

# TURKISH-RUSSIAN ACADEMICS

A HISTORICAL STUDY ON THE CAUCASUS

Andrei ARESHEV • Ali ASKER • Andrei BOLDYREV  
Altay CENGİZER • Hayri ÇAPRAZ • Amur GADZHIEV  
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**TERAZİ YAYINCILIK**

Terazi Yayıncılık Bas. Dağ. Dan. Eđt. Org. Mat. Kırt. Ltd. Őti.  
Abidin Daver Sok. No. 12/B Daire 4 06550 ankaya/ANKARA

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**EDITED BY**

Center for Eurasian Research  
(AVİM)

**ISBN:** 978-605-60619-6-7

**DESIGN**

Ruhi ALAĐÖZ

**FIRST EDITION**

April 2016

**PRINTING**

Özyurt Matbaacılık

Büyük San. 1. Cad. Süzgün Sok. No: 7 İskitler / ANKARA

**Tel:** 0 312 384 15 36 - **Faks:** 0 312 384 15 37

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## Introduction

**T**urkey and Russia, having proximity and a shared destiny with each other due to being historical neighbors, have had many ups and downs throughout history ranging from hostilities and war to friendship, support and cooperation.

With globalization setting in and after the collapse of the Soviet Union, Turkish-Russian relations grew to become multi-faceted and multi-dimensional, providing a rich ground for scientific academic studies and research.

History no doubt is still a prominent field. Joint publications, symposiums and conferences on history carried out in the recent period have been concrete indicators of the developing cooperation between Turkey and Russia. Maintaining and developing this cooperation is of vital importance for the future.

As a result of contacts and meetings with the esteemed head and academicians of the Turkish Studies Programme of the Russian Academy of Sciences, Institute of Oriental Studies, the idea has emerged to compile a book on the work of some distinguished Turkish and Russian historians and academics, particularly on the history of the Caucasus region. In accordance with this understanding, the Center for Eurasian Studies (AVİM) is pleased to edit this historical academic study in a book.

We are grateful to all the participants for their valuable contributions, all outcome of meticulous academic work.

We also trust this initiative will help to encourage Turkish and Russian historians and academics to pursue more extensive and comprehensive studies and inspire them to accelerate their work.

# Nazi - Dashnak Collaboration During World War II\*

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**Abstract:** *The Dashnaks played the same role in World War II as they did in World War I. The Dashnaks took part in German plans to occupy both the USSR and Turkey by volunteering troops for the German fascist armies. The ideological foundation of the collaboration between the Nazis and Dashnaks began to be laid in the 1930s. In that period, the Dashnak leaders took great pains to prove to the Germans that Armenians were of Aryan origin. The first Dashnak organization that adopted the fascist ideology was "Tsegakron" established under the leadership of Nzhdeh, one of the commanders of the volunteer troops that fought against the Turks during World War I. This organization was then bracketed with Hitlerjugend of the Nazi Party.*

*Dro, who fought against Turkey during and after World War I, and was known for massacring the Muslim population, founded the Armenian National Committee on December 15, 1942. The aim of the Committee was to represent the Armenians of Europe at the German government level. The Dashnaks ran espionage and sabotage operations behind Soviet lines during the war and produced propaganda seeking to legitimize the German invasion. The most prominent of these was the Dromedar Group. Dashnaks visited prisoner camps and recruited agents on behalf of the Nazis. The Nazis made use of Dashnaks*

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\* I would like to express my thanks to Maxime Gauin for his contribution to the article.

*as a combatant power and formed Armenian legions. Dashnaks praised racism and Hitler in their publications too. Dashnak activities were not limited to anti-Sovietism; they took part, alongside the Germans, in plans targeting Turkey. There were also many Dashnak agents working for the Nazis in Turkey.*

*The Nazi-Dashnak alliance was a natural outcome of the aggressive, racist and collaborative character of Armenian nationalism. On the other hand, information and documents presented in this article are examples of the fact that the Armenian issue was a tool in the hands of imperialist countries throughout history. The Dashnak leaders who collaborated with the Nazis, such as Dro and Nzhdeh, are today regarded as heroes by the circles who fervently support the Armenian genocide claims. The same circles also condemn the denial of the Armenian genocide as a racist act. In fact, those who took the lead role in the mutual slaughter of 1915 and thereafter collaborated with the Nazis, entered into it under the command of racism.*

**Keywords:** *Dashnaksutyun; Armenian Issue; Fascism; World War II; Nazi Germany*



The Dashnaks played the same role in World War II as they did in World War I; however, this time, side by side with Hitler's Germany. The Dashnaks committed a fresh crime against the people of the region by forming volunteer troops with the German fascist armies, as well as taking part in the German plans to occupy both the USSR and Turkey.

### The Ideological Foundation of the Collaboration

The ideological foundation of the collaboration between the Nazis and Dashnaks began to be laid in the 1930s. A leading Nazi party ideologist Alfred Rosenberg assigned Artashes Abegian (Head of the Institute for Oriental Studies 1926-1936) the task of setting up a committee to study the anthropology and history of the Armenians. Five months after the committee was set up in 1934, Rosenberg submitted a report to Hitler indicating that the Armenians were of Aryan origin.<sup>1</sup> During that time, Dashnak leaders such as Dro<sup>2</sup> and Nzhdeh<sup>3</sup> took great pains to prove to the Germans that Armenians were part of the Aryan race.<sup>4</sup> After all, the idea that Armenians belonged to the Aryan race was frequently instilled by Armenian nationalist ideologists and

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1 Eduard Abramian, *Kavkaztsy v Abwehre*, Moskva: Izdatel Bystrov, 2006, pgs. 31-32. Eduard Abramian, an Armenian from Armenia provides important information about the Nazi-Dashnak relations in his book entitled "Caucasians in Abwehr", which he wrote after studying the Armenian, Russian and German archives.

2 Dro (Drastamat Kanayan) (1883-1956), an important leader of the Dashnaks, studied in Yerevan. In 1908, he went to Dogubeyazit and led the smuggling of weapons into Ottoman territory. He commanded the 2. Armenian Volunteer Unit in World War I and fought against Turkey in the Caucasian Front. At the end of 1917 he was appointed Commissar of the Armenian Corps. In November 1920 he became the Minister of Defense of Dashnak Armenia. At the end of November 1920, when the Soviet government was formed in Armenia, he signed up with the Revolution Committee, but was expelled immediately. He launched a fight against the Soviet government in February 1921. He defected abroad. He played the lead role in the collaboration with the Nazis during World War II. He went to America, and died there. See "Dro", *Entsiklopedia "Armyansky Vopros"*, Yerevan: Glavnaya Redaktsiya Armyanskoy Entsiklopedii, 1991, p. 168.

3 Nzhdeh (Ter-Harutyunyan Garegin) (1886-1955), a Dashnak leader, was born in Nakhchivan. He finished officer's school in Sofia in 1907. He was arrested by the Tsarist regime in the Caucasus in 1909. He went to Bulgaria in 1911, and organized the Armenian volunteer troops against the Turkish armies together with Andranik in the Balkan War, and fought in the Bulgarian Army. He also became one of the commanders of the Armenian volunteer troops in the Caucasian Front in World War I. He served in military positions in Dashnak Armenia. He fought against the new regime after proclamation of the Soviet government in Armenia. He went to Iran, and from there to Bulgaria. He lived for a time in the United States. He worked for the Nazis during World War II. After the war, he was captured by the Soviet counter-intelligence in Bulgaria and taken to Moscow where he was arrested. He was sentenced to 25 years imprisonment; he died in prison. See K. Sardaryan, "Nzhdeh", *Entsiklopedia "Armyansky Vopros"*, p. 246.

4 Vache Hovsepian, Garegin Nzhdeh i KGB: *Vospominaniya Razvedchika*, Yerevan: NOF "Norabank", 2007, pgs. 109, 142, 148, 153, 267; Antranig Chalabian, *DRO (Drastamat Kanayan): Armenia's First Defense Minister of the Modern Era*, Los Angeles: Indo-European Publishing, 2009, p. 243; *Dashnaki Na Sluzhbe Germanskoy Razvedki*, Azemeshr, Baku, 2014, p. 63.

leaders both at the emergence of Armenian nationalism, as well as during and after Dashnak Armenia.<sup>5</sup>

From this period until the end of the war, he published dozens of books and printed pamphlets in Germany about Armenians, their ancient history, their Aryan race origins and the “1915- Armenian Genocide”. Among these were “Armenian-Aryan”, “Zeytun”, “The Historical Friendship between the Armenians and Germans”, “Aryans are Looking at You”, and “The Historic Role of Our Volunteers”.<sup>6</sup>

The ideological foundation for Dashnak collaboration with fascists was also echoed by the Italians. In August 1937, a Caucasus expert of Mussolini’s regime, Lauro Mainardi, defended his argument for collaboration with the Dashnaks by comparing the ideology of Dashnaksutyun to the Italian National Fascist Party.<sup>7</sup> Dashnak leaders, in their meetings with the Germans, did not refrain from underlining that the very first socialist-nationalist party was, indeed, founded by them.<sup>8</sup>

### Early Fascist Organizations and “Tsegakron”

As part of this process, Armenian nationalist youth associations, and pro-Nazi fascist Armenian youth organizations were established to carry out activities in Berlin, Munich, Bucharest, Sofia and other European countries. In Bulgaria and Romania, combatant groups were formed from members of the Armenian nationalist organization “Tsegakron”.

This organization, founded in the US by Nzhdeh in 1934 (one of the commanders of the volunteer troops fighting against Turkey during World War I), later spread through Europe. A significant part of the organization joined the special units of the German military intelligence organization Abwehr in the process. These included not only young people, but also Nzhdeh’s former comrades in arms. “Tsegakron” called for the collaboration of all Armenians

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5 For examples, see Mehmet Perinçek, *Ermeni Milliyetçiliğinin Serüveni: Taşnaklardan ASALA’ya Yeni Belgelerle*, İstanbul: Kaynak Yayınları, 2015, pgs. 31-40, 282, 286; The letter of the Dashnak Armenia Delegation in Paris dated February 9, 1922, Archives Du Ministère Des Affaires Étrangères, La Courneuve, Microfilm P 16676; Jordi Tejel Gorgas, *Le Mouvement Kurde de Turquie en Exil: Continuités et Discontinuités du Nationalisme Kurde Sous le Mandat Français en Syrie et au Liban (1925-1946)*, Berne: Peter Lang, 2007, pgs. 226-228.

6 Eduard Abramian, p. 32; Vache Hovsepian, p. 153.

7 Georges Mamoulia, “L’histoire Du Groupe Caucase (1934-1939)”, *Cahiers Du Monde Russe*, No. 48/1, 2007, p. 57.

8 *Dashnaki Na Sluzhbe Germanskoy Razvedki*, p. 54.

around the world with the Nazis during World War II. Many historians described this organization as the Hitlerjugend<sup>9</sup> of the Armenians.<sup>10</sup>

The Organization based its ideology on race, and indeed sanctified it. “Tsegakron” believed that the blood of the race needed to be pure. The movement argued against interracial marriages in its publications. According to “Tsegakronutyun” (the ideology of the movement), the family existed to strengthen the race, and children belonged to the race rather than the parents. For them, the race came before everything else, and the true religion of Armenians was Armenianism.<sup>11</sup>

John Roy Carlson (Arthur Derounian), an Armenian living in the US and a witness to the period, cited the words of the Pro-Nazi Dashnak Edward Masgalajian (Edward C. Adrian) about “Tsegakron”, whom he came across on the street in New York:

“Adrian told me of the youth division of the Dashnag, known as the Tzaghagron, coined from the Armenian words tzegh (race) and gron (religion). The program and philosophy of these fascistic ‘race worshipping’ nationalists were similar to the Hitler Youth, Adrian told me proudly.”<sup>12</sup>

Similar statements about “Tsegakron” were also echoed by Devedjiyan, an important leader of the Dashnaks. Ovanes Akopovich Devedjiyan, an Armenian from Turkey, assumed top level positions in the Party, and subsequently went to Europe to play a significant role in the collaboration with the Nazis. Devedjiyan was captured by the post-war Soviet counterintelligence organization “Smersh” (Smert Shpionam - Death to Spies) in Bucharest, and interrogated in the USSR. Devedjiyan was also questioned about the “Tsegakron” organization in his interrogation:

“If we analyze the term ‘Tsegakron’, worshiping the race and protecting its purity are revealed; it is an equivalent of Nazism. Nzhdeh made Armenian-based fascism propaganda this way with his ‘Tsegakron’.”<sup>13</sup>

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9 The organization called “Hitler Youth” was founded as the youth wing of the Nazi Party. It was later turned into a government agency. The Government issued a law in March 1939 that made it mandatory (akin to military service) for all young people to join the “Hitler Youth”. See William Shirer, *Nazi İmparatorluğu: Doğuşu, Yükseliş ve Çöküşü*, 2. edition, Istanbul: Ağaoğlu Yayınevi, March 1970, pgs. 194, 400-407; Cornell Law Library Donovan Nuremberg Trials Collection, Office of Strategic Services Research and Analysis Branch, *Principal Nazi Organizations Involved in the Commission of War Crimes, The Nazi Party (Part IV)*, Vol LXXXVII Section 62.04 (R&A 3113.7, pt. IV).

10 Eduard Abramian, pgs. 32-33.

11 Musheg Lalaian, *Garegin Nzhdeh i Yego Uchenie*, Yerevan: Respublikanskaya Partiya Armenii, 2004, pgs. 28, 37.

12 John Roy Carlson, *Under Cover: My Four Years in the Nazi Underworld of America*, 7. edition New York: E. P. Dutton & Co., Inc., August 1943, pgs. 81-82.

13 For the related part of the interrogation minutes dated August 28, 1947, see Vache Hovsepian, p. 23.

“Tsegakron” also appeared in the list of crimes in Nzhdeh’s indictment when was captured and tried by the Soviets after the war. According to the indictment in the Nzhdeh investigation file No. 11278, the organization was founded on the basis of Hitlerjugend ideology and produced racism propaganda; youth camps were established in the US for military training, (the aim of these camps being to unite with Nazi armies to attack America from the inside if Germany attacked the US when the war broke out), and prevent local people mounting a resistance in case of invasion of the USSR and Armenia.<sup>14</sup>

When the famous Orientalist and Armenian specialist Akop Arakelovich Siruni (Choloian) was arrested by the Soviets after the war, his testimony was taken under the scope of the Nzhdeh investigation. Siruni gave a testimony entitled “About Garegin Nzhdeh and the ‘Tsegakron’ Movement”. According to Surini, who had known Nzhdeh since the early 1920s and even written books about him, said that after going to the US, Nzhdeh praised racism with solemn language in the Ayrenik newspaper and that the viscous, vulgar and fanciful tone of Nzhdeh’s writings and speeches only revealed that he had founded a race-based organization and his race was the essence Armenian existence. Siruni, who regarded such ideas of Nzhdeh as being quite far from the demands and reality of the Armenian people, underlined that the Armenians did not pose a racial threat, and therefore there was no need to undertake measures to this end. Siruni also said that he had then used the term “impure-religion” without fear, instead of “race-religion” from which the term “Tsegakron” was derived.

Siruni, who pointed out that the Armenians in the US were divided into two camps after Nzhdeh went to Bulgaria in 1934, said that Nzhdeh wrote two books on this issue: “The American Armenians: The Tribe and its Gutter” and “Evil Conspirators against the Race”. Also mentioning Nzhdeh’s efforts to spread the “Tsegakron” movement in Europe, Siruni emphasized that many fascist groups parroting fascist ideas detached from the Armenian reality, such as anti-foreignism, emerged among the Armenians in Europe.<sup>15</sup>

During his imprisonment in Armenian SSR<sup>16</sup>, Nzhdeh said that only Turkophiles and ignorant Armenians who did not understand history could speak against “Tsegakron”. Nzhdeh argues that among the reasons for the foundation of “Tsegakron” was the change in the political approaches of the old generation of Armenians toward Turkey. According to Nzhdeh, the old generation which had begun to keep a distance from the Armenian issue, was coming to terms with the idea of giving up on Armenian land in Turkey, and

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14 See *ibid*, p. 178.

15 For the full text of Siruni’s statement, see *ibid*, *pgs.* 179-185.

16 The Soviet Socialist Republic.

becoming closer with the Turks. The “Tsegakron” movement, in this sense, also assumed the task of reminding the Armenians of their responsibility for the land claims against Turkey. Therefore, the cover of the first edition of the “Tsegakron” program was issued with the slogan “Lausanne? Never!”<sup>17</sup>

One of the most important goals of “Tsegakron” was to take revenge on the Turks. Each Armenian that fell victim to the Turks was to be followed by two vengeful Armenians. The Turkish people were never to be forgiven, to be relentlessly avenged on and be subject to ruthless payback. According to the idea structure of the movement, the enmity toward the Turks was not historical, but biological. In addition to the Turks, Bolsheviks and Armenians collaborating with them were also among the chief adversaries.<sup>18</sup>

### **The Armenian National Committee: The Goal of a German Aegis in Armenia**

Drastamat Kanayan (Dro), who fought against Turkey during and after World War I, and was known for massacring the Muslim population, founded the Armenian National Committee on December 15, 1942. The aim of the Committee was to represent the Armenians in Europe at the German government level. This Committee became a center of Armenian anti-USSR, pro-German propaganda during World War II.<sup>19</sup> Dr. Artashes Abegian mentioned above took on the chairmanship of the Committee, and Abraham Giulhandanian took on the vice-chairmanship. Among the committee members were also Nzhdeh and Vahan Papazian (Koms) who was a former Van deputy and one of the architects of the uprising against the Ottoman State.<sup>20</sup> The meetings held between Dro, the Committee and the German high command were kept secret.<sup>21</sup>

Interestingly, a committee with a similar name, the Armenian National Bureau, worked to streamline issues related to Armenian volunteer troops at the Russian government level during World War I, and became a focal point of pro-Turkey activities.<sup>22</sup>

The Armenian intelligence archives in Yerevan (Archives of the National

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17 *ibid*, pgs. 245-246.

18 Musheg Lalaian, pgs. 32-33, 39.

19 Eduard Abramian, pgs. 33-34.

20 Christopher J. Walker, *Armenia: The Survival of a Nation*, 2. edition, London: Routledge, 1990, p. 357.

21 Sarkis Adamian, *The Armenian Community*, New York: Philosophical Library, 1955, p. 399, as cited by: Antranig Chalabian, p. 231.

22 See V. Melikian, “Natsionalnoe Byuro”, *Entsiklopedia “Armyansky Vopros”*, p. 243.

Intelligence Service of the Republic of Armenia - ASNB RA) hold a declaration of the Armenian National Committee in Berlin written in Armenian dated February 15, 1943.

The first clause of the declaration states that the Armenian National Committee was founded in December 15, 1941 under the auspices of the German Ministry of Occupied Eastern Territories. The statement describes the function of the Armenian National Committee as an intermediary between Germany and Armenians. Of course, it would also serve social issues within the framework of the European people. Articles 2 and 3 of the declaration are as follows:

“2. The Armenian National Committee pursues, on one hand, the goal of salvation of Armenia from the Russian Bolshevik yoke, and on the other, the goal of political independence of the people of Armenia and Armenia.

“3. The Armenian National Committee expects the political patronage of the German Reich as the most secure guarantee to achieve and reinforce this goal and its duties. On this basis, the Armenian National Committee, from the point of view that the powerful German Reich has been a savior of Armenia and the people of Armenia since medieval times, believes that the line of Armenian administrative circles shall this way be made dominant and strengthened again.”<sup>23</sup>

Article 6 of the declaration is about the land claims of the Dashnaks:

“6. The Armenian National Committee feels obliged to draw the attention of the protector state to the land claims of contemporary Armenia. The Armenian National Committee shall do what is within its power to resolve this issue equitably within the borders of the South Caucasus, and will have to refer to the justice of the Reich when necessary.”<sup>24</sup>

Article 9 of the declaration is a typical reflection of Dashnak nationalism:

“9. Armenia, under the auspices of the German Reich, must work to reinforce the German influence in the Near East as much as it can. In this context, the Armenian National Committee feels obliged to point to the bitter disappointment and terrible sadness inflicted by Russia and England on the Armenians in the past.”<sup>25</sup>

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23 For the complete statement, see ASNB RA 1966 file 23342 volume 1 pages 36-39, as cited by: Eduard Abramian, pgs. 245-248.

24 *ibid*, pgs. 246-247.

25 *ibid*, p. 247.

Article 12, the last article of the declaration states that the duty of the Armenian National Committee shall end when a new government is established in Armenia under the rule of Germany.<sup>26</sup>

On the orders of Rosenberg, the German Minister of Occupied Eastern Territories, the United Armenian Headquarters was also founded in February 1944. Led by Vartan Sarkisian, this agency coordinated the activities of all Armenian military and intelligence groups within the German armed forces Wehrmacht, and military intelligence Abwehr.<sup>27</sup>

### **Borman's Close Friend, Dro**

It was Dro who played the lead role in the Dashnaks' taking part alongside Nazi Germany. Even before the war, Dro was highly regarded among the Nazis. He had close relationships with senior German ministers, such as Martin Borman and Alfred Rosenberg. Borman's secretary and nephew said that the German Minister intimately referred to Dro as "the Hero of Bashaparan". Dro's nickname came from a conflict he waged against the Turks in 1918.<sup>28</sup>

First, the Dashnak Party gathered a convention in Bucharest on Dro's command, and opted to fight on the side of Germany. A committee of five (Vahan Papazian, Davidkhanian, Yefrem Sarkisian, Sarkis Araratian and Dro) was set up to set the wheels in motion, and began negotiations with both the German and Italian governments. This commission engaged in recruitment activities for the German army and intelligence. After the death of Araratian, Ovanes Devedjiyan replaced him.<sup>29</sup>

### **The "Dromedar" Group**

After the Battle of Stalingrad<sup>30</sup> the Abwehr administration embarked on forming a special Armenian group. The group of Dro (who had been promoted to the rank of general) was also included in this formation. Founded at the beginning of April 1943, the group was named Abwehrgruppe (AG)-114

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26 *ibid.*, p. 248.

27 *ibid.*, p. 34.

28 *ibid.*, p. 44.

29 Vache Hovsepian, pgs. 157-158.

30 The Battle of Stalingrad that is regarded as the turning point of World War II and ended with the Red Army's triumph took place between July 17, 1942 and February 2, 1943. See David M. Glantz, "Battle of Stalingrad", *Encyclopedia of Russian History*, edited by James R. Millar, New York: Macmillan Reference USA, 2003, pgs. 1453-1455.



“Dromedar”. At first, it was planned to parachute this group into Armenia from aircrafts over the front line. However, adverse conditions on the front forced the German command and General Dro’s military headquarters to change their plans somewhat.

At the end of April 1943, the group assumed an independent status. The assistant to the head of the group (Dro) was Kuro (Nikolai Tarhanian), and the chief of staff was Tigran Bagdasarian. Misak Torlakian assumed the responsibility of intelligence and sabotage activities. The spy team of AG-114 was comprised of members of Dashnak Armenia’s (1918-1920) military.

Dromedar members were clad in a new type of German uniform and they carried a mixture of German and Soviet made weapons. Everyone in the group, from privates to generals, had to wear a badge showing the three colors of the Dashnak Republic, inscribed with “ARMENIEN” on the right sleeve of their military coat. At first, the Dashnak legionaries used the figure of the Ararat Mountain or the symbol of the State of Dashnak Armenia on their badges. Other codes denoting the Dromedar group were “Kars” and “Kars-1101”.

Dromedar members captured by the Soviet forces explained that Dro also established a school of espionage. According to their statements, this school had the capacity to train 150 people at any one time. Dromedar members were divided into small groups of 4 or 5 at the school. Each small group included a radio-telegrapher, two former Red Army members who knew the region well and would direct the group, and a German officer acting as a group commander, who would be one of the Dashnak refugees trusted by Dro.

The group dissolved in July 1944 and was replaced by a separate unit named “Einheit Sturm” founded in Belgrade. This group also engaged in activities behind Soviet lines.

Abwehrgruppe-106, on the other hand, was comprised of agent groups under the leadership of Stepanian and Sarkisian who were former members of the Soviet Army.<sup>31</sup>

## **Armenian Legions**

Besides the espionage and sabotage activities, the Armenian volunteer legions were also forged under the leadership of Dro. The following were among some of the Armenian legions beginning to be established in Poland, Ukraine and

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<sup>31</sup> Eduard Abramian, pgs. 67-70, 72-73, 93-94, 133-134; Sergey Chuyev, *Proklyatyte Soldaty: Predateli Na Storone III Reykha*, Moskva: Eksmo, 2004, pgs. 521-522.



Russia in 1942: The Armenian legion in the city of Lublin, Poland in March 1942 (1000 persons); the Armenian Legion in the Rembertow region of Warsaw in June 1942 (3,000 people); the Armenian National Regiment in Simferopol in August 1942 (1,500 people); the Fourth Division of the Brandenburg Regiment Caucasian Battalion in Rostov na Donu in October 1942; the Armenian Legion in the city of Pulawy, Poland in July 1942 (1000 persons); the First Armenian Regiment in the city of Jizdra in the Orlov region in February 1943 (2,500 people).<sup>32</sup> Only in Poland were there 9 Armenian battalions forged. (807-809, 812-816) These battalions operated under strict discipline. Even the slightest errors were subject to severe physical punishment.<sup>33</sup>

809. Battalion, later to be named “Zeytun” 809, particularly came to the forefront. Fighting against the Soviet partisan (guerrilla) movement, the battalion was highly praised by the German command. The battalion participated in the German defense against the Americans in the Normandy landings. In addition to combat forces, 22 Armenian auxiliary companies (logistics, railways, transportation, and construction) were established.<sup>34</sup>

While the total number of men in Armenian battalions was eleven thousand, seven thousand Armenians served in auxiliary units.<sup>35</sup>

### Legitimization of the German Occupation

One of the major services rendered by the Dashnaks to the Nazis in World War II was their propaganda activity behind Soviet lines and in occupied territories. One of these teams was lead by the SS Officer Nikolai Gevorkian (Dr. Sikorsky Gevorkov), son of the famous Dashnak leader Seto Djelalian. They planted their agents among the Armenian population in occupied areas for counterintelligence activities. They were also producing large amounts of anti-Soviet propaganda and disseminating it among the Armenians.

Apart from this, they set up local Armenian National Committee centers. According to the statements of local Armenians, the Armenian National Committee had a center and headquarters in each settlement. They were trying to legitimize the German occupation through financial assistance and trying to

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32 Vladimir Yampolsky, “Unichtozhit Rossiyu Vesnoy 1941 g.” (A. Gitler, 31 Iyulia 1940 goda): Dokumenty Spetssluzhb SSSR i Germanii. 1937-1945 gg., Moskva: Kuchkovo Pole, 2008, p. 262.

33 Sergey Chuyev, pgs. 522-523.

34 *ibid*, pgs. 523, 526.

35 This does not include the Armenians in the German troops, SS armies, etc. See G. G. Mamulia, *Gruzinsky Legion Vernakhta*, Moskva: Veche, 2011, p. 299.

convince the public that only Hitler cared about the well-being of the Armenians.

### **“Great Armenia” Propaganda at Schools**

Private schools were opened for Armenians. At these schools, propaganda of the Great Armenia to be founded under the auspices of the Third Reich was disseminated.<sup>36</sup> An example of the types of letter written by inhabitants of the region regarding these Dashnak activities is as follows:

“The Russians were saying that Germans were brutal murderers and shooting down everyone with firing squads, and that they embarked on a mass extermination or enslaved the people of the USSR. However, I assure you, dear Gayane, these are all, but a lie; they [the Germans] are very friendly to everyone, especially to us, the Armenians.”<sup>37</sup>

Of course, this “friendly attitude” lasted a very short time; the Armenian Gestapo agents who arrived later terrorized the region. One of the Armenian National Committee propaganda themes was to compare the Soviet Union to the Ottoman Empire. According to the Dashnaks, Young Turks and Bolsheviks were the same. The idea, “We will save the country from Stalin and the Turks; we will reach an agreement with the Germans and pursue our independent policy like Bulgarians, Romanians, Slovaks and Croats” was continuously instilled among Armenian troops.<sup>38</sup>

### **Activities in Crimea**

One of the regions where the Armenian National Committee carried out intensive work was Crimea. The Committee had branch offices in all the major cities of Crimea.<sup>39</sup> Committee activities were supported by the German administration of the Crimea. They opened cafes and restaurants only for the families of Armenians, Germans and volunteers, as well as hospitals which only admitted Armenians.

On the other hand, the Committee was collecting aid from the Armenian population for the needs of the German fascist armies and Armenian volunteer

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36 Eduard Abramian, pgs. 71-72.

37 *ibid*, p. 72.

38 *ibid*, pgs. 35, 74.

39 Oleg Valentinovich Romanko, *Nemetskaya Okupatsionnaya Politika Na Territorii Kryma i Natsionalny Vopros (1941-1945)*, Simferopol: Antikva, 2009, p. 42.

troops. The Dashnak-led Armenian National Committee published magazines in Crimea called “Asat Hayastan” (Free Armenia) and “Hay Azk” (Armenian Nation), and called the peninsula’s male population to fight alongside the German ranks. Also, the volunteer troops recruited under the leadership of the Dashnaks fought intensively against the Soviet partisan (guerrilla) organization.

Such collaboration of Crimean Armenians with the Nazis led to the deportation of 9,621 local Armenians in the beginning of May 1944, immediately after a significant part of the peninsula passed into the hands of the Soviet armies.<sup>40</sup>

During this process, Dro and many other Dashnak leaders went to Simferopol. Soviet intelligence devised a plan to capture Dro in the Crimea, but failed.<sup>41</sup>

### **Germans Recruiting Agents**

Another activity that the Dashnaks conducted for the Nazis was to recruit agents from military prison camps. They recruited Armenian soldiers from the Soviet army, who were later sent to the training camps of the German military intelligence Abwehr, the German armed forces Wehrmacht or the Nazi military police, the SS. Armenian captives held in the Mozdok and Pyatigorsk camps, explain that very articulate, Armenian speaking Dashnaks in German uniforms frequently visited them and told them that they could save themselves from famine and plague by joining the German ranks. The following words of the Dashnaks to Armenian prisoners of war are also worthy of attention: “The German government is fighting against Bolshevism and offering the Armenians the opportunity to save their country from the communists and Turkish invaders.”

The Dashnaks did not neglect to run those prisoners of war who agreed to join their special units through some tests, to weed out Jews pretending to be Armenian. They had the prisoners who surrendered read the Bible they had with them in Armenian, to verify their true nationality.<sup>42</sup> Dro also founded a special group from Armenian students studying in Berlin to visit the prison camps.<sup>43</sup>

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40 Eduard Abramian, pgs. 66-67, 156-185.

41 Antranig Chalabian, pgs. 243-245.

42 Eduard Abramian, p. 66.

43 Vache Hovsepian, p. 166.

### **Dashnaks Serving Hitler**

It was not only Dro, Nzhdeh and the other names above who collaborated with the Nazis. In particular, many of the major Dashnak leaders entered under the command of Hitler:

**Artasesh Abegian:** From the Nakhchivan region, Artasesh Abegian was an official employee of the Ministry of Occupied Eastern Territories. He conducted the negotiations with Rosenberg in 1941 and offered the services of the Dashnaks to the Germans in the fight against the Soviets. He led the Armenian National Committee in 1942 and was also the editor of the “Ayastan” in Armenian, published on the orders of Goebbels. He also gave anti-Soviet lectures at the concentration camps in Poland at the end of 1943.

**Vachagan Artashesovich Abegian:** Vachagan Artashesovich Abegian defected to Germany with his father in 1921 and worked as a translator at the Ministry of Occupied Eastern Territories. He visited prison camps to recruit members for Dashnaksutyun Party and selected people among the prisoners of war who could work at the German agencies. He also served on the Armenian National Committee.

**Akop Petrovich Azizian (Azirian):** Defecting to France from Armenia in 1921, Azizian was an official member of the AG-114 “Dromedar”. At the beginning of war, he took part in the interrogations of the prisoners of war with Dro at the Soviet-German Front, recruitment of agents and deployment of spies behind Soviet lines.

**Vahan Tatevosovich Ayrapetian:** A member of the Dashnak Party, a German spy and a propagandist, Ayrapetian was taken prisoner by the Germans in Crimea in 1942. He joined the Nazis and served as a prison camp warden. He studied and lectured at the propaganda school of the Ministry of Occupied Eastern Territories near Berlin in March 1943.

**Gayk Asatrian:** Born in 1900 in Eleshkirt (Erzurum), Asatrian joined the Dashnaksutyun Party after finishing school and carried out activities in Ottoman territories. He worked in several publications and wrote articles on Armenian issues. He became close friends with Garegin Nzhdeh and fought against the Turks alongside him, then fled to Europe after the Dashnak February Uprising in the Soviet Armenia (1921) was suppressed. Along with the Dashnaks, he made contact with the Nazis and collaborated with the Germans from the outset of the war. Asatrian believed that the territories “occupied” by Kemalist Turkey would be saved with the help of the Germans and engaged in political training of the cadres of Armenian troops alongside

Nzhdeh during the war. The wife of Asatrian Siranus, who was an Iranian Armenian, was also an agent of the Bulgarian police and Gestapo.

**Tigran Bagdasarian (Tigris):** An officer in the Turkish army, Bagdasarian moved to Paris from Istanbul and was an official employee of the German intelligence. He served in top level positions in Dro's group AG-114 during the war, as well as serving on the Armenian National Committee. He was also a managing director of the "Ayastan" newspaper issued to the Dashnaks and Armenians by Goebbels' Propaganda Ministry.

**Suren Bekzadian:** Bekzadian was a member of the Dashnaksutyun Party and the founder of "Paykar" Publishing House. He was also the son of the Ambassador of Dashnak Armenia to Baku. He then founded a publishing house called "Osank" under the aegis of Rosenberg to be used as a propaganda tool aimed at Armenians in the occupied territories of the USSR.

**Nikolai Ambariumovich Gevorkian:** Gevorkian worked as a medical doctor in the Dashnak army but fled to Paris after the fall of the Dashnaks. He became a prominent name at the Dashnak headquarters there and served at the intelligence organ of AG-114 "Dromedar" during the war. He gathered intelligence behind the Soviet lines under the pretense of collecting aid for the Armenian prisoners, and was especially involved in propaganda activities.

**Alexandr Hatisian:** Hatisian was the prime minister of Dashnak Armenia and attended meetings held with the Nazis for the recruitment of volunteer troops.

**Aram Konstantinovich Mirimanian (Dervish):** Born in Igdir (Turkey), Mirimanian was an AG-114 agent and worked as the editor of "Ayastan" newspaper. He disseminated anti-Soviet propaganda at prisoner camps in 1945 and urged the prisoners not to go back to the USSR. He would also obtain foreign passports for those who agreed to it.

**Alfred Muradian:** Born in Amasya in 1908, Muradian was a member of the Dashnak Party and lived in Berlin as of 1921. He became the agent of the German intelligence organ "Zeppelin" and was promoted to the rank of major in the German army. Joining the German Nazi Party in 1937, he became the representative of the Armenian National Committee at the command levels of the German Armed Forces as of November 1942. He would frequently give lectures at the intelligence school in Auschwitz and undertook high level duties in the formation of the Armenian volunteer troops. He also won Goebbels's affection.

**Alexy Sarkisian:** His father was an Armenian from Cilicia who immigrated

to Bulgaria, where Sarkisian was born. He joined “Tsegakron” (described as “Hitlerjugend” of the Armenians) in 1938, and the Dashnaksutyun Party in 1942. As anti-Turk and anti-Soviet propaganda intensified in 1941, he joined the Armenian volunteer troops and served as a non-commissioned officer in 809. Battalion “Zeytun”. He engaged in heavy conflicts in North Ossetia. Sarkisian won favor of the Germans and was appointed lieutenant commander of a division in May 1943.

**Vartan Mikhailovich Sarkisian:** Sarkisian fought in the Russian army against Turkey during World War I, but was taken prisoner by the Turks in 1918. He was released upon the visit of the American General Harbord’s delegation to Anatolia, who was conducting investigations into the Armenian issue. In 1919, he volunteered to join the Dashnak army and then served with the Soviet army. He voluntarily joined the German side in World War II and was promoted as far as General. He was captured by the Soviets and shot by firing squad at the end of the war.

**Misak Akopovich Torlakian:** Born near Trabzon (Turkey) in 1888, Torlakian served in the Dashnak army between 1919 and 1920. Misak killed Behbud Khan Javanshir, former Minister of the Interior of Azerbaijan on July 19, 1921, in Istanbul, and defected to France in the same year. He later lived in Romania, worked at the oil company owned by Dro, and served as a member of the official cadre of AG-114 “Dromedar”. He and Dro arrived in Crimea in 1942, where he directed the Dashnak bureau. He also presented confidential documents about Turkey’s Caucasus plans to Rosenberg and went to the Balkans with the German armies in 1944. In the US, he conducted anti-Soviet activities and controlled territory in Germany with Dro after the war.<sup>44</sup>

### **Racism in Dashnak Publications: “The Need to Cleansed of Jews”**

During the collaboration with the Nazis, the Dashnak media organs were also under the complete influence of fascist ideology. The weekly Dashnak periodical “Hayrenik” went as far as writing the following lines in its issue dated August 19 and 21, 1936:

“The Jews are fanatically nationalistic and racist bigots; they pretend to be world citizens and internationalists to ensure continuation of their race wherever they are... Just like the British who used battle ships to invade other countries, the Jews use internationalism and communism as a weapon... It is sometimes hard to weed out these toxic elements, like chronic diseases, when

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<sup>44</sup> See Eduard Abramian, pgs. 46, 56, 178-179, 211-216, 219-223; Vache Hovsepian, p. 112; Sergei Chuyev, pgs. 520-521.

they root. And when there is a need to clear them through elimination... such attempts are considered revolutionist. It is natural to see blood shed during surgery... In such circumstances, dictatorships assume the role of a savior.”<sup>45</sup>

On May 10, 1935, the weekly “Hayrenik” published the words of the Bucharest Deputy Mayor, “The Armenians have helped us Romanians not to become slaves of the Jewish elements.” The “Hayrenik”’s issue dated August 9, 1935 described the Jews’ love of gain as the reason for the Armenians and Greeks killing many Jews in Salonika.<sup>46</sup> The Dashnak leader, Dro, severed all ties with his Jewish friends to earn the trust of the Nazis<sup>47</sup>.

### Hitler’s Accolades

The Dashnak collaboration with the Nazis was evident in Dashnak publications even before the war. Armenian Scientist A. A. Lalaian, in a 1936 issue of the Scientific Research Organization for National and Colonial Issue’s publication “Revolutsionny Vostok” (Revolutionary East), described the Dashnak tactic as “organizing a counter-revolutionist movement against Soviet Russia and providing all kinds of support to German fascists, Japanese militarists and other imperialists in their invasive policies, to re-establish Armenian sovereignty in the territory of Armenia after the defeat of the Soviets” and cites the following from the issue of their media outlet Uysaber in Egypt, dated June 26, 1936:

“A Dashnak media outlet also says the following in their editorial: ‘In the future, everyone without exception shall directly or indirectly participate in a major armed conflict between the nations. We will be from the first group of nations. Undoubtedly, as the storm approaches, its echoes will inevitably be heard in our country and will directly affect our fate... Historical events have linked our fate with a country (USSR) that will be the axis of major conflicts in the future... It is nonsense to think that warring nations must leave Russia alone... On the contrary, the struggle shall break out on this one-sixth of the Earth land mass’. Later, the newspaper exalts with an enthusiastic style Hitler’s known speeches about ‘the Wealth of the East’ and invasion of Russia, thus stressing once again that Dashnaksutyun had the ability to actively join a war against the Soviets in the future.

“The Dashnak media outlet defends Hitler and his ‘historical mission’ regarding the USSR in an open and arrogant manner and demonstrates a

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45 See Şükrü Server Aya, *Soykırım Tacirleri ve Gerçekler*, Istanbul: Derin Yayınları, 2009, November 2009, p. 250.

46 See Samuel A. Weems, *Secrets of a “Christian” Terrorist State*, Dallas: St. John Press, 2002, p. 347.

47 *Dashnaki Na Sluzhbe Germanskoy Razvedki*, p. 42.



dissenting attitude toward the decision of the VII. Congress of Comintern on a single-front against fascism and internationalist war.

“Dashnaksutyun’s counter-revolutionist ‘ideologists’ know very well that fascism means war. Therefore, they have special sympathy for Hitler’s fascism which has come to power. While maintaining its anti-Soviet relations with the reactionist circles of British and French imperialism, Dashnaksutyun defends the German fascist invasion of the East in a more and more energetic manner.

“(…) Here is a prescription from the Dashnak generals without an army as ‘how to solve the Armenian issue, which is still unresolved as of today (!), tomorrow for sure...’”<sup>48</sup>

The issue of “Hayrenik” dated September 17, 1936 writes that Hitler came to power after Herculean struggle, and emphasizes that he spoke to the racial heart strings of the German and opened the fountain his national genius.<sup>49</sup>

On the other hand, Goebbels’ Propaganda Ministry published the weekly “Hayastan” newspaper for the Armenian volunteers until 1944. The periodical issued in Armenian and German was managed by a Dashnak named Vigen Sant. There were many Armenians at Goebbels’ ministry working as radio announcers in German, French, Russian and Armenian.<sup>50</sup>

The issue of “Hayastan” dated February 2, 1945 published Dro’s address to Armenians under Hitler’s picture. Dro proclaimed that the victory was near, and the Armenian emblem on the top corner of the newspaper was made to look like swastika.<sup>51</sup> Those in Dro’s immediate vicinity claim to have witnessed Dro raise his glass to Hitler in various occasions<sup>52</sup>.

### **Dro Trains Agents for the Nazis**

The Nazi-Dashnak collaboration was naturally identified by the Soviets. There are also several documents revealing this fact in the archives of Armenia. In particular, the archives of the Armenian Intelligence (KGB of the former Armenian SSR) are an important resource in this matter: The National Security Service Archives of the Republic Of Armenia (ASNB RA). The report dated

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48 A. A. Lalaian, *The Counter Revolutionary Role Of The Dashnagzoutiun Party (1914-1923)*, Istanbul: Kaynak Yayınları, 2007, pgs. 23, 26-27.

49 Samuel A. Weems, p. 348.

50 Eduard Abramian, p. 33; Christopher J. Walker, p. 357.

51 See Şükrü Server Aya, p. 252.

52 Dashnaki Na Sluzhbe Germanskoy Razvedki, p. 41.



December 17, 1942 on Dashnak leader Dro Kanayan's anti-Soviet activities produced by the 4th Office (which handled foreign operations) of the People's Commissariat for State Security of the Soviet Intelligence Service (NKGB) is noteworthy:

"Dro tried to establish links with the fascists even before the onslaught of Germany on the USSR. At the beginning of the war Dro went to Germany, where he was heavily involved in training the spy cadres.

"Among many refugees, Dro is one of those who have authority in the eyes of the Germans, so much so that official correspondence referred to Dro as 'General Dro', his security is ensured, etc.

"According to data from the documents dated April 17, 1942, Colonel Wieser at the German intelligence service was sent a telegram: 'General Dro will come together with two companies. Please have a 3-bedroom detached apartment ready.'

"According to the same data, Colonel Baun in Warsaw was sent the following telegram on September 9: 'Dro went to the occupied territory of the Soviet Union in March 1942 to recruit and train Armenian spies to be sent to the USSR.'"<sup>53</sup>

The Soviet report also includes Dro's telegrams about his activities. Dro focuses particularly on the recruitment of the Armenian prisoners of war. He wrote the following to the German Major Schreter on August 19, 1942:

"General Dro's 7 agents are still being trained in radio-telegraphy in Daks. 3 of them are ready to be sent. 4 will be ready at the end of August."<sup>54</sup>

According to the same report, the groups reporting to Dro who were sent to Soviet territory were also tasked with making contact with anti-Soviet guerrilla groups behind Red Army lines, in addition to gathering intelligence. The Soviet intelligence report also includes other German documents. A correspondence dated July 18, 1942 is as follows:

"The order for the attack has been received. Please advise if we should take the Crimean Armenian group and agents tasked with parachute drop with us."<sup>55</sup>

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53 A copy of the report in the archives is registered under ASNB RA 1966 file 23342 volume 1, pages 40-42. The copy of the document is original, and it is noted thereon that it was approved by Lieutenant Colonel M., Director of 8. Unit of 2. Department of KGB in Armenian SSR on June 10, 1966. See Eduard Abramian, pgs. 242-243.

54 *ibid*, pgs. 243.

55 *ibid*, p. 244.

The following order was sent from Kharkov to Colonel Hemirin in Poltov on July 30, 1942:

“Are there any Armenians left in Simferepol? If you have taken them with you, send them immediately to Rostov.”<sup>56</sup>

### **Competition to Win the Favor of the Germans**

Another report stored in the archives of the Armenian secret service addresses the links between the Armenian community in Europe with the German administration. A considerable number of Dashnak Party executives are said to have collaborated with the German intelligence organs and the following names are listed as examples:

“Now, the Armenian refugees are led by Hatisov (Hatisian) Alexander<sup>57</sup> who is in Berlin.

“Apart from him, those who came to Berlin are: Araratian Sarkis – the former Minister of Finance of the Armenian Dashnak government, Vahan Papazian, – member of the Foreign Bureau of the ‘Dashnaksutyun’ Party, known by the nickname ‘Koms’.

“The well-known doctor of philosophy Dashnak Malaian, who had the special task of organizing the activities and recruiting volunteers among Armenian refugees, went from Berlin to Geneva in January 1942.

“The Armenian agent in the Berlin Cavalry Captain Pulloy reports that Dro’s Armenian friends from the party have launched their activities in Berlin and compare themselves to Dro. Allegedly, they are trying to prove that their works are better than those of Dro.”<sup>58</sup>

### **Smuggling Diamond in the Name of the Nazis**

The activities undertaken by Dro in the name of the Nazi’s were not limited to just these. Dro, together with Araratyan, worked to prevent the attempts to sabotage the petroleum industry in Bulgaria, particularly those owned by the Americans and the British. The goal was to make sure the petroleum industry

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56 *ibid*, pgs. 244-245.

57 Former Dashnak Prime Minister.

58 For the complete report, see ASNB RA 1966 file 23342 volume 1 pages 38-40, as cited by: Eduard Abramian, pgs. 248-252.

remained in one piece for the Germans to take over. Moreover, it was Dro who facilitated the illegal trade of diamonds and gemstones in Romania which they got hold of from various firms and private individuals in Berlin and the Netherlands. Dro received a lot of praise from the Nazi's for all his activities during the summer of 1940, particularly for managing to sell the precious stones at a high price. In his statement following his captivity by the Soviet Army in 1944, Peter Kamsarakan, an Armenian who was a member of the German foreign intelligence service, conveyed that it was indeed Dro himself who had described the abovementioned events. Kamsarakan added that Dro approached his involvement in illegal trade for the Nazi's in an idealistic manner and that he did not get any commission from this transaction. Kamsarakan highlighted that Dro's statements were, however, rather suspicious.

Kamsarakan also mentions that the Dashnak leaders Njde and Araratyan told him that Dro engaged in looting in the name of his own union but kept the assets all to himself. In parallel to this, in the spring of 1944, Dro transferred 100 thousand Swiss Franc to a bank account (Schweizerische Kreditanstalt) in Switzerland from Romania<sup>59</sup>.

### **Nzhdeh's Case File and Interrogation Minutes**

The interrogations of the Dashnak leaders who were captured by the Soviet counterintelligence organization "Smersh" and tried in the USSR after the war are also of great importance in illuminating the Nazi-Dashnak collaboration. The foremost among these is the file of Nzhdeh who was captured in Bulgaria. However, the whereabouts of Nzhdeh's file (code name "Zubr"), which contains many different documents and various information, was stored in 6 volumes (about 1500 pages) in the archives of Armenian SSR KGB, is now not known. Nzhdeh's 4-volume investigation file is in the National Security Service Archives of the Republic of Armenia.<sup>60</sup> The intelligence officer Vache Hovsepian who attended Nzhdeh's interrogation in person published some of the documents from the lost 6-volume file. Hovsepian also benefited from the 4-volume investigation file while writing his book.

Nzhdeh told of his meeting with the German intelligence officer Drumm in his interrogation dated October 12, 1944. According to this, Nzhdeh asked Drumm how they could help Germany in the war, and proposed opening a school in Berlin for Armenians, the graduates of which were to perform duties assigned

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59 Dashnaki Na Sluzhbe Germanskoy Razvedki, pgs. 13, 44-45, 69-70

60 Vache Hovsepian, pgs. 5, 28.

by the Germans. Upon this, 30 Armenians were brought to Berlin from Bulgaria and sent to Soviet Armenia to work from the inside on behalf of the Germans.<sup>61</sup>

The crimes listed in the indictment dated March 10, 1948 attributed to Nzhdeh begin from 1918. Among activities during the period of Nazi collaboration are that he founded the “Tsegakron” organization in the United States; established contact with Otto Wagner (code name Dr. Delius), a key figure in German intelligence in the Balkans, through the German agent S.I. Burev in 1941; went to Bucharest, Varna, Plovdiv, Sliven, Sumen and was tasked with recruitment there by Wagner on behalf of the Germans for use against the Soviet Union; was tasked by Major Drumm with bringing 30 Armenians from Bulgaria to Berlin in the autumn of 1942 and ensuring that they were trained at intelligence schools there, later sending them to Soviet Armenia through Crimea to engage in espionage and sabotage activities, and start to an uprising should the German armies arrive; went to Crimea to perform duties assigned by the Germans and took part in the Armenian National Committee established to collaborate with the Germans. The indictment also demands that he be imprisoned for 25 years.<sup>62</sup>

In his interrogation dated August 28, 1947, Ovanes Devedjiyan who played a major role in making contact with the Nazis, was a prominent leader of the Dashnaks and a close colleague of Dro, explained that Nzhdeh visited prison camps to call the Armenian Soviet soldiers to fight against the USSR, and whipped up propaganda by saying “whoever dies for Germany dies for Armenia”.<sup>63</sup>

Another document contained in the file is the report by the Soviet intelligence officer B. Z. Kobulov, written as early as October 1938. The report mentions Nzhdeh’s racist and anti-Soviet propaganda in Bulgaria and the fascist military groups organized by him, and addresses the measures that should be taken against him.<sup>64</sup>

Another report prepared before he was captured conveys that Nzhdeh gathered volunteers for the Germans with the support of the Bulgarian government and Gestapo and also that a women’s organization was established.<sup>65</sup>

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61 For the related part of the interrogation, see *ibid*, pgs. 146-147.

62 For the full text, see *ibid*, pgs. 81-85. For the arrest warrant dated October 31, 1944 that has similar accusations, see *ibid*, pgs. 94-95.

63 For the related section of the interrogation minutes, see *ibid*, p. 24.

64 See *ibid*, pgs. 75-76.

65 For the full text, see *ibid*, pgs. 128-131.

## Reaction of the Communist Armenians

Apart from the reports prepared by the Soviet State, reactions against the Dashnak collaboration with the Nazis can be seen in the publications of the Armenian communists. The declaration signed by prominent Armenian artists, poets, writers, and scientists, and published in Pravda on August 17, 1941 addressed the Armenian diaspora as follows:

“And now, in these painful days, the ringleaders of the Dashnaks, each of whom was bought separately, have been hired as agents of German fascism. They lick Hitler’s bloody boots with no shame and are ready for all kinds of treachery.”<sup>66</sup>

The article entitled “Our Goal” published in “Azatuyun” (Freedom), the Armenian section of the French Communist Party newspaper, published in Armenian (No. 1, August 1944), includes the following noteworthy lines:

“It is possible to understand the sadness of the fugitive traitor Armenians dreaming to come back to the country with evil ambitions to re-start their murders and plunders by entering into an agreement with Berlin. A handful of traitors have already humiliated the party with their dark deeds. Even in the days of Germany’s most spectacular achievements, a significant number of the Dashnaksutyun Party’s administration and common members turned their back on the nefarious activities of Koms-Dro-Nzhdeh-Djamalian<sup>67</sup>.”<sup>68</sup>

It must also be stated that almost all of the names mentioned in the article were commanders of the volunteer troops fighting against Turkey during World War I.

The Armenians in the French Communist Party not only produced publications, but also engaged in an active struggle to paralyze the Armenian volunteer troops from fighting for the Nazis.<sup>69</sup>

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66 See *Sovetskaya Armeniya v Gody Velikoy Otechestvennoy Voyny (1941-1945)*, Yerevan: Izdatelstvo Akademii Nauk Armyanskoy SSR, 1975, p. 710.

67 Arşak Camalyan (İsaakyan) (1882-1940), a significant leader of the Dashnaks, served as the ambassador of Dasnak Armenia to Georgia from 1918 to 1920. He became the Minister of Communications in 1920, and declared war against Turkey. He lived in France and Italy following the establishment of the Soviet rule in Armenia. Founding member of the Georgian-Armenian Union which has launched activities against Turkey and the Soviet Union in the year 1936. Camalyan organized Georgian-Armenian legions to support military operations of Italian fascists in Ethiopia. He played a significant role in collaborations with the Nazis. See *Dashnaki Na Sluzhbe Germanskoy Razvedki*, pgs. 18-19, 54.

68 *Sovetskaya Armeniya v Gody Velikoy Otechestvennoy Voyny (1941-1945)*, p. 723.

69 See T. S. Drambian, “Iz Istorii Antifashistkoy Borby Komunistov-Armyan vo Frantsii”, *Vestnik Obshchestvennykh Nauk AN ArmSSR*, No. 5, 1966, pgs. 42-51.

Scientific studies conducted in Armenia also contain examples of this. S. A. Vartanian wrote the following lines in his dissertation which he defended in Yerevan in 1954, entitled “The Victory of the Soviet Power in Armenia (1917-1920)”:

“The Dashnaksutyun Party became and has remained home to spies and traitors against our country. During the great Fatherland War<sup>70</sup> the Dashnaks were in the camp of German fascism.”<sup>71</sup>

A comprehensive study on this issue was undertaken in Armenia by Martirosian, entitled: “The Dashnaksutyun Party’s anti-People Activity during the years of World War II”, and was published in 1987.<sup>72</sup>

Besides the Communists, Dashnak collaboration with the Nazis also drew reaction from the Armenian diaspora. For example, after his visit to the Soviet Armenia, a prominent member of the diaspora (and man of literature) Andranik Dsarukian, was to say that the name of Dro was not welcome in Armenia and that Dro’s collaboration with Hitler’s army had not been forgotten. According to Dsarukian, Dro had two ineradicable stains. The first was volunteering troops for the Nazis, and the second, establishing an espionage network for America in Syria and Lebanon in the post-war years. For this reason, many Armenians were imprisoned, tortured or forced to leave the country in which they lived.<sup>73</sup>

### Anti-Turkism under Hitler’s Guidance

The Nazis planned to use the Armenian volunteer troops not only against the USSR, but also against Turkey. Germany’s Minister for Occupied Eastern Territories, Rosenberg, wrote the following, although he did not mention the invasion of the Caucasus in the “Barbaros” plan in the same period: “(…) The aim of German policy: Political and military domination over the Caucasus and the neighbors on its southern border.”<sup>74</sup>

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70 The Soviet front of World War II.

71 S. A. Vartanian, *Pobeda Sovyetskoy Vlasti v Armenii (1917-1920 gg.)*, Yerevan: Akademiya Nauk Armyanskoy SSR Institut Istorii, 1954, p. 55.

72 R. A. Martirosian, *Antinarodnaya Dyatelnost Partii Dashnaksutyun v Gody Vtoroy Mirovoy Voyny*, Yerevan: Izdatelstvo “Ayastan”, 1987.

73 See Antranig Chalabian, pgs. 270-271. The French researcher Maxime Gauin also states that Dro worked for the American intelligence. Dro was captured by Americans at the end of World War II, and however, was not delivered to Moscow despite the Soviet request. Gauin states that the CIA documents reveal that Dro, from the beginning of 1945 until his death, worked for the American military intelligence and also for the CIA after its establishment. See Maxime Gauin, “The Turkish-Armenian Dispute: Who Has Something To Hide?”, *Daily Sabah*, 14th October 2014.

74 Eduard Abramian, p. 43.

The frame drawn by Rosenberg also encompassed Turkey. The German administration, who knew of the Armenians' hatred for the Turks, gave special importance to the advice and issues of the Armenians. They were openly told as follows: "Report to us on your means to plan joint operations. Afterwards, deliver your demands."<sup>75</sup>

According to the researcher-author Abramian, the Armenian issue, as always, became a tool for Germany to implement its own foreign policy. The Third Reich administration's special policy toward Armenian refugees was definitely not a coincidence. The Germans were to shoot two birds with one stone. It would use the Armenian refugees against both the USSR and Turkey. Abramian continues as follows after this evaluation:

"Being aware of the feelings of hatred of the Armenians toward the Turks, the Germans frequently told the [Armenian] legionnaires, members of Abwehr and SS: 'Your fundamental duty is to save your supreme country from the Bolsheviks and the Turks; this is a great honor for you.' Apart from chasing the Bolsheviks away from Armenian SSR, the basic propaganda aimed at the Armenian soldiers was that the long-awaited war to avenge 1915 and restore independence from the Turkish state would begin soon. Many of them believed in this, and the Armenian legionnaires fighting against other Muslim partisans in Albania and the Balkans at the end of the war began to blame them, like the Turks, for all the troubles inflicted on their people. The Germans simply got what they wanted; the legionnaires, on the other hand, became toys fighting for an illusion."<sup>76</sup>

### **The Gertrud Plan**

According to archive research and intelligence commission reports, Berlin told the representatives of Armenia and Georgia to prepare for a victorious and holy war against Turkey, which had for a long time been oppressing them. Their armies were to be supported by Greek troops, the Wehrmacht and the SS, as well as the Bulgarian and Italian armies from Europe. Then, Armenia and Georgia were going to provide 100,000 soldiers at the disposal of the Germans for the attack against Turkey.

A special plan was also prepared for the invasion of Turkey, which was to be divided among Armenia (the entire Eastern Anatolia and majority of the historical Cilicia region), Georgia (a small part of the historical Kingdom of Trabzon), Bulgaria, Italy and Greece (Izmir and its surroundings). The study

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75 *ibid.*, p. 45.

76 *ibid.*, p. 41.



on the attack plan began the beginning of the summer of 1942. Its code name was “Gertrud”, but later changed several times.

Some steps were taken to realize this plan at the beginning of 1943, which was a difficult time for the Germans. The goal was to deal a blow to the Reds behind USSR lines over the Turkish-Soviet border. However, the plan was postponed upon the Red Army’s offensive and invasion of Sicily by the allies.<sup>77</sup>

Nazis had planned to mobilize Kurds through Dashnaks in 1943 in case of a war with Turkey. Reports were prepared on the subject, and the cooperation between Kurdish seperatist organization Hoybun and the Dashnaks were going to be utilized to achieve that end. Aim was to crush Turkey’s defence against Germany by using Kurdish rebellion supported by the Dashnaks.<sup>78</sup>

### **The “Great Armenia” Project with the Nazis**

Germany tried to use Turkey against the USSR via Pan-Turkism in the beginning of the war. However, the German policy toward Ankara fundamentally changed in mid-1942. Then, Alfred Rosenberg, and the Third Reich administration moved on with the Caucasus Union project against both the Soviet Union and Turkey. The Dashnaks were glad to provide as much assistance as possible to the Germans in this. The anti-Turkey Caucasian Union was founded under the initiative of Garegin Nzhdeh in mid-1942.

As shown by the documents of the Nazi Ministry of Occupied Eastern Territories, the German administration and Rosenberg identified that Pan-Turkism would be a threat sooner or later in the case of a unification of Turkey with Azerbaijan. The idea of “Great Armenia” and its realization would prevent the “Great Turan” and create a balance against the Turks’ actions in the Caucasus. Armenia was the best wedge for the Nazis to insert between Turkey and Azerbaijan. As a separate plan, Rosenberg worked on the “General Commissariat of Armenia”, envisioning the establishment of a buffer zone under the aegis of Germany.<sup>79</sup> On the other hand, German spies, who used Tehran and Tabriz as a base, did not hold back in provoking the Armenians in line with their own purpose, by promising the “Great Armenia”. Armenian terrorists also opened fire on Turkish troops.<sup>80</sup>

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77 *ibid*, pgs. 49-50, 324.

78 Dashnaki Na Sluzhbe Germanskoy Razvedki, pgs. 70-71.

79 Eduard Abramian, p. 51; Antranig Chalabian, p. 240; Alfred Rosenberg, *Die Tagesbücher von 1934 bis 1944*, S. Fischer, Frankfurt am Main, 2015, p. 447.

80 Ray Brock, “Armenians in Iran Inflamed By the Nazis”, *The New York Times*, July 24, 1941, p. 4.



However, Nzhdeh's group was tasked to operate in Thrace within the frame of the German intelligence plans in the summer of 1942. This plan was abandoned due to the counter-attack of the Soviets, and Nzhdeh's group was sent back to Germany to prepare for operations on the Eastern front.<sup>81</sup>

Also in his interrogations in the Soviet Union, Nzhdeh stressed many times that the principal basis of the collaboration with the Nazis was anti-Turkey sentimentality. He even highlighted this point in a letter dated December 16/10, 1947<sup>82</sup>, which he wrote to Stalin from prison.<sup>83</sup>

Nzhdeh says that he often made anti-Turkey speeches during his meetings with the Nazis. During Nzhdeh's meeting with the German intelligence official Drumm, it was discussed that the Armenians to be used on the Soviet front would serve as the main link to incite the Armenians against the Turks in the war to be waged against Turkey later, and that they would also be sent to Turkey. Given Nzhdeh's argument that this group would be more successful in Thrace, the group was put under Dr. Engelhaupt's order. The group engaged in activities on the Turkish-Bulgarian border and made preparations to move to Thrace on the eve of the German attack.<sup>84</sup> Meanwhile, prison camps were also visited to collect Armenian soldiers for use in the war against Turkey.<sup>85</sup>

It is also worthy of attention that almost all of the Armenians Nzhdeh took to Germany following his contacts with the German intelligence were of Turkish origin.<sup>86</sup> Besides, Nzhdeh also stressed that the collaboration with the Nazis essentially stood on the basis of anti-Turkey sentimentality, and stated that the troops were created within the German Army, specifically by selecting young Armenian people from Turkey.<sup>87</sup>

### Members of Abwehr's Turkey Network

In this process, the Dashnaks in Turkey engaged in activities on behalf of the German military intelligence Abwehr too. The Abwehr agents set up a very

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81 Eduard Abramian, p. 158.

82 This is how it looks in the original letter.

83 For the related part of the letter said to have never been given to Stalin, see Vache Hovsepian, p. 103.

84 *ibid*, pgs. 146, 153, 155, 177, 199; Republic of Armenia KGB Archives file 5232 volume 4 packet 2, as cited by: G. B. Abramian, "Iz Tyuremnykh Zapisok Garegina Nzhdeh", *Vestnik Obshestvennykh Nauk AN ArmSSR*, No. 5, 1991, pgs. 140-141.

85 For the related part of the testimony of Nzhdeh's close colleague A. K Asaturian, see Vache Hovsepian, p. 235.

86 *ibid*, p. 154.

87 For the related section of Nzhdeh's interrogation dated March 22, 1947, and of the letter dated February 26, 1954 he sent to K. Y. Voroshilov, the President of the Supreme Council Presidium of the Soviet Socialist Republics, see *ibid*, pgs. 174, 176, 199.

effective courier system linking Berlin and the Balkans to Istanbul and Istanbul to the Arab world. The most permanent part of this communications network was created by the Dashnaks. Joseph and Lucy Ayvazian, the owners of a summer hotel in the Southeast of Turkey were the key members of this network. Joseph, who was an orphan, grew up in the Koch family as the step brother of Paula Koch<sup>88</sup>. Therefore, his allegiance to the female German agent was unshakable. The hotel was an ideal meeting and mail center for Abwehr. A large amount of money arriving from Berlin twice a year was distributed to the Arab world through this chain. Lucy Ayvazian would mostly travel between Syria and Istanbul and play a role in the transmission of intelligence received from Arab agents. Numerous Dashnak members in about 6 countries were working for Abwehr's network in the Middle East.

Abwehr's attention shifted to the Soviet front from the Middle East in 1942 and 1943. The Dashnaks also served in the infiltration of Abwehr agents from Turkey into the USSR.<sup>89</sup> The purpose of this Dashnak mobility in the border area was, besides intelligence, to create groups to uprising and break down the resistance morale of the people.<sup>90</sup>

Nzhdeh also took part in recruiting agents from Turkey for the Germans. Nzhdeh raised this issue in his meeting with Delius, the German intelligence authority in the Balkans, while he was in Bulgaria. After saying that Germany was particularly interested in Turkey and that there were many Armenians living in Istanbul, Delius asked Nzhdeh for his help in finding people among them to work in the German intelligence. Upon this, Nzhdeh gave the name of Adrine Dadrian. Dadrian gathered information for the Germans about the Turkish Army, the country's economic condition and the mood of the public later in the process. In return, the Germans helped her to go to Vienna to live with her brother.<sup>91</sup>

### **The Nazis Wish to Hand the Nagorno-Karabakh Over to the Armenians**

Nazi Germany promised Nagorno-Karabakh, Nakhchivan, a part of Akhalkalaki and Borchali to the Dashnaks in exchange for their services. Also,

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88 Being the first and most loyal employee of Abwehr's Chief in Istanbul, Captain Paul Leverkühn, Koch, who was also sometimes referred to as the Mata Hari of World War II, grew up in the city of Aleppo in Syria. She was a nurse working in the German army during World War I. She lived in Brazil and Indonesia in the following years. She came to the Middle East and made effective use of her old acquaintanceship with major Arab families for Abwehr. She was 56 years old in 1940. See Barry Rubin, *İstanbul Entrikaları*, 3. edition, İstanbul: Doğan Kitap, August 2007, p. 73.

89 *ibid*, pgs. 74, 232.

90 Yuri Baturin, *Dosye Razvedchika*, Moskva: Molodaya Gvardiya, 2005, p. 428.

91 For the related part of Nzhdeh's interrogations dated October 12 and 18, 1944, see Vache Hovsepian, pgs. 143-144, 162.

special combat forces and special commandos from the Dashnaks were sent to the Nagorno-Karabakh region during the war to incite the local people against the Soviet government.<sup>92</sup>

### Conclusion

The information and documents presented above are important in terms of determining the point at which Armenian nationalism emerged. Armenian nationalism was born and developed in parallel with the plans of the West and Tsarist Russia to use the Armenians against Turkey, starting particularly from the 19<sup>th</sup> century. The archive documents and Armenian publications of the period clearly reveal the collaborative, bigoted and offensive roots of Armenian nationalism. Serving Hitler's Germany was a natural consequence of the Dashnak line.

On the other hand, the information and documents are other examples of the fact that the Armenian issue was a tool in the hands of imperialist countries throughout history for their expansionist and aggressive policies. After being employed by the United Kingdom, Tsarist Russia and France, this instrument came into the hands of the Nazis. Later, this flag is seen to have been taken up by the United States. It is no coincidence that Dro worked on behalf of the CIA, whose power rose significantly after the war.

The Dashnak leaders who collaborated with the Nazis, such as Dro and Nzhdeh are today regarded as heroes by the circles who fervently support the Armenian genocide claims. Their statues are erected in Armenia and in the West, medals are awarded and government institutes opened in their names. After the dissolution of the USSR, their honor was restored. Today, there are still many ceremonies held and monuments erected in their name. Interestingly, the same circles also condemn the denial of the Armenian genocide as a racist act. Laws are passed in Western parliaments that regard statements denying the genocide as crime within the scope of anti-racism.

In fact, those who took the lead role in the mutual slaughter of 1915 and thereafter collaborated with the Nazis are protected under these laws, contrary to their very purpose. The Dashnak leaders who lit the fuse of mutual slaughter due to their part in World War I became a tool of German fascism. This tradition, collaborative and chauvinist in its essence, emerged under the orders of racism. They conducted activities with the Germans especially against the USSR and Turkey on and behind the front line. A wide range of psychological

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92 Eduard Abramian, pgs. 48, 52, 136; Dashnaki Na Sluzhbe Germanskoy Razvedki, pgs. 12-13, 39

warfare was used by the Nazis, and a wide range of publications were made. Those like and including Nzhdeh and Dro also stabbed the Soviet Armenians in the back during World War II.

This collaboration did not just remain on a political plane, but also emerged on an ideological one. The Dashnaks sought to fit Nazism and fascism into the frame of Armenianism. As they themselves express, not only the Turkish State, but also anti-Turkism made up the body of this. It is clear that these ideas fueled racist hatred. Here, it is also possible to find the origin of the ASALA terrorism occurring later.

Many more of the above-mentioned documents and resources are in the archives of Armenia. The fact that some of these documents were destroyed is also indicated by the above-mentioned sources. Brining these archives and documents to light would play an important role in illuminating the details and depth of the Nazi-Dashnak collaboration..

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