունների և հակամարտության պատճառով հանգեցնում համայնքի ներսում խմբավորումների ձևավորմանը: Գաղափարական այս տարասեռումները կուսակցությունների պաշտոնաթերթերում («Ազդակ», «Զարթոնք», «Արարատ») 1960-ականներին վերածվում էին բանավեճերի, որոնցում ակամայից ներգրավվում էին ընթերցողները: Յուրաքանչյուրի լսարանի համար ընդունելի էր դառնում տվյալ թերթի դիրքորոշումը, ինչը, ի վերջո, ինքնության բազմաշերտ դրսևորումների առիթ էր դառնում:

Գայանե Աვაգյան – *Идентичность диаспоры и пресса (на примере армянских газет в Ливане 1960-х годов)*

Сохранение национальной идентичности является ежедневной проблемой армянской Диаспоры. Влияние среды, непосредственный контакт с иными культурами оставляет свой неизбежный след на идентичности человека. Поэтому возникает необходимость определить идентичность Диаспоры. Она гибкая, ситуативная, и может в любой момент проявиться тем или иным образом. Даже в Ливане, который в 1960-х годах считался центром армянской Диаспоры, сложно говорить о единой идентичности армян Диаспоры. Деятельность национальных партий (Армянская Революционная Федерация «Дашнакцутюн», Либерально-демократическая партия «Рамкавар Азатакан», Социал-демократическая партия «Դնչակ») и соответствующих учебных и культурных учреждений, с одной стороны, способствовала воспитанию в национальном духе, сохранению национальных корней, а с другой стороны – из-за явных разногласий приводила к формированию группировок внутри общины. Эти идейные различия переходили в дебаты на страницах официальных газет политических партий («Ազդակ», «Զարթոնք», «Արարատ»), в которые невольно вовлекались читатели. Позиция каждой газеты становилась приемлемой для ее аудитории, что в конечном итоге способствовало многоуровневому проявлению идентичности.