

**HOVHANNES TER-MARTIROSSYAN
(A-DO)**

Gasparyan R. H.

PhD in History

Sahakyan R. O.

Doctor of Sciences (History)



**A-Do (Hovhannes Ter-Martirosyan,
January 4, 1867- February 7, 1954)**

The Armenian intellectual and scholar A-Do (Hovhannes Ter-Martirosyan, January 4, 1867- February 7, 1954) is one of the prominent figures of Armenian life at the end of the 19th century and the first decade of the 20th century. He is one of those rare personalities who dedicated their entire conscious life to the scrupulous study of modern and contemporary history of the Armenian people.

Since September of 1885 A-Do had started correspondence with the newspaper “Mshak”; afterwards, he became its Yerevan correspondent. In 1889-1891 he studied and graduated from the Yerevan Diocesan School.

In 1890, the organizational structure of ARF (Armenian Revolutionary Federation) was formed in the Yerevan Province, among the founders of which

was A-Do as well. Party organs were established in Etchmiatsin, Mastara and other places by his and his party friends [Gedeon Aharaonyan, Galust Aloyan (Toros, Davrish) and others] efforts¹. A-Do took part in transportation of weapons and ammunition to Western Armenia, but after a while left Dashnaksutiun.

The “Macedonia” brochure of A-Do, which is relatively little known to the present scholar community, got published in 1903, where he had made an interesting conclusion that the reform program of May (adopted by the government on May 11, 1895 for the Armenian provinces) was an anti-Turkish impetus for Macedonia, moaning under the Ottoman rule².

Another brochure of A-Do presents the inhabitant of Akhsran village of the Archesh region of Van province (villayat), Murad, who quit his birthplace because of massacres of the 1890s³.

¹ Խոսրոնյան Գ., ՀՅ Դաշնակցության քննական պատմություն (ակունքներից մինչև 1895 թվականի վերջերը), Երևան, 2006, էջ 270:

² Ա-Դօ, Մակեդոնիա, Ս. Պետերբուրգ, 1903, էջ 12-13:

³ Ա-Դօ, Հայրենիքի Կարօտը, Ս. Պետերբուրգ, 1905, էջ 7:

In the 1990s A-Do had been already a known figure in the socio-political life of Yerevan and enjoyed the respect of society. His coeval Yeprem Sargsyan provided the following characteristic: “He was one of a great stature, with a thin and sinewy face, black and distressful eyes, and sad expression. He was serious up to greyness and self-contained. It seems as if he had always a busy min...”⁴

In October, 1905 A-Do was enrolled in the first year of the Kharkov University’s faculty of Law as a free listener. In 1905-1906 fervent revolutionary actions and strikes were going on in all of Russia, as well as in Kharkov, where the students had an active role. At that time the Governor-General of Kharkov was General Nikolay Peshkov, whom A-Do should meet in 1916, when the former was appointed the Governor-General of Western Armenia by the Tsar Nikolay II.

The first Russian Revolution provided an opportunity for Russian as well as Armenian progressive figures to publish a number of books, having been banned by the censorship until then. A-Do made use of this opportunity and submitted to publication the study about Michael (Mikael) Nalbandyan⁵.

The revolutionary movements forced A-Do to leave his studies unfinished and return to Yerevan, where the Armenian-Tatar clashes were going on in full swing. The young scholar collected a great number of materials on the cause and process of the said clashes. In July, 1905, he went to the provinces of Sharur and Nakhidjevan, then to the province of Gandzak in October, 1906.

The work, shedding light on the history of clashes, remains a unique and scrupulous investigation on the Armenian-Tatar clashes up to now; the author himself was in the places of fighting and collected evidence of witnesses and participants.

In 1908 A-Do wrote the work “The liberation movement in Russia,”⁶ the publication of which sparked the anger of the Russian authorities. A criminal case was initiated against him. The censorship office of Tiflis confiscated the entire edition of the book by the order. But A-Do succeeded in keeping a considerable part of the edition away from confiscation. And as long as the investigation was in progress, the young researcher decided to travel to St. Petersburg to study at the Psychoneurological Research Institute. At the same time, he was inspiring to carry into life his long-standing dream - to be in Western Armenia and to collect statistical data about the Western Armenians.

On June 23, 1909 A-Do crossed the Russian-Turkish border and reached the Kogovit’s town of Daruynk (Bayazet) on the same day. Staying two days in the town, he has pointed out that the local Armenians were behind their Russian-subject compatriots (in Eastern Armenia) in terms of progress⁷. That was the kind of negative and

⁴ Սարգսեան Ե., Արօ (Յովհաննէս Տէր Մարտիրոսեան), «Հայրենիք», Պոստոն, 1952, թիւ 4, էջ 91:

⁵ Ա-Դօ, Միքայէլ Նալբանդեանի կեանքի հետաքրքիր մի էջ եւ Բակունինի նրան գրած նամակները, Երեւան, 1908:

⁶ Ա-Դօ, Ազատագրական շարժումը Ռուսաստանում իր ծագման առաջին օրերից, Երեւան, 1908:

⁷ Հիշողություններ, էջ 102:

catastrophic consequences of the Ottoman rule for the socio-economic conditions of the Western Armenians.

The scholar visited Van, Mush, Sasun, Karin-Erzrum, Khnus and other localities in Western Armenia, gathering statistical data on the number and places of inhabitations of the native Armenian population. The scholar published the outcomes of his research on Western Armenia in two volumes⁸.

The trial that was held in Yerevan on March 17, 1909, condemned A-Do to imprisonment for a year period, and 987 examples of the confiscated books were to be obliterated. A-Do appealed the court's decision, sending it to St. Petersburg and for the answer was to come after two or three months he decided to use the time for visiting Western Armenia to fill the missing and incomplete statistical data. The records about the Ottoman tax collection were insufficient. He crossed the Russian-Turkish border once more and went to Daruynk (Bayazet) and several surrounding villages. The travel lasted eight days.

In mid-July of 1909 it became known that the Trial Chamber of the Caucasian Viceroyalty had refused to annul the judgment. A-Do was forced to obey. He carried out the prison sentence in the jail of Nerkin Akhta (at present town of Hrazdan, Kotayk district of the Republic of Armenia).

At the beginning of 1914 A-Do explored the archive of Khachatur Abovyan [for the period of his inspector work (1843-1848)] at the Yerevan Gymnasium archive. A-Do wrote a large article, based on the obtained materials, a part of which was published in the fifth series of the newspaper "New Stream" ("Nor Hosanq") in 1914, having been completely published in the issues of "Gorts" ("Labor") magazine (№ 5-6 and 7-8). In sum, the birth date (1809) of Kh. Abovyan was clarified.

On August 1, 1914 the First World War broke out. Seizing the favorable opportunity, the Young Turkish government carried out the Armenian Genocide. A significant number of Armenian populations of the Russian-Turkish frontier areas quit the places of their inhabitation and retrieved salvation in the Caucasian Viceroyalty, Yerevan province and other Armenian districts, as well as in Baku, Tiflis and the Northern Caucasus. A-Do couldn't watch from the sideline in such conditions and started researches among the refugees to make clear their statistical and relief opportunities.

In 1915 the Armenians confronted the Turkish and Kurdish slaughterers in various localities of Western Armenia. Van-Vaspurakan was one of such spots. The Armenian population of Van city was able to gain a victory on May 4, 1915, being besieged by the excessive forces of both Turks and Kurds for a month. The advancement of the Russian Army and the Ararat volunteer regiment contributed to the mentioned victory. A provisional bureau was organized (Governorship) under the guidance of the prominent

⁸Ա-Դօ, Վանի Բիթլիսի եւ Էրզրումի վիլայեթները. Ոստանասիրութեան մի փորձ այդ երկրի աշխարհագրական, վիճակագրական, իրաւական և տնտեսական դրութեան, Երեւան, 1912, նույնի՝ Հուշեր Տաճկահայաստանի ճանապարհորդութիւնից, «Նոր հոսանք», Թիֆլիս, 1913-1914:

figure of the Liberation movement, Aram Manukyan. Armenian public, ecclesiastical and political figures hotfooted to Van to support the Armenian authority. A-Do, too, arrived in Van among others.

The travelling of A-Do began on June 14, 1915, and terminated on July 25 of the same year.⁹ He started gathering evidence on the fights, the Armenians had sustained both in Van and in the province, the mass killings of Armenians and the functioning of Armenian authority in Van.

A-Do described the impression he had of the Armenian authority's operation in Van in the following way: "Everyone - the employees of that governor's residence were writing, calculating, listening, responding, having been under the burden of tasks, and many applicants and supplicants were satisfied; they were doing all this untiringly, humbly and with the consciousness that they were called to serve a stately idea"¹⁰.

On July 14, news came that the Russian units of the Caucasian IV Army Corps had begun to retreat, refusing to provide weapons and ammunition to the defenders of the city. The Armenian authority of Van called on compatriots to be enrolled in combat units, having been organized. The unexpected retreat evoked a terrible panic among the population. As a consequence, the mass departure of the Armenian population of Van-Vaspurakan began.

A-Do offered his service to Nikol Aghbalyan, who instructed him to take some of the collected manuscripts to Etchmiatsin. A-Do, Hakob Ter-Hakobyan (Irazek) and Isahak Ter-Ghazaryan rushed to the harbor, where nearly 200 manuscripts brought from Akhtamar, were being transposed from the parked boat to a cart. The precious cargo reached Etchmiatsin in July 24¹¹. Varazdat Teroyan, too, had a similar assignment from Aram.

On January 1, 1917, the head of the Ethnographic Commission, formed in Etchmiatsin. Archimandrite Garegin A Hovsepyan (subsequently, the Catholicos of the Great House of Cilicia Garegin A Hovsepyan, 1943-1952) and the member-secretary of the Commission, Ashot Hovhannissyan informed A-Do that a course of actions had been taken to publish a collection under the title "Vshtapatum" ("The Book of Mourning"), suggesting to bring his participation to these initiatives and to write an article about the movements of Armenian refugees¹².

⁹ See in detail Սահակյան Ռ., Հաղթանակած Վանը «Ա-Դոյի անտիպ հուշերից», Պատմաբանասիրական հանդես, 2012, N 1, էջ 223-242, նույնի՝ «Վանի նահանգապետութեան պատմութիւնից: Յունիս 14-Յուլիս 7-Յուլիս 25, 1915», եւ Ա-Դոյն, Հայկազեան Հայագիտական Հանդէս, թիւ ԼԲ, 2012, Պէյրութ, էջ 407-430:

¹⁰ Հիշողություններ, էջ 190:

¹¹ Հիշողություններ, էջ 210: «Հորիզոն»-ի 10 հոկտեմբերի 1915 թ. № 229-ում տպագրվում է Արամի նամակը, որտեղից տեղականում ենք, որ ձեռագրերը տեղափոխվել են նրա հրամանով:

¹² Հիշողություններ, էջ 224: Testimonies about the organization and implementation of massacres were gathered from the refugees, who had found shelters in various places of the Transcaucasus, to have published a book under the title of "Vshtapatum" by the initiative of Baku Committee of ARF in 1916 (Վշտապատում. Հայոց Մեծ Եղեռնը ականատեսների աչքերով. Կազմողներ՝ Ամ. Վիրաբյան, Գ. Ավագյան, Երևան, 2005, էջ 3).

In the mid-January of the same year the commissioner of the Caucasian Stations of the Red Cross' Petrograd brigade Sirakan Tigranyan spoke to A-Do, offering to set out for Salmast, where the food supply base station of the mentioned brigade was located; there was a need to investigate the everyday life and needs of refugees as well as to make clear their number¹³.

A short while later A-Do left for Salmast (Persia) (by the offer of the commissioner of the Caucasian Stations of the Red Crest's Petrograd brigade), where he collected statistical data on the refugees. On April 12, 1917, A-Do and the surveyor of the Salmast food supply base station's schools, H. Ter-Hakobyan set off for Persia. They reached Tabriz on April 13, the cultural center of Atrpatakan's (Atropatene) Armenians.

Armenians were living in two quarters in this city, in Ghala and Lilava. A-Do took the route to Salmast on April 16. There, the scholar investigated not only the conditions of the inhabitant Armenians, but also those of Syrians, and laid down a respective statistics on them¹⁴. He visited the birth place of Raffi, Payajuk, as well as Savra village; he talked with the local inhabitants and gathered information both about the great writer's life and about the prototypes of the heroes of his compositions.

A-Do has provided readable records on the Assyrians of Julamerik. According to his calculations, the number of Syrians reached 13260, who had taken shelter mainly in Ghalasar and Payajuk villages¹⁵. The scholar sets apart the sister of the Syrians' leader Mar Shimun Benami, Surma khanum, who was simultaneously the first counselor of her brother¹⁶.

A-Do had a bad impression especially of the ineffable persecutions the native Armenian population of Aghbak province was subjected to. He toured numerous places, recorded various stories on the Turkish-Kurdish brutalities, but "what has happened in Aghbak, regarding the Armenian people, never happened before in any place. Terrible scenes of massacres, mass forcible conversion cases and sceneries of the Armenian families' assimilation by the Kurdish families had taken such shapes in this region that we saw nowhere before."¹⁷ When the Russian Army settled down in Northern Persia, a great number of "kurdified" Armenians reaffirmed their Armenian ethnicity. In addition, the Armenians, having been forcibly converted during the Hammidian massacres, were among them¹⁸. A-Do has given special praise to the activities of the regional commissioner of Van, Kosti (Constantine Hambardzumyan). The scholar recorded painfully that 70-80% of the population were displaced. The military operations were not permitting the Armenians from Van, who outlived several mass departures, to return to their native places.

¹³ Հիշողություններ, էջ 224:

¹⁴ Op. cit., pp. 241-243.

¹⁵ Op. cit., p. 241.

¹⁶ Op. cit., 241.

¹⁷ Op. cit., p. 252.

¹⁸ Հիշողություններ, էջ 253-258:

A-Do stayed in Van for five days. He collected statistic data on various regions of Vaspurakan as well as on the local Kurdish tribes. Finalizing his researches, he set off for Yerevan in June 17 and in five days was there.

The scholar's official journey lasted two months and ten days. While in assignment he had time to publish the voluminous article, "The last five years of Kh. Abovyan's life" in "Gorts" periodical¹⁹.

A difficult and alarming situation was created in Armenia at the end of 1917 and at the beginning of 1918. The military units of the Caucasian Army were leaving the Russian-Turkish front, departing to Russia. A disorder was created in the Caucasus and Armenia because of that.

Making use of the fact that the great part of the Russian Army was departed, the Ottoman command began a major offensive almost on the entire length along the front in February of 1918. In addition to that, an anti-Armenian Georgian-Tatar cooperation took shape.

The Turkish Army, advancing rapidly, appeared in the Ararat Valley in May of 1918, threatening to annihilate completely the Armenian people. Despite the difficult situation, A-Do continued to record the events and facts. He has thrown light in more details on the heroic battles of May 1918, their organization and process. The scholar wrote a special survey about these decisive events of the Armenian people's history, applying not only the press of the time and the archive of Armenian corps, but also his own observations. He was particularly warm when presenting the principal actors of the heroic battles, General Movses Silikyan (Moysey Silikov), Dro (Drastamat Kanayan) and colonel Daniel Bek Pirumyan as "Holy Trinity".

A-Do has elucidated in full details the measures taken by the Republic of Armenia to improve the situation of refugees, to restore the devastated economy of the country and to suppress the Turkish-Tatar riots.

World War I ended on October 30, 1918, by the victory of the Entente Powers and the Turkish Army began to retreat from Armenia.

After WWI the government of the Republic of Armenia took a decision to investigate the Turkish ferocities as well as to compile a compact work, where the participation of Armenians in the military operations and the self-defense battles of Western Armenians would have been presented. The initiator was the Central Council of the Armenian Compatriotic Unions, which was governed by the Armenian eminent writer and socio-political actor Hovhannes Tumanyan. He had taken over the governance of the "Investigating Commission on the damages the Armenian People suffered during the World War", established in Tiflis at the end of 1918.²⁰ A "Historical-

¹⁹ «Գործ», Բազու, N 5-6-7, մայիս-յունիս 1917, էջ 31-40, 48-69:

²⁰ See in more detail Сакарян А., Топт-генерал Александр Еулебякин и Армения, ПРС, N 3, 2001, էջ 115-126: Զաքարյան Ա. Հ., Գեներալ Ալեքսանդր Կուլեբյակինի մասնակցությունը Համաշխարհային պատերազմում հայ ժողովրդի կրած վնասի քննիչ հանձնաժողովի աշխատանքներին, Հայկական բանակ, N 1-2, 2002, էջ 155-158, Զաքարյան Ան., Նորահայտ փաստաթղթեր Հովի. Թումանյանի գլխավորած «Համաշխարհային պատերազմում

Military Commission” under the guidance of General Al. P. Kulebyakin was operating in parallel with the commission. The Armenian prominent historian Leo had joined its staff.

On December 4, 1918, the report of H. Tumanyan on the creation of Investigative Committee, its problems and actuation was heard at the meeting of the Armenian Compatriotic Unions’ Central Council. Four sub-committees or sections were organized, “Historical-Political”, “Military-Historical”, “Economic” and “Criminal”.

The “Historical-Political” section was guided by Leo²¹. Both he and the other members of the commission were deeply conscious of the responsibility they had to go through. A very short period was provided for the Commission. During that period, it had to be able to collect, arrange and put in writing an enormous quantity of documents as well as the recollections of immediate participants of military operations.

At the beginning of December, A-Do received a formal offer from the Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Armenia, Sirakan Tigranyan, to take part in the affairs of a Special Commission, operating in Tiflis, which had to compile and summarize the human and property losses the Armenian population underwent during WWI. A-Do set out for Tiflis at the beginning of 1919 and met with one of the commission members, General Tigran Baghdasaryan. After having considered the problem, he found it unsuitable to participate in the affairs of the Commission.

In 1919 Armenia's Union of Consumer Societies was founded (Haycoop, Armcoop), and A-Do got a job there, serving until 1949; he served as the Head of the Statistical Department.

A-Do was keeping on the scientific researches, having been prepared to write a special survey, which would embrace the period between WWI and 1919.

On March 16, 1920, the scholar turned to the bureau of Armcoop, informing that “My work, dedicated to the events of the last two years, is ready for publication, which is stopped owing to lack of paper”²². He had a request of providing him with paper of nearly 30 pounds with a relevant fee for the work’s publication. A-Do was even willing to transport the paper, allocated for Armcoop, from Tiflis to Yerevan at his own expense, but the bureau rejected his request.²³

The refusal of the Armcoop’s bureau didn’t discourage the scholar and he made a request to archimandrite Gyut Ter-Ghazaryan on March 29, 1920. A-Do brought to mind that father Arsen had promised to assist him in obtaining the paper. At the end of the letter, A-Do had remarked that he was ready to send the book for publication without

հայ ժողովրդի կրած վնասների քննիչ հանձնաժողովի» գործունեության մասին, ՊԲՀ, N 2, էջ 271-304: Закарян Ан., Александр Кулебякин и Армения. Под ред. акад. НАН РА В. Микаеляна, Ереван, 2003, стр. 40-51.

²¹ Ջաքարյան Ա. Հ., Գեներալ Ալեքսանդր Կուլեբյակինի մասնակցությունը Համաշխարհային պատերազմում հայ ժողովրդի կրած վնասի քննիչ հանձնաժողովի աշխատանքներին, «Հայկական բանակ», Երևան, N 1-2, 2002, էջ 156-157:

²² ՀԱԱ, ֆ. 41, ց. 1, գ. 1, թ. 1.

²³ Ibid.

any remuneration provided that “publication should be done immediately and as accurately as possible”²⁴.

Perhaps, receiving unsatisfactory response or being unable to solve the problem of the paper, A-Do turned to the Military Ministry of the Republic of Armenia and sent his voluminous work for consideration in April 1920, which was entitled “The accouchement of Armenian nation”. On April 24 of the same year, the Military Headquarters of the Republic of Armenia made an official request to the Interior Minister Abraham Gyulkhandanyan, informing that Hovhannes Ter-Martirosyan had presented a typewritten survey in Armenian, which was dedicated to WWI and the involvement of Armenians. The Military Minister asked to appoint a person with an eye to have his participation in the works of the Commission. The Commission should provide a professional decision to settle the matter of having the work by A-Do published. The content of the work was attached to the writing²⁵. Probably, the further events, the rebellion of May in 1920, the Turkish invasion in September and the sovietization of Armenia in December 2nd made impossible the publication of the work.

On December 2, 1920, the Soviet power was established in a considerable part of Eastern Armenia. The struggle under the command of Garegin Nzhdeh against the Bolshevik forces was lasting in Zangezur (Syunik). After the suppression of the nationwide uprising of February in 1921, the Soviet authorities began to seek ways for compelling the Mountainous Armenia to give up the armed struggle through persuasion and negotiations. A delegation, consisting of Davit Ananun (Davit Ter-Danyelyan), Hovhannes Melikyan, A-Do and others, was sent to Zangezur for that purpose.²⁶ As E. Sargsyan points, the mentioned persons advised the fighters not to believe the Bolsheviks in contradistinction to the members of the official delegation, Melnikov and Artashes Karinyan. A-Do was telling his own and reliable friends, “They lie, do not believe theme, they deceive”.²⁷ Simultaneously, E. Sargsyan adds, “A-Do returned with the broken heart, but saying again, like the old and virtuous party-man, that “you know your affairs better, move cautiously!”. He took upon himself to deliver the aid, we had provided, to the friends’ families”²⁸.

During the Soviet years, A-Do worked tirelessly in the sphere of cooperation, Armcoop. Certainly, the Soviet cooperation was not the model he had dreamed of, but he continued his work activities like his endeavors in all other areas, occupying various positions.

***Translated from Armenian
by V. M. Gharakhanyan***

²⁴ Ibid, §. 57, g. 2, q. 1160, թ. 20 շրջ.:

²⁵ ՀԱԱ, §. 201, g. 1, q. 29, թ. 14-15:

²⁶ Սիմոնյան Ա. Հ., Խորհրդային Հայաստանի և Լեռնահայաստանի կառավարությունների ներկայացուցիչների Սիսիանի բանակցությունները (1921 թ. մայիս), Լրաբեր հասարակական գիտությունների, 1998, N 2, էջ 69:

²⁷ Սարգսյան Ե., op. cit., p. 93.

²⁸ Ibid.